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ARTICLE I.

THE CHRIST OF JOHN.

1. The germ of the doctrine of the Christ was cast into the soil of Eden. Straightway it sprang up into a vigorous plant, which has outlived and far surpassed all the glories of Paradise. Its growth through the centuries has not been constant or uniform. Long periods have elapsed without any perceptible progress; but these have been followed by epochs of great and sometimes even startling development. In the fulness of the times God was manifest in the flesh, and dwelt among us for a third of a century. For about another third of a century the Canon of Scripture was not extended beyond the limits of the Old Testament. Malachi had uttered the precious promise, "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple." This was the latest promise in the Hebrew tongue. Through the long succeeding night, in which there was no vision and no revelation, it lingered in the air like a sweet presence, cheering the hearts and sustaining the hopes of all who in that troublous time waited for the consolation of Israel. But now the messenger had prepared the way. Christ, born in Bethlehem of Juda, had finished the work given him to do; had been crucified under Pontius Pilate; had been dead and buried; had risen again on the third day, had ascended on high, led cap-

tivity captive, and given the inestimable gifts of the Holy Spirit unto men. Human haste would have lost no time in putting on record an account of these marvels. Indeed, Luke expressly informs us that many had taken the work in hand before he wrote his monograph. But the Spirit of inspiration, working "without haste and without rest," waited, as well as we can judge, to the decade between 60 and 70 A. D. The Church doctrine then effloresced into the three synoptical Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

But the Beloved Disciple had not spoken yet, though oftentimes urged to speak. His life was prolonged beyond the allotted span of threescore years and ten—beyond the labor and sorrow of fourscore. Fourscore and ten came, and still the old man sat upon the heights overlooking the sea of eternity, his grey hair floating in the breeze, and his dim eyes gazing wistfully out upon the solemn main. Peter and James, who had been with him on the Mount of Transfiguration and in the garden of Gethsemane; Philip and Andrew, and the rest of the Apostles, including the fiery-hearted Paul,—all, all were gone. Their lessening barques showed like phantom ships on the far waters. Only Christ was with him—Christ abiding with him, as with us, evermore.

On one Lord's day, tradition says, he was sitting in the assembly of the faithful, when the Spirit came mightily upon him, and he cried out in an ecstasy, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." And in addition to, if we should not say above, the other three, flowered forth the last, tenderest, truest evangel. So it pleased the Spirit of truth, which infallibly inspired them all.

2. It could not be otherwise than that John's Gospel should give a portraiture of Christ resembling the previous ones in many respects. Yet it was to be expected that the Beloved Disciple, if he wrote at all, would add something to what had been said before. It was not unreasonable to hope that he would conduct his readers at least a little farther into the innermost heart of the Master.

Perhaps it may be found true that as years roll on, and we leave youth's restless activity behind us, we are more drawn to

John, and that somehow John brings us nearer to Christ. Some temperaments are fascinated in early life by his quiet pages, and it is a fascination that never loses its hold. But with others the peculiar charm is not felt until a later period. To both these classes of contemplatists the following meditations are offered.

3. Charlotte Brontë quotes from an unnamed source the thought that the career of the first Napoleon was like a rainbow, whose centre was in the heavens, while its ends rested on the earth. The military school at Brienne—the Empire—St. Helena.

The lives of most of earth's distinguished men more or less resemble this, at least when the rainbow is complete, and sweeps in its fulness from horizon to horizon. The first part of life may be hidden in impenetrable obscurity, as in the case of Elijah; or a Julius Cæsar may be cut off in the zenith of his greatness. But if life is lengthened out, the days of weakness come at last. The old man returns like a wearied child to the bosom of earth, our common mother. The wreck, however, is not always reserved for the time of old age. Misfortune, disease, crime, the wickedness of others, may antedate the ills of time, and bring distress and ruin upon us in middle life.

Mark's Gospel omits all mention of Christ's childhood and earlier manhood. He comes forth unheralded at the age of thirty from Nazareth in Galilee to be baptized of John, and then at once enters upon his ministry. All are amazed at his mighty works. His fame spreads abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee. He heals the sick, he feeds the hungry, he casts out devils, he raises the dead. But soon a dark cloud arises; it enshrouds the whole sky, and from its fowl bosom the lightning leaps forth to smite and to destroy. A brief supplementary chapter adds that he arose from the dead, commissioned his apostles, and ascended into heaven.

Matthew and Luke take a different starting point, and give the particulars of the birth of Jesus. Luke's narrative is an inimitably sweet pastoral. The Old Testament worth and simplicity of Zacharias and Elisabeth in the hill country of Judea; the gentleness and purity of Mary in a fierce and filthy age and place; the shepherds with their flocks; the light from heaven;

the song of the angels. Matthew surrounds the manger-cradle with the glamour of the Orient. Wise men from the east, guided by a meteor through their long journey, offer gold, frankincense, and myrrh to the Babe born King of the Jews. Yet with both Matthew and Luke, this flash of brightness is followed by the obscurity that even yet rests upon the infancy and childhood of our Redeemer. This gives way in due time to the glory of his public ministry, and this in turn to the dark and fearful tragedy of Calvary.

4. After referring a geometrical magnitude to a given point, given lines, or surfaces, mathematicians often change the original planes of reference, and deduce quite different and most interesting equations. By a similar transformation of coördinates, John goes far back of the birth of Christ—back of Paradise—back to the beginning, to the boundary line separating the two eternities, in the former of which God existed alone, and in the latter of which he was to coexist with his universe. From this proceeds logically enough a new conception of the career of the Christ.

At a certain season of the year, as twilight sinks into night, a star of the first magnitude glitters in the northwestern sky. As night advances the star sweeps downward, struggles with earth-born mists and vapors, dips beneath the horizon, and at midnight is totally lost to view. By and by it rises again, gleams out fitfully through smoke and cloud, mounts higher, glows brighter, until night goes, and the shadows flee away. Then, having regained the elevation of the evening preceding, it lends its rightful splendor to the sky. This is John's conception of the Christ, and it is an altogether unique conception. Save Jesus of Nazareth there is none other born of woman to whom it is applicable. No wild dream of Grecian or Hindoo mythology had anticipated this thought of John; and in the centuries since it was set forth, the Church has but feebly realised the grandeur of that which the Holy Ghost revealed by the mouth of the Beloved Disciple.

“We cannot reach the mystery.

The length, the breadth, the height.”

Never, throughout the ages of the ages. For the Infinite must ever be beyond us and above. Exalted One, who from the inac-

cessible heights didst sink below the horizon of our thoughts for our redemption, pity our weakness, and lift us up into the heaven of thy peace!

5. Confirmatory of this view is the remarkable fact that in some of its aspects John never rises above the conception of Christ with which he starts out. In the beginning was the WORD. On reflection we agree with Ryle and dissent from Olshausen, in rejecting the idea that John here followed any vain traditions of the Rabbins, or the teachings of Philo¹ concerning the Logos. It belittles John, and also the Holy Ghost speaking by John, to suppose that in so grand a matter, and writing for the Church of all ages, he adjusted his phraseology to the vagaries of a few wretched theosophists scattered through Asia Minor.

John was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. He does not exhibit the Grecian culture of Paul. He views all things from the standpoint of the old dispensation. He looks abroad upon the world-wide sea of the new régime, but casts loving glances up the river of the old. In this last book of Holy Writ, John echoes and interprets the opening words of the first. Very captivating to him was the primeval grandeur of the simple early faith and speech. In the beginning God created. In the beginning was the Word. God created by a word. "God said, 'Be light; and light was.'" The Hebrew does not analyse; does not expatiate on volition and conation; but seizes the external fact of the uttered word as the

¹Ritter gives an account of Philo Judæus in his History of Ancient Philosophers, Vol. 4, c. 6. From this it appears that Philo was an exceedingly visionary speculator, hesitating "half-way between the Grecian and the Oriental cast of thought." "Out of matter," says Ritter, in stating Philo's views, "God has, it is true, made all things, but he did so without touching it, for it could not be that the omniscient and the happy should come into contact with shapeless and confused matter." Query: Was the Son of God not omniscient and happy? In making the Cosmos, did he do a work that would have been degrading to the Father? According to Philo, the word of God was an energy, or the collective energies of God. It is also the supra-sensible world, τὸν νοητὸν κόσμον. God is the cause (αἰτιον) of the Cosmos; the word is the instrument (ὄργανον). The angels also are words of God. It is incredible that an inspired apostle should have countenanced any such wild errorist, if, indeed, he had any acquaintance with Philo's vagaries.

expression of all that precedes it, and the proximate cause of all that follows. And now, what had been obscurely intimated by the prophets is brought out into the full light of day by an Apostle—even the mystery of the Trinity, and the office work of the Persons of the Godhead. The Father is the fountain of Deity; the Son is the creative Word. It was he specially who, in the beginning, created the heavens and the earth. Before this beginning, of old, even from everlasting, the universe lay as a Thought in the divine Mind, and now the Word spake that Thought into Being. The Son is the proximate cause. As the natural philosopher takes a beam of white sunlight, and resolves it into separate colors, so John takes the first light of revelation, in Genesis, and shows us the Trinity in the unity of the Elohim. If it were to our present purpose, we might add, that as the philosopher recombines the refracted colors into the original beam of white, so John, on occasion, reblends the mysterious Three into the primal mystery of the One. "I and my Father are one. * * * He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

To resume: The Psalmist says: "By the *word* of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the hosts thereof by the breath of his mouth." The word comes forth from the man; the Son is of the Father; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God. Πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο. All (things) came into being by means of him (διὰ *instrumentalis*); and without him not one (thing) came into being which has come into being. How succinct, yet how definite! The thought, the word, the work; the Father, the Son, the universe. But in due time there came into existence beings in the likeness of God; angels and men; creatures that could know the Creator; and to them the Son is again the Word. The Word spoken of God, and the God-speaking Word. No one hath ever seen God; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath revealed him. (The margin of the Revised text has it, the only begotten *God*, who is in the bosom of the Father—θεός for υἱός.)

So that the Word speaks the universe into being; and to the thinking part of the universe he tells of the grace and the truth that are in the Father. Evermore the Word uttering the Thought; and higher conception than this, there is none.

6. Which leads to the remark that no inventor of stories, no dramatist of how high soever order, could have dared to begin in this way. Even if he could have done so, he would have felt that so august a character could not be sustained; but in any, ablest human hands, it would sink to some lame and beggarly conclusion.

John was sure of his theme, sure of its truth and its greatness. He could not begin too high in describing the

“Strong Son of God, immortal Love.”

It was his duty, not to originate, but to portray. - He was not a creator, but a seer; and lovingly did the aged eyes linger upon the divine original, and the aged hands delineate. He does not hesitate to begin higher than highest heaven, and to bring his glorious subject down into the deepest humiliation of earth. He leads us to the verge of an abyss, from which we recoil in horror—an abyss into which none but the Son of God has ever descended, or can descend.

7. It was not only unnecessary, but really foreign to the purpose of John, to describe the lowly manger in the caravansera, the offering of turtle doves instead of the lambs of the rich, and the inconvenient and toilsome flight into Egypt. Enough and most apposite to say that the Word became flesh. He by whom all things became now himself becomes. The chasm between the Infinite and the finite is spanned. The Eternal assumes the temporal, the Creator the creature, into a personal, and real, though ineffable, union, which shall endure forever. Glorious mystery of mysteries, which we shall worship evermore!

But now, again, as some majestic strain of music by a great master sweeps from joy into pathos, Christ appears as the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. To become man was an infinite condescension; to become the lamb of sacrifice, to bleed and die as the sin-offering—this was indeed an infinite humiliation.

8. A profound principle is couched in the advice of Horace to the writers of epics: Never introduce a deity unless the occasion justifies a divine interposition.

*Nec deus intersit, nisi dignus vindice nodus
Inciderit.*

The incarnation of the Deity is the most stupendous fact in the history of the world; nor is there reason to believe we should err if we added, in the history of the universe. Stupendous in itself; stupendous in its results. Yet John is fully committed to the doctrine, and indeed makes it the fulcrum of his whole account of the Christ. If this gives way, all is lost.

This doctrine staggers unbelief, yet it has been accepted, in some form or other, by vast numbers, both in and out of Christendom. The countless ills of the present life, the darkness and terror of the boundless future, and man's sense of his own guilt and weakness, have led the human heart to cry to heaven for a deliverer. There is an unspeakable longing for some one to help our infirmities, and since earth fails to furnish this helper, our eyes look wildly to the sky. It is interesting, from a philosophical point of view, as well as otherwise, to note that many myriads have believed that the deity has come, and will again come, to our help in a visible form. It is not well to deride this principle, so deeply imbedded in our nature. The broad instincts of humanity are apt to be right at bottom. But we must distinguish between an instinctive appeal to a supernatural power, and the painfully absurd methods which that power has been imagined to employ. In the Hindu theology, the gods have, at innumerable times, come down to man. But the most noted theophanies have been the Avatars of Vishnu. Let us pity the degradation of so gifted a branch of the Aryan family, when we read in one of their Puranas that Vishnu appeared on earth as a fish, as a tortoise, as a swine. In a sense, this is beneath contempt; yet let us beware how we despise the shrieks of drowning men.

There is a progression discernible in the Avatars. In the fourth, the god comes as a being compounded of a lion and a man; in the fifth, as a dwarf; in the sixth, as the son of Iarmadayni, and thenceforward as a man or a demi-god. His tenth and last incarnation is yet to come; so that there is an approach to the truth.

John retains all the truth and rejects all the error of the Gentile myths. Man is sinful, helpless, dying; and there is wisdom, power, and compassion on high. But there are no grotesque

representations in the Gospel. Surely, this must have been due to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. To pass from the Puranas to the Evangelists is to pass from extravagance to sobriety, from folly to reason.

The Scriptures inform us that the second person of the adorable Trinity appeared to the fathers on several occasions; but it is not of these that we are treating. Our business is with the one only incarnation of God in humanity, wherein Christ was born of the Virgin Mary; wherein he assumed our nature into a personal and eternal union with the divine. So far as we are advised, this particular view is to be met with nowhere outside of the Scriptures; and in them it is most fully brought out in the writings of John.

9. After these preliminary thoughts, the question recurs, whether John gives any sufficient reasons for the assumption of human nature by the Godhead. What might reasonably, and did actually, induce the Word to become flesh, and to taste the bitterness of death for sinful men?

We answer, in the first place, his regard for the glory of the Father. This is the chief life-work of him whose life-time is eternity, to reveal the Father. In this work there was a perfect agreement in the two wills, the divine and the human, of Jehovah-Jesus. On the human side, we find in Jesus of Nazareth the one human being who loved the Father with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength, and desired, above all things else, the Father's glory. When nature shrank back from the terrific ordeal of Gethsemane and Calvary, and he asked himself, "What shall I say? Father, deliver me from this hour?" After a moment's weakness and tremor he was strong again, and said, "Father, glorify thy name!" Again, on the verge of his appalling sufferings he triumphed over fear, and, lifting up his eyes to heaven, communed, the eternal Son with the eternal Father, saying, "The hour is come! Glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee."

John thus teaches us that the only begotten Son, and the noblest spirit that ever dwelt in a human bosom, desired the glory of God with a longing deeper than the love of life, and stronger

than the fear of death. That we should know God, and knowing him, love him, and loving him, rest in him, and resting in him, rejoice with an untold joy,—ah! God himself judges this the best thing that even he can aim at outside of the ineffable communion of the Trinity. This is his principal work through the ages, so far as his universe is concerned, and, with the same limitation, this is his chief joy. For our poor love, and trust, and rejoicing in him as our strength and our song, and taking him as our all, and feeling that our lot is an indescribably blessed one, is very sweet to the heart of the great Father.

Every holy being in all God's vast dominion seeks the glory of the Eternal One—seeks to know, and to lead others to know, his holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. To secure this end, no sacrifice is too great, provided it be but necessary to its attainment, and provided also, that the greatness of the honor bear a just proportion to the greatness of the sacrifice.

A crisis had arisen in the divine government. A district of his realm was in revolt; his authority was defied, his law trampled under foot, and his majesty dishonored in the dust. Eternal justice must be upheld, and eternal right maintained, at all hazards. At the same time, there was an opportunity of disclosing to the intelligent universe an unfathomable ocean of love, pity, tenderness, in the Godhead. The existence of this unsounded sea had not been suspected even by the archangels. It had lain there from eternity, unknown, save to the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Shall it continue to lie thus unknown forevermore? This, to speak after the manner of men, was the question to be decided by the all-wise Trinity. And who that has ever, with eyes divinely enlightened, looked abroad upon that mighty ocean, but will asseverate that the decision recorded by John was holy, and just, and wise, and good!—and, so far as our scanty knowledge of God's illimitable past enables us to judge, the holiest, and the justest, the wisest, and the best purpose of his that ever has been revealed to angels or to men. So that we are utterly at a loss to conceive how anything transcending it can, in any coming cycle, emerge from the depths of the Godhead.

10. In the first place, then, the Christ of John, apprehending

all these truths far more profoundly than is possible to us, did not deem the sacrifice of Calvary too great if thereby he might so illustriously glorify the Father. The second reason will be presented in the form of an apologue.

A royal family is residing in a castellated palace. Everywhere the marks of opulence abound, and corridor, stairway, and hall are elaborately furnished and exquisitely adorned. But there is within those massive walls one chamber whose very existence is known only to the monarch and his son. The door is hidden, and the key is in the possession of the king himself. That chamber is the richest in all the building. It is glorious in clustered columns and fretted ceiling, in paintings, statuary, and mosaics, and it surpasses belief in its treasured gold and gems. Hitherto the expenses of state have made no drain upon this mine of wealth; but now the cry of the famishing in one quarter of his kingdom smites upon the great heart of the king; for his heart is truly royal; but it is written on parchment, and subscribed with the king's sign-manual, and sealed with his own signet, that this treasure cannot be expended except on condition that the son pass through a course of heroic toil, and end his career with a death of horror. Then saith the son, Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me—to do thy will, and thy law is within my heart. Wide open fly the doors; the treasures pour forth, and the king's heralds make proclamation to all who are anhungred and athirst, to all who are faint and dying, that they need hunger and thirst, sorrow and die no more.

The Christ of John always regards mankind as in a deplorable condition, famishing with soul-hunger, consuming with soul-thirst, and he announces himself to be the bread of life and the living water. He beholds them dying as if bitten by venomous serpents; if they will only look to him, they shall live. They labor and are heavy laden; he and none but he can give them rest. He does not offer to lay down his life in order to procure any trivial advantages for our race. He does not appear in the interests of commerce, or as a great teacher of material science. He never lays brush upon canvas, or chisel upon marble, or plectrum upon lyre. No, nothing less than the dread realities of sin and

holiness, hell and heaven, judgment and eternity, could have brought him from the bosom of the Father. His mind was untouched by the sentimentalism of an imaginary deity who will not punish sin with everlasting banishment from heaven and eternal death in hell. He came to rescue from irremediable woe, utter ruin, endless despair,—irremediable, utter, and endless, except for his intervention. It is appalling to hear his gentle voice echo and reëcho those fearful words, "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." In accordance with this, although in a sense he is "prodigal of his great life," it never occurs to him that he is squandering the most precious blood in the universe. He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied.

How august a work! The Saviour of every soul of man that ever shall be saved, from the first to the last of all earth's generations! There is no parallel to this conception. What breadth of view! This conception cannot have originated in the mind of John. He could not have swept back over the forty centuries of the past, and forward over the even yet uncounted centuries that were to come—over island and continent, tribe and nation, Jew and Gentile.

But it is not a mere negative deliverance that is contemplated by the Christ. From age to age man sighs for relief. The Brahman theology presents man as a fallen being, holding an existence individuated from Brahm by a real or an imaginary alliance with matter, yet never, in his many and painful transmigrations, losing the capability of a final absorption into the divine essence. This once attained, he reaches an existence as calm as a sea unruffled by a breath of air. He becomes in form and semblance what he was before in fact, a part of God. The billow sinks to the level of the placid deep; the rising smoke is lost in the quiet blue of heaven.

According to Max Müller and others, the Buddhists recognise no Brahm. They are thoroughly atheistic. But one may become Buddha and enter into Nirvâna.¹ By the Nirvâna their

¹*The Nirvâna.*—By collating the different articles of Max Müller in his "Chips from a German Workshop," we reach the following as his

canonical books appear to have meant annihilation, but a widely accepted opinion was that it meant a passionless existence, without desire, regret, or fear—such an existence as the Buddhist might have feigned a God to possess, if indeed there had been a God.

Very different from this is the thought of the Christ. The thrice-precious words of the Master are, "I give unto them everlasting life. Because I live, ye shall live also." The God of the Old Testament was a living God. The Hebrew verb "to live" was almost identical with the verb "to be." The former might be called an intensified form of the latter, as though living were an intense being. Through the abyss of eternity, before time was, and through the infinite voids of space before this island universe had arisen from amid the waters, there thrilled, as there yet thrills, a Life,—the life of God. The apocalyptic angel swears not by him who was, and who is, and who is to come, but by him that liveth forever and ever. In the Christ was life.

The coarse materialism of our day asks in vain, Whence is life? seeking in matter the source of that which springs from spirit. A worldly philosophy may rise to the conception of mental life, but it denies, or at least ignores, the life of the soul, the true spiritual life which Christ gives. But to his chosen ones the Master saith, Ye shall live! There is peace in his presence, but it is not the peace of absorption into the waveless sea of Deity;

final opinion: (1.) Gautama, the first, or at least the only historic Buddha.—*i. e.*, enlightened one,—believed in the immortality of individual souls. Every one *may* finally become, perhaps *will* finally become, Buddha, *i. e.* enlightened, and enjoy an endless, serene, passionless existence. This belief is indicated in the first and second of the Three Baskets, or collections of canonical writings of the Buddhists. (2.) His metaphysical followers kept refining on this passionless existence, until they reduced it by successive negations to absolute Nihilism. Müller quotes M. Barthélemy Saint Hilaire as saying, "Nothing remained but to annihilate the soul." The Romish Bishop Bigandet, Apostolic Vicar of Ava and Pegu, says that Buddha leads man, "after all, into the bottomless gulf of a total annihilation." (3.) The common people did not adopt the Nihilistic view, but held to a happy state of endless being as the ultimate goal. Consult (besides the above named volumes) Müller's "Science of Religion, with Papers on Buddhism."

there is repose on the banks of the river, beneath the verdure and the bloom of the tree of life, but it is not the repose of annihilation. A life energetic, jubilant, unwearied, perhaps with intervals of quietude, and measureless calms of meditation interspersed among the activities,—may we not look forward to this as the life of heaven? A horizon of knowledge ever widening; a theatre of action ever enlarging; a fountain of holy affection ever deepening! In his presence there is fulness of joy; at his right hand there are pleasures forevermore.

The glory of this career transcends our utmost reach of thought. So much the more reason why it should constitute a worthy end to him who only can comprehend it in its fulness, and whose love prompts him to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think.

12. Thackeray has surpassed himself in the character of Henry Esmond. Henry was the son of a man of rank and fortune, but there was a bar sinister on his escutcheon, and his titles and estates fell to another. The wife of the kinsman who succeeded to his place and demesne, was a warm-hearted woman and very kind to the little Henry. He grew up to love her and was inexpressibly grateful for her goodness to him in the circumstances. In course of time, however, he learned that the bar sinister was a figment; he had been born in lawful wedlock, and he obtained legal proof of the fact. He had but to say the word; and his stain would be publicly removed and his due rank and wealth be restored; but his benefactress, now bereaved of her husband by a violent death—what would become of her? He locked the secret up in his bosom, and for her sake bore the shame and the loss patiently on. By some indirect way and without his connivance, she too learned the truth of the case and was overwhelmed with astonishment and admiration. An instance not unlike this is given by Dickens in his fearful Tale of Two Cities. A wretched inebriate, almost an outcast from society, was treated kindly by a young married couple in Paris. The reign of terror came. The young husband was sentenced to the guillotine, but by a ruse the sot took his place, rode on the tumbrel to execution amid the jeers of the canaille, and laid down his life for his friend.

Ah, yes, for a good man peradventure some would even dare to die; and pleasant it is to meet with a few such portraitures from the hands of those who have studied the human heart. Too often, alas, from the Medea of Grecian antiquity down to the Romola of the English yesterday, the artists seem to have dipped up their colors from the seething caldron of hell, and to have applied them to the canvas acrid and scalding.¹

Between these two extremes we have every intermediate grade of human character; but above self-sacrifice to a benefactor the dramatists and *littérateurs* either cannot or dare not rise. The outpouring of the tenderest love upon one's enemies, the voluntary enduring of long-continued reproach, insult, and persecution, ending in a bloody and shameful death, for one's bitter enemies, would have violated all probability. No such portrait could have been drawn, for there was no original to sit for it. Any attempt in that direction would have been justly decried as fantastic.

No, the uninspired writers have portrayed man; John has given us the lineaments of the God-man. One perfect example of this superhuman virtue has been seen on earth; one, only one in all the universe, exalting the name of Man above that of Archangel, and teaching us what we may become. For every human soul bears within itself the germs of the godlike, and the indestructible capacity of being born again into the image of Christ; and if this heroism of love to those who hate and revile and persecute us has been found anywhere on earth save in the great Exemplar, it has been exhibited in his followers, and wrought in their hearts by the same Spirit that wrought mightily in his. John did not invent this character. He could not have done so, if he had desired. He says, times without number, that it is a portrait from life, and this must have been true. The coldest logic confirms the truth of his declaration.

And yet this Christ is so far above the most exalted of natural men that many from that day to this have scoffed at it as no historical verity. Nor can any relenting sinner, though reared

¹In Romola, George Eliot even forgets the good taste of Euripedes, and the criticism of Horace, *Nec pueros coram populo Medea trucidet.*

under the sound of the gospel, so believe in this love toward himself as to rest his soul thereupon, until he is taught the sweet lesson by the Spirit of God. Nor can they who have most profoundly meditated upon this surpassing theme do otherwise than cry out, Oh, the depth! Oh, the riches! Oh, the wonders of his love! Or, like the saintly Edwards, give up all articulate speech for broken sighs and tears.

13. How does the Christ of John deport himself during the period of his humiliation on earth?

John does not treat this part of his subject in vague generalities, as a wily impostor might. He comes unflinchingly up to the most difficult task ever set before a writer, and he must have failed if he had been an inventor and not a narrator. It is impossible for us to understand what is wholly outside of our own experience. If the angels are disembodied spirits, they cannot comprehend our mixed human life. Mind and matter are so diverse that *a priori* the possibility of their union would have been doubted, if not denied. The antitheses are certainly very startling, though long use and familiarity have taken off the edge of the novelty.

Some, we know not how many, of the angels have temporarily occupied bodies, and may thus have far clearer conceptions of human life in general, and of the work of Christ in particular. But neither angel nor man can be for one moment divine. Hence John was compelled to write of things totally outside of his experience, and could have done so fittingly only by revelation. The impossibility of understanding is even surpassed by the greater impossibility of originating. We may apprehend when we do not comprehend, and we may also apprehend when we could not have invented. If any revelation of God's nature and character be vouchsafed to us, there must needs be something in it that we can lay hold of, and yet it seems unavoidable that there should occur glimpses into the far off and the unfathomable. Our steps must ever and anon be arrested on the brink of giddy precipices of thought, and our vision lose itself in the immensity of the sky above us.

Such and so difficult a theme had John in the uncreated God-

head of the Christ, and the difficulty was immeasurably enhanced by the personal union of the Godhead with the complex unity of the manhood. A Christ so constituted must pass easily and naturally from the exhibition of weakness to that of infinite power; from a tremor approaching quailing to the eternal calmness of Deity. He sits wearied and thirsty by the well side—he, the Creator of all worlds—and cannot, at least does not, slake his thirst except with water drawn up by the feeble hands of woman; yet he declares to her his power to open in all our hearts a fountain (*πηγή*) of water springing up into everlasting life. He sinks into death, but is evermore the Resurrection and the Life. He loves Mary and Martha and Lazarus and John as we might, and he loves a world with an affection as far beyond our reach as is his creative power. One moment he weeps; the next moment he raises the dead. He is the Son of Man on earth, and the Son of God in heaven; or, more briefly, the Son of Man which is in heaven.

14. Christ now sitteth at the right hand of God, in the glory of the Father. Nineteen centuries have elapsed since he sat in the upper chamber with his disciples and said, "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." The prayer has been answered, and there is a continually increasing fulfilment of his last petition, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me."

The mediatorial glory of Christ was obtained by means of his humiliation. The star sweeps downward through the mists of earth on the way to its subsequent elevation; and it is passing wonderful that a similar necessity existed in the divine government.

15. A great master of chiar'oscuro has painted Christ in the temple. On each hand the countenances of his enemies are obscurely seen as they shade off into the surrounding gloom. Behind him a column, a curtain, a recess of the temple are faintly descried amid the darkness. But in the foreground Christ

himself stands bathed in a flood of light, and his brightness reveals in subdued splendor the woman who was a sinner, kneeling forgiven at his side. If he had appeared in this dark world only as the one sinless being, he would have appeared glorious by the contrast. If without the sacrifice of himself he could have bestowed pardon on wretched sinners, he would have been seen as the forgiver of sins. But he did more than these. He came into a world where sin and death abounded, and by falling a victim to them, conquered both, and extorted from them the great honor of his name. Thoughtful minds have in all ages asked, and sometimes in sore dismay, Why has sin been permitted to enter God's universe? Death is here because sin is, but how came sin to have an existence? We construct our theodicies in the attempt

“To justify the ways of God to man.”

Yet, after all, unanswered questions arise, and we are constrained to pronounce the problem too high for our present stature, too dark for our present light. We can only stand within the great bulwarks of faith, and feel that the positive evidences of the holiness and justice, goodness and truth of the Eternal, are altogether irrefragable. The day may come when our eyes shall pierce through this mystery of all time, but now we walk by faith rather than by sight; by a faith, however, that is more rational than unbelief.

The Christ of John does not discuss this problem. It was once almost thrust upon him in the question, “Did this man sin, or his parents, that he should be born blind?” To which he made answer that the blindness was attributable to neither of these causes, but had occurred in order that the works of God should be made manifest in him. Christ accepts the situation of a world justly condemned, justly lying under God's wrath and curse. He endorses the righteousness of God in the whole matter. “O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee.” He stands at the beginning, and by one omniscient glance surveys the past eternity wherein he dwelt in the bosom of the Father—an eternity holy, blessed, tranquil, compared with which “time is but an upstart novelty.” It is

too late for God to think of destroying his own throne by connivance at sin.

But if there be any explanation of the mystery of sin's appearing in the universe, *i. e.*, an explanation that we can understand, he does not divulge it. Either we cannot, or it is better that we should not, know it. Faith must come in somewhere; why not here? To the Christ all is light. There is no darkness in him; there is none to him. But out of these horrible evils he educes the chief glory that God has received from his universe. How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

15. The star of evening that swings down to the horizon and again mounts aloft, is not alone in the sky. Its motion is but a part of the movement of the entire heavens. And so, too, the redemptive work of Christ is not disconnected from the inconceivably vast onward movement of God's administration. What this connection is, and what are the relations of the various parts of the grand unity, neither our present information nor our present faculties enable us to know. This study lies before us in the coming cycles. There is much for us to learn, and, may it not be said, much for us to do. But now we have only the intimations of Holy Scripture, and these are to be handled soberly and with humility. Various scattered passages of the word point to our disenthralled and purified earth as the final home of the saved of our race. The argument, if not absolutely conclusive, is far stronger than would be supposed by one who has not duly weighed it. And we are plainly told of the abode of the blessed, wherever it shall be, that the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it. The Christ has in all ages manifested great interest in our little world. It is, it was, but a little spot in his universe, but he had chosen it as the place where he was to die, and he was to die only once in his eternity. "I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive forevermore."

The smallness of man's stature, and the minuteness of his abode, do not seem to have constituted an obstacle to the Christ. It is a beautiful thought of Chalmers that the telescope and the microscope were invented simultaneously; and while the former

taught us the prodigious magnitude of the worlds above and around us, the latter revealed a limitless downward progression of living creatures beneath us, every increase of microscopic power bringing within our range of vision infusoria that were too nearly infinitesimal to be seen before. So that man stands midway between two infinities. If God careth for the infusoria, and fashioneth their tiny frames with such masterly skill, how much more will he care for us?

The difficulty, however, is one that has been felt most in very recent times and by a very small number of minds,—the great mass of believers hitherto, and of unbelievers also, having no practical knowledge of telescopes and microscopes. The Christ is fresh from a whole eternity in which matter did not exist at all, and during which his consciousness was solely spiritual. What he loves and dies for is a mind that can know God, a heart that can love him, and a will that can choose him for an eternal portion. Nor could it signify anything to him whether that thinking, loving, willing personality inhabited a body six feet or six furlongs in length. We are dearer to him than pterodactyls, or ichthyosauri, or any other monsters of an earlier geologic period.

To him, too, whose dwelling place was and is immensity, it was a matter of the least concern whether his throne should be on a planet of the size of ours, or on a sun as large as Sirius, or amid the fainter splendors of a nebula like that of Orion. For the light of this vast and magnificent universe is to him but as that of a glow-worm amid a whole hemisphere wrapped in a starless and rayless night. Yes, he shall reign where he died, and the world of the cross shall be the world of the throne.

16. John gives the final touch to the conception of Christ as our Emmanuel. Christ stood in Eden, and, after the fall, appeared from time to time to the fathers. In the exodus from Egypt he advanced so far as to take up his abode with his people. A tent more sumptuous and more beautiful than the rest, and from Solomon's time onward a palatial temple in the holy city, marked the dwelling place of the Messiah. By another great step in advance he became bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. Then was fulfilled in a higher sense than ever before that

which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, "They shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." So he was and shall continue to be God and man in two natures and one person forever. In this sense he can never cease to be God with us. But after his resurrection, the place of God's special self-manifestation not being upon this earth, it became necessary for the risen Saviour to ascend to heaven, and sit at the right hand of the Father. All power in heaven and in earth was given unto him, and to-day he holds the sceptre of the universe. During this period of absence from the Church militant he is still present with the Church triumphant, and the latter is far the larger part of the Church universal. We on this side of the river are but a feeble host; beyond, the white tents of the redeemed stretch far and wide, till lost in the dim distance, and over them floats the banner of the Lamb that was slain. He has left us, but he has promised to return, and on this promise the Church militant rests lovingly, ever crying with John, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

John's account of the last judgment is brief, but inexpressibly grand. The great white throne, the Judge, earth and heaven fleeing affrighted from his face; the dead, small and great, standing before God, the open books, the eternal doom; the sea, death, Hades, grim dungeons of the dead, opening their hoary portals to the outward rush of unnumbered millions; the lake of fire. Then come the new heaven, and the new earth, and the holy city descending from God out of heaven. And now the idea of the Emmanuel is completed. The tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God—an Old Testament thought, in Old Testament language. And who that reads of his wiping away all tears from our eyes, and of there being no more death there, neither sorrow nor crying, neither any more pain, but feels as if this were almost too good to be true, and longs, with a great home-sickness, to be there!

17. At the end of the 20th chapter of his Gospel, John says: "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that, believing, ye might have life through his

name." Can we dispassionately consider this subject in all its bearings, and for one moment entertain the idea that John originated this transcendent conception; that he invented the miracles and discourses which so wonderfully sustain this divine-human character; that he conducts an imaginary hero through a life of humiliation, and a death of ignominy, yet ever keeps him great, great above the sons of men? Why does John never claim the credit of so superlative an achievement in invention? Why does he turn away the love of his readers from himself to Christ? There is only one possible answer to such questions. Another way of putting the matter: Is this conception from heaven or from hell? Is it of God, or of Satan? If the hosts of evil had been able to conceive so pure, exalted, and holy a being (which is impossible), why should they have offered their conception to the wonder and adoration of the universe, and exhibited themselves as the instigators of his murder; and then exalted him to the throne of God, and represented him as destroying wicked men and wicked angels (*i. e.* themselves) in a merited lake of fire; and finally as dwelling, with those who have believed on him, in a holy, blessed place, world without end, from which the unjust, and the filthy, the dogs, the sorcerers, the whoremongers, the murderers, the idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie, shall be excluded forevermore?

Ah, no! The Christ of John is the Son of God, and the Saviour of mankind. May he abide with us, and may we abide in him!

18. In his Lord Rector's address to the students of the University of Edinburg, Carlyle refers to "a book by Goethe—one of his last books, which he wrote when he was an old man, about seventy years of age—I think one of the most beautiful he ever wrote, full of mild wisdom. * * * * I have often said, there are ten pages of that which, if ambition had been my only rule, I would rather have written than have written all the books that have appeared since I came into the world." The main thought of the passage in Goethe appears to be, that reverence (*Ehrfurcht*) is "the soul of all religion that ever has been among men, or ever shall be."

“The first, and simplest,” says Carlyle, “is that of reverence for what is above us. It is the soul of all the Pagan religions; there is nothing better in man than that. Then there is reverence for what is around us or about us. * * * * The third is reverence for what is beneath us; to learn to recognise in pain, sorrow, and contradiction—even in those things, odious as they are to flesh and blood—to learn that there lies in these a priceless blessing. And he (Goethe) defines that as being the soul of the Christian religion—the highest of all religions.”

If by this Goethe meant, as he seems to mean, the priceless blessing which we may derive from subjective sorrow and suffering, it is a wise and noble thought. Thrice blessed is the ministry of pain; and wonderful indeed is it that the Most High has converted what was of old the penalty of sin into the means of sanctification from sin. Truly divine is the alchemy which transmutes the iron that enters our souls into a crown of gold upon our heads.

Yet this can not be considered the soul of Christianity. The highest of all religions, the only true religion, includes the three forms of reverence. In the second form, it bids us “Honor all men.” But the special peculiarity of Christianity is that it combines the first and the third, and presents as the object of adoration to men and angels a DIVINE SUFFERER. His humiliation is the pedestal of his glory. In him suffering becomes divinely beautiful as the robe of love. We had not otherwise known THE LOVE. But for the Christ and his cross the universe never could have known what love could be and do. The memory of his passion has left a trace of sadness on his countenance, and now we have Christ, the fairest one—Christ, the most beautiful. Even he was made perfect through sufferings, though in a sense different from that in which it is true of us, for he knew no sin. By suffering he was outwardly qualified to save, for it was the absolutely necessary ransom paid for our redemption; thereby, also, he was inwardly fitted to be our merciful and faithful high priest, and is the noblest of creatures, as well as God over all, blessed forevermore.

Goethe calls Christianity “a height to which the human species was fated and enabled to attain, and from which, having once

attained it, it can never retrograde." Rather, let us say, the conception of the Christ was one which the Godhead's eternal counsel and purpose foreordained to realise in time, in the person of the God-man; for without this realisation, even the Godhead (reverently be it said) could not execute his highest good pleasure. Let us say, too, that the heart of man was originally created with the capacity to receive this thought of God, and, having once received it, can never let it go. Nor can our race be persuaded that the thought was evolved from the depths of human consciousness. No, it came down from heaven. And so far is man from creating this transcendent conception, that he never rises to its level. The purest and noblest spirits on earth, after long communion with it, always find that its fulness is beyond and above them. They, most of all, cling with a passion of fondness to the Christ, and will never give up their belief, their trust, their adoration. Nor will the spiritual universe ever loose its hold of the great thought, or "willingly let it die." It is too late for that, now. The knowledge of it has already reached the angels. Those exalted beings bend over (*παρκίπτω*) and peer down eagerly into the mystery. So Peter informs us. Paul gives it as one part of the broad purpose of the gospel, that God's manifold wisdom should be made known to the principalities and the powers in heaven; and John copiously represents them as worshipping the Lamb that was slain.

If there be still other spiritual existences (and we can hardly survey the material heavens and doubt it; surely the uncounted worlds are not mere curious mechanisms; they or their satellites are, or shall one day be, inhabited); but, to speak with the utmost caution, *if* any beside earth-born and the angels can know God, they will, they must, know of the Christ. By this thought God has enriched his universe; and poor is he that does not possess it. Not more surely do the waves of light from our sun spread abroad through space until they sweep to the outmost verge of the realm of matter, and break only along the shores of nothingness and night.

Riches of our poverty, strength of our weakness, brightness of our joy, solace of our sorrow, dwell in our hearts, world without end.

L. G. BARBOUR.