

except that, while it implies communication on the one part, and derivation on the other, it is different from, and is left in a somewhat more general and indefinite position than the "begetting and being begotten," which represents the distinguishing personal properties of the Father and the Son, and, at the same time, constitutes their mutual relation.

This is the sum and substance of all that is revealed to us in Scripture concerning the distinction in the divine nature,—concerning the three distinct persons who possess in common the one divine nature,—in so far as their true and proper divinity, or their eternal power and Godhead, are concerned; and we have now only to advert to another great truth revealed to us in Scripture concerning the second of these three persons,—viz., that He was made flesh, that He became man,—and to what is implied in and results from this.

CHAPTER X.

THE PERSON OF CHRIST.

THE subjects which we have been considering, in connection with the Arian controversy and the Nicene Creed, come under the head of Theology, in the most restricted meaning of the word, as descriptive of that branch of divine truth which treats directly of God, or the Divine Being; and, accordingly, they are often discussed in the older systematic works under the head *De Deo Uno et Trino*. It is an important feature of the information which God in His word gives us concerning Himself, that in the unity of the Godhead there are three distinct persons, the same in substance, and equal in power and glory; and men who know not or who deny this, cannot be said to know the true God as He has made Himself known to us. The topics involved in the controversies, to which we now proceed very briefly to advert, come under the head of what, according to the modern divisions generally adopted upon the continent, is called Christology, as distinguished from Theology in the most restricted sense of the word, and were usually discussed in the older systems under the head "De persona Mediatoris." They respect the constitution of the Saviour's person, not as He existed from eternity with the Father, but as He was when on earth working out the salvation of sinners, and as He now is in heaven at God's right hand.

So far as the Socinians are concerned, the controversy is virtually terminated by the proof of Christ's true and proper divinity. Though some ancient heretics denied Christ's humanity, and though one or two modern Arians have held that the super-angelic creature whom they regard as the Son, or *Logos*, informed or dwelt in Christ's body, and thus served as a substitute for a human soul; yet it may be said, practically and substantially, to be universally admitted that Christ was truly and really a man, possessed of a true body and a reasonable soul. It is right that we should dwell upon the abundant evidence which Scripture affords of this

position, in order that we may realize the great truth, that He was a partaker of flesh and blood,—a true and real man like ourselves. But this evidence is now scarcely ever produced for controversial objects, except when the Socinians descend to the artifice of marshalling it for the purpose of insinuating, or conveying the impression, that, because He was man, therefore He was not God. Of course, the question, whether He was God or not, is not to be disposed of in so summary a way, but by a full and impartial examination of the scriptural evidence bearing upon this point itself, conducted in the manner and upon the principles which have been already described. It is impossible to prove, *a priori*, the impossibility of a union of the divine and human natures, or of a divine person taking human nature into union with Himself,—just as impossible as it is to prove that there cannot be three persons subsisting in the unity of the Godhead; and if so, there is no reason why we should not receive and hold in combination both the doctrines, each of which can be conclusively established by its appropriate evidence,—viz., that Christ was from eternity God, possessed of true and proper divinity; and that when He appeared on earth He was a true and real man.

But the Scriptures not only teach us that Christ was God, and that He was man,—they further distinctly and explicitly assert the fact of His incarnation, of His being *made* flesh, of His *becoming* man,—*i.e.*, of His assuming human nature into union with the divine. The Socinians, of course, apply to those passages that assert His incarnation, the same process which they apply to those that make known His proper divinity, with the same object,—viz., to pervert them from their natural obvious meaning; and with the same result,—viz., in their failure, when tested by the rules of strict and impartial criticism; and while they attempt to accumulate additional improbabilities and difficulties, on abstract grounds, on the doctrine of His incarnation, as distinguished from the doctrine of His divinity, the fair conclusion is, that the explicit assertion in Scripture of His being *made* flesh, or of His *becoming* man, greatly confirms the evidence of His having previously existed in the possession of a higher nature. There have been some controversies among those who believed in the divinity and incarnation of Christ, as to what the assumption of the human nature by a divine person, and the consequent union in some sense of the two natures, implied or involved; and to these it may be proper

to advert, in order to complete the scriptural view of the constitution of Christ's person.

This subject was fully discussed in the fifth century, in connection with the Nestorian and Eutychian controversies; and the decisions, then pronounced by the church regarding it, have been ever since generally received by the churches of Christ. The Nestorians and Eutychians both professed to receive the decrees of the Council of Nice and Constantinople, and, of course, to believe in the incarnation of the Son of God,—*i.e.*, to believe that the second person of the Godhead, eternally begotten by the Father of His own substance, did assume human nature so as to become a man. This incarnation of the eternal Word—this assumption of human nature by the Son of God—this *ενσαρκωσις*, or *ενανθρωπησις*, as it was called by the Greek fathers—is the great fundamental truth upon the subject, clearly taught in Scripture, and clearly declared in the Nicene, or rather the Constantinopolitan, Creed; and in comparison with this great truth, the topics involved in the Nestorian and Eutychian controversies sink to the somewhat lower platform of being questions about the exact nature and precise results of the incarnation, and the mode in which it was effected. But though the doctrine, that the eternal Son of God assumed human nature so as to have thereby become a man, is the fundamental truth upon this subject, to which all others are in some sense subordinate, it does not by any means follow that the ulterior questions as to what this general truth, more precisely examined, involves or implies, are unimportant. When the question is put—and it is of course one of fundamental importance—Who or what is Christ? the direct and proper answer to it is,—That He is God and man,—*i.e.*, that having been from eternity God, He in time assumed human nature, so as thereby to become man. But when the mind dwells upon this great truth, with the view of more fully comprehending and realizing it, the questions almost immediately arise, whether, after this assumption of human nature, by one who had been from eternity possessed of the divine nature, the two natures still continued to retain each its own entireness or completeness; and whether, if so, each of the two natures did not form or constitute a distinct person, so that in Christ there should be two persons as well as two natures. And these are just the topics involved in the Nestorian and Eutychian controversies. The great doctrine of the incarna-

tion cannot be very distinctly understood, and it cannot be very clearly explained, unless these questions be kept in view, and unless the words employed in explaining it virtually contain a deliverance regarding them. Accordingly, we find that, even in works intended to convey instruction in the elementary and fundamental doctrines of Christianity, it has been felt to be necessary in describing the person of Christ, to make statements which contain a deliverance upon these controversies,—controversies which were at one time discussed with so much heat, and which, from the mode in which they were discussed in the fifth century, appeared to involve points of the most unprofitable, the most obscure, and the most perplexing description. In our Shorter Catechism, for instance, it is said, “that the only Redeemer of God’s elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who being the eternal Son of God became man, and so was and continues to be God and man in two distinct natures and one person for ever,”—a statement which manifestly embodies the sum and substance of the decrees of the third and fourth Œcumenical Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon in the fifth century, and which cannot be explained and defended without a knowledge of those scriptural grounds applicable to the subject on which the decisions of these councils were professedly based.

Assuming that the general doctrine of the incarnation of the eternal Word, as it has been declared by the Councils of Nice and Constantinople, was generally received in the church, as it certainly was, it might have been expected that the next question which would arise, as that which most naturally and obviously presented itself to the minds of men in the progress of exposition or speculation, would be that which concerned the continued distinctness and entireness or completeness of the two natures—the divine and the human—*after* the incarnation. And this reasonable expectation seems to be contradicted by the fact that the Nestorian heresy, which divided the person, preceded the Eutychian, which confounded the natures. It should be remembered, however, that the heresy of Apollinaris, which preceded that of Nestorius, turned in substance upon the completeness of the two natures in Christ; that Nestorius, if indeed he was really a Nestorian, about which many competent judges have entertained great doubts, seems to have been led into error by going into the opposite extreme in opposing Apollinaris; and that Cyril, the great opponent of Nestorius, was charged by some with leaning

towards Apollinarianism, and what was afterwards called Eutychianism, or the heresy of the Monophysites.

Sec. I.—The Eutychian Controversy.

We shall first advert to the continued distinctness and completeness of the two natures in Christ, in opposition to Eutychianism; and then to the unity of the person of Christ, notwithstanding the continued distinctness and completeness of the two natures in opposition to Nestorius, or at least the Nestorians; following the order of the Catechism, which teaches that “Christ was and continues to be God and man in two distinct natures,” or as the Larger Catechism, with a more explicit reference to doctrinal controversies, expresses it, “in two *entire* distinct natures and one person for ever.” The whole scriptural truth upon the subject is thus stated in the Confession of Faith: * “The Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance and equal with the Father, did, when the fulness of time was come, take upon Him man’s nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin; being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, of her substance. So that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures,—the Godhead and the manhood,—were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion. Which person is very God and very man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator between God and man.” This statement, so far as concerns the point with which we have at present more immediately to do, is given almost in the words of the Council of Chalcedon in 451, which, in condemning Eutyches, gave an explanation of the whole doctrine of the incarnation, or the constitution of Christ’s person, in opposition to the Nestorian as well as the Monophysite extreme. The general doctrine explicitly taught in Scripture upon this subject is, that the *Logos*, the eternal Son of God, was incarnate, or assumed human nature, or became man. Of course He could not cease to be God, to be fully possessed of the divine nature, with all divine perfections and prerogatives; and accordingly, all who admit that He was from eternity possessed of the divine nature, and that He became incarnate in time, believe that He continues to be very God, to possess the divine nature

* Chap. viii., sec. 2.

entire and unchanged. The question, therefore, respects only the entireness and completeness of the human nature after its assumption by the *Logos*; and really amounts in substance to this: Did the assumption of human nature by the eternal Son of God, leave that human nature entire and complete, so that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures,—the manhood as well as the Godhead,—were still to be found joined together in Christ?

The considerations which most obviously occur as bearing upon the settlement of this question, are these: First, that we have no indication whatever in Scripture of the disappearance, absorption, or extinction of the human nature in the divine; secondly, that the fair and natural import of the scriptural statements, which declare the great fact of the incarnation, leads to the conclusion that the human nature, though assumed into union with the divine, continued to exist in its proper character as human nature, retaining all its essential properties; and, thirdly, especially and above all,—for this is the direct and conclusive proof,—that Christ is uniformly represented to us in Scripture, during His abode upon earth, and of course after the incarnation, even from His birth, as being truly, properly, and in all respects, a man, or a partaker of human nature, with all its necessary constituent elements and essential properties. It is on this position mainly that the question hinges,—it is by this chiefly that it is to be decided. Christ had been from eternity God over all; He assumed human nature into union with the divine. The divine nature of course continued unchanged, because it is unchangeable. Did the human nature also continue unchanged, distinct from the divine, though inseparably united with it? Christ is uniformly represented to us in Scripture as being *prima facie* a man—a full partaker of human nature in all its completeness. If it be asserted that He had not human nature in its entireness and perfection, or that anything essential to human nature was wanting in Him, the *onus probandi* must lie upon those who make this assertion; for the obvious import of the general declaration of the incarnation, and the general bearing of the representation given us of Christ during His abode upon earth, plainly lead to an opposite conclusion. There is no evidence whatever in Scripture that Christ wanted anything whatever to make Him an entire and perfect man, or possessor of human nature in all its completeness; and, on the contrary, there is direct and positive proof that he had every essential property of humanity.

The distinctive constituent elements of a man, of a human being, of one who is possessed of perfect human nature, are a body and a soul united. Christ took to Himself a true body and a reasonable soul, and He retained, and still retains them in all their completeness, and with all their essential qualities. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, “of her substance,” as is said in the Confession of Faith and Larger Catechism; these words, “of her substance,” being intended as a negation of an old heresy, revived by some Anabaptists after the Reformation, to the effect that He was conceived *in* Mary, but not *of* her; and that He, as it were, passed through her body without deriving anything from her substance; and being intended to assert, in opposition to this notion, that she contributed to the formation of Christ’s human nature, just what mothers ordinarily contribute to the formation of their children. Having thus taken a true body, formed of the substance of the Virgin, He continued ever after to retain it, as is manifest in the whole history of His life, of His death, and of the period succeeding His resurrection; and He has it still at the right hand of God. He took also a reasonable soul, possessed of all the ordinary faculties and capacities of the souls of other men, including a power of volition, which is asserted in opposition to the error of the Monothelites. We see this clearly manifested in the whole of His history, both before and after His death and resurrection; and the proofs of it might very easily be drawn out in detail in a survey of the whole record which God has given us concerning His Son. The denial of perfect and entire manhood, as well as Godhead, in Christ, rests upon no better foundation than a vague and confused notion, that the divine must, somehow or other, have absorbed or extinguished and swallowed up the human nature; so that the human could not, after its union to the divine, continue to exist in its entireness, and in the possession of all its own essential properties. But this is a mere imagination or conjecture, which has no solid foundation to rest upon. We must not imagine or conjecture anything upon such a subject, but seek simply to ascertain what the word of God makes known to us. That word plainly represents Christ to us as being and continuing a true and perfect man, after the human nature had been assumed into union by the divine; and thus shows that our plain and imperative duty is just to believe on God’s testimony, that the divine nature did

not absorb or extinguish the human, but left it, notwithstanding the union between them, distinct, in all its entireness and completeness, so that Christ really was very man as well as very God, and had manhood as well as Godhead, whole and entire.

The Son of God assumed human nature into union with the divine. The human nature is, of course, liable to change or alteration, while the divine is not; and, therefore, the question naturally enough occurs, What became of this human nature when it was taken into union with the divine; what position did it thereafter occupy? It was to contradict or exclude all supposable modes of explaining its position and relation to the divine nature, except that to which the whole tenor of God's words shuts us up,—viz., that it still, in the union, retained its own entire completeness and perfection—that the Council of Chalcedon declared that they were united together,—*ἄρρητως και ἀσύγχυτως*; and that it is declared in our own Confession, that they “were joined together without conversion, composition, or confusion.” It is not needful to suppose that these three words in our Confession are intended to convey three distinct or materially different ideas; or indeed anything more in substance than the *ἄρρητως και ἀσύγχυτως* introduced by the fathers of Chalcedon against Eutyches, and ever since generally adopted by the orthodox churches. Composition and confusion are here used as critically synonymous—the one being merely exegetical of the other, and the two together just expressing most fully the sense of *ἀσύγχυτως*, for which indeed the word communication, as well as composition or confusion, has been sometimes employed. If the human nature did *not* continue in Christ perfect and entire, so that He still was very man as well as very God, there are just two ways, in one or other of which it must, when assumed by the divine nature, have been disposed of. It may be conceived to have been changed or converted into the divine nature, so as to have been wholly absorbed by it, and thereby to have ceased to have any proper existence of its own; this is denied to have taken place, when it is said that the two natures were united,—*ἄρρητως*,—without conversion, without the one being changed into the other. Or else the two in their union may have been confused or mixed up together, so as that a third nature was formed out of the composition or commixture of the two which was neither the one nor the other, but partook partly of the properties of both; this is denied to have taken

place, when it is asserted that they were joined together,—*ἀσύγχυτως*,—without composition or confusion. And the grounds of these negations are twofold: First, the intrinsic and inherent absurdity and impossibility of the things themselves,—i.e., of the human nature being changed into the divine; unless, indeed, this be supposed to be the same as the annihilation of the human nature, which is possible, but which is not contended for, or being commingled with it, so as to change or modify *its* character.* And, secondly, their inconsistency with the scriptural representation of the continued entireness and complete perfection of the human nature in its distinctive characteristics, and with all its essential properties, in Christ after its assumption into union with the divine. There would have been no occasion whatever for making such assertions, or for employing such phrases as these, had not the Eutychians† maintained that there was but one nature in Christ,—that He was indeed of two natures, as they expressed it, i.e., that the divine and human natures both went, or contributed in some way, to the formation or constitution of His person;—but that He was not *in*, as well as *of*, two natures, inasmuch as from the time when the union of the two was formed, one or other, or both, had been in some way changed, so that they were not both, if either, found in Him entire and perfect. If the eternal Son of God assumed human nature, and if yet Christ, from the time when the assumption took place, had but one nature, as they held, it followed necessarily, that the union or assumption must have taken place in such a way, that either the one was changed into the other, or that the two must have been commingled together, so as that one compound was formed out of them. Hence the necessity and consequent propriety, with a view to the explicit contradiction and exclusion of the whole error upon this subject, in its root and branches, of asserting that the divine and human natures were, and continued to be, in Christ distinct, entire, and perfect, being united together,—*ἄρρητως και ἀσύγχυτως*,—“without conversion,” and without “composition or confusion.”

Sec. II.—The Nestorian Controversy.

Though Christ had two distinct natures, entire and perfect, He had but one person, as the ancient church decided against

* Bishop Barrow on the Creed.

† Campbell's Lectures, Lect. xiv., p. 256.

Nestorius, and as has been since generally held by orthodox churches. This position is necessary, in order to our forming right views of the person of the Mediator; and the meaning of this position, though it does not perhaps admit of any very clear, formal definition, is just practically and in substance this, that from the time when the union of the divine and human natures took place, all that was said, done, or suffered, was said, done, and suffered by one and the same Being, without any distinction of persons subsisting in that one Being, as there does in the unity of the Godhead,—there being but one speaker in regard to all the words which Christ uttered, one agent in regard to all the actions which He performed, one sufferer in regard to all the afflictions which He endured. There is no appearance in Scripture of anything like a distinction of persons in Christ, of a divine person saying or doing some things ascribed to Him, and of a human person saying or doing other things, also ascribed to Him. On the contrary, He is uniformly represented as being in every sense one; and if we just submit our understandings fairly and implicitly to the influence of the views given us concerning Christ in the word of God, we can no more doubt that He was one person, though He possessed two natures united together, and each perfect and entire, than we can doubt that any one of our fellow-men is one person, though he has a body and a soul united together,—and though some things that may be predicated of Him generally and without distinction, are true only of His soul, and other things only of His body. The ground on which the person of Christ has been divided, and on which it has been maintained that He had two persons as well as two natures, is not in the least a scriptural, but merely a metaphysical one. The doctrine ascribed to Nestorius, and certainly taught by some of his followers, that Christ had two persons, is represented as a natural or necessary consequence of His having two natures. It is not necessary to enter into any metaphysical discussion upon such a point. It is enough that the word of God uniformly represents Him as one person, though having two distinct natures united together; and to remember that it was the person of the Son, the eternal Word, who, retaining His own proper personality, assumed, not a human person, but human nature, into union with the divine.

These great scriptural truths concerning the person of Christ, the Mediator between God and man, when combined together,

form what is usually called by divines the doctrine of the hypostatical union, or the union of the divine and human natures in the one hypostasis, or person of Christ. There are several distinct truths, each based upon clear and abundant scriptural authority, that, when combined, go to form this great doctrine,—which declares or unfolds the person of Christ, the Redeemer of God's elect. The particular truths or doctrines which exhibit or unfold the constitution of Christ's person, are these: first, that He was God, possessed of the divine nature and perfections, and God's Son, even with reference to His divine nature, as standing from eternity in a certain special relation to the first person of the Godhead, analagous in some respects, though of course not in all, to the relation subsisting between a son and a father among men; secondly, that He was a man possessed of human nature, with all its essential properties and common infirmities, yet without sin,—an actual partaker of flesh and blood, having a true body and a reasonable soul, as we have; thirdly, that, though He possessed at once the divine and human natures, He was but one person, as distinguished from two or more persons. Now, if these different doctrines are each based upon scriptural authority, then, when combined together, they just form the one great doctrine of the union of the divine and human natures in the one person of Christ, which is thus proved to be taught in the word of God; while it manifestly unfolds to us all that we could desire to know concerning the person of Him who is set before us in Scripture as the only Saviour of sinners. The only thing materially necessary to complete the scriptural account of the person of the Redeemer, is, that this union of the divine and human natures in the one person of Christ, having been once formed, is never again to be dissolved. It existed while He tabernacled on earth,—it exists now while He sits at the right hand of God,—it will continue when He comes again to judge the world,—and it will last for ever.

There is one other position concerning this matter laid down in the Confession as taught in Scripture, to which, before finally quitting this subject, I may briefly advert.* It is this: "Christ, in the work of mediation, acteth according to both natures; by each nature doing that which is proper to itself: yet, by reason of the unity of the person, that which is proper to one nature is some-

* Chap. viii., sec. 7.

times in Scripture attributed to the person denominated by the other nature." * The union of the divine and human natures in the one person of Christ, with a view to the salvation of sinners, was effected just because there were some things necessary for the salvation of men which could be accomplished only by God, and others which could be done or endured only by man. Man alone could suffer and die, and God alone could satisfy the divine justice and magnify the divine law. Christ, accordingly, being God and man in one person, did by each nature that which was proper to itself.

The second part of the statement just quoted from the Confession is a mere assertion of a fact in regard to a certain scriptural usage of language, and its accuracy is proved by such texts as this—"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us." Dying is, of course, proper to the human nature; yet it is here attributed to God—the person denominated by the divine nature; and the ground or reason of the attribution is, that that person who laid down His life, and did so as man, was also God. The Confession, in making this statement, merely notices a fact, or points out an actual scriptural usage of language; but is not to be understood as laying down any general principle by which we may be guided in our use of language. We ought to make no such attributions of what is proper to one nature to the person denominated by the other, except only when the Scripture has gone before us, and sanctioned it. Some persons, upon the ground that instances of this usage of language occur in Scripture, have thought themselves warranted to indulge in minute and elaborate attributions of what was proper to the *one* nature, to the person denominated by the *other*, and thus to form an elaborate series of startling and *prima facie* contradictory or irreconcilable positions,—declaring of Christ's human nature, or at least of Christ as man, what was true only of the divine, or of Christ as God, and *vice versa*,—a practice which I cannot but regard as inconsistent with the awe and reverence with which the great mystery of godliness—God manifest in the flesh—ought ever to be contemplated. The position in the Confession,—a mere statement of a fact in regard to an occasional scriptural usage of

* This is called by divines the *κοινωνία ἰδιόματων*, or *communicatio proprietatum*.

language,—must be carefully distinguished from a doctrine which *sounds* very like it, and which has been strenuously maintained by Lutheran divines, as the ground of *their* tenet concerning the ubiquity or omnipresence of Christ's body, as it is called, which they are accustomed to adduce in defence of their view of the real presence of Christ's body in the Eucharist. The Lutheran doctrine is, that what is proper to one nature may be attributed, not, as our Confession says, to the *person* denominated by the other nature, or described by a name taken from the other nature, *but to the other nature itself*; and more particularly, that the ubiquity or omnipresence of Christ's divine nature may be attributed, because it really belongs, or has been communicated, to His human nature; nay, to His body or flesh. It is quite unnecessary to expose this absurd and monstrous doctrine; it is enough to point out that, though resembling in sound the statement contained in the Confession, it is essentially different in its nature and import, and in the authority on which it rests.

The errors involved in the Eutychian and Nestorian controversies are not now, and, indeed, have scarcely ever been since they were first broached, subjects of serious practical discussion, though there are still some sects of Christians in the East who are understood to hold them. The chief use *now* to be made of an examination of these controversies,—of the points which they involved, and of the grounds on which they were decided,—is not so much to guard us against errors which may be pressed upon us, and into which we may be tempted to fall, but rather to aid us in forming clear and definite conceptions of the truths regarding the person of Christ, which all profess to believe; in securing precision and accuracy of language in explaining them, and especially to assist us in realizing them; in habitually regarding as great and actual realities the leading features of the constitution of Christ's person, which the word of God unfolds to us. Scarcely any man in the Western Church has, ever since the fifth or sixth century, deliberately and intentionally taught Eutychian or Nestorian error, though charges of this sort have occasionally been brought against individuals—not because they had deliberately embraced these errors, and seriously meant to defend them, but because, from ignorance or inadvertence, they had been led to use language which had something of an Eutychian or Nestorian complexion. It would be no very difficult thing to produce

specimens of this, or of something like it, from works on popular theology; and I am not sure that I have not heard from the pulpit phrases which a more intelligent acquaintance with the discussions that have taken place in regard to the constitution of Christ's person, would have led men to avoid,—expressions which, if strictly interpreted and followed out, would have tended *either* towards dividing the one person, or confounding the two natures. It is, of course, the duty of all to see that they are able to unfold the scriptural views of the person of the Redeemer with clearness, precision, and accuracy. There is reason to fear that professing Christians in general, and even ministers of the gospel, are too apt to rest satisfied with very vague and indefinite conceptions of the person of Christ, and to contemplate Him too much merely in general as a glorious and exalted being, who came down from heaven to save sinners, without distinctly regarding Him as being at once very God and very man,—a real possessor of the divine nature, and at the same time as truly and fully a real partaker of flesh and blood like ourselves. This is the view given us in Scripture of the person of our Redeemer; and it is only when this view of His person, in all its completeness, is understood and realized, that we are duly honouring the Son, and that we are at all fitted to cherish and express the feelings and to discharge the duties of which He is the appropriate object,—to love Him with all our hearts, at once as our Creator and our elder Brother,—to rest in Him alone for salvation,—to yield ourselves unto Him as alive from the dead,—and to rely with implicit confidence on His ability and willingness to make all things work together for our welfare, and to admit us at length into His own presence and glory.*

* *Vide* Owen on the Person of Christ; Dods on the Incarnation.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PELAGIAN CONTROVERSY.

THE Pelagian controversy respects chiefly topics which are usually classed by continental writers under the head of *Anthropology*, or the doctrine of what man is, and of how he is influenced in those matters which concern his salvation. They stand connected with the views which Scripture unfolds to us of the actual state and condition of human nature, and, of course, of each man who possesses it, and of the kind and causes of those changes, if such there be, which are necessary to prepare men for the enjoyment of heaven. The discussion of these topics, indeed, runs up into the investigation of the divine sovereignty and fore-ordination; but still the basis and starting-point may be said to lie in the questions, What is man? his character and capacities? and what the nature and the source of those changes which must be produced upon him in order to prepare him for the enjoyment of God's presence? The Pelagian controversy thus includes all those most important and difficult topics which are usually discussed in works on systematic theology, under the heads, *De peccato*, *De gratia*, *De vocatione*, and *De prædestinatione*. No subjects can surpass in intrinsic importance those which treat directly of God and Christ; but those we have now to advert to are not inferior in importance, being just as intimately connected with the salvation of men's souls, and therefore as truly necessary to be known, and known correctly, and as fundamental in their character. The history of the church seems to indicate that somehow the prosperity of vital personal religion is more closely connected with correct views of the points involved in the Pelagian controversy, than even with correct views upon the subject of the Trinity and of the person of Christ. There never, indeed, has been much appearance of true personal religion where the divinity of the Son of God has been denied; but there has been often a profession

of sound doctrine upon this subject, long maintained, where there has been little real religion. Whereas, not only has there never been much real religion where there was not a profession of substantially sound doctrine in regard to the points involved in the Pelagian controversy, but also—and this is the point of contrast—the decay of true religion has always been accompanied by a large measure of error in doctrine upon these subjects; the action and reaction of the two upon each other being speedy and manifest. The apostate Church of Rome has preserved throughout an orthodox profession on the subject of the Trinity; but though precluded by her avowed principles from professing Pelagian doctrines, which have been frequently anathematized by popes and councils, she has always, in her practical teaching, exhibited a large amount of Pelagian error, and may be said to have become formally liable to the charge of teaching Pelagianism, in consequence of the general adoption by the church of the famous Bull *Unigenitus*, against the Jansenists, published in the early part of last century.

There is one consideration which makes the Pelagian controversy somewhat more intricate and perplexing than the Trinitarian; and that is, that there is room for a greater diversity of sentiment, and a greater indefiniteness or latitude of statement, even among those who may, perhaps, be regarded as agreeing in the main substance of the doctrine, in the one case than in the other. Few persons who have been classed under the general designation of Pelagians—except Pelagius himself, and his immediate followers, *Cœlestius*, and *Julian*, and modern Socinians and Rationalists—have denied altogether that man's nature suffered some moral taint or corruption from the fall, or that the gracious agency of God is in some way necessary in preparing men for heaven. When men go so far as to deny these things, the grounds of controversy are abundantly clear and definite; but there have been many who, without going nearly so far, and without therefore having opened up nearly so clear and definite a field for controversial discussion, have yet been charged, and justly, with greatly underrating the effects of the fall upon man's moral nature; and with superseding, to some extent at least, the agency of the Spirit in his conversion and sanctification. Pelagianism, in its original historical sense, is thus a pretty definite heresy, striking at the root of almost all that is most peculiar and dis-

tinctive in the system of revealed truth; but what has been called semi-Pelagianism—which may be regarded as describing, in general, views that make some approach to Pelagianism, but do not go quite so far—is of a much more vague and indefinite character. Pelagianism, and other words of a similar description, are often used in theological literature with a considerable measure of vagueness,—not to describe the precise sentiments of him from whom the name is derived, but rather as a convenient, though of course somewhat loose, mode of indicating a general class of opinions, of which there may be no one very definite standard, and which may not have been fully developed by the original broacher of the doctrines, who has given name to the system, but only by those who have afterwards followed in the same general track. There has been, perhaps, more indefiniteness in the use of the word Pelagianism than in that of almost any other word of a similar kind; for this, among other reasons, that there has never been any distinct and separate community of professing Christians to which this designation has been generally attached as their ordinary distinctive appellation.

The Socinians, indeed, have fully adopted the views of the original Pelagians in regard to the character and capacities of man's moral nature, and the agency of divine grace; but these are not the features of Socinianism which have attracted the largest measure of public attention. Arminians have been commonly charged with holding Pelagian errors; and no doubt all Arminians hold some principles which were maintained by Pelagius and his followers, and opposed by Augustine and the church in general in his day; but then there have been some of the better class of Arminians,—especially Arminius and the Wesleyan Methodists,—who, however inconsistently, fully adopt Augustine's views upon what are usually regarded as the main distinctive features of the Pelagian system,—viz., the entire depravity of human nature, and the absolute necessity of the special gracious agency of God in the whole process of the conversion and sanctification of sinners,—and are thus much more orthodox upon these points than even the semi-Pelagians were. In ordinary usage, Pelagianism is commonly employed as a general designation of defective and erroneous views in regard to the extent and consequences of human depravity, and of the necessity of special divine agency in conversion and sanctification; and it is obvious that there is room for

considerable latitude in the extent to which the deviation from sound scriptural doctrine upon this point may be carried.

There are strong and powerful tendencies of various kinds that lead men to underrate the injurious effects of the fall upon their moral nature, and the consequent necessity of divine grace for their renovation; and on this account, Pelagian views, more or less fully developed, have prevailed very extensively in almost every age of the church. Generally they have assumed somewhat of a philosophic dress, and have prevailed most among those who have thought themselves entitled to the character of rational Christians, and professed to be very zealous for the interests of morality and virtue. Sometimes, however, as we see in the Morisonianism of our own day, they have assumed a more apparently scriptural and sanctimonious garb, and have been accompanied with great professions of an eager desire for the conversion of sinners, and an anxious wish to remove every obstruction to men's coming to Christ, and laying hold of the offered blessings of the gospel. In this latter class of cases, there has usually been mixed up with the Pelagian error a larger amount of scriptural truth than has been maintained by the more rational and philosophical Pelagians,—so much of scriptural truth, indeed, as that God may have, to some extent, blessed the labours of these persons for the conversion of souls,—not of course because of the error they hold, but in spite of it, and because of the truth they hold along with it. But, in so far as this particular point is concerned, they, just as much as the other class, obscure the divine sovereignty in the salvation of sinners, and do what they can to rob God of the glory which He has declared that He will not give to another.

Sec. I.—Historical Statement.

In formerly directing attention to the testimony of the primitive church,—*i.e.*, the church of the three first centuries,—upon the subject of the doctrines of grace, we had occasion to show that it was of a somewhat dubious and uncertain kind; that these topics had not during that period been, at least in all their length and breadth, subjects of controversial discussion; and that in consequence, as is usually the case, there had been considerable vagueness and inaccuracy in the language sometimes employed regarding them. The discussions in which the early fathers

were engaged had a tendency to lead them rather to magnify the power of man's free-will, since fatalism, or something like it, deeply pervaded the Oriental and Gnostic systems; and it is chiefly on what some of them have said in magnifying man's free-will, in opposition to fatalism, that those who have maintained that Pelagian views prevailed in the primitive church have taken their stand. Statements, however, upon this point do not afford the best or most certain test of men's views upon the subject of the doctrines of grace in general. Augustine certainly did not deny man's free-will altogether, and in every sense of the word; and the most zealous defenders of the doctrines of grace and of Calvinistic principles have admitted that there is a free-will or free-agency, in some sense, which man has, and which is necessary to his being responsible for his transgressions of God's law. It is laid down in our own Confession, that "God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty, that it is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined, to good or evil;" and it would not be easy to prove, in regard to the generality of the fathers of the first three centuries, that they believed, or really intended to declare, more in regard to the free-will of man, even when they were contending against fatalism, than may be fairly regarded as involved in this position, especially as they have given us no reason to believe that they ever deliberately considered the distinctions which are of fundamental importance in regard to this whole question,—*viz.*, between man's liberty of will before and after the fall, and between his free-agency in regard to things spiritual, and things merely civil and moral. It is very certain that they were not in general Pelagians, since they almost all held in some sense the doctrine of original sin,—*i.e.*, believed that man's moral nature was to some extent corrupted in consequence of the fall, and that all that was truly good in man was to be ascribed to God's special agency, and not to the exercise of his own powers and capacities. At the same time, it is plain that they had no very distinct conception of what these truths involved, especially in their connection with each other and the other departments of Christian doctrine, and did not always speak regarding them in a very definite or consistent way.

There does not appear to have been any very material change in the general strain of the teaching of the church upon this subject in the fourth century, from what it had been during the

three preceding centuries. Chrysostom's works contain many statements to which the Pelagians, or at least the semi-Pelagians, appealed, and not without reason, in support of these doctrines; while Augustine, in defending the doctrines of grace, appealed sometimes to Ambrose, who had been the chief instrument in the hand of God of leading him to the knowledge of the truth, though there is good reason to doubt whether Ambrose's teaching upon these subjects was perfectly uniform and consistent.* It was in the early part of the fifth century that the doctrines of grace were, for the first time, subjected to a full investigation, error being then more openly and explicitly taught, and truth being more satisfactorily defended and illustrated, developed and systematized, than ever before. It is this which stamps so special an importance upon the Pelagian controversy. It is this which sheds so peculiar a glory around the name of Augustine,—a glory which attaches in the same degree to no man whom Christ gave to His church, from the age of the apostles till the Reformation of the sixteenth century.

We see in Augustine what has not unfrequently been noticed in men whom God has made signal blessings to His church, that even before his conversion he was subjected to a course of discipline and training that was not without its use, in preparing him for the work to which he was afterwards to be called: I refer especially to his having been for a good many years involved in the heresy of Manichæism,—a fact which I have no doubt was overruled by God for preserving him from the danger to which men who are called upon to engage in arduous controversy upon difficult and perplexed subjects are so very liable,—that, viz., of leaning to an extreme opposite to that against which they may feel it to be their duty at the time to contend. Manichæism may be regarded as, in some respects, an opposite extreme to Pelagianism, as the former implied a sort of fatalism, and the latter exalted unwarrantably the natural powers of man. It has, indeed, been alleged by Pelagians, both in ancient and in modern times, that Augustinianism, or Calvinism,—for they are in substance the same,—is tainted by some infusion of Manichæan error; and it has been asserted, that this is to be traced to Augustine retaining some leaven of his old Manichæan principles: but the general experience of mankind shows that this theory is most improbable,

* Neander's General Church History, vol. iv., p. 299.

and proves that it is much more likely that a man who had, deliberately and from full conviction, renounced a system of error, pervaded throughout by one uniform and peculiar character, should, in place of retaining and cherishing any of its distinctive principles, be rather apt to run into the opposite extreme. Augustine, assuredly, did not run into the opposite extreme to Manichæism—else he would not have made such strenuous opposition to Pelagianism; but neither, in opposing Pelagianism, was he tempted to go to the opposite extreme of Manichæism, as he might probably,—according to the tendencies which controversialists too often manifest,—have been led to do, had he not previously sounded the depths and subtleties of Manichæism, and been led decidedly and deliberately to reject it. There would probably have been some better ground for the charge of Manichæism, which has often, without foundation, been adduced against Augustine, had he not both embraced and renounced this heresy before he was called upon to engage in the Pelagian controversy; but as matters stand, it can be fully established that, in opposing the Pelagian heresy, he has avoided all tendency to run into the Manichæan extreme, and been enabled to keep, with wonderful accuracy, in regard to all the essential features of the controversy, the golden mean of scriptural truth.

The founders of Pelagianism—men who have had few followers in the extent to which they carried their views, except the Socinians and Rationalists of modern times—were Pelagius, Cœlestius, and Julian. The two former were monks, but, as was usually the case with monks at this period, they were laymen and not clergymen. Julian was Bishop of Eclanum, a small village in Italy, near Capua; for even in the fifth century many villages still had bishops. Pelagius was a native of Britain; and Cœlestius, too, is supposed to have been a countryman of our own, though the evidence in regard to him is not very conclusive. Jerome, who was always remarkable for the virulence with which he assailed his opponents, never being able to see any good quality in them, speaks with the utmost contempt of Pelagius and Cœlestius; but Augustine, who was, after his conversion, as highly exalted above the generality of the fathers of his age in the personal excellence of his character, as he was in ability and knowledge of divine truth, speaks very respectfully both of their talent and of the general character which they had sustained. They seem to