

The Gospel for an Age of Doubt

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IV.—The Human Life of God¹

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A GREAT TRUTH IN ECLIPSE

Nearly fifty years ago, Horace Bushnell, the most mystical of logicians or the most logical of mystics, delivered before this University a magnificent discourse upon the "Divinity of Christ." In that fine work of genius, wrought out of darkness and light, mystery and clearness, like an intricate carving of ebony and gold, I find these words: "Christ is in such a sense God, or God manifested, that the unknown term of his nature, that which we are most in doubt of, and about which we are least capable of any positive affirmation, is the human."²

This sentence, it seems to me, is not of gold but of ebony. It does not represent that illuminating and harmonious kind of truth which comes directly from the divine revelation of Christ. It belongs rather to that obscured and discordant manner of presenting truth which is the consequence of studying it too much at second hand and too little at first hand, too much in the speculations and reasonings of men and too little in the facts of life wherein it was first manifested. Whatever may be said of this sentence as a statement of the result of dogmatic theology—and in this sense I, for one, do not question its accuracy—when we consider its naked meaning as an expression of Christian experience and faith, one thing is as clear as daylight. It is utterly out of touch with the experience and faith of the first disciples. . . . For if there is anything in regard to which the New Testament makes positive and undoubting affirmation, it is the complete, genuine, and veritable humanity of Christ. If there is any fact which stands out lustrous and distinct in the experience of the early Christians, it is that they saw in Christ . . . the revelation of God leveled to the direct apprehension of man, the unveiling of the Father under conditions which were so familiar that they dissolved doubts and difficulties. They saw the human life of God.

The object of this lecture is, first, to trace very briefly the way in which this view of Christ has been beclouded so that his humanity has appeared doubtful and less capable of positive affirmation; second, to show how the primitive view of his person and life may be, and in the history of Christian faith often has been, recovered and restored to its pristine brilliancy and beauty; and, third, to try to express, though but imperfectly, the meaning and importance of this view for the present age.

I.—Obscuration by Formula

Definition is dangerous. Necessary it may be; useful it undoubtedly is; but our recognition of these qualities ought not to make us forget or deny the peril which the process certainly involves. And this is the nature of the danger: the definition has an inherent tendency to substitute itself for the thing defined. The terms in which a fact is expressed creep into the place of the fact itself. The reality is removed insensibly to a remote distance behind the verbal symbols which represent it. The way of access to it is blocked, and its influence is restricted by the forms of expression invented to define it.

IN ART

I do not know where we can find a more vivid illustration of this process than that which is given, in many ways, in the history of Art. The first effort of the artist is to represent something that he has seen or imagined. Out of this effort and the work which it produces grow certain methods and habits of representing landscapes and architecture and the human figure. Out of these habits grow rules and formulas, not only for the hand, but also for the eye. On these formulas schools are founded. In these schools the example of masters comes to have an authority which overshadows and limits the vision of facts as well as the representation of them. The Japanese artists, of certain schools, actually reproduce that infantile condition of sight in which all things appear flat, in a single plane without perspective. The Giotteschi of Italy carry their disregard of anatomy to such a point that joints and articulations vanish from the human figure.

Now, this same process of limitation by formulas may be observed, on the ideal side, in the course of religious art. The first pictures of Christ, traced in color upon the walls of the Catacombs, or carved in stone upon the sarcophagi of the Christian dead, do not give us,

indeed, the very earliest conception of him, for the Christian art of the first two centuries, if it ever existed, has long since perished. But that which remains, dating from the third and fourth centuries, bears witness to an idea of the Christ which was simple and natural and humane. He appears as a figure of youthful beauty and graciousness; the good Shepherd bearing a lamb upon his shoulders; the true Orpheus, drawing all creatures and souls by the charm of his amiable music.¹ These are only symbolic representations, yet they evidence a conception of him which was still in touch with the facts. . . .

But when we pass on to the creations of so-called Byzantine art, we find ourselves face to face with an utterly different view of the Christ. His countenance now stares out in glittering mosaic from the walls of great churches, huge, dark, threatening, a dreadful and forbidding face. The fixed and formal lines are repeated and deepened by artist after artist. Every feature of naturalness is obliterated; every feature that seems to express awfulness is exaggerated and emphasized. The wide-set eyes, the long, narrow countenance, the stern, inflexible mouth—in this ocular definition the man Christ Jesus has vanished, and we see only the immense, immutable, and terrible Pantokrator, who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.²

IN THEOLOGY

When we turn to the intellectual life of the Church out of which this type of art grew, we see there the process explained. The early Greek fathers, like Irenæus, went directly to the Holy Scriptures for their view of the person of Christ, and frankly accepted all the features of the living, lovely portrait there disclosed. They recognized without reserve the reality of Christ's human growth in stature and wisdom and in favor with God and men; the actual limitations of Christ's human knowledge as expressed in the questions that he asked and in his profession of ignorance in regard to the time of his second advent; the intimacy of his sympathy with us in temptation, suffering, and death. But with the development of theological definition this direct view of Christ was modified, obscured, and at last totally eclipsed. Instead of looking at God through his revelation in Christ, the Fathers began to look at Christ through a more and more abstract, precise, and inflexible statement of the metaphysical idea of God. It became necessary to harmonize the Scripture record of the life of Jesus with the theories of the Divine Nature set forth in the decrees of Councils and defined with amazing particularity in the writings of theologians. In the effort to accomplish this two main lines of thought were followed. One line abandoned the belief in Christ's real and complete humanity, and reduced his human life to a tenuous and filmy apparition. The other line distinguished between his humanity and his divinity in such a way as to divide him into two halves, either of which appears virtually complete without the other, and both of which are united, not in a single and sincere personality, but in an outward manifestation and a concealed life, covering in some mysterious way a double center of existence. It is only fair to say that the extreme results of these two lines of thought were condemned by the Church in the heresies of Doketism and Apollinarianism, Eutychianism and Nestorianism. But it is equally fair to say that the influence of these theories was by no means checked nor extirpated. They continued to make themselves felt powerfully and perniciously—now in the direction of dissolving the humanity of Christ into a mere cloud enveloping his deity, and again in the direction of dividing and destroying the unity of his person in the definition of a dual nature.

THE HIDING OF CHRIST'S HUMANITY

It is not necessary, nor would it be possible, for us to trace this process in detail through all its complexities and self-contradictions. It will be enough to give two or three specimens of the kind of work to which it led in dealing with two essential features of the picture of Christ which is given to us in the Gospels: his human limitation of knowledge, and his human growth in wisdom, stature, and grace. Both limitation and growth are unexempt conditions of manhood. Both are unquestionably attributed to Christ in the New Testament. Both are explicitly denied by the theologians. Ephrem Syrus, commenting upon the "Diatessaron" of Tatian, says: "Christ, though he knew the moment of his advent, yet, that they might not ask him any

¹ The first of these Lectures, "An Age of Doubt," will be found in The Outlook for May 9; the second, "The Gospel of a Person," in the issue of May 16; and the third, "The Unveiling of the Father," in the issue of May 23.
² Horace Bushnell, "God in Christ" (Scribners, New York, 1887), p. 123.

¹ So in the paintings from the catacombs of S. Agnese and S. Callisto.
² See the mosaic of Christ in the Church of St. Paul Outside the Walls, near Rome.

more about it, said, *I know it not.*" Chrysostom, in his explanation of St. Matthew xxiv., 36, paraphrases Christ's words in this extraordinary fashion: "For if thou seek after the day and the hour, thou shalt not hear them of me, saith he; but if of times and preludes, I will tell thee all exactly. For that indeed I am not ignorant of it, I have shown by many things.—I lead thee to the very vestibule; and if I do not open unto thee the doors, this also I do for your good." John of Damascus, defending the orthodox faith, declares that—"Christ is said to advance in wisdom and stature and grace, because he grows in fact in stature, and, through his growth in stature, brings out into exhibition the wisdom which already existed in him. But those who say that he really grew in wisdom and grace, as receiving increase in these, deny that the flesh was united to the Word from the first moment of its existence." Peter Lombard does not explicitly adopt, but quotes with evident approval, the opinion that the person of the eternal Word put on a human body and soul as a robe, in order that he might appear suitably to the eyes of mortals; yet in himself he was not changed by this incarnation, but remained one and the same, immutable.

THE VANISHED MANHOOD OF JESUS

Canon Gore, in his Bampton Lectures, adroitly uses the Jesuit theologian De Lugo as a man of straw through whom he may safely and vigorously attack the false conception of Christ's person which is still current, and to a considerable degree dominant, in dogmatic theology. He says that De Lugo depicts a Christ "who, if he was, as far as his body is concerned, in a condition of growth, was, as regards his soul and intellect, from the first moment and throughout his life, in full enjoyment of the beatific vision. Externally a wayfarer, a *viator*, inwardly he was throughout a *comprehensor*, he had already attained. . . . It is denied that he can be strictly called 'the servant of God,' even as man, in spite of the direct use of that expression in the Acts of the Apostles. He is spoken of at the institution of the Eucharist as offering sacrifice to his own Godhead."¹

Canon Gore condemns this picture by De Lugo as in striking contradiction to that which the New Testament presents. But the point which I wish to make clear and distinct is that, in spite of this contradiction, the picture has not been frankly and finally discarded in Christian theology. It still exercises an obscuring and perverting influence upon the vision of Christ. It still produces, by imitation, representations of him in which definitions dominate facts, and formulas hide or obliterate realities. We do not need to go back to the seventeenth century, nor abroad to the Jesuits, for our examples. We may turn to Archdeacon Wilberforce's book on "The Incarnation" and find him representing the body of Christ as miraculous in its freedom from sickness, its power over animals, its exemption from the necessity of death, and its inherent power of communicating life to others.² In regard to the mind of Christ, he says that "since it would be impious to suppose that our Lord had pretended an ignorance which he did not experience, we are led to the conclusion that what he partook, as man, *was not actual ignorance*, but such deficiency in the means of arriving at truth as belongs to mankind."³ We may turn to Canon Liddon's magnificent work on "The Divinity of Our Lord" and find him writing: "Christ's manhood is not of itself an individual being; it is not a seat and center of personality; it has no conceivable existence apart from the act whereby the Eternal Word in becoming Incarnate called it into being and made it his own. *It is a vesture which he has folded around his person; it is an instrument through which he places himself in contact with and whereby he acts upon humanity.*"⁴ And so, if we accept this picture of Christ, the manhood of Jesus fades, retreats, grows dim and shadowy. It wavers like a veil. It dissolves like mist. It descends again, mysterious and impenetrable, illusory and impersonal, to envelop him whom we love and adore in its strange and unfamiliar folds. We grope after him, but we can touch nothing but the hem of his mystic robe. We long for him, but he approaches us and comes into contact with us only through an instrument. He is not what he seems. The Son of God behind that veil is beyond our reach. The Son of Man, whom human eyes beheld and human hands touched, is not the real, living, veritable Saviour, but only the form, the garment, of an inscrutable life. And if, in our dire confusion, our reasoning faith still succeeds in holding fast to the Eternal Logos, our confiding faith is maimed and robbed by the loss of that true, near, personal, loving, sympathizing Jesus, who was born of a woman, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. He is gone from us, as certainly as if the Pharisees had spoken truth when they said that his disciples came by night and stole him away. The thing "of which we are most in doubt, and

about which we are least capable of any positive affirmation, is the humanity of Christ." We are left with a perfectly orthodox doctrine of two natures, but we no longer have a clear and simple gospel of One Person to preach to the doubting souls of men.

II.—The Cry of the Heart for a Human Saviour

But the heart of Christendom has never rested content with this distant, vague, uncertain view of the real manhood of our Lord. There has always been a protest against it. There has always been an effort to escape from it.

We can see a strange and indirect, but indubitable, evidence of this deep inward dissatisfaction, in the rise and growth of an impassioned devotion to the human mother of Jesus. The worship of the Virgin Mary was a reprisal for the obscuration of the humanity of her Son. In the thought of her true womanly tenderness and affection, her real and unquestionable sorrows, her simple and familiar joys, her intimate, genuine, unfailing sympathy with all that makes our mortal life a bitter, blessed reality to us, the souls of the lowly and the lonely found that peace and consolation which they could no longer find in the contemplation of the distant Second Person of the Trinity through the telescope of theology. That which Jesus himself was to John and Peter, to the household of Bethany, to the penitent publican, and to the woman which was a sinner, Mary became to the baffled and confused faith of a later age—an approachable mediator of the divine mercy, a helper who could really understand and feel the need of those who cried for help, a warm and living image of the Eternal Sympathy in flesh and blood. In the light of mediæval dogmatics Mariolatry appears not without its justification. And for my part I should not wish to be bound to the Christology of Peter Lombard and Thomas Aquinas without finding the compensation which their followers found in personal devotion and confidential trust flowing instinctively and irresistibly towards the blessed Virgin.

But, after all, this was only a substitute for the real thing. It gave to faith the image of a lovely and adorable humanity in closest union with God; but it did not give back the old vision of the human life of God. And so through all the ages we see men turning, now in solitary thought, now in great companies, to seek that vision. The renaissance of Christian art, with its beautiful pictures of the infancy of Jesus, with its piercing and pathetic representations of the sufferings of Jesus, bears witness to the eagerness of that search. The revivals of Christian life, seen in such diverse yet cognate forms as the rise of the "Poor Men of Lyons" and the foundation of the "Brotherhood of St. Francis," are evidences of the same movement back to Christ. . . . The Reformation, which was at once and equally an intellectual and a spiritual protest against the arrogance of current theology and the coldness of religious life, supplies no better watchword to express its great motive than the saying of Erasmus: "I could wish that those frigid subtleties either were completely cut off, or were not the only things that the theologians held as certain, and that *the Christ pure and simple might be implanted deep within the minds of men.*"⁵ Modern Biblical scholarship, with its splendid apparatus of linguistic and historical learning, proceeding in part, at first, from a skeptical impulse, has developed in our generation, either through the conversion of skeptics in the process of research, or through the awakening of believers to the necessities of their faith, into a reverent and eager quest for the historic Christ, the Jesus of the Gospels, the Lord of the primitive Church, that we may see him as the first Christians saw him, in the integrity of his person and the sincerity of his life, and receive from him what they received—a faith that dissolved doubts and an inspiration that conquered difficulties. Back to the New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ—back to the facts that lie behind the definitions, back to the Person who embodies the truth, back to the record and reflection of that which the Apostles "heard, and saw with their eyes, and looked upon, and their hands handled of the word of life"—this, and this only, is the way that leads us within sight of

the Heaven-drawn picture
Of Christ, the living Word.

THE GOSPELS GIVE A KINSMAN-REDEEMER

Now, it is a marvelous thing, and one for which we can never be grateful enough, that when we come to the New Testament in this spirit, we find in it exactly what we need: not a dogmatic system, not a collection of definitions, not a treatise on theology even by Christ himself, but the graphic reflection of a Person seen from a fourfold point of view, and the simple record of manifold human experience under the direct and dominant influence of that Person. And the one fact that emerges clear and triumphant from the reflection and the record is that the writers of the New Testament never were in doubt of the human nature of Christ, and never hesitated to make the most positive affirmations in regard to it.

The Christ of the Gospels is bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh,

⁵ Erasmus, quoted in Gore, "Dissertations," etc., p. 180, Epistle 207.

¹ "The Incarnation," p. 164.

² Archdeacon Wilberforce, "The Doctrine of the Incarnation" (Young, New York, 1885), pp. 60-65.

³ Ibid., p. 71.

⁴ Canon H. P. Liddon, "The Divinity of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (Bampton Lectures; Rivingtons, London, 11th edition, 1885), p. 262.

mind of our mind, heart of our heart. He is in subjection to his parents as a child. He grows to manhood. His character is unfolded and perfected by discipline. He labors for daily bread, and prays for divine grace. He hungers, and thirsts, and sleeps, and rejoices, and weeps. He is anointed with the Spirit for his ministry. He is tempted. He is lonely and disappointed. He asks for information. He confesses ignorance. He interprets the facts of nature and life with a prophetic insight. But he makes no new disclosure of the secrets of omniscience. There is no hint nor indication that he is leading a double life, reigning consciously as God while he is suffering apparently as man. His personality is simple and indivisible. The glory of what he is and does, lies not only in its perfection, but in the hard conditions of its accomplishment. Superhuman in his origin, as the only-begotten Son of God; superhuman in his office and work, as the revealer of the Father and the Redeemer of mankind; in his earthly existence the Christ of the Gospels enters, without reserve and without deception, into all the conditions and limitations which are necessary to give to the world, once and forever, the human life of God.

THE EPISTLES EMPHASIZE CHRIST'S HUMANITY

When we turn to the Epistles to see how this view of Christ was affected by the recognition of his divine glory and power as one who had been raised to the right hand of God and made head over all things to the Church, two things strike us with tremendous force. First, the identity of his person was not lost, nor the continuity of his being broken; the exalted Christ is none other than "this same Jesus."¹ Second, the reality and absoluteness of his humiliation are emphasized as the ground and cause of his exaltation.

How vividly these two things come out, for example, in the writings of St. Paul! It has been well said that "the Christ whom Paul had seen was the risen Christ, and the conception of him in his glorified character is the one which rules his thoughts and forms the starting-point of his teaching."² Corresponding to this present glory, Paul assumes an eternally pre-existent glory of Christ as the image of the invisible God, the medium and end of creation.³ Now, it is of this Person, divinely glorious in the past as the one who is before all things, and in whom all things consist,⁴ divinely glorious in the present as the one who is far above every name that is named not only in this world, but in that which is to come⁵—it is of this Person that Paul writes, in words so strong that they touch the very border of the impossible: "For our sakes, *he beggared himself* that we through his beggary might be enriched."⁶ And again: "He, existing in the form of God, did not consider an equal state with God a thing to be selfishly grasped and held, but *emptied himself*, and took the form of a slave, being made in the likeness of man."⁷ These powerful expressions, "self-beggary," "self-emptying," seem to be directly designed to break up the conventional molds in which dogmatic theology has attempted to cast the truth and let it harden. They bring back a vital warmth and motion into the facts of the incarnation. Once more it glows and flows. Once more we see that it is not a mere exhibition of being, but a process of becoming. The idea of self-beggary mightily overflows the mere statement that a human nature was added and united to the divine nature, for that would have been no impoverishment, but an enrichment. The idea of self-emptying shatters the narrow dogma that the Son of God suffered no change in himself when he became man. It was a change so absolute, so immense, that it can only be compared with the vicissitude from fullness to emptiness. He laid aside the existence-form of God, in order that he might take the existence-form of man. Whatever right he had to an equal state of glory with God, that right he did not cling to, but surrendered, in order that he might become a servant. And upon this real self-emptying there followed a real self-humiliation, wherein, being found in fashion as a man, he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.⁸ It was on account of this—and by "this" we must understand the entire actual operation of the self-denying, self-humbling, self-sacrificing mind of Christ—it was for this reason, St. Paul declares, that "God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name."⁹ And I know not how to interpret such language with any reality of intelligence, unless it means that the present glory of the Son of God is in some true sense the result of his having become man and so fulfilled the will of God.

This view, which St. Paul condenses into a single pregnant "wherefore," is expanded in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The object of this Epistle is to show the superiority of the priesthood and sacrifice of Christ, which are substantial and enduring, to the priesthood and sacrifice of the old dispensation, which were shadowy and transient. But the method which the writer follows is not to deny, but to assert, the verity of Christ's humanity. Without this he could not be the true priest nor offer the true sacrifice. "In all things it behoved him

to be made like unto his brethren." "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities: but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered, and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." This complete incarnation, this thorough trial under human conditions, this perfect discipline of obedience through suffering, was a humiliation. But it was in no sense a degradation. On the contrary, it was a crowning of Christ with glory and honor in order that he might taste death for every man. "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering."¹ If the Epistle to the Hebrews teaches anything, it certainly teaches this. The humanity of Jesus was not the veiling, but the unveiling, of the divine glory. The limitations, temptations, and sufferings of manhood were the conditions under which alone Christ could accomplish the greatest work of the Deity—the redemption of a sinful race. The seat of the divine revelation and the center of the divine atonement was and is the human life of God.

III.—Summary of Scripture Teachings

Here, then, we may pause for a moment and try to sum up the conclusions to which the New Testament leads us in regard to the person of Christ.

I am sincerely anxious not to be misunderstood. On the one hand, I would not conceal for a moment my conviction that current theology has failed, very often and very largely, to do justice to the meaning of the Incarnation on the human side, and that we *must* go back to the image of Jesus Christ as it is reflected in the Gospels to purify and refresh and simplify our faith. We should not suffer any reverence for human definitions of doctrine, however well founded, nor any fear of incurring reproach and mistrust as innovators, to deter us from that necessary and loyal return to the reality of the Person in whom our creed centers and on whom it rests. To find Jesus anew, to see him again, as if for the first time, in the wondrous glory of his humility, is the secret of the revival of Christianity in every age. This is not innovation. It is renovation.

On the other hand, we have no right, and we ought to have no inclination, to insist exclusively upon any particular theory as the only possible explanation of the facts of the Incarnation. Every earnest and thoughtful man must feel that these facts are so deep and mysterious that the plummet of human reason cannot sound their ultimate recesses. With all our thinking upon this subject there must ever mingle a consciousness of insufficiency and a confession of ignorance. But with this confession of ignorance there must go also a clear recognition of those portions of the truth which are unquestionably revealed in the New Testament. Three things are there made plain to faith.

THREE VITAL TRUTHS

1. God is not such a being, absolute, immutable, and impassible, that the Divine Logos cannot descend by a free act of self-determining love into the lower estate of human existence, and humble himself to the conditions of manhood without losing his personal identity.

2. The essence of the Gospel is its declaration of the fact that this act of condescension, of self-humiliation, actually has been performed, and that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, who has taken upon him the existence-form of a servant, and lived a truly human life, and been obedient even unto death, in order to reveal to the world the saving love of God.

3. That the distinctive attributes of personality (self-consciousness and self-determination) in Christ are not dual, as of two persons, the one divine and the other human, co-existing side by side in a double life, but individual, and manifested as the life of one person. That person is the Son of God, who laid aside the glory which he had with the Father, and emptied himself, and so became the Son of man; and on account of this humiliation God hath highly exalted him and crowned him with glory and honor as the God-man forever.

These are the points which are vital to the reality of the Gospel of the Incarnation. All views which make these points clear, safeguard the truth in its integrity and in its reconciling power. The question of the method of the divine humiliation and the human exaltation of Christ lies beyond these points. It is not necessary to insist upon any particular form of its solution. Indeed, it may well be that the profundity of the question, the inherent mystery of the facts of life and personality with which it deals, and the limitations of human thought and language, preclude the possibility of a complete and final answer at present. It must be frankly acknowledged that none of the solutions which have been propounded hitherto are free from serious perplexities. But it must be recognized with equal frankness that the theories which have been put forward in modern times, with new earnestness and power, by men of unquestionable loyalty to the Christianity of the New Testament, who have sought to find a clear

¹ Hebrews ii., 9, 10.

¹ Acts i., 11.

² Stevens, "The Pauline Theology," p. 206.

³ Col. i., 16.

⁴ Col. i., 17.

⁵ Eph. i., 21.

⁶ 2 Cor. viii., 9.

⁷ Phil. ii., 6, 7.

⁸ Phil. ii., 8.

⁹ Phil. ii., 9.

and positive meaning for the great word *Kenosis*, which St. Paul uses to describe the self-emptying of Christ in the Incarnation—theories which have been stigmatized as *kenotic*, as if the name were enough to mark them as unorthodox—are so far from being heretical that they have the rare merit of conserving and emphasizing a truth of surpassing value, undoubtedly taught in the Bible, and too much neglected, if not practically denied, during many centuries of theological speculation. A *kenotic* view of the person of Christ is, in so far forth, a Biblical view, and a true view. It may be, as Julius Müller held, that the distinctive attributes of personality are, abstractly considered, identical in God and man, so that, by the divine self-limitation in the Incarnation, they are actually unified, like two circles which have a common center.¹ It may be, as Dr. Fairbairn holds, that the Son of God, being the eternal representative of the filial relationship within the Godhead, the symbol of the created within the Uncreated, needed but to surrender the form and status of the uncreated Son in order to assume, by the same act, the form and status which man as the created son was intended to realize.² It may be, as Godet holds, that the Incarnation was by deprivation, and that the Eternal Word renounced His divine mode of being, and entered into life, without omniscience, omnipresence, or omnipotence, as an unconscious babe.³ It matters little in what form of words we try to express the transcendent truth. But it matters much, it is supremely important for the integrity of our Gospel and its influence upon the heart of this doubting age, that we should hold fast to the fact that the life of Jesus of Nazareth is the human life of God.

The time is at hand when this simple and profound view of Christ, which beholds in Him the God-man in whom Deity is self-limited and humbled in order that humanity may be divinely exalted and perfected, must break through the clouds which have obscured it and become the leading light of religion and theology. The life of Christ needs to be restudied and rewritten under this luminous guidance, in absolute and unhesitating loyalty to the facts as they lie before our eyes in the Gospels.⁴ The doctrine of Christ's person needs to be reconstructed and restated in this light. It must include, as the Creed of Chalcedon included, not only the truth of a *Homoöusia*—a sameness of nature and experience—with God, which the past has vindicated; but also the equal truth of a *Homoöusia* with man, which the future is to unfold as the universality of Christ's manhood is exhibited through his progressive triumphs among all the races of men and all the modes of human life. The humanity of the incarnate Christ must stand out as clear, as positive, as indubitable as his deity. Nay, more, it must stand where the New Testament puts it, in the foreground of faith. For it is only in this humanity that we can truly find the Son of God who loved us and gave himself for us.

IV.—The Old Definitions Inadequate

How urgent and pressing are the needs of our own age which call us to this work! How far behind us, how effete and inadequate, are the terms and illustrations which were used in former ages to express the results of human thought in regard to the person of Christ! Recall, for instance, that fine similitude of the heated sword which the Lutheran theologians borrowed from the Fathers to explain the union of the divine with the human in Christ.⁵ To them it was satisfactory because they regarded heat as one substance and iron as another substance. In their view the divine nature penetrated and pervaded the human nature as the caloric fluid was supposed to permeate a mass of metal. But in our world the caloric fluid does not exist. Heat is not a substance, but a mode of motion in substances. In the light of modern science the old similitude fades into a meaningless comparison of things which cannot be compared.

We cannot accept the scholastic terminology of "natures" and "subsistences" in the final and absolute sense in which it was once employed. The philosophy of realism, which ascribed an objective existence to universals apart from individuals, is not the philosophy of to-day. Its language is not only foreign, but dead. The philosophy of being and not-being has opened to receive the philosophy of becoming; and in so doing it has been utterly transformed.

LIFE IS THE REGNANT IDEA

Life is now the regnant idea; personality its utmost expression. It is in the facts of life, its secret potencies, its mysterious limitations in

germ and seed, its magnificent unfoldings in the process of development, that we must seek our comparisons for the Incarnation. And the very search will bring us face to face with a conviction that life in all its manifestations transcends analysis without ceasing to be the object of knowledge.

In the living world the boundaries of imagination are not coterminous with the limits of apprehension. We know many facts and forms of life whose modes of becoming we cannot imagine. It is just as impossible for us to conceive how the life of the oak, root and trunk and branch and leaf, form and color and massive strength, is all folded in the tiny, colorless, unshaped seed, as it is to conceive how the life of God is embodied in the man Christ Jesus. But the difficulty of conceiving the manner of this infolding, this embodiment, does not destroy for us the reality of the life. Indeed, if we could explain it entirely, if we could trace it perfectly as in a diagram, if we could observe it completely as in one of those beautiful models of flowers which a skillful artist¹ has recently made to illustrate his lectures on botany, we should know that it was not life, but only a picture of it. The picture is useful, but it is not vital. The metaphor has its value, but it falls far short of the truth. Self-beggary and self-emptying are but "words thrown out towards" an unimaginable but not unreasonable manifestation of the Divine Love as life. The reality to which they point is the Son of God living under all the conditions and limitations of energy and consciousness which are proper to the Son of man, the Word made flesh and dwelling among us.

THE KINSHIP OF MAN WITH GOD

It would be hard to overestimate the significance of this view for the present age, and the importance of setting it forth as a living truth in the language of to-day. It is the only view which gives us any ground of reality for our faith in the kinship of man with God. If the Son of God who is the image of the Father, by laying aside the outward prerogatives of his divine mode of existence, becomes man; then, and only then, the divine image in which man was created is no mere figure of speech, but a substantial likeness of spiritual being. There is a true fellowship between our souls and our Father in heaven. Virtue is not a vain dream, but a definite striving towards his perfection. Revelation is not a deception, but a message from Him who knows all to those who know only a part. Prayer is not an empty form, but a real communion.

Speak to Him, thou, for He hears, and Spirit with spirit can meet;
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.

This view of the spiritual relation of man to God cannot possibly have any foundation in fact, deep enough and strong enough to withstand the sweeping floods of skepticism, unless it builds upon the rock of a veritable Incarnation. The discoveries of modern science, enlarging enormously our conceptions of the physical universe, have not only put man (as we said in the first lecture) in a position to receive a larger and loftier vision of the glory of God, but they have made such a vision indispensable. And they have emphasized with overwhelming force the form in which that vision must come in order to meet our needs and strengthen faith for its immense task. If we are not to be utterly belittled and crushed by the contemplation of the vast mass of matter and the tremendous play of force by which we are surrounded; if we are still to hold that the vital is greater than the mechanical, the moral than the material, the spiritual than the physical; if we are to maintain the old position of all noble and self-revering thought, that "man is greater than the universe"—there is nothing that can so profoundly confirm and establish us, there is nothing that can so surely protect and save us from "the distorting influences of our own discoveries," as the revelation of the Supreme Being in an unmistakably vital, moral, spiritual, and human form. Such a revelation at once rectifies, purifies, and elevates our view of God himself. For if the Son of God can surrender omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence without destroying his personal identity, then the central essence of the Divine Being is neither infinite wisdom nor infinite power, but perfect holiness and perfect goodness. And so from the very lowest valley of humiliation we catch clear sight of the very loftiest summit of theology, the serene and shining truth that God is Love.

THE SUPREME PATTERN OF LOVE

In the light of this truth we behold also the highest perfection of man and the path which leads to it. Love is the fulfilling of the law, and the perfect pattern of love is the example of Christ. And whether we look at it from the divine side as the supreme self-sacrifice of God, or from the human side as the complete obedience of man, everything depends upon the genuineness and sincerity of this example. Unless the Son of God truly became man, the Incarnation cannot be, as Bishop Westcott calls it, "a revelation of human duties." What strength could we draw from his victory over temptation if he was not

¹ For this statement of Müller's views, which he gave in his lectures, I am indebted to Dr. George P. Fisher, who was one of his hearers.

² "The Place of Christ in Modern Theology," p. 476.

³ Godet, Commentary on John 1, 14.

⁴ "No action of our Saviour's earthly life, from Bethlehem to Calvary, exhibits divinity. He appears first as a helpless babe in the manger. He is subject to his parents. As the child grows, he waxes strong in spirit and increases in wisdom. Such an increase in wisdom implies increase in knowledge, and less knowledge or greater ignorance to-day than to-morrow. Omniscience could not have been exercised by the Jesus who was growing in wisdom. If any say here, as we usually do, that the humanity grew, but the divinity was omniscient, let us ask if there were two persons in Jesus. This Nestorianism is practically the creed of the present day with the Reformed Churches. They have gone over to a virtual duplication of the person of Christ."—Howard Crosby, "The True Humanity of Christ" (Randolph, New York, 1880).

⁵ Chemnitz, "De Duab. Nat."

¹ William Hamilton Gibson

exposed as we are to the assaults of evil? What consolation could we draw from his patience if he was not a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief? "Jesus Christ," says one of the greatest of French theologians, "is not the Son of God hidden in the Son of man, retaining all the attributes of divinity in a latent state. This would be to admit an irreducible duality which would do away with the unity of his person, and would withdraw him from the normal conditions of human life. His obedience would become illusory, and his example would be without application to our race. No! When the Word became flesh, he humbled himself, he put off his glory, being rich he became poor, and was made in all points like as we are, only without sin, that he might pass through the moral conflict with all the perils of freedom."¹ When we see him thus, we know what it means to follow him and to be like him.

GOD'S SELF-SACRIFICE IN A HUMAN LIFE

Finally, the whole value of the Atonement, in its reconciling influence on the heart of man, in its exhibition of the heart of God, depends upon the actuality of the Incarnation. If he who died on Calvary was a mere theophany, like the angel of Jehovah who appeared to Abraham, then his death was merely a dramatic spectacle. The body of Jesus was broken, but God was not touched. But if the Father truly spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, then the Father also suffered by sympathy, making an invisible sacrifice, an infinite surrender of love, for our sakes. Then the Son also suffered, making a visible sacrifice, and pouring out his soul unto death to redeem us from the fear of death and the power of sin. And this becomes real to our faith and potent upon our souls only when we see the human life of God, agonizing in the garden, tortured in the judgment-hall, and expiring upon the cross. Then we can say:

O Love Divine! that stooped to share
Our sharpest pang, our bitterest tear.

Then we can look up to a God who is not impassible, as the speculations of men have falsely represented him, but passible, and therefore full of infinite capacities of pure sorrow and saving sympathy. Then the dumb and sullen resentment which rises in noble minds at the thought of a universe in which there is so much helpless pain and hopeless grief, created by an immovable Being who has never felt and can never feel either pain or grief, that sense of moral repulsion from the idea of an unsuffering and unsympathetic Creator which is, and always has been, the deepest, the darkest spring of doubt, fades away, and we behold a God who became human in order that he might bear, though innocent and undeserving, all our pains and all our griefs with us and for us. Thus we stand before our doubting age, as David stood before the disillusioned, downcast, despondent Hebrew king, in Robert Browning's splendid poem of "Saul." The word, sought in vain among the glories of nature, among the joys of human intercourse, the word of faith and hope and love and life, comes to us, leaps upon us, flashes through us.

See the King—I would help him but cannot, the wishes fall through.
Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow poor to enrich,
To fill up his life, starve my own out, I would—knowing which,
I knew that my service is perfect. Oh, speak through me now!
Would I suffer for him that I love? So wouldst Thou—so wilt Thou!
So shall crown Thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost crown—
And Thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor down
One spot for the creature to stand in! It is by no breath,
Turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation joins issue with death!
As Thy Love is discovered almighty, almighty be proved
Thy power, that exists with and for it, of being Beloved!
He who did most, shall bear most; the strongest shall stand the most weak.
'Tis the weakness in strength that I cry for! my flesh, that I seek
In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be
A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me,
Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever: a Hand like this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ stand!

A Raconteur

By Ian Maclaren

"You must excuse me the gaucherie of a compliment," I said to Bevan in the smoking-room, after a very pleasant dinner, "but really you have never been more brilliant. Five stories, and each a success, is surely a record even in your experience."

"It is very good of you to appreciate my poor efforts so highly." It was his way to snuff, and he once explained to me that the skillful management of the box was an invaluable aid to his art. "It is a distinct risk to attempt five in one evening—six is the farthest limit sanctioned by any raconteur of standing. You can always distinguish an artist from a mere amateur by his severe reserve. He

knows that an anecdote is a liqueur, and he offers it seldom; but the other pours out his stuff like vin ordinaire, which it is, as a rule—the mere dregs of the vine. Did you ever notice how a man will come back from Scotland in autumn, and bore companies of unoffending people with a flood of what he considers humorous Scottish stories? It is one of the brutalities of conversation.

"What irritates me is not that the material is Scottish, for there are many northern stories with a fine flavor; it is the fellow's utter ignorance of the two great principles of our art."

"Which are?"

"Selection and preparation," said Bevan, with decision. "One must first get good stuff, and then work it into shape. It is amazing how much is offered and how little is of any use. People are constantly bringing me situations that they think excellent, and are quite disappointed when I tell them they are impossible for the purposes of art. Nothing can be done with them, although, of course, another artist in a different line might use them. Now I have passed several 'bits' on to Browne-Johnes, who delivers popular lectures. The platform story is scene-painting, the after-dinner miniature."

"May I ask whether you are ever taken in, as it were, with your material, and find it 'give' after it has been manufactured, like rotten yarn or unseasoned wood?"

"Rarely; one's eye gets to be trained so that you know a promising subject at sight, but after that comes the labor. I once heard a man bore a dinner-table to the yawning point with a story that had some excellent points in it, but he had taken no trouble, perhaps had no insight."

"And you . . . ?"

"It is now, in my humble judgment, as good a story of its kind as you would wish to hear, and it still bears improvement, which is a good sign. A really high-class story will take years to perfect, just as I am told by clergymen that a sermon only begins to go after it has been preached twenty times."

"You have been working on that Shakespeare bit; I noticed one new touch this evening at least which was excellent."

"Now that is very gratifying," and Bevan was evidently pleased; "it is a great satisfaction to have one's work appreciated in an intelligent manner; perhaps you are the only one present who saw any difference."

"What I think I like best"—and he tapped his box in a meditative way—"is to get an old, decayed, hopeless story, and restore it. Breaking out a window here, adding a porch there, opening up a room, and touching up the walls—it is marvelous what can be done."

"Besides new drains," he added, with significance; "the sanitary state of some of those old stories is awful. You feel the atmosphere at the door—quite intolerable, and indeed dangerous."

"Then you do not think that indecency . . . ?"

"No, nor profanity. Both are bad art; they are cheap expedients, like strong sauces to cover bad cooking. It sounds like boasting, but I have redeemed one or two very unpleasant tales, which otherwise had been uninhabitable, if I may trifle again with my little figure, and now are charming."

"You rather lean, one would gather, to old tales, while some of the younger men are terrified of telling a 'chestnut,' always prefacing, 'This must be well known, but it is new to me; say at once if you have heard it.'"

"Most humiliating, and quite unworthy of any artist. Heard it before!" and the old gentleman was full of scorn. "Imagine a painter apologizing for having taken a bend of the Thames or a Highland glen some man had used ten years."

"Of course, if one makes a copy of a picture and exhibits it as his own, that is fraud, and the work is certain to be poor. One must respect another artist's labor, which is the ground of his copyright."

"But if one makes a 'bit' of life as old as Aristophanes or Horace his own, by passing it through his own fancy and turning it out in his own style, then it is ever new."

"Then there is the telling! There are musicians who

¹ De Pressensé, "Life of Christ," Book I., chap. v.