

## CUR DEUS HOMO?

"It is oftentimes considered the chief purpose of Christ's Incarnation," says Trench (*Huls. Lect.* p. 218,) "that it made his death possible, that it provided him a body in which to do that which merely as God he could not do namely to suffer and to die; while some of the profoundest teachers of the past, so far from contemplating the Incarnation in this light, have rather affirmed that the Son of God would equally have taken man's nature, though of course under very different conditions, even if he had not fallen—that it lay in the everlasting purposes of God, quite irrespective of the fall, that the stem and the stalk of humanity should at length bear its perfect flower in Him, who should thus at once be its root and crown." This passage we have quoted before, in our notice of the work from which it is taken, as one of significant interest in relation to the great subject to which it refers.

In a later article we have called attention to a more full and formal presentation of the same view by Professor Liebner of Germany, who makes it in fact the foundation thought of his recent work on Christology. The view is adopted also by Dörner, and has called forth as we have seen the direct approbation of Schöberlein, in an able recension of Liebner's work published in Reuter's Repertorium. Liebner himself has appeared again, as we have also seen, in the same Journal, in opposition to Dr. Thomasius, a distinguished Lutheran divine, who it seems has entered the lists with him on the opposite side. This may serve to show the interest which is taken in the question here brought into debate, and how intimately related it is felt to be to the very heart of theology at the present time.

We find now a new writer on the field, Dr. Julius Müller, the author of the widely celebrated treatise on Sin. His mere name is sufficient of course to command attention and respect. He is not a man to take up any subject lightly, and what he writes is sure to carry with it the weight both of extensive learning and profound thought. This credit is well sustained by his dissertation on the subject before us, in two articles contained in Schneider's *Deutsche Zeitschrift* for October 1850, under the title: "The Question examined, Whether the Son of God would have become man, if the human race had continued without sin." The occasion of the discussion is in large part at least the work of Professor Liebner. It is not however a review of this in any strict sense, but addresses itself to the inquiry with

which it is occupied in a general way. The investigation is exceedingly calm, but at the same time exceedingly searching and deep, and the conclusion reached by it is a full negative answer to the question that forms its theme. The author allows a large merit to Liebner's work, and considers it an important contribution to theological science, especially in his view of the deep and difficult doctrine of the Trinity; but he rejects as unsound and unsafe the thought on which it rests throughout, that the necessity of the Incarnation lies primarily not in the fall of man but in his creation. Liebner of course, as we have before seen, does not call in question the soteriological design of the mystery, its relation to sin as the only possible means of redemption and salvation; he simply maintains, that this is not to be viewed as the exclusive or primary reason of the mystery, that there was a necessity for it on the contrary back of this, and of a far broader and deeper nature, in the original idea of humanity itself, in virtue of which only it was possible for the special need created by the fall to find its remedy and cure here under any such supernatural form. But Müller refuses to acknowledge any necessity for the Incarnation, beyond the existence of sin and the idea of redemption. The soteriological interest forms in his view the ultimate and whole reason of the stupendous mystery; so that if the first Adam had not fallen, there would have been no second Adam to take his place, if sin had not entered into the world the Son of God would never have assumed human flesh.

Some traces of the other view, according to Müller, are to be met with in the Patristic Period, particularly in the writings of Irenaeus; but it is among the Schoolmen of the middle ages that it first comes distinctly and formally into view. Anselm of Canterbury, in his celebrated tract, *Cur Deus Homo?* excludes it, by referring the Incarnation wholly to the necessity of an atonement for sin; and Thomas Aquinas rests in the same conclusion, as most in harmony with the authority of the Scriptures, although he seems occasionally to look a different way, and has been quoted in fact by some as the patron of the other opinion. On the other hand a certain abbot Rupert, a theologian of decidedly biblical rather than scholastic turn, appears in the 12th century as the open advocate of the view, setting it in what he conceives to be necessary connection with Augustine's theory of predestination. After his time, a number of the schoolmen are found answering the question, *Cur Deus homo?* in the same general way; as for instance Alexander Hales, John Duns Scotus, and his school. "With this last his Pelagianizing anthro-

pology may have come here somewhat into play, inclining him to detract from the weight of sin as a determining influence on God's counsels; but the immediate reason he urges in favor of the view is, that the happiness and glory to which Christ's soul has been predestinated is a Divine purpose which in the order of dignity goes before the purpose of salvation towards other souls, on which account the Incarnation, as being the necessary condition of its realization, cannot in the order of God's purposes depend on the fall of man absolutely as its cause. Were this the case, it would seem to follow that Christ must be regarded as a *bonum occasionatum*, something which Duns Scotus takes to be wholly derogatory to the proper glory of his nature." We find the same view earnestly maintained again by the celebrated John Wessel, and still also under the same general regard to the dignity of Christ's person, as infinitely transcending even in his human nature the worth of all human beings besides.

With the Reformers of the 16th century the sense of sin was so active, and along with this the idea of redemption so prominent and strong, that the question, whether the Son of God would not have assumed flesh even if man had never fallen, may be said to have had no power even to engage their serious attention. At all events they could have for it but one answer. The mystery of the Incarnation depends for them on the tragedy of Sin. If pressed with the difficulty of upholding the absolute sovereignty of God's decree they are ready in favor of this view to take refuge even in supralapsarianism, and to include the fall itself in the decree as the condition of redemption. So Calvin, as we all know, without any sort of qualification or reserve. But Luther when necessary looked at the matter in the same light. Even in his Larger Catechism he says: "Ob id ipsum nos creavit Deus, ut nos redimeret," God created man in order to his redemption—a proposition which implies that the act of creation must have carried in it a provision for that which makes redemption necessary, in other words must have involved the necessity of sin. A public representative indeed of the other view of the necessity of the Incarnation, comes before us in this age in the person of the Lutheran Osiander. But this advocacy stood connected with what was considered an unsound theology on the subject of justification, which caused it of course to have more weight against the view in question than in its favor. The case was made still worse for it, by its gaining the approbation of Faustus Socinus; though with him again the reason for receiving it lay in a particular peculiarity of his own system which the hypothesis happened to fit, rather than in the older

theological speculation. "Thus it happened," says the writer before us, "that a theological opinion which had been considered in the middle ages open for free discussion in the schools, fell everywhere with the older Protestant theology into the reproach of heterodoxy. The orthodox divines of the Lutheran confession, so far as they touch the question, declare themselves with one voice against it. Still this has not prevented the later theology from looking favorably on a view, which is felt to be recommended especially by the consideration, that the highest act of Divine love, bringing with it the greatest exaltation of man, cannot be regarded as dependent upon man's wilful self-perversion, and so on something accidental, but must rest on the original pure idea of the creation in the Divine mind, or in other words on the *essential relation between God and man*."

The investigation here in hand has to do with its subject, only as presented on the ground of the true Bible doctrine of a personal God. Pantheistic systems, which resolve the activity of God's love into a metaphysical process of absolute self-consciousness, made complete at last through the speculative thinking of the human spirit, have also appropriated to themselves the thought now in question; but their meaning is simply, that man is formed by his nature to become divine or theanthropic, in which view the entire history of the race is to be regarded as a so called eternal incarnation of the Deity. All such logico-metaphysical blasphemy is here left entirely out of sight. Supposing the Incarnation to be necessary even for a normal development of our human life, it is regarded as flowing only from an *ethical* principle or ground, from an act of the personal God; in the case of which any *necessity* it may have must rest wholly on the freedom of the Divine will, the disposition of God's love to reveal itself under such form.—So also no regard is had to those theories of an original necessity for the Incarnation, which shrink not from making it to be the completion of God himself, the higher unity, as they say, in which the contradiction of the pretended abstractions, Deity and Humanity, is brought to an end (*aufgehoben*). Such a view gives the mystery indeed the character of absolute necessity, not for man only but also for God; but it completely destroys in doing so the true idea of the absolute, and gives us under the name of an eternal Divine incarna-

So Bonaventura speaking of the two different theories says: "Quis autem horum (modorum) alteri praeponendus sit difficile est videre pro eo, quod uterque modus catholicus est et a viris catholicis sustinetur."

tion the absurdity of an *absolute coming to pass*. This excludes too the conception that the Son of God or the Logos became flesh; the assumption is that *God became flesh*; an idea which implies a rejection of the christian doctrine of the Trinity, and resolves the whole being of God into a process. Christian science should be on its guard thus against even the sound of anything like an agreement with such a view; a caution, Müller thinks, which has not been sufficiently observed in certain quarters of the later German theology, where a disposition has been shown to transplant not merely the sound but the actual substance of the false idea in question to the historical field of the Bible. The idea of course has the whole voice and spirit of the New Testament against it; while it inevitably subverts besides the conception of God and that of the creature both at once. "The being of God would in this view fall fully into the course of time; up to a certain point in time he could not have been true and perfect God; and so could not be this either after such date; for an absolute which has come to pass is no less a contradiction, than one eternally coming to pass. Since moreover there could be no incarnation of the Logos without created existence, it would follow that God needed the world in order that he might truly be God; he creates it accordingly, to bring himself into full reality—that is, he does not create it at all, for the idea of creation implies essentially freedom over against the world, which is here supposed to be wanting; in the world, which all sound theism owns to be the creature of God, he must at the same time see the *condition of himself*, and Angelus Silesius would be right with his impiously bold word:

Gott ist so viel an mir, wie mir an ihm gelegen;  
Ich helf' sein Wesen ihm, er hilft mir meines hegen.

Propositions such as the necessity of God's becoming man to complete his own nature, and the consequences that flow from it, may have some intelligible meaning on the platform of pantheism; but when transplanted to theistic ground they lose all sense and force, and deceive with a mere show of depth that comes only of the dim uncertain twilight in which they involve the mind. If they cannot satisfy it they at least put it into a state of confusion, and that itself is for many a sort of inward satisfaction."

The question then regards properly no conception of this kind, as the ground of the necessity for the Incarnation; but supposes the case to be, that such necessity is referred only to the *human*

side of the transaction; in the sense namely, that it is *man* only who could not truly fulfil his own idea, the sense of his own nature, without the entrance of the Logos in a real way into the organism of his life.

Here comes into consideration the posture of Schleiermacher's theology with regard to the point in hand. Thomasius makes this the source in fact of the modern form of the proposition; that the Son of God would have become incarnate even if man had not sinned. But Müller shows very clearly that it has no root in Schleiermacher's theory whatever. According to this theory, Christ is the completion of human nature, the second stage of man's creation as distinguished from the first in Adam (*Glaubenslehre* §. 89.). The first creation is imperfect, through a want of full harmony in the nature of man between his conscience and will, the consciousness of God not being strong enough to give the spirit its proper supremacy over the flesh; in Christ first this consciousness with its corresponding power appears in full force; and from him, through the action of faith directed towards him by his people, it is brought to extend itself to the race generally, completing thus the original sense of our human life, and setting it free from its previous imperfection. Creation and redemption here are only different parts of one work. In this view, it is plain, that there is no room for the question, whether the Incarnation would have been necessary if man had not sinned. For what the system takes for sin is in truth a mere natural defect in the first form of man's being itself, which from the first looks forward to the higher consciousness of Christ as its own needful complement and end; and this itself must be regarded of course then as the only normal order which the case allows. Or if it should be imagined that there might have been, according to the theory, such a progress of the first imperfect life of the race as would not have been attended with that inward contradiction and disturbance which we now experience under the notion of sin, it is easy to see that in such case there could be no room for the introduction of a higher order of existence in a single personal Christ as the means of redemption for others. In every view clearly, the system of Schleiermacher implies that the mystery of the incarnation is conditioned by the imperfection of the world as it now stands, and knows no ground beyond this or aside from this on which to speak of it as necessary.

We come thus to Müller's second article, with the question disentangled from all false connections, and reduced to its proper theistic and truly christian form. Admitting the existence of a

personal holy God, the perfect freeness of his acts, the original sufficiency of the first creation, the awful reality of the fall as something made necessary only through man's will, and the need of a real redemption by Christ's death, the thesis under consideration still asserts, that the mystery of the incarnation does not depend absolutely on this abnormal course of things, but would have had place also on the supposition of a normal or sinless development of man's life. It is allowed that the entrance of sin rendered it necessary for the mystery to take the special soteriological character under which it now appears; but the idea is, that back of this particular need there lay a broader and deeper necessity for it in the original creation of man's nature itself, which would have required it to make this in full what it was designed to be even if it had remained true to its first state. This is the thought to be examined and tried.

The older advocates of the opinion endeavored to rest it on direct scriptural proof. Its modern friends however see and acknowledge, that the Bible everywhere refers the fact of the incarnation to sin and the necessity of redemption. In other words it proceeds throughout on the simply soteriological theory, without any distinct regard to the other. It is not necessary to quote particular texts in proof of this. They meet us on all sides; while only three or four, such as 1 Cor. xv: 45-47, Eph. i: 21-23, Col. ii: 10, 1 Peter iii: 22, and as more plausible than all the rest Col. i: 16-17, are made to look by circuitous and doubtful interpretation the other way. But why, it is asked, may we not admit along with this direct biblical view, another also of more comprehensive character, growing forth from the power of legitimate and necessary speculation exercised on the vast scheme of christian truth as a whole? Thus related the two theories do not exclude each other. Rather the biblical representation is to be taken simply as a determinate phase of the truth, which is embraced in the other more general construction. The first proceeds analytically, planting itself on the fact of man's state as it now is; the other moves synthetically, in just the opposite direction. The last has to do with the general or universal substance of the relation in question; while the Bible, answerable to the actual condition of the world, brings into view a *specific mode and form* of its realization, namely the Word made flesh in order to the exhaustion of man's curse by suffering and death.

But this imagination of the possible harmony of the two theories, according to our author, is attended with great difficulties. Take first, for instance, that which starts from the *need of re-*

*demption.* The theory involves not merely single biblical texts, but the whole view that is taken of Christ's person, and of its relations to the world both before and since. "Our earthly human life as it now stands is directly and unavoidably subject to suffering; the soteriological view of the incarnation affirms of course that the entrance of the Son of God into this whole form of existence presupposes sin, and by it alone becomes intelligible. The same theory presses the consideration moreover, that in assuming flesh the Logos has been born as a member of the Jewish nation, and in subjection to its law, while the whole Israelitish economy resulted certainly from the fact of the fall. Only in view of sin again, it is urged, does it become intelligible why the incarnation took not place at the beginning of man's history, but at a later time; sin must first ripen, and humanity show what it was able to do of itself after the fall, before the Son of God could appear as the author of redemption and the dispenser of a higher life. And who can doubt, the soteriological theory is ready to add, but that all this is according to the sense of the Apostles, and particularly of that one among them, who alone has left us in his writings the outline of a general view of the world with Christ for its centre?" The mode too in which we are brought to participate in Christ's life, is such as to involve in its very nature the supposition of sin. Not only is this the case with repentance, but also with faith in the sense of Paul and John. Suppose no opposition between the natural and spiritual, the world of sense and the invisible world, in man's soul, and what room would there be for the idea of faith, as the power that breaks through the one to embrace the other? What room would there be for the conception of that agency of the Holy Ghost, which is represented to be now the medium of Christ's life and work in the world since his return to the Father? But how can we think of any such opposition between the two worlds in question, the soteriological theory asks, without the entrance of the disturbing power of sin into the process of man's life?

As regards the *work* of Christ again, the soteriological view will not consent of course to hold itself simply to the idea of the priestly office; as though the prophetic and kingly offices were to be properly cared for, as some have pretended, only by the other theory. It finds full scope for both these last in its conception of the kingdom of God, which is based on the fact of the fall and destined to end as a new creation in the glories of the resurrection. The three offices are in truth subordinated throughout to the *idea of redemption.*

"Thus it is that the theory which finds the cause of the incarnation in sin and the need of salvation, spreads itself out over the entire compass of the fact as it appears in history, over Christ's person and work, beginning and end, mode of revelation time, national sphere, all going before as preparation and all following after as consequence; no room is left anywhere for any other principle to appropriate to itself any part or portion of the fact; the actual incarnation is taken up by its explanatory account at all points, so as completely to thrust aside that other theory of an original general necessity for it as a purely vague and empty abstraction."

The same want of inward agreement between the two views will be felt, if we reverse the order of consideration and start with the opposite principle, that namely which places the christological necessity back of sin in the general nature of man.

The idea is, that if the development of humanity had gone forward in a perfectly normal and sinless way the Logos would still have become flesh. But for what end? Not for show merely, or to please the imagination. It must be thought of under an ethical view, as Liebniz himself is careful to allow; it must be regarded as an act of *love* on the part of God. To whom? Of course to the human race. What would it communicate then; what want of the race would it propose to supply?

Here the ground is taken, that the race could have no true unity or wholeness without the God-man, that if its parts are not to fall asunder atomistically it must have a *personal head*, in whom the human nature is joined with the divine. This cannot mean merely, that Christ is appointed for all mankind as their ruler, and all mankind for him to submit to his government, that they belong of right to him and he to them; for so much the soteriological view itself allows, which is taken to fall short of the principle here in hand. Christ's headship over the race then must be understood of an *actual relation* holding between it and himself; as the New Testament also in truth refers the sense of *κεφαλῆ* only to a relation of this sort. Thus then a predicate, which is used of Jesus Christ commonly in his relation to the *Church*, is here transferred to the relation he bears to mankind in general, an application it never has in the Scriptures. But what does it signify in the first relation? Nothing less, certainly, than that he is joined in real life union with his Church, so as to be its ruling and actuating principle, filling it with his presence, and using it as the *organ of his will*, by the power of the Holy Ghost. But now extend this conception to the race as

a whole, and what becomes of the reference of the incarnation in any view to the idea of sin? Humanity then, sin or no sin, as being already in union with the divine-human life, needs no redemption. It has by this real relation all that it requires, and it becomes idle indeed to speak of sin as in any sense a fall from God; since in the midst of it all the race still stands, through its actual head, in full fellowship with God, and in full possession also of eternal life. What room can there be in such circumstances for the idea of redemption, or for making it in any way the object of the incarnation?

Each of the views in question then, it appears, goes actually to exclude the other. They refuse to stand together. It follows, that to maintain itself at all the idealistic theory, which pretends to resolve the mystery into a deeper general ground back of the soteriological view, must quit this abstract position, and come forward as the only sufficient key for the explanation of the whole fact.

In this case however one feature of it at least must still be excepted, the Saviour's *death upon the cross*. Not to refer this wholly to sin, would be to contradict plainly the whole sense of the Scriptures. But it is not easy to uphold the propitiatory significance of this death, if we are to retain steadily the thought that the God-man is the real head of the whole human race. It seems the most ready course to say, that the intervention of sin made it necessary for the head of the race to appear under such a form as should include, in addition to the requirements of the idea under its normal character, the provision of an atonement for the removal of the guilt belonging to men by means of suffering and death. But to say nothing of the isolated position the atonement is thus made to take in the general revelation of Christ, the force of it as a real condition of reconciliation with God cannot stand, where it is firmly held that *Christ is the actual head of all mankind*, and so still less of course the necessity of the incarnation for any such end. The death of the Son of God then must be taken as having a declarative value only, suited to assure men that their original and essential relation to their ever living head remains good notwithstanding their sense of guilt. Such a declaration might have been given by word alone; but it is rendered more expressive through the real symbol thus exhibited in the transaction of the cross. How every such view tends to sink the central mystery of faith into the form of a mere accommodation to human fancy and conceit, stripping it of all objective necessity and so of all real inward power, it is not necessary here to prove. It falls in truth into

the sphere of certain well known rationalistic theories, which are fairly exploded on the field of true theology.

Will it be said, to avoid this difficulty, that the idea of Christ's natural headship of the race anticipates and presumes of course a real appropriation of his atonement, on the part of men, by repentance and faith, and so cannot be regarded as having force till this condition is at hand? But if the thought in such form is not to lose itself in the mere conception of Christ's destination for the race at large, which belongs to the other theory, it must imply evidently the restoration of all men to communion with God as the metaphysically necessary end of all human development, and so along with this the overthrow in full of the ideas of freedom, accountability, guilt, punishment and pardon; and what becomes then of the real appropriation of the atonement through repentance and faith?

Or may it be supposed perhaps, that a part of mankind by its wilful resistance to the attraction of the head sunders itself from the body that belongs to it? So Liebner would seem to think, when he speaks of the loss of the wicked as "compensated" by the head, in which is realized the full idea of humanity. But this in one view is plainly to fall back into the scriptural thought, that Christ is the head of the *Church*; for the system of humanity as such is made to give way in favor of the body of the redeemed, to which only, and not to the race at large, the term *σωμα* is applied in the New Testament. In this way the idealistic account of the incarnation would yield in truth to the soteriological. In another view however one cannot see, why the supposed capacity of Christ to compensate for the loss of a *part* of the race, should not be sufficient also to compensate if need be for the *whole*—a result certainly as anti-soteriological as possible. Then the last sense of his revelation, would be not his love towards actually existing men, but the perfect realization of the full idea of humanity in himself! But what becomes then of the *ethical* motive already acknowledged, as lying at the ground of the mystery? The thought besides dialectically destroys itself; for a head in which the whole idea of the body is already realized, so that it can by itself make good any deficiency in this whether partial or total, is by such character raised above the relativity that belongs to the very conception of the head.

Paul found all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge in Jesus Christ *crucified*. If the theory before us is to be more than an empty abstraction, as before said, it must be able, aside from this idea of the cross, to explain the other aspects and connections of the historical incarnation, as related to the world both

before and since. Can it do this? Liebner seems to think so; for on the ground that the idea of humanity is supposed absolutely to require a perfect realization in one central individual, free from all the onesidedness that must attach to other individuals as such, he bases the conclusion that mankind *in any case*, that is even without sin, could be righteous before God only by faith in Christ, their divine human head. "But now when Liebner himself expressly says at the same time, that this absolutely universal individual cannot belong originally to humanity, but must proceed from a higher sphere, how shall we understand it in the first place that the race should be found from the start, not by its own apostasy from God but by God's creative act, in a condition of perfect inability to meet the Divine requirement, without the implantation of a new principle higher than the nature of humanity as such? How again is the consequence to be avoided, that God in the first act of creation purposely made the world bad, in order to make it better in the second? And if we attend to it, this unavoidable insufficiency of all human individuals aside from the God-man as their universal centre, this want of righteousness in virtue of which they *cannot* be the objects of the Divine complacency, rests on no other ground than this, that as abstractions of the true ideal unity which is reached in Christ they are of course onesided and partial representations only of the real generic conception, and so necessarily inadequate examples of humanity. This itself then unfits us to stand before God in our natural state, that we are only *individuals* in the common metaphysical sense of the term! We have here a questionable mixing of the ethical and the metaphysical, from which it is only a step to the error current among the disciples of the Nature-philosophy of Schelling, that individuality is itself the principle of evil, the original fall from the absolute or God."

All goes indeed to subvert the very idea of sin. For if the abstract singleness of the human person taken by itself is itself evil, since the whole creation besides looks to this as its end, it follows that evil is identical with the conception of a finite creation; or rather in place of a creation the ground of relative existence is made to be, as in the old Gnostic systems, a falling away from God; whereby at last the ethical force of sin is wholly swallowed up in theosophico-metaphysical dreams. Or without this, if it be assumed in any view that the world as it came originally from God could not please him, how must the idea of sin suffer and along with it the whole view of salvation! It can hardly be taken at best to signify more than an aggravation of

defects previously inherent in the creature as such. The relation between normal and abnormal becomes one of difference, not in principle, but only in degree. How easily thus may the sense of our own sin mingle itself with the sentiment of mere natural insufficiency before God, and in this lose itself altogether! Such is the mischief always of trying to fix ethical predicates on metaphysical relations which are independent of will and freedom, with the view of thus transforming them into an ethical character; the transformation strikes unavoidably the other way, the ethical notions are lost in the simply metaphysical.

The origin of Liebner's confusion here is carried back by our critic to a metaphysical thought, which has captivated others also too far, he thinks, on the same ground; this namely, that the relation of *genus* and *individual*, and the postulate from it of one representing in metaphysical sense the life of the whole, is made the point of departure for the speculative construction of the christology. The thought, in the opinion of Müller, is only a delusive phantom, with associations and tendencies besides that may well cause it to be regarded with distrust. The adequate actualization of humanity in the person of the Son of Man, did not require that he should include in himself all particular talents and properties of the race, any more than it required that he should enter into all human relations and connections. His life was revealed under natural limitations, as of sex, nationality, family, &c. True, these particularities, essential to the truth of his human nature, were at the same time surmounted and as it were set aside by the greatness of his vocation and spirit. But this is something very different from the supposed concentration metaphysically of all the constituents of the total race in him, as the central individual and microcosm of humanity.

But now taking the thought in its true sense, that the moral idea which humanity carries in itself requires its adequate realization in the form of individual life, how will it bear on the proposition, that the Son of God would have become incarnate if there had been no sin? The thought itself contains nothing that looks to the realization of this ideal only in one single individual. Rather it requires it of all; for not to strive after it would be a positive falling away from morality, and the imagination of an endless striving that can never reach the end, a vain *progressus in infinitum*, is a contradiction that destroys itself. It lies however in the very nature of the *moral idea*, that the *nisus* in question should be directed towards the *whole* realiza-

tion of this idea if it is to have place in the mind at all; for the idea is based on man's relation to God, and is for this reason superior to all conditions and circumstances besides. Artistic, scientific, political ideals have quite another character. Their realization calls everywhere for a division of work into different spheres; even the most prominent minds here are the bearers and organs only of some distinct part of the idea. So the greatest musical genius may have no sense whatever for works of sculpture and painting, or the reverse. But in the realization of the *moral* idea, there is no room to speak of any such division of tasks in the service of the whole. The aim must be all or nothing. The object of redemption accordingly, now that sin has turned the race aside from its original destination, is to bring to pass the adequate realization of this idea in all that are gathered by it into the kingdom of God. But suppose sin had not occurred; then the idea must have actualized itself to the full in all human individuals—which is indeed implied also by the hypothesis of a normal development; and thus the thought before us by no means leads to the necessity of the incarnation for the realization required.

New difficulties in the way of the theory under consideration come into view, when we take into account the existence of other created intelligences besides men, either angels or the inhabitants of other planets. "If it lies in the conception of created personality universally, that its complete destiny can be reached only through the real union of the Logos with its nature, we must assume, (against Heb. ii: 16 indeed,) that such a mystery has had place also in favor of the angels. But it belongs to the very idea of a true incarnation that the Logos enters as subject into the process of an individual human life throughout; and if he is not to lose his personal unity in thus going out of himself this can have place only in one individual. United with two or more, he would not be truly in any with his actual self, but the union must be thought of merely as a sort of prophetic inspiration—the Logos simply working upon the created consciousness, without identifying himself with it and so without personal conjunction. Or else we must imagine a succession of personal unions—like the Hindoo avatars of Vishnu for instance, in which the deity takes the forms of different creatures and drops them again one after another. But this conception also plainly destroys the truth of the incarnation; for to this the permanence of the union is indispensable, since the truth of man's being implies continued existence. Pantheistic systems indeed, if they admit the hypothesis of other orders of personal beings



beside men, can easily enough extend to them *their* idea of the incarnation, the process by which God takes form in the world; this however, just because they allow no real incarnation in the christian sense, as a free act of love on the part of the Son, emptying himself of his glory for the purpose, but turn this thought into a vague shallow generality that has no power to bring man an inch nearer to the living God. Christian knowledge owns only one incarnation of the Logos in the person of Jesus Christ alone, and must reject with like decision every transfer of the conception, whether it be to other human persons or to beings of a different race."

But how now is the restriction of this condescension to the case of the *human* race to be explained? According to the soteriological theory, by its special need of redemption; it is the lost sheep, over against the ninety and nine which are left behind for its rescue, Matth. xviii: 12; the good angels are supposed to require no similar grace for their perfection; while the fallen angels are regarded as too deeply lost to be capable of any redemption. But take the other view, by which the incarnation is supposed necessary without sin; what reason then can be given for this restriction? No other it would seem than this, that the human nature in itself considered stands nearer to the Divine nature, to the Logos, than all created intelligence besides. It is preferred thus, not for its moral misery and want, but for its metaphysical excellence and worth. The transaction serves not so much to magnify the riches of Divine grace, as to illustrate the comparative dignity of the human race.

Unless however we reason in a circle from the mere fact of the distinction itself, which it is pretended to account for by its means, this fancy is found destitute of all biblical proof. The angels are styled also sons of God; they stand in near union with him, more close at present certainly than that to which man is admitted; they excel man in knowledge; the state of the resurrection is even described expressly as being "like unto the angels." In the view of the Bible thus, the image of God in which man is said to have been created is not peculiar to him, but belongs to all personal beings; as indeed the idea of their personality itself implies. Nay, the deeper fall of the lost angels would seem to show that their first state was higher than the original condition of man; which in fact the whole christian world has always believed.

The human race, we may believe, has indeed a great and wide end to serve in the general economy of creation; not however as standing higher than other personal intelligences, but as

standing comparatively lower. According to our author, the very extremity of the case, and the difficulty of the conditions involved in it, would seem to be that which invests the work of redemption here with its special significance and interest. Sin itself becomes thus the occasion of such a display of Divine love as could not otherwise have place. This redounds to the distinction of the human race; and as it is the *human nature* that is glorified by its union with the Logos, in the work of redemption, he is to be regarded as standing to this nature in a relation of special intimacy and appropriation; in such way that the glorification of the redeemed is always a process of conformation to the image of the God-man, a partaking of his glory, the entrance into them of Christ's being and life. Redemption is more than the simple restitution of man's primitive integrity; what we gain in Christ is something incomparably greater than what we have lost in Adam.

Here however we are bound to use great caution, that the relation in question be not so taken as to break down the conception of the true and proper boundary, that must ever hold necessarily between the nature of the creature and that of the Creator. The principle of man's union with God is *love*; which implies full personal distinction, and here also distinction of substance or essence. If such union overthrew the substantiality of the creature, causing it to lose itself in the Divine substance, it would be in truth no union but only destruction. God's love then would be in its action like hatred, absorbing or annihilating its object. The view which assumes the necessity of the incarnation independently of sin, Müller thinks, is particularly exposed to the danger of falling into this unethical apprehension of the nature of our relation to Christ; according to which, man is to be regarded as coming to a sort of deification, an actual unity of *essence* with the Logos, in virtue of his humanity. Every such imagination of course, whether it be open or latent only and disguised, reduces the existence of the creature to a mere unsubstantial show; and ends necessarily in the yawning gulph of pantheism.

"But, now, if according to all that has been said the theory of the original necessity of the incarnation cannot be maintained, what view must we take of the *idea of the God-man*, beyond which certainly no higher idea is to be thought of as the *axis* of the Divine scheme of the world, and which therefore must necessarily be the central idea, around which all the other parts of creation revolve, as they find in it also their union and end? Does not the Apostle Paul say expressly in this sense,



Col. i: 16, 17, that the universe is created in Christ and for him, and that by him all things consist?

"Here different points of view are usually blended together, which need to be kept distinct.—So much the soteriological theory of the incarnation also must hold for settled, that Christ is the turning point of history, that the cross on Golgotha is the boundary where its centrifugal tendency became centripetal. Was the first Adam the commencement only of a process of natural life, which through the force of sin became a constantly growing departure from God; the second Adam is the author of a process of spiritual life, which rests in no end short of complete fellowship with God, 1 Cor. xv: 45 f. But the thought before us goes beyond this; it means that humanity, and so the world at large, has been originally formed with reference to the God-man and to union with him and under him as a head. Here also there is at bottom a deep truth, which is only half misunderstood. The end of all created life as it lies in God's mind, ideally viewed must be placed in such a free union of the personal creature with him, as shall cause it to be in full the organ of God, filled and glorified with his life, and as shall enable it, in virtue of the perfect holiness and bliss to which it is thus raised, to raise the rest of the creation also, after its way and measure, into a participation of the glorious liberty of the children of God. This world of personality, however, thus united with God, is in his eternal idea viewed as a whole, made up of manifold individuals joined together complementally as its members, and so as a kingdom of created intelligences, which as such remain substantially distinct from God, while he is in them still as all in all. The Logos now, as the absolute image of the Father and the hypostatical principle of his self-revelation *ad extra*, stands with all beings created in the image of God, that is with all personal creatures, in deep specific correspondence. As this principle he is the bearer of the Divine idea of the world, which comes to its focus in the conception of created personality; and in such view he is also the Mediator of all these intelligences as actually existing, Mediator in a universal sense that must be carefully distinguished from the soteriological, the Revealer of God for them in a purely inward way and by virtue of his dwelling in their spirit, and the sovereign king who conducts their history to its absolute end and completion; for only in communion with God can man, or any personal creature, rise to communion with God, whether directly or in the way of return from sin. Here we have in view the normal development of created personality, and in this sense it is undoubtedly true, that

man in his very origin is formed for Christ, namely as the Logos. The human nature is primitively disposed for the incarnation, just as all created personality is so in being made for communion with God. What since the fall the Holy Ghost is now for humanity in the sphere of redemption, and what before this redemption took place the Logos never ceased to be for the same humanity, though only as a light shining in darkness, that he would have been for it entirely and in full if it had gone forward without the disorder of sin; so that in this sense also the Holy Ghost is the representative of Christ, (John xiv: 16, xvi: 7,) here of course as the Logos. And thus all that is truly noble and great in antiquity, in which a higher inspiration comes into view pushing aside for the moment the narrow interests of selfishness, is to be referred to the immanent operation of the Logos as its source; some sense of which indeed we have even in that memorable word of the earnest Roman philosopher: *Nemo vir magnus sine afflatu divino unquam fuit*. Now however, since the entrance of redemption, all true elevation, in the case of man, springs from the Holy Ghost, and so stands inseparably connected with the pursuit of holiness, with the consciousness of personal sin and strenuous endeavors to be delivered from its power."

The passage, Col. i: 15-17, refers to this primitive relation to the Logos, and not to what he is for the world by the incarnation. This is implied by the title *πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως*, the first-born of the whole creation. In this view it is also, that Christ in his state of exaltation, having again the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, John xvii: 5, is described by the apostles as Lord and Head, not only of the Church, but also of the angels in their various classes and orders; comp. Eph. i: 21, Col. ii: 10, 1 Peter iii: 22, and the *ἀνωκεφαλαιότης* Eph. i: 10.

If this view of the ideal order of the world in the Divine mind be correct, all else becomes *means* for carrying it out to its appointed end. These are conditioned, in the everlasting omniscience of God, by the vast and mighty disorder which has been brought into the world by sin. The reality of this is so fearful, the catastrophe it involves so great, that to meet it properly required on the part of Divine love not merely a slight modification of its plan as arranged to proceed without sin, but the introduction of a new provision, the most wonderful invention of this love, the awfully glorious mystery of the incarnation. This takes its place thus indeed among the *means* which God employs to carry out the plan of the world, the centre in

which all means meet that have for their object the overthrow of sin ; a thought, which loses its difficulty just in proportion as we are brought to look into the abyss of evil and at the same time into the depths of Divine love.

It is only the fact of sin in truth, apprehended in its world-vast solemnity and significance, that furnishes an adequate reason for the highest act of God's love. The sense of this fact therefore must lead the way in every effort that is made successfully, to understand or interpret the christological mystery.

The distinguished writer, whom we have been trying to follow in this article in the way of free synopsis, is careful to tell us that he has no idea of charging the perilous consequences, which he is led to point out as apparently flowing from the theory he reviews, on such excellent men as Liebner and others who have stood forward in its defence. He regards them rather as fellow laborers with himself on the same platform of evangelical freedom, and has no doubt but that they have in their own way of looking at the subject what are supposed to be sufficient precautions against these consequences. His object is accordingly to open the way for their bringing out still more fully and distinctly the entire sense of their system, in all its aspects and bearings. "This inquiry proposes to be nothing more," he says, "than an excitement to a new revision of the christological theory in question, on the basis of the true biblical theism, and to a solution if possible of the difficulties now presented; for which very reason it has been felt necessary to give them the most sharp and distinct expression. If they can be shown to be groundless, of course on the basis just mentioned, the writer would not wish to be among the last certainly to embrace a view, the special advantages of which for the scientific construction of christian doctrine he can fully appreciate."

J. W. N.