THE DOCTRINE OF OUR LORD'S INCARNATION, AS DISTINGUISHED FROM THE PRINCIPAL HERESIES ON THAT SUBJECT;

A

DENYER PRIZE ESSAY,

READ IN THE DIVINITY SCHOOL, OXFORD

JUNE 23, 1848.

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OXFORD:
PRINTED BY J. VINCENT.
1848.

"Secundum nullam sententiam hæreticorum, Verbum"
"Dei caro factum est."

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THE DOCTRINE OF OUR LORD'S INCARNATION,

AS DISTINGUISHED FROM THE PRINCIPAL HERESIES ON THAT SUBJECT.

The doctrine of the Incarnate God has been handed down to us in the plainest terms that are able to convey so deep a mystery. Those three Creeds, which "ought thoroughly to be received and believed;" and the second of those Articles which our Church has authoritatively promulgated, embrace in the following language this necessary point of faith:—We are taught to believe that our Lord Jesus Christ is both God and Man. With regard to His Divine Nature, He is *Perfect God*—no creature, formed out of nothing—no being of simply *like* substance with God—but *consubstantial*, co-eternal, and co-equal, with The Father; begotten of Him before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God. With regard to His Human Nature, He is *Perfect Man*—possessing a human body, which He took in the womb of the blessed Virgin, of her substance, together with all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature. These two natures in Christ are distinct, and without confusion of substance, or conversion of either into the other—and yet they are not so distinguished as to form *two Persons*. But they are One by Unity of Person—so that two whole and perfect natures, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined

together in one Person, never to be divided, whereof is One Christ, Very God, and Very Man.—

Such is a brief abstract of the doctrine concerning our Lord's Incarnation. It contains the unravelling of points which in other days distracted Christendom. There was no matter of faith which exercised more the subtlety of the disputant, called out more the opposition of the heretic and unbeliever, tried more the soundness and the perseverance of the Church of Christ, than this great mystery. It was a stumbling block to all those, who preferred the results of their own wisdom to a revelation of The Deity. And this tendency was naturally increased by the difficulty of finding terms, wherein to embrace so high a subject. For, in strictness of speech, a matter of faith cannot receive a full definition from the language of finite reason. Hence, also, when error made its assaults upon this truth, and it became necessary for the Church to establish such definitions as would secure the right faith against the enemy, one of the chief impediments was the inadequateness of terms to comprehend objects too high for a perfect and clear apprehension. The confusion, too, which prevailed in consequence of the ambiguous use of terms in the doctrine of the Trinity, appears to have made its way also into this subject. The variety and confusion of sense affixed to the words *ὑπόστασις*, *οὐσία*, *πρόσωπον*, *φύσις*, *substantia*, *persona*, naturally affected any point of faith into which this phraseology entered. This confusion, if it was not produced, appears to have been heightened by the unfair conduct of heretics, who conveyed their own false notions in Catholic language. The Arians adopted a continual system of such equivocation. Of an equally unfair nature was the Sabellian use of the word *πρόσωπον*;[a] in which Nestorius afterwards followed them, attaching to the word the same "theatrical" sense. It is a a cause, however, for much thankfulness, that we are now without such confusion; and that the terms which are used

[a] Waterland's Works. Vol. II., pp. 541, 542.

in our Creeds are well defined, and as adequate as the nature of the subject will permit.

It was, perhaps, a perception of the weakness of human language to embrace mysteries, which led the ancients to express them so much by *similitudes*. Thus, the relation of the Father to the Son is represented by such resemblances as those of *mind* and *thought*, *fountain* and *stream*, *fire* and *fire*, *light* and *light*.[1] So also, in this matter of faith, the distinctness of The Word from that flesh with which it is joined, is compared to the unblemished purity of the sun or the fire, while either purifies an unclean substance. This manner of expression in a matter of faith, as it is more plain to ordinary minds, so it lacks the ambiguity and confusion of language; and carries with it force, as the substitute of an outward truth in God's creation for the results of man's own reasonings, to denote a truth of the inner world.

This mode of expression, however, may become defective, when, assuming the shape of an argument, it is carried beyond certain bounds. A resemblance or proportion between two objects is combined with some points of difference;[b] and, if it be carried beyond the points of agreement, of course error follows. This was the case in the noted similitude of St. Athanasius. He compared the union of God and Man in Christ to that of the *reasonable soul* and *flesh* in man. And this statement was perverted by the Monophysites; who inferred that, as the reasonable soul and flesh made one *nature*, so God and Man also were joined *in one nature* in Christ. Their reasoning was fallacious, as an assumption that a perfect proportion existed between the relations of the two parts in the two beings.

Yet this similitude, as of course it is defective if considered "quoad modum omnem," is seen to be peculiarly happy in many points of view. It evinces the possibility of union between[c] an *immaterial* and a *material substance* in *One*

[1] Waterland's Works, Vol. II., p. 614.

[b] "Omne simile est etiam dissimile."

[c] Hooker, Eccl. Pol. V. 52, 4.

Person. It shews that it is not the mere indwelling of the Deity in Manhood, but a true and real union of the natures which makes One Christ.[d] Other points of resemblance have been noticed.[d] One meets the heresy of Nestorius on the subject of our Lord's Conception. The argument is that, as man is conceived by woman, although the reasonable soul does not take its beginning from her but from God, even so the Person Christ Jesus, although His Divine Nature did not take its origin from the Virgin, yet was conceived by her. Another point of resemblance compares the relation of the body as the organ of the reasonable soul, with that of the Human Nature in Christ to the Divine as its *united personal instrument.* The schoolmen tell us, that the union of the reasonable soul with the body may be considered either as one of *matter* and *form;* or as one of *an intelligent agent* with its *united proper instrument.* In the latter point of view, the analogy holds well; in the former it is of course defective, as making one nature only in Christ. It may, however, be noticed that, if the ordinary philosophical theory concerning man's nature be adopted, according to which that nature is not made up altogether of confused and compounded elements; but so composed that the reasonable soul does not commingle the properties of its distinct substance with the flesh to which it is united: the distinction between the material and immaterial elements would be another mode of confirming the similitude in question, and an additional argument against the Monophysite error. A last and very important point of view, in which the resemblance obtains, is this,—that even as the union between the reasonable soul and flesh in man is a *fact* which is not open to a clear human comprehension, so also the union of the two natures in Christ is a *fact*, and yet such as man is not able to scan and penetrate with a perfect understanding. Thus the daily perception of a reality in the world, of which the mode of existence is above apprehension, discourages inquiry: and teaches

d d Jackson's Works, vol. 7, p. 283, sqq.

men not to search too minutely into the mode of the antitype of that outward truth.

This similitude in fine is very striking for those who assert the following principle, *That Plurality of distinct and perfect substance excludes identity of Person.* This, the converse of the Anti-Trinitarian thesis, *That identity of substance excludes plurality of persons,* lay at the root of all the heresies which prevailed upon the subject of the *Incarnation;* and from it these false theories may be parted off into their various branches. On this principle, heretics were led to deny, either, I., the *plurality of substance,* or II., the *identity of Person.* In the former case, a unity of substance was made, either by excluding the human nature in whole or in part; or by a similar process with regard to the Divine; or this was effected by a confusion of the two natures; or, finally, by a transubstantiation of one into the other. Under these heads we shall be able to arrange the various heresies which prevailed on this point of faith.

I. (*a.*) The first form which the denial of our Lord's Incarnation assumed was the denial of His *human body.* Those who maintained this opinion received hence the name of Docetæ; because they held that the outward form assumed by the Son of God was an unreal bodiless phantom. This was the prevailing view upon the subject which the Gnostic heresy adopted: and it was a natural consequence of the principles upon which that school of falsehood proceeded. The doctrine of an *Incarnate God* necessarily clashed with the dominant philosophy of the oriental world: and the accumulation of man's wisdom, formed by the recent course of events in the East, which had fused together Persian and Grecian dogmas,[2] Alexandrian Platonism, and Jewish teaching, stood near at hand, an armoury for those to whom the revelation of a God clad with flesh and bones was "foolishness." But it was not mainly a fair and open contest with direct heathenism, in which Christianity was called upon to engage.

[2] Burton, Bamp. Lect. III.

The power of its foe was weakness, when resting upon its own inherent means. But the enemy who tried the Church most sorely in the primitive times was one, whose mode of attack was unfair and insidious, and who stole her strength from her rival's resources. Such a foe was Gnosticism, the greatest effort ever made by the forces of heathen philosophy to uproot Christianity. On the one hand, it drew from all sides the whole array of worldly wisdom; admitting with the widest eclecticism the elements of each religious system:[e] and on the other hand, it adorned this mass of error with the most attractive parts of Christianity itself.[f] It was this lining of truth over its corrupt system which made Gnosticism so dangerous a foe; and it is a signal proof of the inherent truth of Christianity, that it was able to preserve itself from self-corruption. The Gnostic held up Christ as the Redeemer; but the redemption which He came to work was that of souls from the tyranny and thraldom of matter. Matter itself, as the subject of inherent evil, could have no part in the benefits of the Saviour's descent from the *Pleroma*. Much less could the Divine Nature itself be united to matter. This was the weakest part of the Gnostic system, and that which drove its teachers into the greatest difficulties. For they were met with the phenomenon, that This Saviour had been seen in human form, had eaten and drunk and conversed with men, had suffered death, and had risen again in the same form that he wore before. They were therefore called upon, either to abandon their principles, or to reconcile them with this fact. The Docetæ strove to effect such a reconciliation, by the hypothesis before mentioned of a phantom. And this mode of explaining the Incarnation was always the favourite among the Gnostics, although they did not uniformly adhere to it. It was probably the publication of the first three gospels,

e Simon Magus even pressed the mythology aud poetry of Greece into his service. S. Iren. Lib. I. S. Epiph. Hær. I. S. Aug. Hær. I.

f Προσχήματι ὀνόματος Χριστοῦ, ὡς ἐλλέβορον μέλιτι παραπλέκων, δηλητήριον τοῖς ὑπ' ἀυτοῦ ἀγρευθεῖσιν ἐις τὴν κακομήχανον ἀυτοῦ πλάνην παρενθεὶς τῷ τοῦ ὀνόματος ἀξιώματι Χριστοῦ, θάνατον ἐνεποίησε τοῖς πεισθεῖσιν. S. Epiph. Hær. I.

and the testimony borne in them to the palpable fact of Christ's Body, which drove Cerinthus to modify the old theory by a distinction of two Persons, *Christ* and *Jesus.* But the older notion appears to have received more favour, and the majority of the Gnostic teachers in the second and third centuries to have been Docetæ. A third method, however, was forged by some of these heretics, which takes a middle course between those of the Docetæ and of Cerinthus. These dreamers held that Christ took indeed a body; but that it was not *material,* but composed of *celestial* elements. This opinion we trace in the system of Valentinus; and in that also of Bardesanes, whom Eusebius[g] states to have belonged to his school. We[h] find the same form of error expressed by the Aphthartodocetæ. Among these persons the theories—of the natural incorruptibility of our Lord's Body—of its created —of its uncreated character—of its natural corruptibility, but actual incorruption,—were all raised upon the common rejection of His perfect flesh. In the following age, the sentiments of the Paulicians appear to agree very closely with those of Valentinus. The same may be said of the Mennonite opinions in the sixteenth century. These two last-mentioned sects, however, appear to have differed with regard to both the time and the manner of the assumption of our Lord's Body. The former are charged with supposing that it descended with Him from heaven: the latter with holding that it was produced in the womb of the Virgin, yet not of her substance; but out of nothing, by the creating power of the Holy Ghost.

But it was not with the denial of the *Body* alone that the impugners of our Lord's Perfect Manhood were contented. Each of those parts which together make up the whole human nature was attacked by heresy. Thus Arius took

g Euseb. Hist. Eccl. iv. 30.

h The Council of Chalcedon confirms the condemnation of *τοὺς οὐρανίου ἢ ἑτέρας τινὸς οὐσίας τῆς ἐξ ἡμῶν ληφθείσης αὐτῷ τοῦ δούλου μορφὴν παραπαίοντας.* Evag. Eccl. Hist. Lib. II. c. 4.

away the *whole human soul* from Christ. Apollinaris, allowing the existence of the *sensitive element*, denied that of the *reasonable*. And, lastly, the Monothelites detracted from the integrity of His *Human Will*. The consideration, indeed, of these three heresies falls also under another division of this subject, to which they belong specifically; but they deserve a general mention here on two accounts—both as shewing how completely every part of our Lord's Human Nature was impeached; His Body, His Sensitive compound, His Reasonable Soul, and His will: and also as pointing out the slow but gradual expulsion of heresy from one stronghold to another.[i] Taking its stand upon the lowest part of man's nature, yet in such a way that its rejection of this embraced a rejection of all, it was driven from this resting-place through each element of the human being; until it had no ground whereon to stand, even in the unseen labyrinths of the reasonable soul and of the will.

In contrast with this wavering course of heresy, the Word of God and the defenders of the true faith maintained a uniform and consistent bearing. The truth of our Lord's *bodily* substance was taught by word and fact contained in the Book of Revelation. Numberless passages, in the writings especially of St. John, were directed against this pestilent form of error. Nor was there wanting out of the same Scriptures a refutation for those also who sought to evade this testimony against them, in refining upon the theory of their predecessors, by the denial of the *unseen* part of our Lord's Human Nature. One passage out of St. Luke's Gospel, which relates that "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature," was a sufficient evidence against Apollinaris. The manifest liability of the Son of Man to the affections, emotions, and sufferings of our nature, was not such as could sort with the hypothesis of any *will-suffering*,

i Ὀυαλεντῖνόι τέ τινες, καὶ Βασιλεῖδαι, κὰι Κέρδωνες, Κήρινθόι τε καὶ Καρποκράτεις, καὶ πᾶσα ἡ περὶ ἐκέινοις φλυαρία τε καὶ τερατέια, ἐπι πλεῖστον τὸν τῶν ὅλων θεὸν τεμόντες, καὶ ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ τῷ δημιουργῷ πολεμήσαντες, ἔπειτα κατεπόθησαν τῷ ἑαυτῶν βύθῳ, καὶ τῇ σιγῇ παραδοθέντες, ὥσπερ ἦν ἄξιον.—S. Greg. Naz. Orat. 23.

such as Xenaias forged; but established the truth of His *sensitive* nature against Arius. Those memorable words, spoken in the Lord's last hour, "Not *My Will*, but Thine, be done," were an answer to those who questioned in this respect the integrity of His human nature—*τὸν τῆς ἐνανθρωπήσεως τῆς τοῦ Κυρίου λόγον ἀδιάστροφον σώζομεν, ὅυτε ΄ΑΨΥΧΟΝ, ὅυτε ΄ΑΝΟΥΝ, ἢ ΄ΑΤΕΛΗ ΤΗΝ ΤΗΣ ΣΑΡΚΟΣ ΄ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΑΝ παραδεχόμενοι.*

β. We pass now to the consideration of a second class of heresies on this subject. It has been already observed, that the first shape which the denial of this doctrine assumed was that of a rejection of the *flesh*. We proceed now to examine the opposite form of error; which shewed itself in the denial of the *Divine* nature of our Lord. Although this error is exactly opposite to the former, it was almost as old. It naturally flows from the same common principle. If the existence of two perfect and distinct natures in one Person is impossible, and a unity of Person is supposed; one of the two elements which were said to constitute The Person must in part or in whole be given up. The Gnostic School were led by their own philosophy to rest altogether in the Divine substance. A system in which contrary principles were upheld, might give up this as far as possible, and think of Christ as *essentially* a human Being.

We trace the beginning of this system in Ebion. Such a view, indeed, runs counter to the opinion expressed by a learned author,[j] who conceives that Ebion agreed with Cerinthus, in holding the distinction between Christ and Jesus, and The Two Persons. But it would appear that this view is not borne out by authority; for the testimony of ancient writers is against it. The words of Eusebius[k] alone are so plainly on this side, that we must acknowledge Ebion to have taught the *human character* of

[j] Burton Bamp. Lect. 8. and notes. On the other side cf. Waterland, vol. III. p. 577 sqq. and Bull Jud. Eccl. Cath. II. 2. III. 1.

[k] Euseb. Hist. Eccl. III. 27.

Christ. It is of course possible that the Ebionites may not have held the "simple humanity" of Christ in such a sense as to exclude the influence upon it of a divine energy from The Deity. But they denied The *Proper Divinity* of Christ. They did not admit The *Personality* of the Divine Nature in Him. Their *essential* view of Him was that of a *man.* The correctness of this opinion is confirmed by the language of Eusebius, where he describes this heresy. And a very strong proof is afforded by the conjunction of Ebion with the names of Theodotus, Artemon, and Photinus; and, in another place, with those of Marcellus and Paulus Samosatenus; the latter of whom is connected elsewhere with Sabellius. For thus the teaching which prevailed amongst those heretics, may be fairly attributed in some measure to Ebion. Now, it is manifest that the doctrine on this subject which prevailed in that school, even to its termination and climax in Socinus, was the denial of any *Proper* Divine Nature in Christ. The only serious objection to this view concerning Ebion is the statement made by an author whom Eusebius cites, that Theodotus was the first who broached the heresy, *ψιλὸν ἄνθρωπον τὸν Χριστόν.*[1] This must be acknowledged a difficulty; although it has been explained, either by supposing Theodotus to have been the first who *formed a party* upon this principle, and who *established a sect* who were to deny Christ on this pretence—or by conceiving him to have been the first among the *Gentile* Christians who adopted this form of error; for Ebion was of Jewish extraction. It is, however, very probable that Ebion's impiety did not extend so far as that of his successor. On the common foundation which rejected any *Proper Divinity* in Christ, many conflicting opinions might rest, with regard to the fact or the measure of Divine influence accorded to the human being. But it is certain that Ebion's system was formed upon this basis. It would thus seem to have been the other extreme to

[1] Euseb. Hist. Eccl. V. 28.

Gnosticism in the primitive age. Its origin appears to have been Jewish. Ebion's own Judaism is well known: and it is remarkable that Paulus Samosatenus was charged with having broached a Judaistic heresy, in order to gratify Zenobia, who is supposed to have inclined that way. The theory adopted by many Jews at this time is much of the same nature.

It has already been observed, that many varieties of opinion, with regard both to the fact and to the measure of divine influence granted to our Lord, might co-exist with the common principle, that He had no Proper and Personal Divinity. And this appears to have been the case amongst this division of heretics. The rise in the second and third centuries of the heresies which denied the Three Persons in the Trinity, as they were of course combined with the doctrines of these heretics, seems to have modified their opinions concerning the union of the divine element with the human being; and to have introduced among them the theory, that *The Person* of the Father was united to the *man* Christ Jesus. This opinion appears to have alternated with the older and more common view of a divine energy or influence. Praxeas and Noetus embraced the new theory. Beryllus also is ranked in the same class.[m] The statement, however, given of his doctrine on this subject by Eusebius[n] may not amount to this. The words *μηδὲ μὴν θεότητα ἰδιάν ἔχειν, ἀλλ' ἐμπολιτευομένην ἀυτῷ μόνην τὴν πατρικήν* do not necessarily imply that Beryllus supposed the *Person* of the Father to have been indwelling in Christ. They may possibly connect him with those other heretics, who considered the divine element to have been merely an energy or influence proceeding from the Father. To this section belonged Artemon, Sabellius, Paulus Samosatenus, and Marcellus. It is difficult to understand

[m] Waterland. Vol. III. p. 582. Bull Def. F. N. IV. 3, 17. On the other hand, Burton B. L. p. 589. Bull himself, Jud. E. C. III. 4., speaks with hesitation on the point.

[n] Euseb. Hist. Eccl. VI. 33

what precise notion Paul attached to his λόγος;[o] and whether he meant by it the outward declaration of the divine will (what is called the λόγος προφορικός); or whether he used it in the other sense of an internal reason proceeding from God. It seems also doubtful at what time he supposed this divine influence to have been united to the human being; whether at his conception, or during his lifetime.[o] On this point variety of opinion appears to have prevailed. Thus the Ebionites were divided on the subject of the miraculous conception; while in after times the Socinian heresy invented a strange conjunction in Christ's human nature: of which one part they supposed to have been received from the Virgin, and another to have been framed by the Spirit; so that by the former He was the Son of Man, by the latter the Son of God.

The most fearful form which these opinions assumed was that which sorted best with the doctrine of our Lord's *ordinary* conception. This was the view that His excellence was *the result of a proficiency in virtue acquired during His sojourn on earth.* This view is directly attributed to the Ebionites by Eusebius;[p] it was distinctly acknowledged by Photinus; and it falls in with the doctrine of the Budnean Unitarians.[3] In the last-mentioned sect the ultimate result and climax of this branch of heresy revealed itself: as they, drawing the proper conclusions from their principles, denied that Christ was *An Object of Worship.* Enough has been said upon this head, when the errors described under it have been brought to an issue which uproots Christianity, and raises the question, "An Christianus ero, an Christicola?"[4]

[o] On these points Burton Bamp. Lect. p. 583. and Bull Jud. E. C. iii. 6. differ.

[p] κατὰ προκοπὴν ἤθους ἀυτὸ μόνον ἄνθρωπον δεδικαιωμένον.—Euseb. Hist. Eccl. III. 27.

[3] Mosheim Eccl. Hist. Vol. IV. c. 4. § 22.

[4] The Socinian tract of Staunton bore this motto on its title-page. It is noticed in the Review of Waterland's Life and Writings, by Bishop Van Mildert.

γ. The third form of heresy which naturally flowed from the view of our Lord's unity of substance, was that of a *confusion* of His Two Natures. To this class belong the heresies which have been already touched upon, of the Arians, the Apollinarians, and the Monothelites. The heresy of the Monothelites appears to have been an endeavour to reconcile the false theory of Eutyches with the Catholic faith. The Monophysites were ready to admit the two natures, if their opponents would on their part acknowledge the existence of *one will only* in Christ. The Monothelites allowed[q] indeed the existence of a faculty of volition in the human nature of Christ; but they supposed that this was so united to the Divine Will, that there was, on the whole, only one will and mode of operation. If by this they meant such a unity as was produced by the perfect harmony of the divine and human wills; their error may not have been much more than one of words. But they appear generally to have held, that the human will was dependent for its motion upon the divine; so that, until influenced by this, it had no power of operation. This confusion of our Lord's natures seems to have arisen from the anxiety to avoid the double *Personality*, which appeared a necessary consequence from the double *will*.

The result of this branch of heresy was, in confusing the properties of the Two Natures, not only to detract from the perfection of The Manhood, but likewise from the dignity of The Divinity. They who cannot conceive of any union of substances, unless properties are interchanged, and each ceases to be exactly what it was before; and who can not perceive that the law which ordinarily governs substances does not necessarily apply to supernatural essence, when that is united to the substance of man: these persons are carried on to the monstrous result, that the *Divine Nature*, as having coalesced with flesh, was made essentially subject to its infirmities and sufferings.

[q] Mosheim Eccl. Hist. Vol. II. c. 5. § 9-10.

The Arian heresy falls more fitly under our consideration in this place; because it impugned the true faith regarding the Incarnation, in all the three points of view under which the errors on that subject have already been discussed. Arius detracted from the *Human* nature of Christ, derogated from the *Divine*, and *confused* both together. His religious system however stands by itself, intermediate between the two prevailing currents of error, which either flowed from the Gnostic doctrine of a God not compassed by the impurities of flesh, or set from the Judaistic view of a man endued with a superior measure of divine influence into the depths of Socinian apostacy. The system of Arius cannot be closely linked with either of these shapes of error; although that it bordered upon both, is evident from the partial similarity which it is shewn to have borne to a Gnostic original;[r] and also from the testimony of the Alexandrian Bishop,[s] who connects it, on the other hand, with the doctrine of Ebion, Artemon, and Paul. It was unlike the latter form of doctrine, in not denying the *personality* of the divine element in Christ, and its pre-existence. It differed also from Gnosticism, in allowing the *body;* while at the same time it denied the existence of the *soul.* In derogating from the true nature of *The Word,* it had already been forestalled by Gnosticism: but it was reserved for Arius to enter with a greater presumption of minute logical subtilty into the relations of That Nature, which the Gnostic had been content to leave less closely scanned by man, within the veil of the pleroma.—"The Son of God,[t] as "begotten of His Father, must have had a *beginning* of exist-"ence. This existence he cannot have derived from the "*substance of the Father,* and therefore he must have been "produced *'ΕΞ 'ΟΥΚ 'ΟΝΤΩΝ.* The Son, therefore, is *a* "*creature; κτιόμα κὰι πόιημα ὁ ὑιός.*"—Such was the Arian

[r] Bull. Def. F. N. V. 100.

[s] Theod. Eccl. Hist. I. 4.

[t] Socrates. Hist. Eccl. I. 5, 6. Sozomen. Hist. Eccl. I. 15. Theodoret. Eccl. Hist. I. 4, 5, 6.

system: which, while it differs in conception from the Ebionite and Socinian theory, is not only as practically destructive; but also as derogatory to the Divine Nature of our Lord. For, even in this point of view, it amounts to much the same thing, whether we conceive Him to have been a *creature*, with as perfect soever a likeness in disposition and power to That Being, from whom He is supposed to differ in *substance;* or whether we conceive Him to have been a man of precisely the same nature as ourselves. In degrading The Deity to the rank of a creature, there can be no measure or degree of such degradation. That which in conception seems less, cannot be so defined, where the very first step of such a degradation is infinite, and comparison has no place.

δ. A fourth mode of uniting the substances of our Lord into one nature was effected by a *Transubstantiation,* or change of one substance into the other. This was possible, either by an absorption of The Manhood into The Godhead, or by a transmutation of the Divinity into the Manhood. With regard to the latter mode, such a "conversion of The Godhead into flesh" is so absurd and monstrous, that it would hardly deserve mention, if persons[u] had not been found sufficiently deluded to maintain it. The other theory is one into which it was more natural to fall, and which acquires some note, in consequence of its adoption by Eutyches. The confession[v] of this heretic was the following:—*Ὁμολογῶ ἐκ δυό φύσεων γεγενῆσθαι Τὸν Κύριον ἡμῶν πρὸ τῆς ἑνώσεως, μετὰ δὲ τὴν ἕνωσιν μίαν φύσιν ὁμολογῶ.* He acknowledged the existence at first of two distinct natures; but asserted that these were at some time united. It is a matter of difficulty on this subject, that we cannot ascertain at what time he supposed this union to have been effected. And we find that his followers were not agreed upon the point: for they attached this union variously to the seasons of the concep-

[u] The Flandrian Anabaptists. Pearson on Creed, Art. 3. Vol. I. p. 202.

[v] Pearson on Creed. Vol. II. p. 124.

tion, of the Resurrection, and of the Ascension. But, whenever this union took place, he held that the natures became one, by the absorption of the human, and the permanence thus of the divine alone.

II. From the general heretical principle, that distinct plurality of substance excludes identity of Person, the other part of the alternative was, to suppose a division of *Persons* in our Lord. The Gnostic principles, as already has been observed, combined with the recorded sensible fact of Christ's real Body, led Cerinthus to distinguish between the æon Christ and the Man Jesus. Nor can it be said with propriety that thus Cerinthus may have belonged to the same class as Ebion, and by the æon Christ have denoted nothing more than a divine influence. For the statement made[w] regarding the Gnostic emanations, that they "were personal and substantial," seems *generally* true. Cerinthus therefore believed in the Existence of *two Persons.* They were very kindred causes which led Nestorius into the same form of error. There was not only the same principle which forbade him to acknowledge One Person in two natures, but also an overweening zeal for the preservation of the Divine Nature intact, which savoured of the Cerinthian loathing for the conjunction of humanity with God. It is difficult to conceive what satisfactory idea Nestorius could have formed of our Lord. He appears to have pictured to himself two Persons, perfectly distinct, but united together in will and affection, and thus forming in combination[5] one *face* or *aspect.* To this point of unity he gave the name of *πρόσωπον*; and it is probably by this peculiar sense of the word that we are to read the confession of Nestorius himself in an epistle, that the name of Christ is *ἀπαθοῦς καὶ παθητῆς ὀυσίας ἐν μοναδικῷ ΠΡΟΣΩΠΩ προσηγορίαν σημαντικήν.*

[w] Burton, Bamp. Lect. P. 594, ad f. (Note 103.)

[5] Hooker, Eccl. Pol. V. 52, 2. Mosheim, Eccl. Hist. Vol. II. c. 5.

Under the above heads all the heresies which impugned the truth of our Lord's Incarnation may be arranged. They were either such as denied His *Two Natures,* or such as contended against His *One Person.* The former class again is subdivided into those which detracted generally from the perfection of Either Nature, those which did so particularly by confusing them, and those finally which did so by a process of transubstantiation. But all these forms of error may be finally resolved into the shape of that one fundamental principle, that *two perfectly distinct substances* cannot co-exist in *One Person.* The perplexity caused by the perverse use of terms doubtless tended much to encourage these errors. The words *substance* and *Person* were expressions very much confounded; and some appear to have attached to the former word very much the same meaning that we attach to the latter. Substance, in this view, would have been what was called by the technical name of *subsistence;* and the existence of two such natures in Christ would almost amount to that of two *Persons.* On the other hand, the precise notion of *Personality* is difficult of comprehension; and the idea attached to it by some might have been such as to enter necessarily into both natures. Indeed, if its essential feature were supposed to lie in the *will,* the existence of the two wills in Christ would prove His double Personality. Or, if we do not define the word *Person* strictly, we shall be in danger of the same error. For instance, that loose description of the term, as denoting "An intelligent Being," will hardly avoid an application to both The Natures: unless we further define the word "Being," which is contained in it. The definition given by Waterland is free from all objections. A Person is defined[x] by him to be "An intelligent Agent, "having the distinctive characters of I, Thou, He; and not "divided into more intelligent Agents capable of the same "characters." Starting with a clear definition, such as this, the co-existence of *One Person* with *two natures* or *sub-*

[x] Waterland's Works, Vol. II. p. 651.

stances distinct and yet united, is an idea not repugnant to any law of human apprehension. It holds only of physical substances, that their union implies a commingling of properties. In the union of the reasonable soul with the body, there is no interchange of properties belonging to either substance. Similarly, in the union of the Divine with the Human nature in Christ, there is no *natural* interchange of properties. But there is a strict association and union between them in The Person. And, in consequence of this Personal Union, there is a *verbal* interchange of properties,[y] so that to God the properties of The Manhood may be attributed, and to man The Divine: yet in those cases only wherein *The Person* is understood, and the *particular nature* is not denoted.

The subject of our Lord's Incarnation is one of the most satisfactory which could fall at this time under our consideration. Truth and error struggled long for the mastery upon this field. Falsehood moulded itself into every shape of subtle invention, to destroy or corrupt this cardinal point of the Christian Faith. The wisest of the world's sages wrestled with a truth which baffled their comprehension, while it clashed with their own prenotions. But the plain and consistent word of God's Revelation prevailed, and issued unhurt from amidst the pollutions of corrupt opinion. The retrospect is now from afar. All formidable opposition has long since ceased: and the impugners of Christ's Incarnation are few, weak, and timid. It is a subject of deep thankfulness, that on this point at least unity should now prevail; and that they who are distracted otherwise should be linked together in "one faith" concerning this cardinal matter; and should be able to unite together in the words of the fathers at Chalcedon:[z]

"One and The Same Son our Lord Jesus Christ, we "do Acknowledge Together, and With One Voice ear-

[y] Hooker, Eccl. Pol. V. 53, 4. Jackson's Works, Vol. VII. p. 292, sqq.

[z] Evagrius, Eccl. Hist. II. 4.

"nestly all teach, perfect The Same in Divinity, and "perfect The Same in Humanity, Very God and Very "Man, The Same of a reasonable soul and human flesh sub-"sisting; of one substance with The Father as touching His "Godhead, and of one substance with us The Same as "touching His Manhood; like unto us in all things, sin only "except: before all worlds on the one hand begotten of The "Father, according to His Godhead; but in these last days "on the other hand born The Same for us and for our Sal-"vation of Mary the Virgin and Mother of God, according "to His Manhood: One and The Same Jesus Christ, Son, "Lord, Only-begotten, in two natures without confusion, "without mutation, without division, without separation, "made known to us; the distinction of the natures having in "no wise been taken away because of their unition, but the "propriety rather of either nature being preserved and con-"curring into One Person and One Subsistence: not as "being portioned or divided into two Persons; but One and "The Same Son, Only-begotten, God, Word, Lord Jesus "Christ, even as of old the prophets taught concerning Him, "and Christ Himself thoroughly instructed us, and the 'Creed of the Fathers hath delivered to us."