

CHRISTIAN FAITH & LIFE

The Bible Student

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complete

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

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CONTINUING

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Number 1.

Our common definitions of Theology are of the logical order, and begin by assigning it to its genus, viz.,

Science, and then seek its differentia, by which it is distinguished from other

sciences, in its subject matter. Theology, we say, is that science which treats of God in Himself and in His relations. This appears orderly and entirely satisfactory. It refers Theology to its class, and discriminates it from the other members of this class in the same way that each of them is discriminated from its fellows. It has not given universal satisfaction, however,—chiefly through an unwillingness, for one reason or another, to recognize Theology as a Science.

Sometimes this unwillingness is the result of nothing more than too low a conception of "Science." If, for example, we mean by "Science,"

the study of phenomena, merely,—then, to be sure, theology is not a "science," just as philosophy is not a "science," because, to wit, it is something immensely more. This is the

point of sight, for example, of Professor WILLIAM KNIGHT, who writes:

"It is outside the province of science to investigate the nature of substance. That is the province of philosophy; and when we raise the question of the ultimate essence of all things, it is a problem of philosophical theology. Theology is not a science. If theology were a science, God would be a phenomenon. There is a science of Religion, because the phenomenon of the human mind, in its effort to apprehend that which lies beyond Nature, can be classified and so far sustained: but there can be no Science of the Infinite. It is true that we might scientifically explain the results of any manifestation of the Infinite in Nature or in History; and, therefore, to that extent, we might have a Science of Theology; but we cannot place it within the circle of those sciences which have for their object-matter the phenomena of the universe" (Essay on "The Classification of the Sciences," in *Essays on Philosophy*, pp. 80, 81).

On the other hand, there is often apparent a low view of theology which denies to it, in principle, all scientific character,

and sets it, indeed, over against "Science" as its very antipodes. A specially gross form of this misconception may be found in Dr. ANDREW D. WHITE'S *History of the Warfare of Science with Theology*, the very

THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT OF JESUS.

It is Luke's distinction among the Evangelists that he has given us a narrative, founded, as he tells us, on an investigation which "traced the course of all things accurately from the first" (Luke 1: 3). We note the careful exactness with which he records the performance by our Lord's parents of "all things that were according to the law of the Lord"—the circumcision of their marvellous child, "when eight days were fulfilled for circumcising him" (Luke 2: 21); his presentation in the Temple, "when the days of their purification according to the law of Moses were fulfilled" (Luke 2: 22); the annual visit to Jerusalem at the feast of the passover (2: 41); and the like. It belongs also, doubtless, to this acrobic of Luke's method—if we may use a still more English form of the word than the 'acribia' recognized by the *Standard Dictionary*—that he marks for us with careful precision, the stages of the growth of the child. He does not indeed distinguish all the eight stadia of development for which the sweet homeliness of Jewish speech provided separate designations:* but with some pointedness he brings Jesus before us successively as "infant" (Luke 2: 16), as "child" (v. 40), as "boy" (I. 43) in his progress to man's estate, and all this within the compass of a single chapter. The second chapter of Luke may fairly be looked upon, accordingly, as an express history of the development of the man, Christ Jesus; and it puts in what almost amounts to a direct claim to be such by formally summing up in two comprehensive verses his entire growth from childhood to boyhood and from boyhood to manhood. "And the child grew," we read, "and waxed strong, becoming (more and more) filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him" (v. 40). "And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man" (v. 52).

It would seem absurd to question that there is attributed to Jesus here what may in the fullest sense of the word be called a normal human development. The language is charged, indeed, with suggestions that this was an extraordinary child whose

*See them enumerated by EDERSHEIM, *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, I. 221, note 3, and the references there given.

growth we are witnessing, and his development was an extraordinary development. Attention is called alike to his physical intellectual and moral or spiritual progress; and in all alike it seems to be implied that his advance was steady, unbroken, rapid and remarkable. Those who looked on him in the cradle would see that, even beyond the infant Moses of old, this was "a goodly child" (Heb. xi, 23), and day by day he grew and waxed strong: and as he increased in stature, he advanced also in wisdom. Not in knowledge only, but in that instinctive skill in the practical use of knowledge, that moral and spiritual insight, which we call wisdom; and so

"not alone in power
And knowledge, but by year and hour
In reverence and in charity."

"And the grace of God was upon him," and he advanced with equal steps "in favor with God." As he grew, "becoming more and more filled with wisdom," he became more and more filled also with grace. Not only man, but God looked upon his developing powers and character with ever increasing favor. The goodly child grew steadily into the goodly youth, and the goodly youth into the good man. With every accession of stature and strength there was the accompanying increase of wisdom; and with every increase of wisdom there was the accompanying advance in moral and spiritual power. In a word, Jesus grew as steadily and rapidly in character and in holiness as he grew in wisdom, and as steadily and rapidly in wisdom as he grew in stature. The promise of the goodly child passed without jar and without break into the fruitage of the perfect manhood; and those who looked on the babe with admiration could not but look on the youth with marvelling (Luke 2: 47) and (for "he *advanced* in favor with men") on the man with reverence. This is, therefore, no ordinary human development that Luke pictures to us here; but it is none the less,—say, rather, all the more—a normal human development, the only strictly normal human development, from birth to manhood, the world has ever seen. For this child is the only child who has ever been born into the world without the fatal entail of sin, and the only child that has ever grown into manhood without having his walk and speech marred at every step by the destructive influences of sin and error.

We may well account it one of the gains that we derive from the picture which Luke draws for us of the growth of Jesus from infancy to manhood, that thus we are given the sight of one normally developing human being. This is how men ought to grow up; how, were men not sinners, men would grow up. It is a great thing for the world to have seen one such instance. As an example, it may seem indeed set too high for us; our wings are clipped and we feel that we cannot soar into these elevated regions of doing and living. But, as an ideal realized in life, it must stand ever before us as an incitement and an inspiration. When we observe this perfect human development of Jesus, issuing into the perfect life of the man, we discern in it a model for every age and for every condition of man of quite inestimable alluring power. "He came to save all by means of Himself," says Irenæus—"all, I say, who through Him are born again unto God—infants, and children and boys and youths and old men. He therefore passed through every age, becoming an infant for infants, thus sanctifying infants; a child for children, thus sanctifying those who are of this age, being at the same time made to them an example of piety, righteousness and submission; a youth for youths, becoming an example to youths, and thus sanctifying them for the Lord."*

Quite the most fundamental gain we derive, however, from Luke's picture of the human development of Jesus is the assurance it gives us of the truth and reality of our Lord's humanity. It is this, indeed, that Irenæus has in mind in the passage we have just quoted from him. The immediately preceding words run: "He did not seem one thing while he was another, as those affirm who describe Him as being a man only in appearance; but what He was that also He appeared to be. Being a Master, therefore, He also possessed the age of a Master, not despising or evading any condition of humanity, nor setting aside in Himself that law which He had appointed for the human race, but sanctifying every age, by that period corresponding to it which belonged to Himself." It would appear to be impossible to read Luke's language and doubt the real humanity of the child whose advance into manhood he is describing—advance along every element of his being—physical, intellectual and spiritual—alike. And this

* *Against Heresies*, II. xxii. 4. Cf. III. xviii., 4.

attribution of a complete and real humanity to Jesus is continued throughout the whole gospel narrative, and that in all the gospels alike. Everywhere the man Christ Jesus is kept before our eyes, and every characteristic that belongs to a complete and perfect manhood is exhibited in his life as dramatized in the gospel story. All the limitations of humanity, therefore, remained his throughout. One fresh from reading the gospel narrative will certainly fail to understand the attitude of those, who we are told exist, who for example, "admit his growth in knowledge during childhood," "yet deny as intolerable the hypothesis of a limitation of his knowledge during His ministry." Surely Jesus Himself has told us that He was ignorant of the time of the day of judgment (Mark xiii., 32); He repeatedly is represented as seeking knowledge through questions, which undoubtedly were not asked only to give the appearance of a dependence on information from without that was not real with him: He is made to express surprise; and to make trial of new circumstances; and the like. There are no human traits lacking to the picture that is drawn of him: he was open to temptation; he was conscious of dependence on God; he was a man of prayer; he knew a 'will' within him that might conceivably be opposed to the will of God; he exercised faith; he learned obedience by the things that he suffered. It was not merely the mind of a man that was in him, but the heart of a man as well, and the spirit of a man. In a word, he was all that a man—a man without error and sin—is, and must be conceived to have grown, as it is proper for a man to grow, not only during his youth, but continuously through life, not alone in knowledge, but in wisdom, and not alone in wisdom, but "in reverence and charity"—in moral strength and in beauty of holiness alike. Indeed, we find it insufficient to say, as the writer whom we have just quoted* says, St. Luke places no limit to the statement that He increased in wisdom; and it seems, therefore, to be allowable to believe that it continued until the great 'It is finished' on the cross." Of course; and even beyond that "It is finished:" and that not only with reference to His wisdom, but also with refer-

*The Rev. DR. ALFRED PLUMMER, in an article on *The Advance of Christ in Σοφία* in *The Expositor* for 1891 (Vol. IV., p. 10 seq). Dr. Plummer is as overtimid in asserting all that is involved in a true humanity of Christ at all times, as he is overbold in denying some things that belong to his true divinity to him at some times.

ence to all the traits of His blessed humanity. For Christ, just because He is the *risen* Christ, is man and true man—all that man is, with all that is involved in being man—through all the ages and into the eternity of the eternities.

We need not fear, therefore, that we may emphasize too strongly the true, the complete humanity of Christ. It is gain and nothing but gain, that we should realize it with an acuteness that may bear the term of poignant. All that man as man is, that Christ is to eternity. The Reformed theology which it is our happiness to inherit, has never hesitated to face the fact and rejoice in it, with all its implications. With regard to knowledge, for example, it has not shrunk from recognizing that Christ, as man, had a finite knowledge and must continue to have a finite knowledge forever. Human nature is ever finite, it declares, and is no more capable of infinite *charismata*, than of the infinite *idiomata* or attributes of the divine nature; so that it is certain that the knowledge of Christ's human nature is not and can never be the infinite wisdom of God itself.* The Reformed Theology has no reserves, therefore, in confessing the limitations of the knowledge of Christ as man, and no fear of overstating the perfection and completeness of his humanity. No danger can possibly arise, of course, from our accepting in the fullest meaning that can be given to them the accounts of our Lord's early development that Luke gives us, and the descriptions of his human traits provided for us by all the evangelists. It is, as we have said, gain and nothing but gain, to realize in all its fulness that our Lord was man even as we are men, made "in all things like unto his brethren" (Heb. 2: 17).

Where danger and evil enter in, is when, in order to realize the completeness of Jesus' humanity, we begin to attenuate, or put out of view, or even mayhap to push out of recognition His Deity. For though the Scriptures represent Christ as all that man is, and attribute to him all that is predicable of humanity, they are far from representing him as only what man is, and as possessing nothing that cannot, in one way or another, be predicated of humanity. Alongside of these clear declarations and rich indications of his true and complete humanity, there runs

*We are quoting here from *DeMoor's Com. on Marck*, I. 30—an acknowledged authority on Reformed Theology.

an equally pervasive attribution to him of all that belongs to Deity. If, for example, he is represented as not knowing this or that matter of fact (Mark xiii, 32), he is equally represented as knowing all things (Jno. 20: 17; Jno. 16: 30). If he is represented as acquiring information from without, asking questions and expressing surprise, he is equally represented as knowing without human information all that occurs or has occurred—the secret prayer of Nathanael (John 1: 47), the whole life of the Samaritan woman (John 4: 29), the very thoughts of his enemies (Mat. 9: 4), all that is in man (John 2: 25). Nor are these two classes of facts kept separate; they are rather interlaced in the most amazing manner. If it is by human informants that he is told of Lazarus' sickness (John xi, 3, 6), it is on no human information that he knows him to be dead (John xi, 11, 14); if he asks "Where have ye laid him?" and weeps with the sorrowing sister, he knows from the beginning (John xi, 11) what his might should accomplish for the assuagement of this grief. Everywhere, in a word, we see a double life unveiled before us in the dramatization of the actions of Jesus among men; not, indeed, in the sense that he is represented as acting inconsistently, or is inconsistently represented as acting now in one order and now in another; but rather in the sense that a duplex life is attributed to him as his constant possession. If all that man is is attributed to him, no less is all that God is attributed to him, and the one attribution is no more pervasive than the other. With reference to his knowledge, for example—a topic very much under discussion now-a-days—we do not think any simple reader of the gospels will hesitate to set his seal to the following representation, drawn from a recent German writer,* whose own solution of the problem of Christ's double knowledge is, however, far from that of the Bible itself:

"The Scriptnres presuppose the Son's omniscience as self-evident. If Jesus calls himself the Truth, He must first know all things, before He could say it; if He is the Light, He must not only see all things but He must see all things only in His light (Ps. 36, 10); and in fine, if He calls himself the life, no man can breathe and no angel can think without His living in them, and so filling and knowing all heaven and earth, so that in Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and without Him there is no knowing. As, therefore, His disciples already in His lifetime (John 16:30), as also Peter after

*JVL. DÖDERLEIN, in an article on *Das lernen des Jesusknaben*, in *Lemme's Neue Jahrb. für d. Theologie* I. 608 (1892).

His resurrection (John 21:17), say 'Thou knowest all things'—so we rightly conclude from His divine Being also His divine knowing, and that He has known all things even as man—already as child,—yea in the womb—and therefore, at all times."

That this conjoint humanity and Deity, within the limits of a single personality, presents serious problems to the human intellect, in its attempts to comprehend it, in itself or in its activities, goes without saying. Small wonder that many errors have been committed in the necessary effort which men have made rightly to conceive it. The short and easy method of dealing with it, is to grasp firmly the one series of representations and simply neglect or openly discard the other. This has been the procedure in all ages of those who would fain see in Jesus only a human Messiah; and it is a pitfall into which we easily stumble if we do not carefully keep in mind the whole double series of representations concerning him. In our vivid realization of the complete humanity attributed to him, it is distressingly easy to forget the equally complete Deity attributed to him. Others seek to pare down both series of representations until, out of the trimmed fragments that remain, they can succeed in fitting together for themselves the portrait of some middle being—neither man nor God—which they call Jesus. Thus violence is done to both series of representations alike: and the result is a fair reproduction of no single declaration of the Bible. Others still would seek to distinguish between the essential nature of Jesus and his earthly manifestations; or even between the two kinds of knowledge in him, intuitive and experimental, in the hope of thus finding a key to unlock the puzzle. All equally in vain; the Biblical facts require us to recognize in the constant possession and use of the God-man a double series of qualities—the one essentially divine and the other essentially human; and in doing so, they impose on us the recognition in him of two natures—so that He is perfect in His Deity and perfect in His humanity—subsisting in one person, without conversion, without confusion, eternally and inseparably.

In these words is enunciated, it need hardly be said, the doctrine of the Person of Christ which has been since the Council of Chalcedon (held in 451 A. D.) the common heritage of the Christian Churches. It was not arrived at easily or without long and searching study of the Scripture material, and long and sharp controversy among conflicting constructions. Every other solu-

tion was tried and found wanting; in this solution the Church found at last rest, and in it she has rested until our own day. In it alone, it is not too much to say, can the varied representations of the Bible find each full justice, and all harmonious adjustment. If it be true, then all that is true of God may be attributed to Christ, and equally all that is true of man. Full account is taken of all the phenomena; violence is done to none. If it be not true, it is safe to say that the puzzle remains insoluble. No doubt it is difficult to conceive of two complete and perfect natures united in one person; but that once conceived, all that the Scriptures say of Jesus follows as a matter of course. He within whom dwells both an infinite and a finite mind, both at every moment of time knows all things and is throughout all time advancing in knowledge. There is mystery enough attaching to the conception; but it is the simple and pure mystery of the Incarnation—without which a real Incarnation would be inconceivable. The glory of the Incarnation is that it presents to our adoring gaze, not a humanized God or a deified man, but a true God-man—one who is all that God is and at the same time all that man is: on whose almighty arm we can rest, and to whose human sympathy we can appeal. We cannot afford to lose either the God in the man or the man in the God; our hearts cry out for the complete God-man whom the Scriptures offer us. It may be much to say that it is because He is man that He is capable of growth in wisdom, and because He is God that He is from the beginning Wisdom Itself. It is more to say that because He is man He is able to pour out His blood, and because He is God His blood is of infinite value to save; and that it is only because He is both God and Man in one person, that we can speak of God purchasing His Church with His own blood (Acts 20: 28).

And unless God has purchased His Church with His own blood, in what shall His Church find a ground for its hope?

Princeton, N. J.

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