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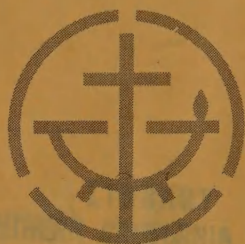
# THE IMAGE OF CHRIST

AS PRESENTED IN SCRIPTURE

VAN OOSTERZEE







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THE IMAGE OF CHRIST.



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# THE IMAGE OF CHRIST

AS PRESENTED IN SCRIPTURE:

*AN INQUIRY CONCERNING THE PERSON AND  
WORK OF THE REDEEMER.*

BY

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TRANSLATED FROM THE DUTCH

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MDCCCLXXIV.

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᾽Ὡς

ἐφανερώθη ἐν σαρκί,  
ἐδικαιώθη ἐν πνεύματι,  
ὥφθη ἀγγέλοις·  
ἐκηρύχθη ἐν ἔθνεσιν,  
ἐπιστεύθη ἐν κόσμῳ,  
ἀνελήφθη ἐν δόξῃ.

PAUL (1 Tim. iii. 16).

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Watson and Hazell, Printers, London and Aylesbury.

## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THE following pages form the sequel to Dr. Van Oosterzee's two volumes on the *Christology of the Old Testament and of the New*, of which they embody the results. The author having already in the preceding volumes examined the various utterances of Sacred Scripture which shed any light upon the person and work of Christ, seeks now to combine their teaching in one whole, and to give the total impression produced by the testimony of Scripture upon this subject—to present, in a word, the image of Christ as *reflected in Holy Scripture*.

In the person of Christ he sees a testimony to Scripture, as throughout Scripture a testimony to Christ. "As regards the authority of Scripture," he writes, "if there is really such a manifest agreement in the prophetic and apostolic testimonies concerning Christ as we have again and again shown to exist, then precisely this agreement is, in our estimation, the great proof that the Bible is something infinitely more than that which so many will now make of it, a merely human book. How should such a glorious harmony be conceivable as we have observed between the Old Testament and the New,



between Jesus and the Apostles, between Apostle and fellow-Apostle, if the Scripture were no document of extraordinary revelations of God, written under the special guidance of the Holy Spirit? As Scripture, read in simplicity, shows us Christ in all His fulness, so does Christ, once known aright, in turn lead us back to Scripture, and give testimony to its truth and value."

In the supernatural origin and character of the Christian revelation and the Divine-human nature of Christ's personality is to be found the key to the author's whole system of Christology. With what logical severity he pushes to its ultimate consequences the view which sees in Christ, though a perfect man, nothing more than man, is evident more especially from pp. 198—201; while the calm conviction of the absolute powerlessness of those efforts directed against the very existence of the Christian Church, which makes itself felt throughout the whole argument, occasionally, as on pp. 442, 443, rises even to the height of exultation.

The issue raised throughout the work—a Christ, natural merely, or also supernatural, man merely, or also God-man—is an exceedingly clear one, as it will also become an increasingly practical one in the present day. The position of the writer in relation to this question, if it were not already well known, would be sufficiently defined by the following extract from his preface:—"Time must show whether the modern Christianity, which is now commended to us in place of the old and tried one, in reality possesses such an enlightening, consoling, new-creating power as—witness the history of the ages—this

last possesses ; or whether a Gospel interwoven with fables and legends, a Christ who is nothing more than a genial and noble man, a so-called Revelation, in a word, deprived of every supernatural element, in truth satisfies the wants of a heart which has learnt to thirst after God, the living God. For our part, we cannot but think that such a rejection of Supernaturalism—that is, of the Biblical-Christian belief of revelation—as that with which many now please themselves and their spiritual kinsmen, in its legitimate consequences leads to a merely Naturalistic Deism, or, still more consistently, to Pantheism, and in this way finally to the denial of *all* religion.”

The work is written with the design of being serviceable “in advancing the science of faith among those who cannot for their everlasting peace rest satisfied with anything or any one short of the full Christ of the everlasting Gospel.” “Willingly,” says Van Oosterzee, adopting the words of a distinguished German theologian, “will we allow ourselves to be deprived of the glittering crown of exact science, if we can at this price win for the Gospel a mightier influence upon the practical life of our nation.” At the same time, while specially designed to confirm the faith of the Christian flock, this work may be found useful in suggesting a line of thought for Christian teachers also.

As regards the work in its English form, the translator has sought faithfully to reproduce the thoughts and words of the writer, with such slight modifications or omissions as might render it more generally acceptable in this country. These changes, which do not affect the

sense, have been made with the concurrence of the author, and with special reference to his latest work, on *Christian Dogmatics*. Where a word of explanation seemed to be required, a foot-note has been added within brackets. That on p. 160 should have been supplemented by a reference to p. 607 of the author's *Christian Dogmatics*, in which he interprets Col. i. 20 of the far-reaching consequences of Christ's death on the cross.

In the citation of Scripture the translator has sometimes followed the Authorised English version, and at other times the Dutch version—where the latter seemed better to express the spirit of the Hebrew or Greek text. In the case of the New Testament the revised version of Dean Alford has often been followed.

Nothing further remains but to wish that this work, which has proved a source of refreshing and strength to not a few, may go forth to witness here also—as it has already done in Holland and Germany, and now in Sweden—to the glory of Him who is the Head of the Church, the centre of God's saving revelation, “the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things He may be first.”

M. J. E.

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#### ADDENDUM.

The note of the translator on p. 203 applies only to the variation in the readings of Matthew. The MSS. of Mark and Luke favour the received text, which probably gives the original reading of Matthew also.—See Van O., *Commentary on Luke*, ch. xviii. 19.

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## INTRODUCTION.

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**A**MONG the fairest legends of Christian antiquity may perhaps be reckoned that of St. Christopher. He is said to have been originally a Syrian heathen, distinguished by great strength of body, and resolved to devote himself only to the service of that master who should be proved to excel him in strength. He was directed to a powerful king; but the latter was afraid of the Evil One, and Christopher draws the legitimate deduction that this last must thus be more powerful than the other. He sells himself now into the service of Satan; but Satan flees in his turn so soon as the cross is planted. Who, then, can this Crucified One be, before whose sign even the prince of darkness trembles? Christopher soon learns, and determines to range himself under His banner. In answer to the question, how he may best show his unlimited subjection to this new master, a hermit counsels him to take his place as a ferryman beside a neighbouring stream, and to offer to all who desire it to bear them on his brawny shoulders to the opposite side. In reality the strong man, who will only bow before the stronger, builds for himself a lowly hut upon the bank, and now daily performs gratui-

tously the pious labour of love. There, on a certain night, he hears the silvery voice of a little boy, who begs he will also carry him over, and the ready servant at once arises. But hardly has he with his light burden set his feet in the waves, when they begin wildly to roar. It is as though the child whom he carries becomes with every moment heavier: as yet scarcely in the middle of the stream, the exhausted bearer seems about to sink. "Who art thou, child?" asks he, astonished and alarmed; "it is as if I were bearing nothing less than the whole world upon my shoulders!" And, "In reality you bear even more than the world," is the answer he receives; "you bear Him who made heaven and earth; I am Christ the Lord, whom you serve." Now he is by the hand of the child immersed in the water, baptised in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and in remembrance of this miracle named Christopher (*Christophorus*), the Christbearer. In proof that all this was no empty dream he was to plant the staff which he bore on this occasion on the other side, in the sand of the river's bank, and in one night the dry wood should become verdant and sprout.

It falls not within the object contemplated by us to investigate the probable origin of this significant legend. But who will be surprised that it presented itself to our mind as we at last overcame a natural shrinking, and addressed ourselves to the work of sketching the image of Christ in all its extent? The experience, in truth, of the man who ventures on the field of Christology is not unlike that of St. Christopher. As though it were a

light burden, youthful zeal undertakes this task. Animated with sacred longing desire to test one's strength to the highest degree, he hardly considers whether it may not be too heavy for human shoulders. But with every step in advance grows the broad stream which must necessarily be waded through; the burden one has imposed on oneself presses ever more severely the weary shoulder; the consciousness of the rashness of the act expresses itself ever more powerfully than that of the dignity and grandeur of the effort. Unless the Lord Himself reveals Himself to the man, and baptises him with the Holy Ghost, where is the strong man who would not in this path eventually sink down?

*The image of Christ as presented in Scripture*, this, then, is the task which awaits us. Scarcely have we placed this inscription above the following pages, when it becomes self-evident how almost impossible it is to enter upon a more sublime, but at the same time a more difficult, subject. The difficulties already experienced in the preparation of the *Life of Jesus* return here, but augmented with many new ones. Not years, but ages, here extend themselves before the eye of him who would investigate the subject; not through earth alone must his imagination roam, to heaven must his spirit soar; not only of the past and the present, also of the mysteries of the future must he testify, under the leading of the Spirit of truth. All the rays of the glory of the Christ must he, so far as possible, collect into one focus, and not merely present a series of sacred and profane testimonies *about* the God-man, but, illuminated and

guided by God's own testimony, must display Him *Himself*, in His peerless lustre, before the eyes of many. Even though the most accomplished pen had become a pencil in the most cautious hand, who would venture to project so much as the first lines of this magnificent painting without the question once more rising to his lips, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

But, notwithstanding all the difficulty of the undertaking, there is not a little which tends at once to banish the dread of its absolute impossibility. It is, indeed, no philosophic Christ, but a purely historic one, whom we are to attempt to depict; no creation of one's own excited imagination, but the centre of God's highest and last revelation, to which we now direct our attention. For every one who with us still regards Holy Scripture as the pure source and infallible standard of Christian truth—and the number of these will increase in proportion as unbelief more unblushingly and superficially assails the Divinity of the Gospel—the answer is thus already in principle given to the all-important question, "What think ye of the Christ?" We have shown<sup>1</sup> that the testimonies of Prophet and Apostle concerning Him, far indeed from being in open contradiction with each other, display the fairest harmony, as well one with another as with the words of the Lord Himself. Thus, then, all the stones lie at hand, which, well compacted, must form that Christologic structure, of which the majestic outline already stands before our mind in the

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<sup>1</sup> *Christologie*, i., ii.

examination of the separate utterances of the Old and the New Testament. What we now have to do is in this way nothing less, but also nothing more, than to rear the superstructure upon the foundation thus laid ; in other words, to draw the likeness of the Son of God and Son of Man, as, according to the unanimous testimony of Scripture, which cannot be broken, He displays Himself to us. Endless would the task be, if we would make any other conception of the Lord's person and work, which might assert itself beside or in opposition to ours, the object of a formal and extended criticism. But that which belongs only to the schools of theology, without possessing any value for Christians who will know in whom they believe, is with reason set aside. It is no abstract dogma that we seek to develop, but a living image which we attempt to sketch ; no controversy with persons, which we desire to open, but a calm contemplation of things, into which we wish to enter ; no running criticism, in a word, which we propose to give of systems *about* Christ, but a visible picture of the Christ *Himself*, as He has in some measure obtained a form in us. We are permitted, in doing so, to attach ourselves to the testimony of His believing Church of all ages, and to make an independent use of the light shed by the most distinguished men of earlier and later times upon the dignity of His person and the glory of the Redemption given us in Him. We are in some respects in the position of the artist who would make the canvas and marble speak to the honour of the Holy One, and—acquainted with the efforts already put forth by meritorious prede-



cessors—now also essays his own, and however high his ideal remains above his powers, yet does not lose courage, because above his outspread frame has hovered the breath of a devout prayer. Of one of the most renowned Italian maestros, Angelico de Fiesole, it is related that he was wont to paint the head of Christ and of the Holy Virgin only on his knees: why should the Christian theologian need to despair, who has no other design than in his domain in spirit to do the same?

It will be unnecessary in this place at large to indicate or to justify the method we wish to pursue. Already<sup>2</sup> have we pointed out in broad outline the form designed for an investigation which, while fruit and crown of an earlier labour, may yet be regarded as a wholly independent one. If we had now to begin with the question, who Christ was, and what He has done, it would indeed be most natural to begin with His earthly manifestation, thence to rise, on the one hand, to His pre-existent state, and, on the other, to that which He has become, after passing through suffering into glory. But since our presentation is to embrace as far as possible all that has been revealed to us in the Gospel concerning Christ, it is unquestionably best conducive to the end in view that we make choice of the *historic* sequence, and begin with penetrating as we are able into the past, in order finally to direct our glance to the yet hidden development of the future. If it is at all allowable to transfer the idea of time to a domain which in part belongs to eternity,

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<sup>2</sup> *Christologie des N. V.*, pp. 24, 25.

we desire to contemplate the Son of God and Son of Man *in the various periods of His existence and activity*. As whilom John, we have to place ourselves at the standpoint of believing contemplation, and to speak successively of

THE SON OF GOD BEFORE HIS INCARNATION ;

THE CHRIST IN THE FLESH ;

THE GOD-MAN IN GLORY.

It will scarcely be necessary to indicate the principles which will guide us in the carrying out of this work. The sacred witnesses of the Lord are for us extraordinary ambassadors of God, before whose high authority we bow, and His own word concerning Himself the end of all controversy, even where we have not yet succeeded, or have only partially succeeded, in independently and clearly penetrating the truth thereof. And yet, while we regard it as folly not to be willing to believe anything which one has not previously comprehended, we regard it as indolence not to wish to comprehend what, and on what grounds, we believe. Where thus the word of truth opens up a depth for our eye, we cast therein a resolute, although ever reverential, glance ; and while we begin with sitting down as children at the feet of Supreme Wisdom, we nevertheless continue mindful of our vocation, as men to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, and to understand the things which in Christ are freely given to us of God. And, while all our knowing and prophesying in this childhood state necessarily continues limited, we adhere

as closely as possible to God's own testimony contained in the Sacred Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament—a testimony of whose infallible certainty we are fully assured, not only because it rests upon facts, often assailed indeed, but never refuted, but also, and especially, because the Holy Ghost testifies in our hearts that the word of the Lord is truth. Rather do we esteem it possible that all men should be seen to be liars than that one jot or tittle of that which the God of truth has spoken, and caused to be written in accordance with His will, should fall to the ground. The decisive “It is written” remains thus for us the highest word in this particular domain, no less than others. That which Scripture leaves undecided, we leave likewise an open question; what Scripture testifies of Christ, “we accept always and in all places, with all thankfulness,” but at the same time seek, so far as in us lies, to sound its meaning. Proceeding under the guidance of that infallible light, we desire to leave no single side of His adorable nature and His redeeming work wholly beyond our examination. We seek to bring His heavenly form as closely as possible within the vision of all who desire with unveiled face to behold the glory of the Lord. And while we are thus conscious of giving an unequivocal testimony to the honour of the truth, we at the same time labour for the advancement of that real peace which is effected, not by the concealing, but only by the revealing of the truth.

“In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost!” Seldom was anything of importance spoken or done in former times, in any province,

without an invocation of this thrice holy Name, in which—according to the old legend—also Christopher was baptised. What word can better be our last one, where we now without delay wend our steps into the Holy of Holies, than an earnest and solemn, “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”?





# THE IMAGE OF CHRIST.



## PART I.

### THE SON OF GOD BEFORE HIS INCARNATION.

**E**VEN on the first glance at the person of our Lord there is seen to be an immense difference between Him and all who are born of woman. We men begin to live, only when we receive an existence from God through the medium of our earthly parents; a few months before, we existed only in the thoughts of God, not in reality. It was not our act, but our appointed lot, to belong to the human race; independently of our own willing and choosing, we have beheld the light of life.<sup>1</sup> Our Lord, on the contrary, has, as well according to His own utterances as according to those of His inspired witnesses, existed in heaven with the Father, many centuries before

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<sup>1</sup> It is true the doctrine of the pre-existence of all human souls has found renewed advocacy within the most recent times, among others, on the part of the renowned theologian, Julius Müller, who seeks in this way to explain the origin of sin; but the erroneous character of this philosophising has been displayed in a convincing manner on various sides.

His appearing upon earth, and even before the beginning of all things. It has indeed been sought to explain the unequivocal expressions, which we meet with especially in the writings of Paul and John, with regard to this His pre-existence, in such wise that they lose even all appearance of demonstrative force in relation to this mystery; but the arbitrary character of the measures resorted to is self-evident, and is already condemned, not before the tribunal of faith alone, but also before that of genuine science. It is only by doing violence to Scripture itself that any can efface from it the conception of a personal pre-existence of the Lord; he who will not read it there, deserves to be placed on the same level with those who can look upon white as black, or square as round.<sup>2</sup> To make a writer say exactly the opposite of that which he manifestly intends to say is not allowed to any expositor. If, under the influence of philosophic doubt, any one will reject the distinct testimony of the Gospel, this at least is intelligible; but let no one continue so partial and superficial as to assert that the truth in question is not presented in the Gospel.

If then we come to the Lord, as did the Jews on one occasion,<sup>3</sup> for an answer to the question, "Who art Thou?" He Himself gives to us the emphatic hint that we are to seek the key to the enigmas of His earthly appearing, above all things in His earlier, heavenly life. In order to

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<sup>2</sup> Observe, for instance, how John, the greatest of the prophets, regards the "heavenly" as separated from him, the "earthly," by a wide gulf (John iii. 31, 32; comp. John i. 1—18; viii. 58; xvii. 5; Phil. ii. 6—8; Col. i. 16, 17).

<sup>3</sup> John viii. 25.

understand the Son of man even to some extent, we must as far as possible learn to know Him as the only begotten Son of God; in order rightly to appreciate the exalted rank of the Son, we must view Him not merely in relation to the Father, but in relation *to the whole Divine Nature*, whose interpreter and visible manifestation He may be called. Yet even at this we cannot possibly stop short. The question now naturally arises, in what relation the Son of God, in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily, stands to the whole *Creation* existing outside Himself, whether visible or invisible. And if, again, so far as we know this creation, man is its crown and adornment, and if the *assumed* relationship of the Lord to our race can be sufficiently explained only from an earlier, originally existing relationship; the relation of the Son of God to *Humanity*, even before His incarnation, affords us a fresh object of reverent examination. Since, finally, there existed again in this humanity a nation, which, according to the testimony of irrefragable history, was century after century the bearer of God's special revelations, and in the midst of which preparation was more directly and expressly made for the appearing of the Word in flesh; then finally the question engages our attention, whether (even before the fulness of the time) the Son of God stood in any nearer relation to this chosen people, and if so, in what relation. When this too has been duly examined, we may and must immediately pass over to the contemplation of the Incarnation of the Logos, with which our *second* main division begins. In this first division there are thus four circles

of investigation laid down before us, of which the first is absolutely infinite, and each succeeding circle narrower than that which precedes. It is evident from the nature of the case, as well that the one section will occupy us much longer than the other, as that not all are equally attractive or easy to treat of. No single one is, however, we think, to be entirely passed over in silence; and just as little must we combine that which, perhaps, may be much better understood, if regarded as an entirely separate head. We therefore treat of our subject in four distinct sections, the order of which will be sufficiently justified by what has been said above.

*The Son of God and the Divine Nature.*

*The Son of God and the Creation.*

*The Son of God and Humanity.*

*The Son of God and the People of Israel.*

## I.

### THE SON OF GOD AND THE DIVINE NATURE.

TO know God is everlasting life ; but all true knowledge of God proceeds only from revelation. As the sun is seen only by its own light, so is the Infinite contemplated only in the light which He Himself sheds for the eye of him who seeks Him. And in reality He has not left Himself without witness to man, created after His own image. Nature is the clear mirror which displays to us His adorable Being ; reason and conscience are the revelation of God in our heart ; the history of the ages shows to us not only that there is a God, but also how He, the Almighty One, with adorable wisdom, righteousness, and love, guides the course of events, and makes them subservient to the fulfilment of His high decrees. Thus He gave to our race a *general revelation*, even to those upon whom the light of the Gospel does not shine. And when sin, having come into the world, exerted its baneful influence, and called forth the need for redemption, it pleased Him to give another revelation, and to open up the way of deliverance, which sinful man, left to his own light, could not possibly have discovered.<sup>1</sup> In the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 9.

Testament we have the original documents of this nearer, *particular revelation*. Its history is thus admirably set forth by an Apostolic writer: "God, having spoken at sundry times and in divers manners in time past to the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken to us by the Son."<sup>2</sup>

In receiving this memorial of the special revelation of God into our hands, we have, without doubt, taken an important step in advance, upon the way to the sanctuary of the knowledge of God. Questions, the solution of which earth had attempted in vain, have been answered for us with indisputable authority from heaven itself: that with regard to which the voice of nature had been silent, is proclaimed to us by the word of grace. Yet we have no right to expect that such nearer revelation of God will explain to us all the enigmas of His adorable Being. Rather is it to be expected, from the nature of the case, that every unravelled mystery will awaken in us the supposition of the existence of additional mysteries, which it is not given us perfectly to fathom. With every veil of mist which the sun dispels from before its face, the brighter becomes the lustre which it sheds, but the more too does it dazzle our eyes. Holy Scripture accordingly never comes to us with the promise of explaining to us the deepest mysteries of the nature of God. On the contrary, it everywhere places in the foreground the incomprehensibleness of God for the finite intellect; the knowledge of God attained to by

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<sup>2</sup> Heb. i. 1.



the light of the Bible may indeed be a pure one, but never a complete one. How then can we be surprised to learn from the Bible things in relation to the nature of God, of which we should never have had the faintest conception without a nearer revelation, and which, even after they are made known to us, display a dark and mysterious side? Much more would it call forth reasonable surprise, and awaken a well-grounded distrust, if we should here learn nothing but what the mind of man could easily have itself discovered by prolonged reflection. It is true, we might reasonably expect of a special revelation of God, that it would contain nothing which is in irreconcilable conflict with the general revelation, in reason and conscience, in nature and history. The true and unchangeable One cannot possibly be in conflict with Himself; the one revelation may complete the other, but not contradict or annul it. But certainly the special revelation may proclaim things which surpass the power of our limited understanding to comprehend, and in connection with which we accept *the fact* on Divine testimony, without *the manner* in which it is so becoming perfectly clear to us. It is the province and duty of reason to examine the basis, the sense, the connection of an extraordinary revelation, and its harmony with the character of God; and it will do this so much the better, in proportion as it is enlightened by the Holy Spirit. But to reject the irrefutable contents of the Biblical revelation, merely because this contains depths as yet unfathomed, and perhaps unfathomable, may be designated as not merely unchristian,

but also as unreasonable and immoral. It is impossible conscientiously to regard the nature and limits of the human capacity for knowledge in the supersensuous domain, without coming to the conviction that Rationalism, as well in its newer as in its more ancient form, is nothing but vain assumption, in part sprung from boundless pride, and not seldom allied to the greatest superficiality, under the guise of a profoundly scientific spirit. Conscientious heathen and philosophic thinkers or poets have often spoken with greater modesty of the mysteries of the Godhead,<sup>3</sup> than Christian Theologians, who, with lofty tone, decide *à priori* what in its nature and operation were possible or impossible, and could, perhaps, prove everything, except their own competency.

It will surely not be asked, why we begin our investigation by reminding of that which is perhaps doubted by none, and yet is forgotten by so many? We could not address ourselves to the task of presenting the image of the Son of God in His relation to the whole Divine Nature, without first of all placing ourselves at the standpoint from which this thrice hallowed mystery must be regarded and treated of. He who knows no

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<sup>3</sup> Think of the striking account, with regard to Simonides, which is found in Cicero, *De Nat. Deorum* I., c. 22. In a similar sense a French poet of the last century, Sylvain Marechal, replied to a prize question, proposed as to the nature of God, with the verse :

“Loin de rien décider sur cet Etre Suprême,  
Gardons en l'adorant un silence profond.  
Le mystère est immense et l'esprit s'y confond.  
Pour savoir ce qu'il est, il faut être lui-même.”

other God than the God of nature and reason alone, will at once meet with a stumbling-block in the conception of a *Son* of God, as existing in distinction from the Father. He who reverences the Revelation of the Bible, but only so far as he can grasp it with his finite intellect, must be offended with all which the Gospel proclaims to him of this Son of God, in His original, pre-mundane relation to the Father. Only he who has learnt to distrust all his own knowledge of, and acquaintance with, Divine things, so far as this does not rest upon the testimony of God Himself, is in a condition to prize the light which the Gospel sheds upon the nature of the Son, not less than upon the work of the Father.

“Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord.”<sup>4</sup> This word contains the fundamental truth, not only of the Mosaic Religion, but also of the Christian, and even of that of Islam. The Biblical Revelation inexorably excludes the doctrine of Polytheism, not less than that of Pantheism. The God who here speaks by His divinely enlightened messengers, is a personal, sovereign, living God, definitely distinct from all that exists through Him and outside Himself; no power, but a Being; no something, but a person, a God who can be personally worshipped, loved, and obeyed. Existing from all eternity in and of Himself, He unites all perfections in Himself, in the most perfect manner; but although these perfections are, for our clouded eye, separated, even apparently in conflict with each other, yet He who pos-

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<sup>4</sup> Deut. vi. 4.

sesses them is unchangeably one and the same. He is that He was, He remains that He is; and as His nature is perfectly unlimited and infinite, so also it remains absolutely indivisible, because it is purely spiritual. Yet this oneness of the Divine nature is no abstract, uniform, mere numerical unity, no unity of the intellectual conception, but of life; which so far from excluding an inner diversity and fulness of existence, rather presupposes and requires it. As we observe in one and the same man a clearly defined diversity of spirit, soul, and body, by which the higher unity of his nature is by no means destroyed, but rather preserved and expressed, so do we meet with a manifold life, in perfect consistency with the oneness of His Nature, in the God who here reveals Himself. And this we might expect, for He is the highest *Love*, and the highest Love can just as little exist as be thought of without an object adequate to it. This object cannot be the finite, imperfect world, which is dependent on God. He must possess this object, if it is to be fully worthy of Him, not out of, but in Himself. It was this conviction which has led even heathen philosophy of earlier and later centuries, either to suppose an eternal existence of creation, as the object of the love and delight of God, or to ascribe to the One True God a plurality of existence, by which alone He could be perfectly self-sufficient. Holy Scripture knows no other than a finite creation, which has arisen, not as the result of the blind impulse of an unconditional necessity in the nature of the Creator Himself, but only at the fiat of His omnipotence, and by the free will of His love. But

the same Scripture also assures us that the highest love had no need of a world external to Himself, in order to be perfectly happy and blessed in Himself. The Father loveth the Son, and the Son is one with the Father. He who, as no other, can utter the words "I, the Lord," has in Himself another I, inseparably united to Him by the bond of the most intimate, but at the same time the most independent, love.

Already do our eyes begin to grow dim, and yet we are at present only at the threshold of the sanctuary. The same Scripture which teaches us to distinguish the Son from the Father—though always without affecting the unity of the Divine Nature—testifies also of the Holy Spirit, in such wise that it is absolutely impossible to confuse or identify Him, either with the Father or the Son. Not less to this Spirit than to the Father Himself, does it regard the Son of God as standing in a very definite relationship. Only in the sacred Trinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, does it reveal to us the whole fulness and glory of the one and unchangeable Divine Being. *The conception of God in Holy Scripture, especially of the New Testament, is by no means Unitarian, but definitely Trinitarian.* It lies not within the scope of our argument to enter into proofs for the soundness of this proposition, with regard to which we are fully convinced, both that it is indubitably certain, and that it is indispensable to the right understanding of the Gospel of Redemption. Not the doctrine of the Trinity, but Christology, is the subject of our investigation. All that has been said, however, imposes on us the weighty

obligation of seeking, under the guidance of the sacred writers, an answer to the three following questions :—

*What is the Son of God in Himself?*

In what relation does He stand *to the Father*, and *the Father* on His side *to Him*?

In what relation, finally, does He stand *to the Holy Ghost*, and consequently *to the whole Divine Nature*?

The Son of God. For him who is not an entire stranger to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, there is no need here of proof, that this name is given to our Lord in an entirely different sense from that in which it is said also of ordinary men, that they are the children of God. Without doubt the Most High is called the Father of spirits, the God of the spirits of all flesh, from whom every family in heaven and earth is named. The rational being, man, created after His image and likeness, is thus a child of this Father; and the inhabitants of heaven, also, are sometimes represented in Scripture as the sons of God.<sup>5</sup> But He, who is here exclusively called the Son, occupies not merely an exalted place *among* all these, but an entirely unique place *above* them. That is clearly taught us, not only by the holy Apostle, who expressly declares that to the Son, as such, a dignity belongs, to which no Angel may lay claim,<sup>6</sup> but also by the Lord Himself, who as Son, places Himself far above all creatures, and ascribes to Himself a relation to the Father, not merely intimate, but

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<sup>5</sup> Job i. 6; xxxviii. 7.

<sup>6</sup> Heb. i., ii.

entirely unique.<sup>7</sup> On a single occasion He may be termed in the Gospel the Son of God, on account of His extraordinary birth, of His dignity as Israel's Messiah, of His resurrection from the dead, or on other grounds;<sup>8</sup> as a rule not a merely moral or spiritual relation, but a *natural* one, is indicated by this term, of a like character to that which on earth exists between a child and the father, to whom it owes its life. With less justice it is not seldom said, that the relation between our Lord and the Father cannot be better expressed for our imperfect understanding, than *by comparison* with the bond which, among men, unites the child to his parents. The earthly relation is not in this case the express image of the heavenly, but the heavenly the archetype of the earthly; and the latter only the feeble defective shadow of that which is found in an infinitely higher, more glorious sense above. The son of man stands in relation to his earthly parents, as the Son of God to the Father; God created man after His image, not the converse.

It becomes thus already evident, how extremely superficial and unsatisfactory is the assertion, that the Lord is called the Son of God for no other reason than because He, the sinless man, as such is especially God's child and image. In the philosophic domain it may be thought that sufficient reasons exist for thus regarding as one and the same the Divine and the purely human nature, and on that account admitting no other distinction than

<sup>7</sup> John v. 19, *sqq.*; Mark xiii. 32; and other places.

<sup>8</sup> Luke i. 35; John i. 49; ? Rom. i. 3, 4. (Cf. *Theol. N. T.*, p. 299.)



one of *degree* between the Christ of God and other imperfect, sinful men ; before the forum of a sound exegesis this opinion is most decisively condemned, and is besides, on further reflection, found to be in contradiction with the nature of the case itself. No doubt the first Adam also is called a son of God ;<sup>9</sup> but to infer from this fact, that he is called so in the same sense in which this name is given to the only begotten, beloved Son, the Son of God's good pleasure, is surely caprice itself. The pure man, who manifests the image of the Godhead, will reflect in unsullied lustre the *moral* attributes of God—wisdom, holiness, love ; but he will not on that account by any means possess God's *natural* perfections—*e. g.*, omnipotence, eternity, omniscience, infinity—and these last no less than the others, are, as we shall soon see, ascribed to this Son of the Father, who is the centre of God's last and highest revelations. Even of the most perfect man I do not read that he, as such, pre-existed before his coming into the world ; Christ, on the other hand, the Son of the living God, was, in and after His incarnation, continuing merely in another form His pre-mundane existence. The perfect man also, according to the teaching of Scripture, is yet lower than the angels ; for God's only begotten Son the demand is made, that all the angels of God should worship Him. Not the perfect son of man is *as such* the son of God ; but the eternal Son of God appeared, in the fulness of the time, as the Son of man.

We are not unacquainted with the great difficulties

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<sup>9</sup> Luke iii. 38.

which attach to the employment of human names and ideas in the supersensuous domain. We would gladly see a heavenly language placed at our disposal, in order that we might to some extent speak worthily of heavenly things. Yet, compelled to have recourse to ordinary language, we can no longer avoid employing the inadequate terms *Person* and *Nature*.<sup>10</sup> And to the repeated question, What is the Son of God in Himself? it is for us impossible, with the Scripture in our hands, to return any other answer than this: *a thrice glorious, heavenly Person, partaker of the Nature and Majesty of God, and object of the love of the Father, even before His coming into the world.*

Not without reason do we lay special stress upon the fact, that a *personal* existence must be ascribed to the Son of God even before His incarnation. For not a few, both in earlier and later times, have asserted that the Word and Wisdom of the Father had indeed existed from all eternity as an *attribute* of the Divine nature, but appeared personally only with the coming of the Son of God in the flesh. Sabellius, a presbyter of Ptolemais, in the middle of the third century, already gave expres-

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<sup>10</sup> In using them we are mindful of the advice of Calvin, who writes, in the exposition of John i. 1, "I have already observed that we ought to be sober in thinking, and modest in speaking, about such high mysteries." But at the same time we add with him, "Yet the ancient writers of the Church were excusable, when, finding that they could not in any other way maintain sound and pure doctrine in opposition to the perplexed and ambiguous phraseology of the heretics, they were compelled to invent some words . . . Hypostases, Persons, etc." [Cf. *Christian Dogmatics*, p. 290, sqq.]

sion to the proposition that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost were nothing but three different *appellations or forms of manifestation* of the same Divine Being. Starting from a very superficial conception of Revelation, he asserted that God had revealed Himself in Christ, in such wise as, for instance, the talent of the architect is seen in the structure which he raises. According to him, the appearing of Christ proceeded from God, as a ray of light from the sun, and returned in like manner to Him again; where thus the historic manifestation of Christ ceased, the Son as such also ceased to exist. He believed in the existence of a God, who as Creator is called Father, as Redeemer, Son, as Renewer, Holy Ghost, while a *personal* distinction between the one and the other was not to be thought of. The history of this article of doctrine shows how the same error, to some extent modified, was espoused, among others, by a Paul of Samosata, and later by the notorious Servetus. "Modern" Theology, also, does not simply hesitate to acknowledge the personal pre-existence of the Son beside and along with the Father and the Holy Ghost, but explains with many words, that the *Logos*, incarnate in Christ, is nothing else but the Divine *plan of the world*.

In opposition to this gross misrepresentation of the letter and spirit of the New Testament, we maintain the doctrine, which indeed admits of proof, that the Son of God had a *personal* existence before His incarnation; *i.e.*, one in which the attributes of personality—self-consciousness and freedom—must be ascribed to Him. The Son of God did not merely exist before His coming in

the flesh, but He was also conscious that He existed; He was not simply present in the counsel and foreknowledge of God, but livingly present in personal communion with Him; He was not merely *in* God, but also *with* God,<sup>11</sup> from the Father Himself thus personally and definitely distinguished. He, who even before His incarnation has the name of God, can assuredly in no case be conceived of as something *impersonal*; He, who is the highest object of the Father's love, must, like the Father, be the personally living One. How could the Father at all times (even before the incarnation) *show* to the Son all things which He Himself doeth,<sup>12</sup> if this Son began His personal life only with His birth of Mary? And how can it be said of the Logos, that even from the beginning He was the *Life* and *Light* of men,<sup>13</sup> if He then existed only in the idea of the Father, and not essentially, *i.e.*, personally?

This personal life the Son of God did not receive at any point of time, but was *ever* partaker thereof. The Gospel teaches the *eternal* pre-existence of the Logos, not less distinctly than His personal pre-existence. Here especially do we feel that we only stammer like children, and can never adhere too closely to the distinct testimonies of Scripture. With good reason, however, we believe it must be maintained, that Scripture ascribes eternity to the Son, not less than to the Father. As

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<sup>11</sup> πρὸς τὸν θεόν, John i. 1. Compare the beautiful words of Bengel on this place: "πρὸς denotes as it were the perpetual tendency of the Son to the Father in the unity of essence."

<sup>12</sup> John v. 20.

<sup>13</sup> John i. 4.

concerns the place which appears to teach the opposite, namely, Colossians i. 15, where the Lord is called "the first-born of all creation," this appellation denotes nothing else than that He is placed at the head of the whole creation, and already existed *before* anything else had a being. The Logos is definitely opposed to all that has been created. The Word *was*, while everything else *began to be* (ἐγένετο, *werd*); "Before Abraham came into existence, I am," says the Lord, speaking with a tone equally exalted as does the Jehovah of the Old Testament, when He ascribes an *Existing*, without beginning and without change, to Himself, in opposition to all finite being. The Logos is not called—as the prologue of John has been diluted into saying—a God, but *God*, and thereby clearly distinguished, in this connection, from all created beings. When it is said of Him, that He was "in the beginning," these words certainly cannot be taken in any feebler sense than in the opening words of the primeval narrative, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." A time before the beginning of time at the creation of all things, the sacred writers do not know; and that which exists before the foundation of the world must, taken in their sense, be eternal, and thus also not merely relatively, but absolutely, Divine.

He who is not a stranger to the history of the Church, will certainly have already observed, that in what has just been said we take a decided part in a controversy which has been waged with varying success since the beginning of the fourth century, and even in the present day divides the Christian world into two different camps.

It was the presbyter Arius in Alexandria who first ventured to declare that the Son of God was created, and the Father alone without beginning; in opposition to which his bishop, Alexander, taught that, "even as there was ever a God, so also was there ever a Son; that the Son exists uncreated with God, born from eternity, born of the Unborn; that God was not even any part of a moment before the Son, since the latter Himself is ever God, and ever Son, and Son of God Himself."<sup>14</sup> Quickly the conflict rose to such a height, that Arius and his adherents were driven out of the city by the exasperated bishop. The apple of discord was now cast into the bosom of the whole Church, and soon party arose against party, synod against synod, bishop against bishop. Even the common people regarded themselves as qualified and called to answer the intricate question as to the Eternal Existence of the Son, now in an affirmative, now in a negative sense. The points of difference were discussed in the public places, by lips not always the most reverent or consecrated. In vain the Emperor Constantine sought, by a writing specially designed for that purpose, to reconcile the disputants. The word of peace, as usually is the case in times of conflict and separation, found acceptance with neither party. The fire of battle was kindled throughout the whole East, so that the question threatened to pass over from the ecclesiastical to the civil domain, and the dignity of the Emperor, even, was here and there ignored or assailed. There

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<sup>14</sup> Compare the letter of Arius to Eusebius, Bishop of Nicomedia, in the writings of Eusebius.

remained now no other measure than to call together a General Assembly of the Church, which was accordingly held at Nicæa in the year 325, and was attended by about 318 bishops, presbyters, and deacons, representatives, for the most part, of the Greek or Eastern churches. This synod framed the confession that the Lord Jesus Christ is "the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God and Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, of the same essence (*ὁμοούσιος*) with the Father, by whom all things were made." The triumph of this confession was especially due to the "Father of Orthodoxy," Athanasius, at that time deacon, afterwards for forty-six years Bishop of Alexandria; as it was afterwards yet more fully analysed and expounded in the Creed of later origin preserved under his name, and which became one of the accepted formulas for expressing the faith of the holy Church universal upon this fundamental article. From this time forth the Arian doctrine was condemned as heretical, although it was far from being on that account vanquished or extirpated. On the contrary, the conflict for and against Arianism was continued with varying success, and scarcely *three* years after the Council of Nicæa the condemned party again triumphantly raised its head. Even the sudden death of Arius did not check the progress of his principles; the Emperor Constantine had during the later years of his life drawn perceptibly nearer to the once condemned heretic, and after his death Arianism ascended the imperial throne of the East in the person of Constantius. Under his powerful influence



the Arian doctrine soon spread throughout the whole Roman Empire, whilst the acceptance of the Scripture doctrine defended by Athanasius found for a time fewer disciples and advocates. Only after his death the sun of Arianism began to decline, as that cause had been weakened even before his death by the inner discord amongst its most violent advocates. Ultra-Arians and Semi-Arians alike contributed to transfer into the camp of his followers the discord which Arius had occasioned in the Christian Church. Under the Emperor Theodosius the Great (379), the crown, once apparently lost, was again set upon the head of the Athanasian faith. The second General Assembly of the Church, summoned at Constantinople in the year 381, completed what the first at Nicæa had begun. The conflict of eighty years, so fruitful in tears and blood, was decided in a sense adverse to the Arians; and although Arianism was able afterwards to open up for itself a new path among the Germanic tribes, and even maintained itself with vigour among the Goths, Lombards, and Vandals for about two hundred years, yet finally, with the conversion of the last-named, the last bulwark of Arianism had fallen. The triumph of the Franks was the triumph of the Catholic faith.

It lies not within the purpose we have in view to pursue any further this brief outline of the earliest history of Arianism, or to enumerate all the phenomena of after centuries which testify to an unmistakable affinity with this type of thought. Just as little do we need to approve of *all* the weapons with which Arianism has

been opposed in earlier or later times, or to form an unmerciful judgment upon Arius himself, in connection with his mysterious death. We may speak of Athanasius as a brilliant sun in the firmament of his restless age, without on that account ignoring the fact that this sun, too, had his spots. But though we regard the persons with calm impartiality, we cannot possibly look upon the views of the Arians with so kindly and lenient a judgment as is not seldom shown by the opponents of the ecclesiastical doctrine even in the midst of us. Much rather must we subscribe to the judgment which one of the most renowned church-historians of our century has pronounced upon Arius: "The profound thought expressed by Origen with regard to the eternal Generation of the Logos, remained incomprehensible for *his* common-place intellect."<sup>15</sup> His controversy was the polemic of the so-called common sense against the mysteries of Christianity, at core as rationalistic as so many another one before and after him. In taking from the Logos the predicate of absolute eternity, he deprived Him at the same time, among so many other tributes of homage, of the crown of His true Godhead. He now made of the Son a sort of intermediate nature, the most excellent of the created heavenly spirits, by whom again God on His part called all things else into existence, and who thus also is worthy to be revered and worshipped as Divine. But the thought of such an intermediate person between the Infinite and the Finite has just as little basis

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<sup>15</sup> Neander.

in Scripture as it is called for by a sound philosophy. The direct relation of God Himself to the world created by Him is in this way destroyed, and adoration of the Arian Christ is in principle nothing else but heathen deification of the creature. And whilst alike Scripture and sound reason teach us to regard the attributes of God as eternally and inseparably *one*, they are divided in an unwarrantable manner by Arianism, since this ascribes to the Logos all the Divine attributes, except eternity. When we rightly regard the matter, we cannot then feel surprised that the Christian consciousness rose with ever fresh power against an error whose injurious and yet inevitable consequences became constantly more manifest. In this way we should lose the very conception of a personal manifestation of God, as well as of His real incarnation, and with this the essence of Christianity. We should receive here, as so often happens in such cases, instead of the mystery which has been rejected, an absurdity; and while the matter became still less comprehensible for the intellect, the heart would run the risk of losing its highest treasure. Or how could He, who was not Himself true God, reveal to us the Father, make for us the atonement for our sins, and in reality make us partakers of the Divine Nature in communion with Himself? With the eternal Godhead of the Head fell also the whole restoration of the members, yea, in the Son of God being lowered, as to His higher nature, to the level of a finite creature, the reality of His human nature was involved in the most serious difficulties by the conclusions of Arianism. From this

standpoint the holy visitant from heaven was indeed for a time incarcerated in a human *body*, but—what belongs not less to true humanity—a purely human *soul* He did not possess. The Logos had appeared in a body, it is true, but was not truly made flesh, and the note of jubilation, “God was manifested in the flesh,” became in this way a sound devoid of force or significance. Are we, then, justified in looking, with some, upon the controversy against Arianism as merely a fruitless and insignificant controversy about “abstract doctrinal notions,” a vain contention about questions concerning which the one knows as little as the other, because they are removed so far above our finite thinking? If any one must be blamed here, it is surely the Arian party; which to an unfathomable mystery opposes a rash denial, to a profound depth, a platitude; and this under the fair name of acumen and scientific method.

Even in the present day Arianism and Unitarianism—both at bottom one and the same—find countless advocates. This doctrine finds its impulse in the inextinguishable desire to comprehend, as far as possible, even the deep things of God, and its principal support in several places of the New Testament (of which we shall later have to speak), which certainly seem to teach a definite inferiority of the Son, a subordination of the Son to the Father. While, therefore, it wins the assent of *acute* minds, the more *profound* minds in the Christian domain are usually more repelled than attracted by this theory. However much Unitarianism enchains and satisfies in some single respects, yet it is evident from

history and experience that it is not in a condition to found a living and permanently flourishing religious community. As a salutary corrective to the extravagances of the orthodox Church, it may stimulate the Church to a constant repetition, development, defence of its good confession, but never supplant this confession. We at least do not hesitate to assert that the Christian Church was guided, in the rejection of Arianism, by a sound tact, or, to speak in a more Christian manner, by the Spirit of Truth. We do not contend for the term of *one substance* (or *essence*); it has all the imperfections to which such terms are subject; it had been well that there had been no necessity for framing it.<sup>16</sup> But the conception expressed by it is surely nothing but the natural consequence of the proposition, that the Son of God has from eternity been a sharer of the nature and majesty of God; and we cannot deny this proposition, without openly contradicting the Lord and His witnesses. If it is wished to hear the same thought expressed in a somewhat different form, listen to the Bishop Alexander, who declares in so many words against Arius, "that Christ was the Son of God *by nature*; that the Father created all times and ages by the Son; that, if the Son had had a beginning, the Father must necessarily have been before without any Logos (*ἄλογος*)."<sup>16</sup> We can no more

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<sup>16</sup> "The Church would have done better to retain the simplicity of the apostolic expressions; but the manifold attacks and misconstructions of heretics have rendered necessary sharp and exclusive definitions, and even now these are not yet superfluous."

—Chemnitz.

suppose this last, in particular, than could Alexander or Athanasius. The more we seek to realise the Gospel conception of the Logos, in His most intimate communion with the whole Divine Nature, so much the more clear does it become to us that God can be just as little conceived of without the Logos as a body can be without shadow, or a sun without radiance. The shadow and the beams exist not a moment sooner, but also not a moment later than body and sun; the Logos has existed just as long as the Godhead; the Son was not before the Father, but also the Father was never without the Son. The Son of God *has had* no beginning, but *is* Himself the beginning of all things.

We have seen, so far as we are enabled to do so in the light of Scripture, what we are to understand as a rule where mention is made of the Son of God. The *Supernatural*, the *Personal*, the *Eternal* character of His being, as such, has successively occupied us. Now we see the way prepared for answering the second question: *In what relation does the Son of God stand to the Father, and the Father, on His part, to the Son?*

*The Son of God has the ground of His existence in the Father.* As this truth necessarily follows from the idea of Sonship, so is it also taught on many a page of the Gospel. Not the Son is the ground of the Father's existence, but, the direct converse; and if one could suppose—which we deny—the Father to exist a moment without the Son of His love, yet the Son, for the very reason that He is *Son*, cannot possibly be conceived of apart from the Father. “As the Father *hath* life in

Himself, so hath He *given* the Son to have life in Himself." Because the Son is *God*, He has life *in Himself*; because He is not Father but Son, He has originally *received* this independent life from the Father. This thrice holy mystery later found its defective expression in the Church doctrine of the *Eternal Generation* of the Son. Its *defective* expression, we say, for it is evident that the words of the Psalmist: "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten Thee," afford only a very doubtful support for this doctrinal form. The more deeply do we deplore that so delicate and tender a subject has not always been treated with the necessary caution, and that only too often those who have spoken of this relationship have been led, even without designing it, to apply (at least to some extent) the notion of human descent and consanguinity to God, who is eternal and wholly superterrestrial. Truly, if generation be regarded as the act by which that which once did *not* exist is now *called into being*, it is self-evident that this whole conception just as little admits of being applied to God as to His Son. For God is Spirit; and the Son of God is eternal as the Father, so that there was never a time when He did not already exist. Athanasius has already justly remarked "that the Father alone can be called unbegotten (*ἀγέννητος*), but that the generation of the Son is something too lofty to be fully comprehended, even by angel intellects." If, however, by this term, "Generation of the Son," is only meant, that the Son has the origin, or rather the ground, of His existence in the nature and essence of God, and on that account may be spoken



of as absolutely of one essence with the Father; we do not know that any objection can be raised against the idea, whether from the Biblical or from the Christian-philosophic standpoint. Only we must here be especially on our guard against every sensuous conception, whether more or less refined; and above all against supposing a *period* at which the Son *received* from the Father the life which He had not before. Not a generation ages before the Creation, but from all Eternity, is the only true and worthy conception; and it would perhaps even be more accurate to speak, not of the Son's *having been* brought forth, but of an everlasting *being brought forth* of the Son by the Father. According to the doctrine of Scripture, the Son did not simply once for all receive life of the Father, henceforth independently to exist and operate outside of Him; but the Son, as from eternity, so to eternity, has constantly the ground of His life in the Father alone. As the Spirit unceasingly proceeds from the Father through the Son, so has the life of the Son continuously its root in the independent life of the Father, and (if Biblical language is here to be held authoritative), as it were, unceasingly flows forth therefrom. He who, after this explanation, still looks down with a certain disdain, or even worse feeling, upon the idea of a *generation*, and asserts that this is in irreconcilable contradiction with the spiritual nature of the Godhead, merits no other answer than the repeated assurance that we also do not by any means suppose a generation in the *human* sense of the term, but would only ascribe to the Son of God such an origin and ground of life as is best *proximately*

expressed by this language. So far from its detracting anything from the Divine Nature of our Lord, its paramount importance rather arises from its characterising the eternal Godhead of the Logos definitely as a Godhead of *the Son*. Where, moreover, should we more deeply feel the limited nature of our human thinking than here, where we have to be so much on our guard, against, on the one hand, ascribing to God anything absurd, and, on the other hand, surrendering the reality of the distinction, which exists in the Divine Nature, with the defective mode of presenting it?

Less difficulty will be felt with regard to a second proposition, which follows naturally from the former. *Between the Father and the Son there exists a constant reciprocal communion of life and love.* The Lord Himself indicated this in the days of His flesh, when He spoke of Himself as *one* with the Father, and declared that He was *in* the Father, and the Father in Him; yea, testified in prayer that the Father *loved* Him before the foundation of the world. It would be an entirely arbitrary mode of proceeding to understand these words *only* of God's *incarnate* Son—however perfectly applicable they are *also* to Him as such—since, on the contrary, they afford us a distinct glance into that relation which has at times, even before and independently of His incarnation, united the Son to the Father. *The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand;*<sup>17</sup> not merely in, or after, the fulness of the time, but before all

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<sup>17</sup> John iii. 35.

eternity, in an everlasting *To-day*, so long as He has been Son. The Father *showeth* Him all things that He Himself doeth;<sup>18</sup> while He is walking on earth, it is true, but why not, also, so long as He has known the Son and regarded Him with Divine good-pleasure? The Father *honoureth* the Son:<sup>19</sup> wherefore should we confine this statement to the three years during which the Son was exposed to all the contumely of His foes? A relation is here indicated, unless we are entirely mistaken, which is not merely temporal, but absolutely eternal; not merely outward, but inward; not accidental merely, but necessary; not moral merely, but supernatural; one equally unique and unfathomable as the whole nature of the Godhead. So intimate and holy is it that the Lord, even while He is sojourning on earth, can declare that He still *continues to be* in heaven,<sup>20</sup> and that He can ask nothing higher for His disciples than a communion with the Father, as close as that of which He Himself is conscious.<sup>21</sup> Who will venture to search out in all its depths the meaning conveyed by these hints which the Gospel lets fall, and to speak in earthly language, in some degree worthily, of the things of heaven? Between the Father and the Son there existed thus a personal communion of life, before the mountains were created, or the earth and the world was formed. The Father contemplates Himself in the Son with unspeakable delight, and sees His perfect love most perfectly responded to by the Son. From

<sup>18</sup> John v. 20.<sup>19</sup> Ib. viii. 54.<sup>20</sup> Ib. iii. 13.<sup>21</sup> See, on this point, the author's *Theology of the New Testament*, 2nd ed., p. 149.

this Son He keeps back nothing; in this Son He sees no single imperfection; higher than this Son, even He, the Omniscient One, knows nothing. "All things that are Mine are Thine, and all that are Thine are Mine;"<sup>22</sup> thus, in the mysterious silence of eternity, can the Father speak to the Son, the Son to the Father. It is an unceasing, reciprocal, blessed beholding and being beheld, a communicating and receiving, a willing and accomplishing, such as is unknown on earth. The Son on His part lives, but He lives *by reason of the Father*,<sup>23</sup> and hears and learns of Him, that which He shall afterwards communicate on earth. He loves the Father with a love which can be by nothing dimmed, by nothing destroyed, by nothing surpassed—not even by the love the Father causes to rest upon Him; for both are alike infinite and Divine. That which He *seeth* the Father do, the same doeth the Son likewise;<sup>24</sup> that which He does is ever well-pleasing to the Father. Rather were it conceivable that God should with His own hand sever the bond which unites Him to the work of His creation, than that the Father should cease to be *one* with the Son, the Son *one* with the Father. Can we be surprised, while shrinking from further inquiry, that a Divinely enlightened apostle testifies of an original "being rich" on the part of the Lord, which preceded His earthly poverty?<sup>25</sup> and that the Son of man at the beginning of His sufferings longs, as it were with holy impatience, for the glory which He remembers having possessed with the Father, even before

<sup>22</sup> John xvii. 10.<sup>23</sup> διὰ τὸν πατέρα, John vi. 57.<sup>24</sup> Ib. v. 19.<sup>25</sup> 2 Cor. viii. 9.

the times of the ages? <sup>26</sup> Truly, in order to form a conception, to some extent worthy, of the glory of the Son of God before His incarnation, it is not even necessary that a rapt imagination should depict Him clothed with light as with a garment; surrounded with millions upon millions of blessed spirits, of every rank and every order, about His throne, who minister at His footstool, and sing His praise; crowned with a glory and honour which dazzles the vision of *every* created being. The one thought, that He was the perfect object of the Father's love, transcends, if possible, all that has just been said. Who can conceive of anything higher than to love, and to be loved, as He?

*The Son, nevertheless, as such, remains definitely subordinate to the Father, and dependent upon the Father.* With sacred reverence do we take into our lips a word which may be so easily misunderstood, and which yet, beyond doubt, is most explicitly taught in the Gospel. Not seldom has the charge of confusion of ideas been brought against the defenders of the Godhead of the Son; as though they overlooked the eternal and natural distinction between the Son and the Father. To obviate this reproach, we contemplate a truth which has oftentimes been sadly exaggerated and misapplied by the advocates of *Subordinationism*. Both the Father and the Son have been, from all eternity, partakers of the same Divine Nature and the same Divine Essence; yet, by virtue of the very relation

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<sup>26</sup> John xvii. 5. Listen to the echo of this feeling in the sigh of Matt. xvii. 17.

existing between them, the Godhead of the *Father* is other than the Godhead of the *Son*.<sup>27</sup> The Logos is not the *Brother* (pardon the seeming irreverence of the expression, which was not first used by us), but the *Son* of God; whom He hath appointed heir of all things,<sup>28</sup> who is Himself God, but *God of God* (*ἐκ θεοῦ*), His Father. Is it possible to separate from the conception *Son* the conception of a certain dependence, which yet detracts not in the least from the true and eternal Godhead of the *Son*? But the Lord Himself testifies, in so many words, that the Son can of Himself do nothing, *but only* what He seeth the Father doing;<sup>29</sup> that the Father *shows* Him all that He doeth, ere He on His part doeth the same; that He lives *by* the Father, whereas it cannot possibly be said that the Father lives by (or by reason of) Him. This is also, without doubt, the profound reason why the name of *God*, although it applies with the most perfect right to the Saviour, and is repeatedly given Him in the Gospel, is especially ascribed to the Father, in distinction from the Lord Jesus Christ;<sup>30</sup> and why the Father of glory is called the *God* of our Lord Jesus Christ;<sup>31</sup> whereas we can scarcely conceive of the Son being in turn spoken of as the God of the Father. And does not the same fundamental thought also underlie the Apostolic utterances, "Ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's; the head of every man is

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<sup>27</sup> Both to the Father and the Son we ascribe *Deitas*; but to the Father alone, *Aseitas*.

<sup>28</sup> Heb. i. 2.

<sup>29</sup> John v. 19.

<sup>30</sup> Compare, *e.g.*, 1 Cor. viii. 6; 1 Tim. ii. 5.

<sup>31</sup> Ephes. i. 17.

Christ, and the head of Christ is God; then shall the Son also Himself *be subject* unto Him that put all things under Him"?<sup>32</sup> If in the exposition of these words we are to reject that mode of interpretation, according to which the Son of God is deprived of His highest crown, a dependence of the Son upon the Father is, nevertheless, still taught, such as can by no means be applied to the Father in relation to the Son. How it is possible to be at the same time dependent, and yet free; *Son*, and yet *God*; subordinate to the Father, and yet not less Divine than the Father, remains a problem for Christian thinking, the perfect solution of which will never be given us on this side the grave. Enough that here the rule has its application: Two propositions, each of which is sufficiently proved, remain also immovably true, even though we do not succeed in penetrating their mutual connection. No jot or tittle do we detract from the confession, "I and my Father are one;" but just as little also may we deny the truth of the Lord's own utterance, when He constantly places the Father, *as Father*, above Himself.

Let it suffice us that what has been said by no means forbids us, but, on the contrary, leaves us perfectly free to make the old confession our own: "*Christ alone is by nature the eternal Son of God; but we are, for His sake, by grace adopted as children of God.*"<sup>33</sup> While it is true He does not apply to Himself *the name* of God—this would have clashed with His great principle, "I seek

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<sup>32</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 23; xi. 3; xv. 28.

<sup>33</sup> *Heid. Catechism*, Answer 33.



not mine own glory"—yet He fully merits that we should, after the example of His Apostles, ascribe to Him this title of honour; while nothing justifies us in understanding this word in a feebler sense than that in which it is elsewhere used. We do not thus assert that the Logos, after the birth of the man Jesus, united Himself to Him, but that the Logos *was* from all eternity, and afterwards *became* truly incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth; not that Jesus in the moral sense *became* the Son of God, in consequence of a spotlessly pure human development, but that the Son of God *was* from all eternity, and would have existed as such, even though He had never been pleased to clothe Himself with this our human flesh and blood. We shall afterwards come to treat more fully of this important point; but if we are asked why we lay such great stress precisely upon this point, that we would rather, if need be, express ourselves too much at large upon it than leave an impression with regard to it in any respect obscure or doubtful—it is because the distinct confession of the Godhead of the Son stands, according to our innermost conviction, in such inseparable connection with our enlightenment, consolation, and sanctification, that if this foundation be taken away the whole structure of the plan of salvation necessarily falls into ruins. If we are to find in the Son of God everlasting life, we cannot hesitate to render to Him the full honour which belongs to Him. What this honour is we believe we have in some measure shown in the light of Scripture, with the consciousness of being able to prove every single



trait of our description from Scripture, and with the conviction of being able to defend every single trait also before the tribunal of philosophic thought. Is it necessary in connection therewith to repeat that, even after all that has been said, the word, "*No man knoweth the Son, but the Father,*" remains the conclusion of our reverential examination?

Yet we cannot quit this mysterious domain before we have sought an answer to yet another question. We were baptised not simply in the name of the Father and of the Son, but also of the Holy Ghost. *In what relation does the Son of God stand to the Holy Spirit, and consequently to the whole Divine Nature?*

In the books of the Old Testament we find, it is true, that the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Lord, is very often spoken of; but in what relation He stands to the whole Divine Nature cannot be determined with sufficient clearness from the language of Moses and the Prophets alone. On a single occasion the Word and the Spirit of God are so closely associated that we can scarcely suppose a definite distinction to exist in the mind of the Sacred Writer. Thus it is, for instance, in the poetic utterance, "By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the Spirit (*Ruach*) of His mouth."<sup>34</sup> It has been already observed by the illustrious Calvin, on this place, that, according to the law of Hebrew poesy, the one expression supplements and explains the other. And when later we read in

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<sup>34</sup> Ps. xxxiii. 6.

Isaiah<sup>35</sup> that Israel was saved *by the Angel of God's presence* (the Angel of His face), but that they rebelled and *vexed His Holy Spirit*, we may suppose, not without reason, that the two expressions by no means imply the same thing; yet, as regards the *relation* between this Spirit and this Angel of the Lord, as little here as elsewhere do we meet with any kind of nearer indication. Only to this extent can we say that the Old Testament affords us any light, in that it presents to us the future Messiah as anointed with the Spirit of God in the fullest measure. Thus it is said of the Rod of the stem of Jesse, "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord."<sup>36</sup> And afterwards the Servant of Jehovah arises with the word, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me."<sup>37</sup> And in Joel the days of the New Covenant are represented as a time of the gracious and abundant communication of the Spirit.<sup>38</sup> Much clearer, however, is the light which is shed from time to time in the writings of the New Testament on the relation of the Son of God to the Holy Spirit. So far from the terms *Word* and *Spirit* of God being here arbitrarily interchanged with each other, we see the two definitely distinguished. "He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God; *for God giveth (Him) not the Spirit by measure.*"<sup>39</sup> If the *Son*, of whom this

<sup>35</sup> Isaiah lxiii. 9, 10.

<sup>37</sup> Isaiah lxi. 1.

<sup>36</sup> Isaiah xi. 2.

<sup>38</sup> Joel ii. 28-32.

<sup>39</sup> John iii. 34. Although Scripture here speaks in general terms,

testimony is given, is the same as the Word that was made flesh, we see thus upon this incarnate Word, in contradistinction from all earlier messengers of God, the Holy Spirit conferred wholly without limitation; and nothing compels us to confine this communication of the Spirit by the Father to the Son to that which took place on the bank of the Jordan at His baptism by John. Rather do we see here the indication of an *eternal* act of the Father, just as little confined to one point of time as that which immediately follows: "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hands."<sup>40</sup> As this love is infinite, so is the communication of the Spirit to the Son unlimited, not merely in measure, but also in time; and we certainly do not err when we find precisely in this constant communicating of the Spirit the bond of the inseparable unity which exists between the Son and the Father. *The Father and the Son are from eternity to eternity one in the communion of the Holy Ghost.*

We behold what is certainly a significant moment in this unceasing communication on the occasion of our Lord's baptism. The Spirit, who has from all eternity formed the bond of union between the Father and the Son, now entered into a new relationship towards the incarnate Son, the Messiah. He took whole and entire possession of Him, penetrated and consecrated His humanity, and unceasingly united His Divinity, during its manifestation in the flesh, with the Godhead of the

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yet the context requires our supplementing *αὐτῷ* (to Him), and thus referring this statement definitely to the Son of God. Compare the remarks of Lücke on this place.

<sup>40</sup> John iii. 35.

Father. The Lord Himself declared that the Spirit of God rested upon Him, that by this Spirit He cast out devils, that the Father would give the same Spirit to all who ask Him. On the other hand, however, He spoke many a word which, we believe, is to be explained only as indicating the existence of a *personal* distinction between Himself and the Holy Ghost, not less than between Himself and the Father. As He had received the Spirit, so He promised the Spirit as *another* Comforter, who should lead them into all the Truth, and constantly bring His words to their remembrance.<sup>41</sup> From this Representative of Himself He looks for the enlightening, strengthening, and perfecting of His people; and when these on their part arise to proclaim abroad the Gospel of the Kingdom, there are not wanting in their writings deeply significant hints, which at any rate justify us in regarding the expression, "the Holy Ghost another than the Son," as something higher than an utterance of human wisdom. "Because ye are sons, God *hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son* into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father;" thus writes Paul to the Christians of Galatia.<sup>42</sup> From the one God and the one Lord he distinguishes the one Spirit, who distributes manifold gifts.<sup>43</sup> And according to the testimony of Peter on and after the day of Pentecost, it is no other than the glorified Saviour Himself, who shed forth the

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<sup>41</sup> John xiv.—xvi.

<sup>42</sup> Gal. iv. 6. [The Spirit of Jesus, breathing again the words of Jesus; comp. Mark xiv. 36.]

<sup>43</sup> 1 Cor. xii. 4—6.

Holy Spirit, with audible and visible signs accompanying.<sup>44</sup> No wonder that John also, in his book of Revelation, represents the Holy Spirit in contradistinction from the Lord, in a manner which renders it absolutely impossible to confound the one with the other; but also equally impossible to ascribe to the Holy Spirit a lesser Divine rank and dignity than is ascribed to the Father and the Son.<sup>45</sup>

In connection with the comparative paucity of the indications which are found in the Gospel with regard to the peculiar nature of the relation between the Son of God and the Holy Spirit, we cannot be surprised that the earliest Fathers of the Church have not always expressed themselves unanimously or sufficiently in regard to it, and that the ecclesiastical definitions, which eventually fix the doctrine, are of comparatively later origin. Thus the Church Father, Gregory of Nazianzus, gave a *résumé* of the different opinions which were prevalent in his time.<sup>46</sup> "Of the intelligent among us," he says, "some hold the Holy Ghost to be a power, others a creature, others again God Himself; yet others know not—as they say, out of reverence for Scripture—which side of them all they shall choose, since this teaches nothing definite with regard thereto." We need not remind the reader how greatly a similar diversity of opinions with regard to this important point prevails in the present day. It is not our purpose in the

<sup>44</sup> Acts ii. 33 ; v. 32.

<sup>45</sup> Rev. i. 4, 5 ; v. 6 ; and other places.

<sup>46</sup> In the fifth of his Theological Discourses, belonging to the year 380.

present case to confirm, with Biblical and Christian-philosophic reasons, our conviction as to the personality and Divinity of the Holy Ghost, as distinguished from the Father and the Son. This question lies beyond the province of *Christology*, properly so-called. In general, however, we think we may set forth, as the result of oft-renewed and continued investigation, that—according to our innermost conviction—the opinion of Arius, that the Holy Ghost is the first of all the creatures called into being by the Son, is entirely wanting in all support; that also in the view of the Holy Ghost as the “power and virtue of God” there is unquestionable truth, but by no means the whole truth expressed; and that the later confession of the oneness of essence of the Holy Ghost with the Son and the Father is the perfectly legitimate *deduction* from the premises contained in the Gospel. We may be fully convinced of the limitation of our knowledge, and the insufficiency of all human presentations of doctrine, in the domain of the supernatural, without on that account denying the relative accuracy of certain formulas, in which the believing consciousness of former centuries has expressed itself. We may thus take upon ourselves the defence of the expression, “the Holy Ghost, not created, not begotten, but proceeding from the Father;”<sup>47</sup> while, with regard to the question which divided the Eastern and the Western Church, whether the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father alone, or also from the Son, we are convinced—though we can in this connection only speak of the

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<sup>47</sup> Athanasian Creed, Art. 22.

economic doctrine of the Holy Trinity<sup>48</sup>—that we must think of a proceeding of the Holy Ghost *from* the Father *through* the glorified Son. While the Lord terms Him, in so many words, the Spirit of Truth who proceedeth *from the Father*, He yet declares, with equal emphasis, that the Apostles cannot become possessed of this Spirit, except *in consequence of His personal intercession*.<sup>49</sup> Thus He Himself justifies us in saying that the Spirit is in a certain sense equally dependent on the Son, as the Son is subordinate to the Father. But just as little as the latter fact detracts from the Godhead of the Son, just so little does the former take away anything from the Godhead of the Holy Ghost. Through the Son He proceeds from the Father; with the Father and the Son He is God. The conception to be formed of this *Proceeding* must remain equally above our finite comprehension, as that of the *Generation* of the Son; and it were greatly to be desired that men had not contended so bitterly about things which are too high and too wonderful for us, but had rather heeded the counsel of wisdom, not to be wiser than Scripture. But, on the other hand, the true peace of the Church is not to be furthered by the denial and toning down of those doctrinal definitions which are warranted by the word of the Lord Himself and that of His Apostles; but rather by a development of the truth, which, clearly conscious of its own fallibility, cleaves as closely as possible to the Gospel, and ever again returns to it.

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<sup>48</sup> *I.e.*, the doctrine regarding the part sustained by each of the Divine Persons in the economy of Redemption.

<sup>49</sup> John xv. 26; xvi. 7.



We have sought, in the light of the Gospel, to describe the relation of the Son of God to the Father, as well as to the Holy Ghost, and consequently to the whole incomprehensible and infinite Nature of God. At the close of this contemplation, the peculiar character of this Christian idea of God—God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—presents itself in augmented lustre before our eyes; and that which we heard of God's only begotten Son, even before His incarnation, gives us fresh reason to hold immovably fast to that confession by which Christianity is exalted so infinitely above every other religion. It is true, we know that the Church of the Lord has, throughout all ages, borne *this* treasure, too, in earthen vessels. Its doctrinal definitions concerning the Son of God and the Holy Ghost were laudable, but always imperfect, attempts to maintain the truth which they found expressed in the Gospel, against the inroads of denial and doubt.<sup>50</sup> What a wide difference between the heavenly simplicity with which the Christian confession of faith is presented by Jesus Himself in the baptismal command, before His departure, and the hair-splitting exactness with which the relation of the Trinity to the Unity is spun out in the Church formulary which bears the name of Athanasius! We are far removed from the attempt

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<sup>50</sup> "The Church's definitions with regard to the doctrine of the Trinity, from their origin and design, do not claim to be regarded as religious-philosophic and perfect explanations as to the nature of the Trinity, but as Ecclesiastical and Social protests against definite and matured degenerate forms, mutilations, and caricatures of the doctrine of the Trinity, protests having their origin in historical circumstances."—LANGE, *Positive Dogmatik*, p. 136.



to decide, from certain expressions here employed, that which the Word of God has left undecided. We do not enter into the defence of the ecclesiastical terms *Trinity*, *Person*, and *Substance* or *Essence* (οὐσία); if any choose to use for the first of these, *Threefold Existence*, for the second, *Mode of Being*, they would perhaps avoid a natural cause of offence, without in reality greatly affecting the doctrine itself. Yet we believe, on the ground of all that which we have just recalled to mind, that in the Church doctrine of the Trinity is embodied a Plurality, which is more or less contradicted by every other and heretical conception of the subject. If the edifice of this dogma is itself of later origin, the stones for its upbuilding are incontestably given in the very Word of Truth; the need for combining them together is implanted by nature in the human spirit, which strives after unity; and we think it may be satisfactorily proved, that every combination of these materials which is in any essential points in contradiction with the Church dogma is not in harmony, but in irreconcilable conflict, with the doctrine of the Lord and His Apostles. That the life of each one of the three modes of existence in God is a self-conscious, free, and Divine life; that the Son is in truth other than the Father, and, again, the Holy Ghost other than the Father and the Son; that, while this personal distinction exists, the same Divine Nature is present in all, and yet that the Unity of the Divine Essence is absolutely inseparable—this indeed is no doctrine of Athanasius and Nicæa alone, but expressly the doctrine of Jesus and the Apostles. If, therefore, we combine their hints and utterances into

one compact whole, we are necessarily led to a conception like that above mentioned. We can on that account only rejoice that gradually the days are passing away in which this dogma was looked down upon with a certain haughty disdain, and was decried as one of those antiquated notions belonging to a school of an already vanished orthodoxy, which it was scarcely worth while formally to contradict. It is ever increasingly acknowledged that this truth, rightly regarded and developed, is a head- and corner-stone in the structure of the whole Christian doctrine of faith ; that the superficiality is on the side of Unitarianism, the depth on the side of the Church dogma ; that, in a word, this Confession is nothing less than the guarantee and expression of the Christian belief in the *Incomprehensibleness* of God, which is not merely confessed, but is also clearly recognised, in the acknowledging of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. We thankfully appreciate every attempt made by Christian philosophy, whether by the way of reflection or of comparison, to bring this revealed mystery of the faith more or less within the province of Christian thinking. We have already referred to the fact that, *e.g.*, from the notion of Divine *love*, the supposition has been arrived at, that this love must not only have an *object* worthy of it (adequate object) in the Logos ; but also a personal *bond of union*, which resolves again the diversity of the two into a perfect unity, and this is found in the Holy Ghost. But whatever may be judged of such endeavours, even though one may, with us, despair of arriving in this way at a clear and satisfactory conception of the

truth itself, our faith does not stand or fall with the success of these attempts. Knowledge, in this domain, must always, from the nature of the case, fall a few steps *behind* faith; and from the exaltedness of the subject above our limited human comprehension its absolute unreasonableness by no means follows. Whether it is comprehended or not, it remains an incontrovertible fact, that God has *revealed Himself* as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one unique incomprehensible essence. And why should we, with some, rest content with this, without—with the believing Church of all ages—going yet a step farther? As God *reveals Himself* to man, so He certainly *is* in Himself: how can we suppose the Unchangeable and True One to give a revelation of Himself which is not the faithful expression of His adorable nature? This very conviction, that God truly *is* (exists), in the form in which the Gospel proclaims Him, as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is in our estimation not simply the solid bulwark against a dry Deism, which recognises only an external mechanical relation between God and the world; but also the great weapon for combating that Pantheism which we see making such rapid progress in our age, and *to which all philosophy apart from the light of the Gospel, from the nature of the case, and in accordance with history, must necessarily come.*<sup>51</sup> Only from the standpoint

<sup>51</sup> “The apparent Tritheism, but in reality Trinity of God, it is alone which preserves the Christian worshipper and thinker, who does not misinterpret it, not merely from Polytheism, but, above all, from Pantheism. History shows, as well in the case of Mahomedans and Jews, as of those children of *Aufklärung* among Christians who resemble them, that, not satisfied with the *isolated* God, they fall

of this confession accordingly can the Person and Work of Christ be to some extent satisfactorily comprehended; while, on the other hand, the inexhaustible riches of this Christ can never be worthily estimated by those who, to the question, What is God? have only the superficial answer to give, "God is Father," instead of confessing with Scripture and the Church, "God is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." No Biblical Christology without belief in the Threefold Nature of God; while, on the other hand, the practical importance of the above-named doctrine never strikes us more than when we bring it into direct connection with the redemption conferred upon us in Christ. The one stands or falls with the other; and only when we have accepted in all its significance the testimony of Scripture as regards the relation of the Son of God to the whole Divine Nature, are we to any extent in a position to understand and appreciate that which the same Scripture proclaims to us as regards His relation to all created beings, and especially to humanity.

In many a product of the ecclesiastical art of the Middle Ages we meet with plastic representations of the Holy Trinity, which, on a superficial notice, not seldom call forth a smile. No, that venerable man, depicted with the child in his bosom, upon his kingly throne, and the dove which hovers with outstretched wings over the head of the two, is no worthy expression of the majesty and greatness of Him "whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain." Yet the thought speaking forth from

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back, in their thirst for life and life's fulness, into a Heathenism which deifies the totality of nature."—NITZSCH.

this painting is infinitely higher than many an abstract-philosophic conception, which has proceeded from the denial of the same thought; and the *naïveté* of the faith which thus depicted the thrice Holy One, approached nearer the truth than the assumption of the Rationalist, which has a thousand times claimed to have so absolutely refuted this dogma, that henceforth every intelligent man would be ashamed to attach to it any weight whatever. Like a phoenix from its ashes, it rises ever afresh, with renewed youth, out of the flame, and ever is it proved anew that whoever does not acknowledge God as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, even with the best will is not in a position to render to the Christ of God His *highest* honour. For these reasons, therefore, we felt ourselves expressly called upon to arrest the attention for a moment in connection with this mystery, and to direct the mind of the reader to the inseparable connection of the one with the other. At the same time no one comprehends better than we do how difficult it is to dwell, even for a brief while, on this highest mountain peak of all, in the contemplation of Christian truth, without one's head growing dizzy, and one's step wavering. We have now, however, firm ground beneath our feet, as we gradually descend from these cloudy heights to regions more familiar. Even as John at the beginning of his Gospel, we proceed from the relation of the Son to that which from eternity *was*, to His relation to that which once at the beginning of time *came into existence*—*geworden* ist.

## II.

## THE SON OF GOD AND THE CREATION.

WHEN we speak of the Son of God and the Creation in a single breath, we express no less an opposition than between the Eternal and the Finite, the Unchangeable and the Ever-changing. For the Son of God was from all eternity partaker of the Divine Nature of the Father; He existed before all things; He would have continued to exist, even though nothing beyond the Godhead had been called into being. However difficult it may be for philosophic thinking to any extent rationally to conceive of a creation in and with time, yet we at once feel that the thought of an *eternal* creation would lead to an absurdity, and that all that exists beyond God must have a *beginning* in time. Precisely this last, however, is denied in the Gospel with regard to the Logos;<sup>1</sup> and at first sight there is thus

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<sup>1</sup> Compare the argument in the previous chapter. Consequently one hardly needs to show what slight importance is to be attached to utterances like the following, "At first God existed alone; then He brought forth the Word, which is called the Son of God, and even on one occasion God, but ever second to the Father and less than He." And further, "A pre-existence from an eternity without beginning we must not ascribe to Him, for neither the Lord nor His Apostles do so. They content themselves with the historic statement, that He existed before Abraham, and before the creation of the world, without determining how much earlier He

seen between the Creation and Him an overwhelming, we had almost said an unfathomable *gulf*.

But would not, even if the Gospel had been entirely silent on this point, Christian reason itself rise to the supposition that this impassable gulf exists only in appearance; and that, on the contrary, a very essential *relation* must subsist between the partaker of the nature and majesty of God and the work of His hands? Or what?—to possess Divine omnipotence and wisdom and knowledge, and then to remain eternally inactive; to be light and life, no less than the Father, and yet without outward manifestation of Himself; to be the *Word*, and yet to remain unintelligible to those who listen to the voice of the visible creation—one feels that this thought is self-contradictory. No wonder that already a Philo the Jew most intimately connected the thoughts *Logos* and *Creator of the world*. That some kind of relation must subsist between the Son of God and the Creation is *à priori* to be expected. *What kind of a relation*, however, it is, is a question to which only God's written word can give a satisfactory answer. There are, it is true, but few disclosures here given us on so important a question. But this cannot surprise us; as the question is certainly more of a speculative than of a practical nature, and the Gospel is not designed, in the

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had existed. And we hold fast to them, especially to their own words, without inferring, from any reasonings of our own, that He must therefore have existed from all eternity."—So PROFESSOR HOFSTEDE DE GROOT, "*The Groningen Theology in its Peculiarity*," pp. 163 and 170.



first place, satisfactorily to enlighten us as respects the mysteries in the world, but rather as respects the plan of redemption. Yet these comparatively few hints are of too remarkable a character to be passed over in silence. When we have collected and elucidated them, it will at the same time become clear to us that we have here to do with something more than a question of idle curiosity.

He who would perhaps expect to meet with an unequivocal declaration, in the Lord's own teaching, as to the relation in which He *originally* stood to all created things, would find himself mistaken. So far as we know, the Son of God has nowhere distinctly declared that even before His Incarnation He was the Head of that Creation, in which during the days of His flesh He occupied so entirely unique a place. This indication would have been for His contemporaries superfluous, for His apostles before the Day of Pentecost unintelligible, and might also have given occasion to injurious misunderstanding; as would have been the case, for example, with the public announcement of the mystery of His supernatural birth. It is known indeed that He never characterises Himself as the Logos, but always as the Son; He does not say, "I and the Logos," but, "I and the Father are one." *The I, which here speaks, is the Logos Himself, in union with the humanity which He has assumed, and is not called to testify of that which He had once done, but of that which He would do for the salvation of sinners. That He existed and had glory before the Creation the Lord has repeatedly given assurance; but of His activity in*



connection with and in relation to this Creation He does not for a moment speak, and in this silence also there lies—pardon the expression—in our opinion, a Divine *decorum*, which must be felt rather than described. Here it was meet, not that the Word should testify of Himself, but that those should testify of Him who from the beginning had been eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word. Only after His ascension, when He had returned where He was before, could a part of the veil be raised which concealed his pre-mundane life.

Those to whom we owe some further light on this point are especially *Paul, the Writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, and *John*. The first of these not merely declares in passing that God *created all things by Jesus Christ*; <sup>2</sup> but also elsewhere exclaims, in a tone of sacred exaltation, “In Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him.” <sup>3</sup> The second, who elsewhere asserts in general terms that the world was framed *by the word of God*, *i.e.*, by the command of His omnipotence, declares, even in the beginning of his epistle, with regard to the Son, “Whom God hath appointed heir of all things, *by whom also He made the worlds*.” <sup>4</sup> And the last rises above time and space in the flight of his conception of the Logos, who was with God and was God; but of whom He at the same time *proclaims*, “*All things were made*

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<sup>2</sup> Ephes. iii. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Col. i. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. i. 2.

by Him ; and without Him was not anything made that was made (*geworden ist*, came into existence).”<sup>5</sup>

Attempts have not been wanting to explain such utterances in a sense which no longer proves anything in favour of a relation properly speaking between the Son of God and the natural Creation. Frequently, for instance, that *new* Creation, which the Lord called into being, has been thought of in connection with the place in the Epistle to the Colossians ; that which is spoken of by John in his prologue has been limited to the spiritual kingdom of God, which certainly would never have been founded without Him ; and in the beginning of the Epistle to the Hebrews has been seen merely the declaration that by His power the different Mosaic and Christian *æons*, or world periods, have arisen. It can, however, be made evident, even for the simple reader of the Gospel, that such limitations are equally in conflict with the letter as with the spirit of the sacred utterances, and have proceeded from the manifest endeavour after an apparently more *reasonable* sense than that which seemed to come naturally out of the words as they stand. Here, too, reason has shown itself but a very untrustworthy guide in the way of truth, and the conception by which the difficulties were most easily avoided was manifested to be the poorest and weakest. No, it cannot possibly be denied that the Apostolic writers never for a moment thought of limiting the activity and power of the Lord exclusively to the

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<sup>5</sup> John i. 3.

*spiritual* domain. Not merely after, but also before His incarnation, does the Lord present Himself before their eye as acting and calling forth life in the wide realm of Creation; and the deeper truth, already concealed under the personification of antiquity,<sup>6</sup> comes in the New Testament undisguisedly and convincingly to light. How would the first witnesses of the Lord have arrived at conceptions like that already mentioned, if the Holy Spirit had not continually taught them? and what would ever have moved them to arise with the proclamation of ideas, which were for the wisdom of their age partly incomprehensible, partly offensive, unless they had been firmly assured of their truth? He who in the spiritual domain follows the guidance of the Apostles, but in the metaphysical despises this guidance, acts with but little self-consistency. Even if the expressions they make use of were not strange to their contemporaries, yet were the *thoughts* they utter something very different from unripe fruits of the age. If we seek to penetrate these thoughts as deeply as possible, there are *three* truths, especially, which they most distinctly proclaim to us.

The Creation is, first, *the immediate work* of the Son of God. "By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made." Whatever may be indicated in this tone of triumph of the ancient poet, for Christians it is literally true in relation to Him who *was* from the beginning. No, not absolutely immediately by the will of the Father

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<sup>6</sup> Prov. viii. 22, *sqq.*

alone was all that exists called into being out of nothing. It is true it was the Father Himself who was the First Cause of all that is created. "Thou hast created all things, and because of Thy will they are, and were created:" thus resounds in heaven the song of praise to the honour of Him who liveth for ever and ever.<sup>7</sup> But the Father created all things *by* the Son, thus not apart from Him, not also merely acting beside and with Him; but in such wise that the Son, even in the work of creation, was carrying out the Father's will and counsel. Thus no inactivity of the Father in favour of the Son; but also no passive repose of the Son, whilst the Father alone was carrying out the work of creation, does the Gospel teach us. But just as little do we render justice to the Apostolic conception, if—with reverence be it spoken—we conceive of the Son as a mere *instrument* in carrying out the Father's will in the work of creation. Rather was He the great *Architect*, by whom—ever in accordance with the counsel and will of the Father—was carried out that which here must be carried out.<sup>8</sup> Even on the morning of the Creation, we may thus say, the pleasure of the Father was prospering in His hand. So little is He placed in a mere external and accidental relation to this creative work, that, on the contrary, according to the deeply significant word of the Apostle, "*In Him* were all things created;"<sup>9</sup> as in the centre ordained by the Father, from whom henceforth the

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<sup>7</sup> Rev. iv. 11.

<sup>8</sup> Not the *Causa prima*, not the *Causa instrumentalis*, but the *Causa efficiens*.

<sup>9</sup> Col. i. 16.

quickening rays proceed in all directions. And how wide is that domain which here opens,—shall we say, for our thinking, or for our imagination? The whole material world, in its most gigantic phenomena, and in its minutest elements, is thus the realisation of the creative thought, not merely of the Father, but also of the Son of His love. The whole spirit world, with its various ranks and orders, was at His word called into existence around the throne of light; and in whatever respects the archangel may differ from the lesser ministering spirits, what they severally are they owe to Him, who calleth the things that are not as though they were. Not merely this world, not merely this solar system, but all that extends before our eye in boundless space; all that lives and moves in the most remote regions of Creation, whither the most powerful astronomical instrument has not yet penetrated, solar systems and stellar nebulæ, pre-existing worlds which have long since passed away, and new celestial bodies which as yet exist only in the thoughts of the Godhead, He it is by whom they exist, or will be called forth into being out of the boundless night of nothingness. Nothing indeed of all these did He create without knowing the will of the Father; but also the Father was not satisfied with having the Son merely as a *Counsellor*. He constituted Him the actual *Fulfiller* of His wondrous plans. Or is such a conception, clearly grounded as it is in the Gospel, in itself unacceptable, yea, unworthy of the supreme Godhead? We confess the impossibility we feel so to unfold it that no single difficulty more shall remain for thoughtful faith,

Yet, if it is not unworthy of God to have a Son, it must be just as little inconceivable that in and by this Son He called the Universe into being; and the absolute impossibility of presenting to ourselves, in a manner to any extent satisfactory, the *How*, is still no reason, for one who has learnt to be modest, to reject as absurd the *That*.

And thus also is the Creation in the second place the *clear and glorious revelation of the Son*. With the highest right has the Creation at all times been termed a glorious revelation of the infinite Godhead. Poets and prophets of the Old Testament, apostles and apologists of the New, have in earlier and later times exalted the significance of this revelation. Yea, "the whole world is for our eyes like a very beautiful book, in which all creatures, from the least unto the greatest, are like letters, which display to us the invisible things of God, even His eternal power and Godhead;"<sup>10</sup> "the heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork." Without hesitation do we agree with all this, but the question remains, Is it sufficiently considered to what an extent the glory definitely of the *Son*, the eternal Logos, shines forth to us in the wonders of Creation? The Word was made flesh, and as Man has dwelt among men; yet though He had never appeared in human form upon this lowly earth, we still could not say that the majesty of the Logos had remained entirely unknown to us. Man and lower animals are, as it were,

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<sup>10</sup> *Netherlands Confession*, Art. ii. Comp. Rom. i. 20.

His incarnate thoughts: "from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall," do we find the realisation of the plans of His infinite understanding. Yea, to the question, Who is He that from the beginning was in the form of God? every blade of grass gives us an answer; for, yet once more, "without Him was not anything made that was made." *Divine* omnipotence, wisdom, and love do we thus, on glancing around us, ascribe not less to the Son than to the Father of lights, and our religious contemplation of nature can only then bear the honourable title of a truly *Christian* one, when often in spirit we rise from all created things, not merely to the Father, but also definitely to the Son, by whom are all things. The earth, which His feet have trodden, was a point of His own creation; the world, which rejected Him, would have had no existence, unless, in obedience to the will of the Father, *He* had called it into being. And yet higher may we rise, guided by the hand of the sacred writers. As He is the Mediate Cause, so also is He the Final Cause, the *End* of Creation: all was not merely by Him called into existence, but also is for Him destined, whom the Father without any limitation has appointed heir of all things. Paul teaches us not simply that all things were made by Him and in Him, but also *for* Him—*εἰς αὐτόν*. "The world, in the diversity of its forms of existence and periods of development, was created by means of the Son, and on that account destined to be subjected to Him."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Compare Chantepie de la Saussaye, *Bijbelstudien*, on Heb. i. 1—4.



It is not merely His work, but also so constituted as to be His crown and to augment His praise. Unless we are deceived, the Creation becomes, with the greater clearness of this consciousness, yet dearer and more full of meaning for the heart of the Christian, and we discover at the same time the deep-lying reason for the preference, displayed by our Lord in the days of His flesh, for the visible kingdom of nature. No prophet or teacher in Israel ever, so far as we know, to the same extent availed himself in his teaching of the phenomena of Creation around him; but neither did any one ever stand in such close relationship to nature, or could penetrate with so infallible a glance its hieroglyphs, as the Son of God and Son of Man. For He was not merely a part, but the Head of Creation; not simply one of its phenomena, but, what is much more, the cause of all created things. It was consequently no arbitrary act, no play of His own imagination, no wise adaptation, merely, to the capacity of His contemporaries for receiving instruction, when He made seed and harvest-field, tares and wheat, leaven and mustard seed, the lilies of the field and the birds of the air, types and heralds of the mysteries of His kingdom. *The figurative language of the Lord is no arbitrary application, but the direct interpretation of that which is to be read in the open book of Creation.* Yea, what is more, if nature has no lower design than to be subservient to the highest revelation in the domain of spirit, it may be said that the eternal Word has revealed Himself in the wide domain of Creation with the definite object of making even the



material and transitory creation the mirror of a spiritual and intransitory kingdom of God.<sup>12</sup>

No wonder, finally, that the Creation, in the third place, is, according to the express teaching of Holy Scripture, *the object of the continual care of the Son*. We set great store by our Christian confession, that the Providence of God is in the fullest sense of the word a *Fatherly Providence*; yet we must not on that account overlook the significant hint given us by a divinely enlightened witness of the Christian truth, that He, who is the effulgence of the glory of God and the express image of His nature, at the same time *upholds all things by the word of His power*.<sup>13</sup> What are we to suppose is indicated by this expression? Are merely all those things to be thought of which definitely in the *spiritual* domain are preserved by the Son of God? But the *things* intended in verse 3 can surely be no other than those *worlds* (*æones*) with regard to which we read in verse 2 that they were made by the Son; we must think of the *all things* of which the Father has appointed

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<sup>12</sup> He who is able to take a step farther in connection with this subject will certainly not be averse to the consideration of the profound words of Lange: "The world appears to us the necessary, though free, act of love of God the Father, in the formation of which—wherein a thousand interpenetrating symbols and images come forth, at first in the obscurity of night, then ever more and more clearly—He presents, on an ever wider scale, the image of the eternal beloved Son, as the love of His nature, until at last He sets forth the eternal Son Himself, in the beauty of His appearing, as the Archetype in whom all those types and shadows meet; and thereby in fact fulfils the great word of His love, 'Thou art My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'"—*Positive Dogmatik*, p. 221.

<sup>13</sup> Heb. i. 3.

Him heir. Without any exception whatever, all this is *upheld* by Him, *i.e.*, not merely governed—although this idea also need not be excluded—but in such wise preserved in existence and order, that without doubt it would sink again into nothingness, unless it were unceasingly sustained by His mighty hand, and preserved from falling.<sup>14</sup> And this the Son of God *did* not merely once for all; that He has not merely *begun* to do, *after* He has Himself made expiation for our sins, and has now ascended the throne of heaven: no, as in an eternal present, *He ever continues to uphold* all created things, because and so long as He is the Son. He did so even before His incarnation; He did not cease to do so—the mystery of Godliness is great—when He went about here on earth in the form of a servant; He continues to exert this sustaining power since He has been exalted as King over the Kingdom of God. How could He forsake the work of His own hands, and withdraw the care of His Providence from that which has in Him alike the reason as the object of its existence? Yea, once more, “He is not only before all things, but *in* Him all things consist—subsist in one organised whole.”<sup>15</sup> He is the centre, from which life and power are communicated to all the spheres of Creation, even as He Himself has received them from the Father: in Him, not less than in the Almighty Father,

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<sup>14</sup> In like manner does Calvin also interpret this place: “To *bear* here means to preserve, or to continue all that is created in its own state; for he intimates that all things would instantly come to nothing, were they not sustained by His power.” Comp. Numb. xi. 14.

<sup>15</sup> Col. i. 17.

do they live and move, and have their being ; He upholds them (and this also must not be overlooked) *by the word of His power*. So little are we justified in thinking of the Son of God before His incarnation as something impersonal, that, on the contrary, there is ascribed to Him, as a thinking and acting personality, a mighty word of command, *which alone is perfectly able* to perform that which *the act* of all others is not able to accomplish, namely, to preserve that which is created from an otherwise certain fall. *By His Son*, once more, in a word, is God the Preserver of all things. If the complaint has sometimes been made, not without reason, that the conception of Providence formed by many is rather Deistic than Evangelical, rather Heathen than Christian ; yet, on the other hand it is self-evident how, from *this* standpoint, the Christian's belief as regards the preservation of the world is most intimately bound up with his belief in Christ as the Son of God. To Him we may with the utmost boldness present the homage, which Israel's poet renders to Jehovah in the undivided fulness of His nature: "Lord, Thy word abideth for ever, in the heavens. Thy faithfulness endureth unto all generations; Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth. According to Thy word it abideth unto this day; for all things are servants unto Thee."<sup>16</sup>

We believe that in determining the relationship which exists between the Son of God and the Creation, we have not proceeded a single step farther than is warranted by

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<sup>16</sup> Ps. cxix. 89—91. Dutch version.

the Gospel, without which we should know nothing at all about it. Yet we think we hear the question raised: "If this is really the case, and the Creation is the very *work*, the clear *revelation*, and the *object of constant care* of the Son of God's love, then what remains over in this vast undertaking for Him, of whom the Saviour testified, 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I also work'?"<sup>17</sup> What can we answer, without meriting the reproach of meddling with things that are too wonderful and too high for us? The solution of the problem can first be — we do not say satisfactorily attained — but dimly apprehended, when we not only unconditionally accept the personal distinction between the Father and the Son, and the essential unity of the two, but also acknowledge the subordination of the Son to the Father, as having its foundation in the natural relation of the one to the other. The Father creates all things, but only by means of the Son; the Son creates all things, but only according to the Father's will and counsel; and yet there is here only one Creator, as one creative act of God. If we might employ an analogy taken from human things, to shed at least some light upon our conception of things Divine, we should instinctively think of Moses, who *himself* reared the tabernacle, but—after the pattern of all that which God had showed him on the mount.<sup>18</sup> But rather do we lay our hand upon our mouth, and cease from the hopeless attempt, in this childhood-state, entirely to comprehend that which on the ground of

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<sup>17</sup> John v. 17.<sup>18</sup> Acts vii. 44.

God's word we reverently believe. The rays of light which we see arise awaken in us the expectation of fresh mysteries,<sup>19</sup> yet we do not turn away our eye. The little which we properly know by faith concerning the relation between the Son of God and the Creation, has a *practical* interest, to which we cannot here neglect somewhat more particularly to direct the attention.

The relation pointed out between the Son of God and the Creation sheds new light upon the *Logos* Himself, upon the *Cosmos*, and upon the *Incarnation* of the Son of God in the fulness of the time.

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<sup>19</sup> The reader may here be fitly reminded of a saying from the *Theodicée* of Leibnitz: "Il suffit que nous ayons quelque intelligence analogique des mystères, afin qu'en les recevant nous ne prononcions pas des paroles déstituées de sens: mais il n'est point nécessaire que l'explication aille aussi loin qu'il serait à souhaiter, c'est à dire, qu'elle aille jusqu'à la comprehension et au *comment* des choses. Les esprits modérés trouvent toujours dans nos mystères une explication suffisante pour croire, et jamais autant qu'il en faut pour comprendre. Il nous suffit d'un certain ce que c'est (*τί ἐστιν*), mais le comment (*πῶς*) nous passe. On peut dire des explications des mystères qui se débitent parci parlà, ce que la reine de Suède disait dans une médaille sur la couronne qu'elle avait quittée: *non mi bisogna, e non mi basta*. Nous n'avons pas besoin non plus, comme j'ai déjà remarqué, de prouver les mystères *à priori* ou d'en rendre raison; il nous suffit que la chose est ainsi, sans savoir le comment, que Dieu s'est réservé." Thinkers, like the great Leibnitz, were still simple enough to bow the philosophic head before mysteries; but thinkers like—the reader may himself fill in the names, of which an abundance will present themselves—assure us that in the religious and Christian domain there neither are nor can be any mysteries, or they must have recognised them. *Pre-Christian* heathendom supposed that there was at least an intimate connection between the religious feeling in man and the mysteries. Later, it is true, men have become more shrewd. But have they also become better and more happy?

If the Logos from the beginning stood in such relation to the whole Creation, then it becomes afresh clear that He in turn *can* be nothing less than very God, blessed for ever. Upon this height, more than anywhere, where all that exists extends as His work before our eyes, does the poverty of the Arian Christology become thoroughly apparent. Mediate cause of all things which have existed from the beginning, and—Himself at one time non-existent! By the highest orders of spirits worshipped as their Creator, and—Himself nothing but a created spirit, who thus on His part must say to the Infinite: “I will praise Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made!”<sup>20</sup> Doing all things which are elsewhere ascribed to the Father Himself, and yet nothing but a cloudy middle-person between God and man! Final aim of the Creation, which thus was ordained and carried out with reference to Him, and—the whole Creation consequently designed for the glorification of the most eminent creature of God! Truly we could wish for words wherein duly to set forth the absurdity of this conception. Confidently do we ask every one who has still eyes to see, whether He, who literally upholds all things by the word of His power, can Himself form a part of the Creation, to whatever extent the most excellent part? Of two things one must be true: *either* the Son of God certainly does not stand to the Creation in the relation above described, *or*, if He does, Arianism is nonsense. Only from our standpoint have

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<sup>20</sup> Ps. cxxxix. 14.

we, as well in the Son as in the Creation, a real direct personal revelation of God.<sup>21</sup>

The Cosmos also, alike the natural and the moral world, after what has been said, presents itself in enhanced lustre before our eye. Without doubt the Creation also is an enigma, which displays so much the greater depths the longer we attentively observe it. Scarcely do we seek in our imagination to rise to that which preceded the beginning of time and of the world, when we learn to comprehend the assurance of the ancient sage, that "we are of yesterday, and know nothing." And to the question, "What, then, was God doing before He created all things?" we cannot return a much better answer than that of Luther, that "God was in a birch plantation, to cut rods for untimely questioners." Yet we no longer feel ourselves compelled

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■ Very justly and admirably does Martensen express himself with regard to Arianism (*Dogmatik* i. p. 124): "In opposition to such a doctrine the Church maintains that the Father did not indeed come into the world; but that God would not be love, if the Son did not come forth from the Father, if the God who, as Father, is *above* the world had not from the beginning been *in* the world as Son, as God of God, who is the life and light of the world, and in the fulness of time was made flesh in Christ. If Christ is only a demi-god, or only a man, who has soared to such equality with the highest as is possible to men; if He is only an angel, or if He is only the greatest of all Prophets, thus, in any case only a creature, *then is Christianity not the highest revelation*; for no creature, no man, no angel, but only God Himself, can reveal God as He is; only the God-man, who unites in Himself the created and the uncreated nature, can fill up the gulf between Creator and Creation, can be the perfect Mediator of love between the two." Compare what we have already remarked in the previous chapter; and see *Christian Dogmatics*, p. 276, *sqq.*



in our thinking to fall back upon the idea of an everlasting Cosmos, since we have learned to know an eternal Logos in His pre-mundane activity. Behind God's finite works we see His eternal counsels, as it were arising out of the unfathomable depth; and instead of conceiving of the Father as sunk in a joyless void and solitude, we behold Him with infinite blessedness contemplating Himself in the Son, and by the Son forming all things, when and as He will. This Son we see begin, maintain, and complete the work of Creation, even as He later appeared to accomplish the work of Redemption, "not that He might do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him." Thus the Creation becomes to us at the same time a continual revelation, embracing all ages, of the Father and the Son in the communion of the Holy Ghost. To the Logos, not as yet incarnate, may now—regarded *à posteriori*—be fully applied that which the wise king in poetic personification represents Wisdom as saying: "The Lord possessed me (in) the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was anointed from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth; while as yet He had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When He prepared the heavens, I was there; when He set a compass upon the face of the depth, when He established the clouds above, when He strengthened the foundations of the deep: when He gave to the sea his decree, that



the waters should not pass His commandment, when He appointed the foundations of the earth; then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him, and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him, rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth, and my delights were with the sons of men."<sup>22</sup> Yes, these inimitable delights of the Word and Wisdom of the Father the whole Creation presents to us at every step. And while sages have often disputed whether and to what extent this world which we inhabit deserves to be called the *best possible* world, for what Christian is there need, even in this respect, of a more satisfactory answer; since in the work of Creation, not less than in the work of Redemption, he sees the very hand of Him who out of boundless love presented the highest sacrifice for our Salvation?

And this leads us on yet to a final reflection. Even the *Incarnation* of the Son of God, of which we shall have to speak hereafter, is never better understood than when we contemplate His relation to all created things. On the one hand, we are now first in the way to perceive all the *amazing character* of that incarnation. Once we know *who* He was who became partaker of our flesh and blood, and remember the vast extent of all that which at His mere beck came into life, we sink down under the feeling of our absolute nothingness, and easily understand that this astonishing fact should appear to many incredible, and that even in astronomy an ally has been sought against the Gospel.<sup>23</sup> What was this earth, this

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<sup>22</sup> Prov. viii. 22—31; Cf. *Christol. O.V.* pp. 196, 197.

<sup>23</sup> We recommend any one who feels himself too much perplexed

little island in the ocean of boundless space, that God's own Son should descend upon it to dwell, to suffer, and to die. Truly Luther's hymn, "He whom the whole universe never contained, rests in the bosom of Mary; in our poor flesh and blood, clothes itself the highest good"—embraces a subject which no finite intellect can ever fathom, and which affords an eternally inexhaustible material for reflection and thanksgiving.

On the other hand, however, the incarnation of the Son of God becomes to us, after what has been said, at least to a certain extent *comprehensible*. For it is no strange earth to which in His love He condescends, but a part of *His own* Creation. It was no entirely new relationship, but simply an altered one, which arose between the Creator and the creature on the incarnation of the Logos. When through sin the order in the Creation was destroyed, the Logos comes, who becomes flesh, only to restore again that which He had Himself originally formed, but which man had corrupted. Assuredly, even thus looked at, there remains here for us a depth of grace, but by no means a chaos of confusion. Unfathomable may we call such a conception, but not unreasonable. Creation renders redemption intelligible to us, redemption restores the harmony of Creation; and in both is reflected the glory of the same Logos.

And such a Gospel is to be regarded as nothing but a cunningly devised fable!

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by objections drawn from this source, once more to read and ponder what has been said on this subject by Chalmers, in his well-known masterly Lectures.

## III.

## THE SON OF GOD AND HUMANITY.

IN the far-extending Creation, which the voice of the one Logos called into being, and of which the starry heavens present to us every evening a small streak, our eye discovers an almost imperceptible point. We call it, in our children's language, world, although we know that with God it is esteemed only as a particle of dust on the balance. For the student of nature, however, this little point is of an importance beyond all others; because he knows more of it than of all worlds and suns together. And the Christian, who considers whose manger and whose cross has stood on it, calls this earth, not indeed the centre of the vast universe, but yet the chosen theatre of the revelation of Him "who dwelleth on high, who humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth." In what a surprising manner these last words have been fulfilled in connection with the appearing of the Son of God in the flesh is generally known, and can be only later developed by us. For the present there arises another question, which is certainly worthy of our special consideration. The relation which the Son of God *assumed* to the human race would have been absolutely incomprehensible, unless there had already existed an earlier, original relation between the Son of

God and humanity. Thus we are naturally carried back in thought from the fulness of time to the pre-Christian period, from the plan of redemption to the work of creation and the later guidance of our fallen race. The question arises, Has the Son of God, even before the fall, stood in any relation to humanity? And secondly, In what relationship did He continue to stand to humanity after sin and death were come into the world? Even to these questions we seek the answer there, where we have never yet sought it in vain.

*Did the Son of God stand in any relation to humanity even before the fall?* This question transports us into the morning of Creation, when the youthful earth had but recently proceeded from the hand of its Maker, and the Deity, about to set the crown on the work of His hands, is introduced as musing in Himself, and saying, "*Let us make man, in our image, after our likeness.*" "*Let us make man.*" We have no wish to renew the controversy waged by interpreters in earlier and later times upon this text. He who would find in these words, considered only in themselves, a clear and sufficient proof for the Church's doctrine of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, must wholly and entirely overlook the distinction of times and testaments. In the glimmer of the dawn we cannot expect that degree of light which is destined to shine only at clear noonday. On the other hand, however, we readily acknowledge that those expositions which would deny to this passage *any evidential value whatever*, just as little commend themselves to us. That there is to be found here only a so-called

plural of majesty,<sup>1</sup> appears to us something like an escape out of a perplexity, and is also in direct contradiction with the simplicity and dignity of the primeval record. That we must here conceive of Jehovah as addressing his celestial council of angels, is an opinion which would lead to the unscriptural supposition that the angels were in some way or other co-workers with God in the creation of man. We can thus only suppose that the Deity is here taking counsel with Himself, as with another Divine *I*; and, to whatever extent it may here remain undecided, in what relation this other *I* stands to the Speaker Himself, we can by no means feel surprised that, when this utterance has been contemplated in the light of the New Testament, certainly a very remarkable indication of a personal distinction in the Divine Nature has been seen in it.<sup>2</sup> Be this as it may, the Creator takes counsel with Himself; He, the living, speaking, operating God, declares that He will make man *exclusively after His image*. Whether one distinguishes between *image* and *likeness*, or, with others, supposes the same idea to be expressed by both words, the design of the sacred writer is clear. Man can display God's *likeness*, only inasmuch as he has been created in God's *image*. On this account the full stress is laid upon this last, in that calmly majestic account, "And God created man *in His own image, in the image of God* created He

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<sup>1</sup> As kings and other distinguished persons are in the habit of speaking of themselves in the plural ("We, William," etc.).

<sup>2</sup> Compare, especially, Calvin on this place; and see *Christian Dogmatics*, p. 374, *seq.*

him.”<sup>3</sup> If we ask, however, what that image was, after which God created man, we can, in accordance with what has been said, only answer, God created man after the likeness of the *Logos*, who was Himself the express image of His person. Understand us aright; we do not assert that Moses, in the use of the expression under review, designed to convey *this* thought, but only that we are necessarily led to this conception of the case when we regard it in the light of the New Testament. Or what? if the Son of God was in reality, as we know, the object of His perfect love, the bearer of His perfections, the confidant of His lofty plans, how could He be excluded when it was a question of forming the earth and man? If the Son is the highest being whom the Father knows, could He be anything less than the Divine Ideal, after whom that masterpiece of the fingers of God, the king of the earthly creation, should be formed? Precisely because the new-created man reflected in unsullied lustre the image of the *Logos* could he also be perfectly good in the sight of the spotlessly Holy One, and—to use the language of one of the Fathers of the Church<sup>4</sup>—“a heavenly plant, the fairest hymn to the honour of the Godhead.” His reason was a ray of that light which existed in the *Logos*, the highest reason; his language as it were an echo of that eternal Word, which was in the beginning with God and was God. In short, as the *Logos* was the image of the invisible God, so was man again the image of the all-animating *Logos*!

Let not any one reproach us, if this thought—which was already hinted at by the Church Fathers Clemens

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<sup>3</sup> Gen. i. 27.

<sup>4</sup> Tatian.

Alexandrinus and Origen<sup>5</sup>—possesses for us special interest, with having ventured on the domain of utterly fruitless speculation. Thus much we at once gain by it: that the relation between the Logos and humanity is seen not to have first begun, as is ordinarily asserted, at Bethlehem, but already to have existed in Paradise; and that, consequently—pardon the defective expression—an original relationship existed between Him and our race. Man was, according to the Scriptural presentation, created not simply *by*, but also *after* (κατά), and *for* the Logos (εἰς); inasmuch as man was from the beginning destined to bear on earth His heavenly image. Far indeed from the Logos being merely a creation of the human thought, humanity, on the contrary, is a creation, the work and image of the Logos. On that very account also is man compelled to conceive of the Divine under human forms, and God, when He reveals Himself, can speak to His human children only in a human way. Because God created man after His own image, man cannot otherwise conceive of God than after his own (human) image. And again, because the Logos stood in direct relation to God's vicegerent on earth, on that account He could not and would not abandon man after the fall to his wretched condition. He, who was Himself God's original image, had compassion on His own dishonoured image here below. Creator of our highly privileged race, in which He recognised His own likeness, He laid aside His glory as Creator to become the Redeemer of men.

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<sup>5</sup> Compare the place, cited, among others, by Hagenbach, *Entwicklungsgeschichte der Christlichen Kirche*.



That which has been said naturally leads us to a question, which at first hearing perhaps sounds more or less strange, and which yet has not without reason during the course of the ages greatly occupied the noblest spirits—the question, *whether the Eternal Word would have become incarnate, even in case sin had not entered into the world.* We cannot feel surprise that a negative answer is returned to this question by those who regard Christ as *exclusively* the Lamb of propitiation, by whose spotless offering the wrath of God was averted from Adam's fallen descendants. Certainly, if no sin had been present, there had been no need for the presentation of a sacrifice; if the sacrifice were not necessary, it is evident that He who presented it would not have needed to appear in the likeness of sinful flesh. But however true it is that the Son of God appeared as the Mediator of the Atonement, it is not less true that He was at the same time the highest Revelation of the invisible Godhead, and that man was originally destined to be like God. The question now arises whether man, apart from sin, would have been able to attain to this high destiny, had not the Logos Himself, the image of the Father and the ideal of Humanity, appeared in human flesh. And to this question the Apostle Paul seems, to us at least, to return a negative answer, when he writes: "Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven."<sup>6</sup>

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1 Cor. xv. 46, 47. (According to the shorter and better reading.)

The body of man did not first become a natural body by means of sin, but it was so from the beginning; a spiritual body it could become only through the instrumentality of the heavenly Man, the Lord from heaven. Even though man had not fallen, he must have been gradually trained and led up to a higher perfection. And why should we not suppose that, among the means which the highest love would have used to this end, even the sending of His Son in human flesh would have had its place? So wondrous a fact as the incarnation of the Son of God in Christ Jesus the Lord can surely scarcely be merely the consequence of a not absolutely necessary phenomenon, sin. God's world-plan, "to gather together again under one Head all things," in His Son,<sup>7</sup> and to lead them to the highest possible perfection, does not date from the hour of the first sin, but was formed before the ages; although no doubt—humanly speaking—it was *modified* by the entrance of sin. As sin produced a fatal disturbance in the order of the world appointed by God, so does it also in this case cause that He who from before all ages was destined to be the highest revelation of the Godhead, must very definitely appear in the character of the one who makes expiation for guilt, the Redeemer, in our stead to suffer, to atone, to die. But even though others had continued to stand, and the pure humanity had risen from virtue to virtue, from blessedness to blessedness, it would not, as it seems to us, have been able to reach its destined goal, in any other way

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<sup>7</sup> Ephes. i. 10.

than as led by the hand of the Logos ; and, unless everything deceives us, a personal revelation of God in the Son of His love would still have been the last and highest step in the Divine plan of education, and the chosen means for making man partaker of God's holiness, through the contemplation of the Divine in a human form. It is true he would not have needed a redemption, if the trial command had never been transgressed ; but a leading on of creation to consummation, the attaining of the final object contemplated in man, seems not conceivable without the appearing of Him who, according to the words of Paul, is "the head of the body, that in all things He might have the pre-eminence."<sup>8</sup> With the most perfect right could thus one of the most acute Doctors of the Church in the Middle Ages give the following answer to the question he propounds, "Whether, if man had *not* sinned, God would still have appeared in the flesh." "It seems that, even in this case, the God-head would have come in the flesh. For if the cause remains, the effect also remains. In the incarnation of Christ, as Augustine says, many other things are to be taken into account besides the deliverance from sin. It belongs indeed to God's almighty perfection, that He should complete His works and reveal Himself in an infinite operation ; but no creature, who is not at the same time more than a creature, can produce an infinite effect, since according to his nature he is finite. In the work of the incarnation, however, an infinite operation of the

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<sup>8</sup> "That in all things He may become the One holding the first place."—Col. i. 18 (FAUSSET).

almighty power of God is seen to be manifest, for by it those things which are infinitely removed the one from the other are united, inasmuch as by it God became man; by it also the universe is brought to completion, since the last-formed of the creatures, man, is united to God, the first beginning. Besides, human nature has not become *more* receptive by reason of sin, that it should receive into itself the gifts of God's grace. But now, even after sin, it has still a capacity for receiving the greatest grace, namely, for becoming one with God. Thus would it also have possessed a receptivity for the same grace, even if man had not sinned, and God would have withheld from him no blessing of salvation, for which he had the receptivity."<sup>9</sup> Or to speak with one of the most distinguished theologians of any century, John Wessel Gansfort:<sup>10</sup> "The Kingdom of God, as made up of angels and men, could not be without Christ the Head, even as Christ could not be without this His body. The all-wise God, the Keeper of the Holy City Jerusalem, had before ordained a yet more living unity and perfection for the citizens of the Kingdom of God than that unity which exists between the head and the members of the same body." Who could dare to conceive how brightly and gloriously God's highest revelation in Christ would have shone forth in a sinless world, when even now, in conflict with sin and death, it displays so incomparable a lustre?<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa* III., *quest.* 1. Art. 3.

<sup>10</sup> *Comp.* Ullmann's *Joh. Wessel*, p. 254.

<sup>11</sup> Our limits forbid our entering more deeply upon a question which, in our time, in an increasing degree fixes the attention of

Why longer, however, tarry over the investigation of an abstract possibility or impossibility? Sin has come into the world, and with it a corruption and misery which can only be stemmed by the intervention and self-surrender of the Son of God, for the deliverance of our lost race. How, to this end, the Word has appeared in human flesh in the fulness of time, we shall later hear. For the present, however, another question engages us. We are wont to regard the four thousand years which preceded the birth

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the scientific writers on Christology. The first traces of the thought here touched upon will be found even in the Church Fathers Irenæus, Tertullian, Origen, etc. Their most important utterances will be found collected in Dorner, *History of the Development of the Doctrine concerning the Person of Christ* (pp. 57—68 of the original work), and must here especially be consulted. Among the later advocates of the same view he mentions, among others, Thomas Aquinas, Rupert of Duytz, Duns Scotus. The Lutheran theologian, Osiander, too, gave expression to this view in a separate treatise, which has now become very scarce, under the title, “An filius Dei fuerit incarnandus, si peccatum non introivisset in mundum.”—Königsb. 1550. It would in all probability have received more general recognition had it not been specially commended and advocated among theologians of Pelagian and Socinian leanings, with whose fatal errors it nevertheless stands in no inseparable connection. Among the Dutch orthodox theologians J. J. le Roi, in his *Goddelijke Openbaring des Bijbels*, Pt. II., pp. 574, 575, comes to the following conclusion :—“The advent of Christ in the world, taken altogether, did not become first necessary for the restoration of *fallen* man, although it has received a peculiar character from the fall; but, even though sin had never intervened, it would have been necessary, in order to lead up man to true immortality and to his higher destiny; but then the death of Christ would not have been necessary, and still less His suffering, since this belongs only to the atonement for sin. This being taken in connection with what we have elsewhere seen of the Divine plan, we learn to conceive of the matter thus, that God—without regard to man’s sinful condition—made man, above all His moral creatures, an

of the Lord as a period of long-continued *preparation* for the day of the New Covenant, and we know what a high destiny was assigned to Israel, as being the bearer and guardian of the special revelation of God. In what relation the Son of God before his incarnation stood to *Israel* in particular will be examined in the following chapter. For the present, however, our glance is directed to fallen humanity in general, especially to the pre-Christian Heathendom; and the question can no longer be repressed: *In what relation did the Logos continue*

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object of His special favour and of His eternal decree, and that in union with His Son, who must to this end become man, since without this union no creature could be led up to that high communion with God for which God hath fitted man, and by which alone also the *natural* body could first become a spiritual body; but that now, sin having intervened, God has not only *not* abandoned His plan, but has even overruled this intervention for the more glorious and fairer execution of it." Of the later theologians it will suffice to mention Liebner, who, in his *Christologie*, I., pp. 12—15, acknowledges, "The full self-manifestation, self-communication of God to humanity is only completed and perfectly satisfied in the *central* and *universal* Person of the God-man, who is consequently also the completion of humanity itself. The merely hamartologic-soteriologic mode of explanation in Christology, 'only because man sinned, was the Eternal Son of God incarnate,' no longer suffices. It must be admitted that through sin *only* the modification (in itself a very great one) has been brought about, that now Christ appears also as *Redeemer and Reconciler* . . . and that Christ, even apart from sin, is the all-completing principle in the true development of humanity." We direct attention further to the treatise of Julius Müller in the *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Christliche Wissenschaft und Christliches Leben*, 1850, Nos. 40—42, under the title, "Untersuchung der Frage: ob der Sohn Gottes Mensch geworden sein würde, wenn das menschliche Geschlecht ohne Sünde geblieben wäre;" where, however, serious objections are raised against the view of Liebner and others. See further *Christian Dogmatics*, pp. 297, 298.

*to stand to Humanity, after sin and death had once entered into the world?*

The answer to this question is to be found in the significant utterances of John concerning the Logos, even before His incarnation. *In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.*<sup>12</sup> We have earlier reminded the reader how superficial and arbitrary a proceeding it would be to limit this saying in its application to that short period during which the Son of God as man went about amongst us men. No, whatever of life, of natural, moral, spiritual life, has ever flowed through the Creation, proceeded from Him. Whatever light also has been seen in the material and moral world in the course of the ages, of this was He the source and centre. This light has not indeed been able, in the ages before Christ, wholly to expel the darkness of error and sin—a long night of forty centuries descended upon the fallen humanity—but yet the light ceased not to shine in this darkness, and ever anew to break forth through it. The darkness comprehended not, did not recognise this light; but just as little was the darkness able in all points to hinder the spread of this light or to quench its rays in mist. On the contrary, it has experienced the operation of this light in sufficient measure to become manifest precisely as darkness, and the whole history of the pre-Christian world may be spoken of as one continuous field of unceasing, ever deepening

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<sup>12</sup> John i. 4, 5. (Cf. *Christol. d. N. V.* p. 391.)



conflict between light and darkness. It was thus, to mention particular instances, owing to the light- and life-bringing energy of the Logos, that a Seth, an Enoch, a Noah, ever towered higher and higher in the knowledge of God and in true<sup>1</sup> Godliness above their constantly more degenerate contemporaries; that a Melchizedek, the priest of the Most High God, formed an exception to Canaan's idolatrous inhabitants; that a Jethro, a Job, with his friends, and others, although they belonged not to the chosen nation, yet walked in the light and knowledge of the One True God. Yea, why confine ourselves to the comparatively few chosen ones of our race whose names we read in the Bible history? All that we discover that was great and glorious in the domain of the Gentile world, in the domain of art, of philosophy, of religion, was the fruit of a secret operation of the Logos upon man, who even in his deeply sunken condition did not cease to be the Divine offspring; an operation which cannot possibly be explained on every side, and traced out in its minutest details, but much less—if at least we hold to the words of John—can be contested or denied. As the rays of the sun pierce through the mist, not bright and clear, but clouded and weak, whilst the mists wage an unceasing warfare against the sunlight; thus also did the Logos before His incarnation operate in and upon the sinful world, but in such wise, that He often experienced opposition in the power of sin, without, however, being entirely arrested and excluded by it. The history of heathendom, too, displays a continual activity of God, gradually to lead man to higher light and life, returned

on the part of man, too, usually by unbelief, aversion, and hatred.

It were a glorious task to describe, expressly from this point of view, the history of the heathen world before Christ. The limits of our undertaking do not admit even of our giving a sketch thereof in rough outline; yet, we cannot bid farewell to so fruitful a thought without at least pointing out a few consequences which follow naturally from this position.

By the relation observed between the Logos and our fallen race *is*, first of all, *sufficiently explained the relative truth and beauty of so much in Heathendom*. There was a time—it is not yet entirely past—when nothing else was seen in the heathen world but a complex mass of iniquity; in the heathen religions, nothing but a tissue of mean priestly deception, an accumulation of all kinds of errors and abominations. And who could be blind to such deep wretchedness as here displays itself on all sides? who would not tremble at the power of darkness which here exerted an influence almost without limits? Yes, every glance which we direct to the world of the heathen confirms the Apostolic description: “Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, having no hope, and without God in the world. Even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.”<sup>13</sup> What is more, there lies a profound meaning in the thought of the same

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<sup>13</sup> Ephes. ii. 12; iv. 18; Rom. i. 28.

Apostle, which we meet with also in illustrious Church Fathers, that the heathen world was nothing else than the gloomy kingdom of the Dæmons, who effectually wrought and reigned in the children of disobedience. He who with us believes in the existence and influence of personal evil spirits, regards the supposition as intrinsically probable, that they were by no means without their part in the abominations which at all times have been associated with idolatry and the worship of images. But all this admitted, nay, placed in the foreground, it can yet be just as little denied that heathendom has also another and better side. Or do we not see, as opposed to a haughty Tarquin, a gentle Numa; as opposed to the mean Sophists, a noble Socrates; as opposed to the luxurious Epicurus, a profound, unique Plato? Have no deeds been wrought by heroes of antiquity which are worthy of being immortalised in gold and marble? no words been spoken by sages of antiquity worthy of being proclaimed from the pulpits, nay, from the house-tops, of Christendom? no laws enacted by legislators of antiquity which not seldom cause us to blush when we look at a so-called Christian civilisation? And can we indeed feel surprise, while recognising all this, that the one-sided under-rating of heathendom in earlier ages has been followed by a one-sided appreciation and glorification of heathendom, as though the age of the heroes in Rome, and of the arts in Greece, were in many respects better than later times?<sup>14</sup> We, at least, cannot admit

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<sup>14</sup> Think, among other illustrations, of the well-known poem of Schiller: *die Götter Griechenlands*.

the justice of this last view any more than of the former. Truly, the heathen world had no light of its own, which could in any respect render superfluous the light of the Gospel; but the heathen world was, on the other hand, no palpable darkness of an everywhere equally gloomy and cheerless night. A night, indeed, but a night irradiated by brilliant stars, some of them even of the first magnitude—that is its image and likeness. These numerous stars do not, it is true, by any means make amends for the want of the one sun, but yet they soften the most dread darkness, and—prophesy of a fairer day. And whence now this glimmering broken light in the heathen world? *In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.* No, not to man in and of himself do we ascribe that relatively better state; such an assertion is contradicted by history, even by the voice of many an enlightened heathen.<sup>15</sup> But the Logos here enkindled a ray of higher light than that of the darkened reason (*νοῦς*), called forth there a movement of higher life than that of flesh and blood, caused—pardon the inadequacy of the expression—caused His life-awakening breath to breathe over the spiritual field of the dead of Hellas and Latium. All that we meet with in the heathen world, that is true and fair and good, was brought about under the hidden influence of Him, in whom we see combined the highest ideal of truth, beauty, and purity, because He is Himself the image of the invisible God. Yea, every presentiment of higher truth, which expresses

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<sup>15</sup> As, e.g., in the well-known words of Cicero: “Nemo vir magnus sine aliquo afflatu divino unquam fuit.” [*N.D.* ii. 66.]

itself so often and in so striking a manner in the Greek philosophy, was awakened by the Logos, as already expressed by one of the Church Fathers, Clemens Alexandrinus: "Philosophy must serve to the Greeks as a schoolmaster, as the law did to the Jews." And elsewhere: "The philosophy of the Barbarians also, as well as that of the Greeks, contains single disconnected parts of the eternal Truth, born not out of the mythology of Dionysius, but out of the theology of the ever-present Logos."<sup>16</sup>

It is now accordingly permitted us to go a step further. By the relation observed between the Logos and our fallen race, *is fully explained*, in the second place, *the remarkable agreement which exists between so many a heathen and so many a Christian conception*. In reality there is a deep significance in the word of the prophet, when he speaks of the promised King of Israel as at the same time "the Desire of all nations."<sup>17</sup> Unconsciously the nations of antiquity waited for His appearing, and through the most diverse traditions and aspirations of the heathen world runs, to use a bold metaphor, a strong Christologic trait.<sup>18</sup> Who has ever paused to

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<sup>16</sup> Clemens Alex., *Stromata*, I. p. 282.

<sup>17</sup> Haggai ii. 7: "*The desirableness of all nations*," abstract for concrete. [For an explanation of its Messianic bearing, see an admirable note of Fausset on this place.]

<sup>18</sup> Liebner, as above, I. p. 63 (after P. Lange): "Every people brings forth in its heathen night, under the pressure of longing after the life of Christ, a glimmer of Christological truth. From the dreamy impulse after the appearing of the day of Christ arise the oracles, priests, legislators, founders of religions. More immediately and definitely Christologic are the high offices of the

think the least deeply in connection with so many a mythological account, so many a mysterious oracle, so many a touching symbol of the heathen religions, without its seeming to him as though he heard already single notes, confused indeed as yet and broken, of the song which sounds forth to him in its full glory in the Gospel? It seems at times as though heathendom stood watching in a dream for that blissful reality which has appeared in Christ; as though humanity, even in its childish state, lisped at times of things which, having come to maturity, it should in the fulness of time behold with its own eye. There would scarcely be an end of enumeration if we would recount only the principal instances which here present themselves to our mind. Yet we mention at least a few examples, which at the same time explain and confirm our meaning. Think of the deep significance of the fable of Prometheus, who, as a punishment chained to an immovable rock, could, according to the oracle, be delivered only by a Divine sacrifice, "presented by a beloved son of a hostile father;" think of the expectation expressed by Socrates in Plato, that some one must come "who should drive the cloud from before our eye, as, according to Homer's song, Athena did for Diomedes;"—of the conception

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nations, the prophets, high priests, and kings. One office, however, in order really to be fulfilled, demands the other; their perfection first appears in their highest and innermost inter-penetration in one office; that is to say, the office of Christ is, in absolute unity, that which humanity produces in a divided form—*was die Menschheit in der Getheiltheit producirt.*"

in the Persian religious doctrine of a Mediator, Mithra, who is placed between the powers of light and darkness, Ormuzd and Ahriman, to fight for the former against the latter, and to render happy the men over whose destiny he presides;—of the expectation of the Hindoos, that Vishnu or Brahma would appear in the flesh, to heal the misery wrought among men by Kali or Kaliga, the great Serpent;—of the solemn assurance of Confucius, six centuries before Christ, “that a Holy One should come from heaven, who should know all things and should receive all power in heaven and upon earth;”—of the account from the northern Edda, of Thor, the first-born of the sons of Odin and the bravest of all the heavenly gods, who should fight against the great Serpent, but only at the price of his life should overcome it;—of the drawings of the ancient Mexicans, discovered by Alex. von Humboldt, of a woman representing the mother of all living, with a serpent, regarded as the symbol of moral evil, which is vanquished by a mighty God;—of the ancient and mysterious oracle of Delphi, in which, according to Plutarch, a prediction was preserved, to the effect that one day a son of Apollo should be born, who should found on earth a kingdom of peace;—of the significant fable concerning Hercules, who has first to slay the dragon ere he can become possessor of the golden apple from the garden of the Hesperides;—of the remarkable prediction of Plato, as to the lot which the righteous man would have to expect, if he should at length appear upon earth;—of—but to what end continue an enumeration, which, after all, cannot possibly



lay claim to completeness? <sup>19</sup> We are silent also with regard to the traces of the Old Testament histories, or of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity and of the Atonement, which are to be found so plentifully among heathen nations. We ask only, Whence so many a conception which, without being the truth itself, yet approximates to the truth, reminds us of the truth, is by the word of truth not contradicted, but rather completed? and again we answer: *In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.* The Spirit of God, as we know, brooded with preparing and fructifying energy over the impure waters of the heathen world. The Logos centuries before prepared the way in which Christ should hold His triumphal entry as King into Gentile hearts. Hitherto—we may boldly assert—the advocates and apologetes of the Gospel have called much too little attention to these ideas of heathendom which are so closely allied to the Gospel. Theology, with many, yet

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<sup>19</sup> A number of important examples is found collected in Aug. Nicolas, *Etudes Philos. sur le Christianisme*. Tom. II., p. 89, *sqq.* Especially is the great work of J. N. Sepp to be consulted: *Das Heidenthum und dessen Bedeutung für das Christenthum*, in three parts—Regensburg, 1853—of which the leading thought (Part I., p. 14) is summed up in the following words: “Christ is the highest and real expression for the underlying thought of all mythologies. It is He who speaks to us, not only in the mirror of nature and of the (human) spirit, but also in the course of history, and whose form is everywhere reflected, without His delineation being exhausted in any of these regions.” Not without reason does he observe that the present age “has claimed Christ for the province of mythology, as a sort of retribution for our previous neglect scientifically to conquer mythology for Christ.”

remains at a standpoint in this respect, like that of Natural Science in former times, when it regarded the antediluvian fossils and skeletons as isolated, accidental phenomena, instead of reducing them to a compact system, and therein discovering the traces of an order of creation which has now perished. What is needed is to observe the harmony of Christologic thoughts and expectations among the most diverse nations in the different centuries, and as it were to listen to the voice of the Divine Logos, who centuries before His incarnation proclaimed Himself in the aspirations of the Gentile world. That which even unbelief in its mockery has been compelled to acknowledge, namely, that almost all nations have expressed, in the most different forms, the longing for a future Redeemer, a highest Revealer of the Godhead,<sup>20</sup> is in itself for the Christian one of the most remarkable proofs for the Divine origin and character of the Gospel, by which alone this need is perfectly satisfied. In a just sense can we thus speak of a Christianity before Christ, which is as old as the world.<sup>21</sup> We should certainly err, if we would derive all the heathen conceptions and expectations above referred to from an ancient original revelation, of which a faint echo had reached their ears,

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<sup>20</sup> Voltaire, in the *additions à l'histoire generale*, p. 15, edit. de 1763, writes in a bantering tone, but nevertheless truly: C'était de temps immémorial une maxime chez les Indiens et les Chinois, que le Sage viendrait de l'Occident. L'Europe au contraire disait que le Sage viendrait de l'Orient. Toutes les nations ont toujours eu besoin d'un Sage.

<sup>21</sup> "He who lives with the Logos is a Christian, even though he be reputed as an Atheist," says Justin Martyr, *Apol. Maj.*, cap. 46.

but the true contents of which are made known to us by the Bible. What we have adduced are indeed thoughts which have risen in and from the heart of humanity itself, which in its condition of misery did not cease to pine for redemption, but—have risen ever under the influence of the Logos, who, if He is really life and light, could not but ever afresh pierce by His beams the thick mists. Heathendom could not possibly of its own strength rise to the realisation of its fairest ideals.<sup>22</sup> Yet who would dare assert that these ideals themselves would ever have been cherished and expressed, if the Logos had wholly withdrawn Himself from the fallen humanity which was once created after His image? “No true Logic apart from the Logos,” wrote a Christian philosopher with good reason.<sup>23</sup>

And this leads us to a last observation. By the relation observed between the Logos and our fallen race is, finally, *an otherwise mysterious dispensation of Providence most beautifully justified*. Or is there not at first sight something mysterious in the fact that God chose only one nation as the depository of His special revelation, and, as far as the Gentiles were concerned, allowed them to walk in their own ways? Has the question never risen within our heart, why—if the appearing of the Son of God was absolutely necessary for the deliverance of the lost—must no fewer than four milleniums

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<sup>22</sup> Compare the beautiful Introduction to the History of the Christian Church in the first three centuries, by E. de Pressensé. [Translated under the title : “The Religions before Christ.”]

<sup>23</sup> Friedr. v. Meyer.

pass away, before the sun of salvation showed itself on the horizon? We do not for a moment pretend to be able to solve this question in such wise that no single shade of obscurity shall remain upon it, but yet we believe that by what has been said an otherwise incomprehensible Providence of God is in part explained, and a natural source of difficulty removed. Yes, Israel was and remained the people of Revelation, in all the significance of the word; but God has not on that account left the Heathen entirely without witness. Yet once more, *In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.* If man, even in his deepest fall, has never wholly and finally severed the last link which bound him to his Creator, this of a truth was not owing to his own wisdom and strength, but to the continued operation of the Logos. Those among the Heathen who, in their own way, feared God and wrought righteousness, were—without themselves knowing it—led by Him in the way of truth and life. Without therefore our expressing ourselves so definitely, as *e.g.* the Reformer Zwingli, as to the salvation of such wise and Godfearing Heathen,<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Among the Reformers it was especially Zwingli who taught a pre-Christian activity of the Logos even in the Gentile world; who applied the name of *Divine* to many a remarkable phenomenon in the Gentile domain, and acknowledged the salvation, *e.g.*, of a Hercules, a Theseus, a Socrates, an Aristides, an Antigonus, a Numa, a Camillus, the Catos and Scipios; not because he believed their salvation possible out of Christ, but because he believed in a saving operation of the λόγος ἀσάρκως." "*Quid enim scimus,*" he asked, *quid fidei quisque in corde suo Dei manu scriptum teneat?* The principal places bearing on this subject will be found collected

the supposition will at least be allowed, that those who were already, here below, thus prepared for the knowledge of the truth, are perhaps after death translated into a higher school of training. Yea, who can determine what rays of light the Logos has shed in former ages for the eye of so many a truth-loving Heathen, the brightness of which has disappeared for a later generation? Who can say in what way He is at this moment occupied in preparing for His day in far-off Heathen lands, which have not yet heard the sound of His approaching footsteps? Who must not admit, that while the Heathen have indeed been without the historic Christ they have not on that account been without the eternal Logos, and that it was He Himself who in every possible way has taught them to ask after and desire Him? The more nearly the centuries before Christ approach their end, the more does it seem to us as though we see Him coming to the deeply sunken Heathen world, ever nearer, and closer, and more swiftly, until at last, while they sit there in an almost hopeless state, He puts an end to all their uncertain seeking, and divining, and striving, and graciously exclaims, "Behold, I am here." For, once more, as the world and humanity were originally created for the Son, so also the Son was originally destined for the world and humanity. They are, so to speak, two opposite points, which unceasingly approach each other, until at last they blend in the ever-memorable scene of Bethlehem; but not until the Logos has manifested

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and criticised, among others,<sup>6</sup> by Alex. Schweitzer, *Glaubenslehre der ev. ref. Kirch*, II., pp. 9—12.

Himself (in a very different manner from that in which He did so in the Heathen world) among the descendants of Abraham, in the midst of whom He was later to appear. *The Son of God before His incarnation, and the people of Israel*, is the subject of our special contemplation in what immediately follows.

## IV.

## THE SON OF GOD AND THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL.

WHEN John, in the Introduction to his Gospel, reviews with eagle glance the operation of the Logos, even before His coming in the flesh, he characterises in a single trait the relation in which the Son of God stood to the posterity of Abraham, not merely during His sojourning on earth, but also ages before. "He came to His own possession,"—to that people of the human race, to which from the beginning He felt a special relation, and in the midst of which He should appear in the fulness of the times,—“but His own people received Him not.”

*To His own.* What has been before said has already placed us in a position to comprehend, at least to some extent, the justice and significance of this saying. While the Logos stood in a definite relation to the whole of humanity ever since the creation, yet the separation and calling of the people of Israel was without doubt no less the execution of His own counsel and will, than it was of that of the Father. He Himself thus caused to arise, and grow, and ripen, that people in the midst of whom He was to appear in the fulness of the time. Far from Christ being, as some represent Him, the natural product of the Israelitish people, Israel itself, as a people of revelation, is



the work of the Logos. "Without Him was nothing made, that was made." It was thus His creative power which caused the son of promise to spring from Sarah's now aged body ; it was His command, by virtue of which a posterity was born from one, and he as good as dead, as the stars of heaven in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea-shore innumerable. This people was destined and set apart to be a people of revelation, in an entirely unique sense of the term. It occupies henceforth an absolutely select position among all the nations of the earth—yea, Rome with all its might, and Greece with all its wisdom, is for the eye of the Christian of far less importance than this little people of promise, which in almost every other respect is behind other nations, but in this one respect merits the preference above all others, that "unto them were committed the oracles of God."<sup>1</sup> He who, as so many in our day, forgets or doubts this special destination of Israel, cannot but be offended at so much that is strange and unwonted in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. He, however, who on immovable historic grounds believes in the existence and operation of a special Divine government over Israel, will already conjecture from the nature of the case, that between this people and the Christ, who was destined to be the crown of Israel and the centre of the world's history, there existed from old time an entirely peculiar relation. If we ask as to the nature and extent of this relation, the three-fold answer may be perfectly justified: the Son of God,

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<sup>1</sup> Rom. iii. 2.

even before His coming into the world, was *proclaimed*, *shadowed forth*, and *manifested* in Israel.

If we consider the *proclamation* of the Son of God in Israel somewhat more closely, it can be shown from the history of the origin and growth of the Messianic expectation in Israel, that this expectation was first carefully *prepared for*, afterwards emphatically *expressed*, and finally, on many sides *developed*; and precisely in this gradual rise do we find a proof for the existence and sublimity of an extraordinary Divine *revelation*. The promise of redemption was by no means (as an uncomprehended magical formula) handed down unchanged, and as it were mechanically, from one generation to another. On the contrary, we observe, even in the first revelations of salvation, a regular and gradual progress. At the very threshold of paradise, we hear humanity called to the most terrible conflict, and to the most glorious victory: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." No promise can indeed be more general than this first one; but now, in the way of an ever free and gracious choice, the circle within which the Hope of the world was to appear, is drawn constantly more and more close. From Adam is chosen Seth, Noah, Shem, Heber. The Babylonian confusion of tongues prepares the way for the separation of a people; and, as afterwards God's creative omnipotence causes the Christ to be born, so now does it make the aged Sarah to be a joyful mother. Abraham arises, the rock whence Israel

was hewn, as a prophet afterwards terms him.<sup>2</sup> He is chosen before others as the friend of Jehovah, yea, the golden line of election now first begins to be right clear and manifest. Not Nahor, but Abraham his brother; not Ishmael, but Isaac his brother; not Esau, but Jacob his brother, is destined to be the ancestor of Christ, according to the flesh. Of Christ—no, as a person He does not yet present Himself before our eyes; these are, as it were, only the morning clouds, from which His light shall appear. We hear only of *something* great and glorious, which God Himself will accomplish for our fallen race, and the promise to Abraham, especially,<sup>3</sup> awakens in us the expectation of a store of absolutely boundless blessings. And if, in the writings of Moses, a *Some One*, a definite person is announced, in whom this hope shall be realised, it is because a fresh ray of light arises upon the death-bed of the Patriarch *Jacob*, where we first hear the Saviour of the world spoken of, but as yet only figuratively and parabolically, as *personal*. “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering (or, obedience) of the nations be.”<sup>4</sup> A Peace-bringer is henceforth looked for from Judah, without its being for a moment said in

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<sup>2</sup> Isa. li. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. xii. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Gen. xlix. 10. Perhaps on account of the parallelism, best rendered, “The staff shall not depart from Judah, nor a sceptre from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the obedience of the nations be.”—*Tr.*

what character He will arise. A few centuries later, *Balaam* sees the house of Jacob invested with princely glory,<sup>5</sup> and *Moses* beholds in the future an ideal *Prophet*, equal to himself in dignity.<sup>6</sup> In the midst of the full enjoyment of the blessing of the Theocracy, the desire for a visible king becomes ever more and more strong, and it awakens in the hearts of men the feeling that under this form of government, the nation will attain its highest point of glory.<sup>7</sup> Thus approaches the time, when first Saul, then David and Solomon, ascend the princely throne; and now that which had been already prepared for and indicated in all the before-mentioned revelations, is by *David* distinctly declared. An everlasting kingship in his house is promised by Jehovah Himself to the man after God's own heart; and, enlightened by the Spirit of the Lord, David beholds in the distant future that Son whom he reverentially hails as his Lord.<sup>8</sup> First, there is presented to his eye the glory of the Hero, who triumphs over all His foes; then he becomes in his own experiences the striking type of Him, who must pass through sufferings to glory. With dying lips does he yet give utterance to his expectation of the "Righteous One, ruling in the fear of God,"<sup>9</sup> who one day shall occupy his throne; and, after David's departure, *Solomon* on his part proclaims the praise of that Prince of Peace, whom he personally shadows forth.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Numb. xxiv. 17.

<sup>6</sup> Deut. xviii. 15; compare xxxiv. 10.

<sup>7</sup> Judges viii. 22, 23; 1 Sam. ii. 10.

<sup>8</sup> 2 Sam. vii.

<sup>9</sup> 2 Sam. xxiii. 1—7.

<sup>10</sup> Psalm lxxii.

Expressed in sacred *Psalms*,<sup>11</sup> the expectation of Messiah becomes more and more an imperishable heritage of the nation; and when at length Jehovah raises up a distinguished succession of *Prophets* in Israel and Judah, this prospect unfolds itself under His immediate guidance with increasing clearness. From century to century there are opened up new depths of sin on the one side, of grace on the other; and there are granted to us deeper glances, not only into the heart of man, but also into the heart of the Godhead itself. Long, even, before the Babylonian captivity, the Messianic image of David is enriched with a multitude of new features. In sublime transport *Joel*<sup>12</sup> describes the days of the New Covenant as days of the plenteous outpouring of the Spirit, without as yet pointing to Him, who shall baptise with the Holy Ghost; but *Amos*<sup>13</sup> sees the fallen tabernacle of David again raised, and looks for the renewed triumph of Israel at the same time, over all its mighty foes. *Hosea*<sup>14</sup> expects from the sceptre of David a fresh union of the now separated Israel and Judah; and the more gloomy the prospect becomes in the immediate future before the following seers—inasmuch as they predict with ever greater clearness the approaching Captivity—the more clearly does the form of the great Restorer stand out in the foreground of the picture

<sup>11</sup> Compare *Psalms* cx. ii. lxxii. xlv., in which four *Psalms* reference is made to the *victory*, the *conflict*, the *peace*, and the *glory* of the future Messianic kingdom. Then compare *Ps.* viii.; xcvii. 7; cxviii. 22; lxviii. 18; xl. 6—8; xli. 9; cix.; lxix.; xvi. 8—11; xxii.

<sup>12</sup> *Joel* ii. 28—32.

<sup>13</sup> *Amos* ix. 11.

<sup>14</sup> *Hosea* iii. 4, 5.

which they draw. The nearer the fulfilment of the time approaches, the more manifold becomes at the same time the number of those peculiarities of His person and work—comparatively small, apparently accidental, such at least as could not have been calculated beforehand—which are indicated by the Spirit of prophecy. Thus *Micah* announces His birth at Bethlehem.<sup>15</sup> *Isaiah*, His conception by a virgin, and His honourable burial after a death of shame.<sup>16</sup> Especially does the last-named man of God tower as a Christologian as high above the other prophets, as David above the other kings. On the one hand, he predicts the appearing of the Son of David in the days of the deepest humiliation; on the other, he presents Him before our view in a more than earthly splendour. Spiritual blessings, especially forgiveness of sin and triumph over death, does he promise His faithful subjects, and describes the prophetic and high-priestly character of the Lord, as well as His royal character. Hints already given by Moses and David with regard thereto,<sup>17</sup> are by him more fully developed, like fruitful germs which suddenly burst forth with vigour, after having slumbered for a while apparently without life. The kingly Branch of David now stands forth as the Servant of Jehovah, who suffers for the sins of others, but then makes known His salvation to the ends of the earth, and at last is as

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<sup>15</sup> *Micah* iv. and v.

<sup>16</sup> *Isaiah* ii. and iv.; vii. 14—16; ix. 1—7; xi. 1—10; xlii. 1—7; xlix.; l. 4—11; lii. 13; liii. 12; and other places.

<sup>17</sup> *Deut.* xviii. 15; *Psalms* cx. 4.

highly exalted as He had before been deeply dishonoured. From the throne which He has in this manner ascended, flows down salvation upon all the nations of the earth, and He founds and presides over a kingdom of God, of which a glorified Jerusalem forms the visible centre, and in which prevails a clear knowledge of God, unsullied purity, and unbroken repose and happiness. And while the desolation of the city seems indeed to hinder the founding of this kingdom, yet it is very soon manifest, even during the Babylonian Captivity, that the best hope of the nation was not lost with its other treasures. Whilst the threatenings, which had been early pronounced against an impenitent nation,<sup>18</sup> are receiving their fulfilment before his eyes, the spirit of *Jeremiah*<sup>19</sup> is carried forward to the establishing of a New Covenant, which shall be alike fraught with blessing and secure against change, and in which there shall be the realisation of all those things of which only the shadow had yet been seen. While the form in which he clothes the promise of salvation, was again to a certain extent new, the preciousness of its contents is especially made evident to us by *Ezekiel*.<sup>20</sup> More strikingly than any of his predecessors does he describe to us the whole outward and inner renewal of Israel by the power of the Holy Ghost, which is to be looked for in after ages, when the only Shepherd gathers again His favoured flock. By the

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<sup>18</sup> Deut. xxviii. ; and other places.

<sup>19</sup> Jer. iii. 14—17 ; xxxi. 31—34 ; xxiii. 5, 6 ; xxxiii. 15, 16.

<sup>20</sup> Ezek. xi. 19, 20 ; xvii. 22—24 ; xxxiv. ; xxxvi. ; xl. ; and other places.



streams of the Chaboras we see a God-opposed world-power arising in opposition to the restored Temple of God, which fights against the heritage of the Lord, and is destined at last to be overthrown. We are thus, yet more than before, led to see the Messianic period take its place in the great whole of the *world's history*; and Ezekiel prepares us for *Daniel*.<sup>21</sup> It is this latter prophet who, in the land of exile, brings the hope of Israel into direct relation with the past and future of the whole of humanity; and, after he has pointed out with regard to the kingdom of God its peculiar place beside and above all kingdoms of the earth, is the first who more closely defines the time when the King Himself shall appear. Without any ambiguity does he announce the heavenly origin of the Messiah, already hinted at by several of his predecessors; and predicts more clearly than any one else the melancholy consequences for Israel, which attach themselves to His rejection. Through the influence of Daniel and others, the nation at the close of the Babylonian Captivity is in the possession of a rich treasure of lofty expectations. These are further augmented by the last prophets; although, with the gradual disappearing of the prophetic gift, no longer so richly as before. *Haggai*<sup>22</sup> teaches the nation to look for the promised salvation, definitely during the existence of the *second* Temple. *Zechariah*<sup>23</sup> represents, even in its minute details, the humiliation and rejection of the King of Israel, and adds yet new features to

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<sup>21</sup> Dan. ii. ; vii. ; ix. 24—27.

<sup>22</sup> Hag. ii. 6—9.

<sup>23</sup> Zech. iii. 1, *sqq.* ; vi. 9—15 ; ix. 9, 10 ; xi.—xiv.

the picture of the last conflict already drawn in such vivid colours by Ezekiel. And *Malachi*,<sup>24</sup> as it were for the complementing of the strictly Old Testament standpoint which he assumes above many others, places beside the almost completed image of Messiah the severe form of the Forerunner, the last messenger of God before the advent of the Angel of the Covenant. Thus almost every prophet added his own touch to the glorious picture of the days of the New Covenant; until, after sufficient elaboration of the main figure, the painters all withdraw, and let fall the curtain for awhile. The Person is already depicted, who shall raise this curtain again, and with His own hand trace for His contemporaries the fulfilment of the prophecy.

We cannot here hope to pursue the development of the Israelitish Messianic expectation still further; yet even this general review, presented only in its broad features, impels us with irresistible force reverently to look *on high*. It might have been spoken of as an irrefragable proof for the Divine mission and all-surpassing dignity of the Christ of God, if only a single prophet had, centuries before His appearing upon earth, minutely detailed the circumstances and issues of that appearing, and this prophecy had, contrary to all human expectation, been perfectly and literally fulfilled. But in this case, it will be felt, there is something infinitely greater. A venerable host of men of God, of the most diverse peculiarity, mode of thought and development, often sepa-

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<sup>24</sup> Mal. iii. 1; iv. 1—6.

rated from each other by an interval of centuries, and each one as a rule speaking independently of the word of his predecessor, arise as interpreters of the fairest expectations. Under circumstances the most dissimilar they behold and point out the same background; notwithstanding the very diverse nature of their individuality, they bear testimony under various differing forms to one truth; and all these voices, now threatening, now alluring, now rejoicing, now lamenting, are all dissolved in one glorious closing harmony: the expectation of the coming of the Lord. "Shell and husk," to use the language of a celebrated theologian,<sup>25</sup> "in which the precious kernel is hidden, fall away one after another, until at length this kernel itself, the Christ, appears personally; and the whole of the Old Testament rests upon the ever more full and complete development of single early prophecies and promises of God, which pervades it, in which the unity of the Divine plan is fully perceived only when Christ shall have come in His kingdom." It is remarkable in what a manifold way, yet one ever conformable to the end in view, the development of this prospect in antiquity is advanced by Jehovah Himself. Now He sends *persons*, who in their work and fate shall as it were shadow forth before the eyes of the nation the future Bringer of salvation; now He ordains *events*, such as the growing decay, the entire overthrow, and the partial restoration of Israel, by which is awakened on the one hand the need of redemption, and

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<sup>25</sup> Herder.

on the other the receptivity for it; then He makes provision that His promises should be preserved and read in enduring *writing*, in order thus to strengthen the desponding heart by a well-grounded hope. But in whatever way the development of this awakened hope is advanced, it goes on its own *uninterrupted* way. It is true it meets with all sorts of hindrances, especially in the insensibility and earthly-mindedness of the nation, but it knows how to triumph over all these; and even that which depresses the joyful spirit of believers in Israel, serves on the other hand so much the more to render intense their desire. As the leaf is born from the branch, the branch from the stem, the stem from the root, so, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, does the one prospect grow out of the other, and never do we perceive an unnatural bound, but at the same time never an obstructing gulf. The way in which Jehovah leads His people ever more deeply into the mysteries of His plan regarding the world, is the same as that which we constantly discover in the history of men and nations: not the straight, but the curved line, which advances by circuitous paths, and even notwithstanding apparent retrogression. A prophet gifted with special insight is not always followed by one yet more brightly illumined, but sometimes by a seer of lesser degree, and for a moment the prospects are obscured or lowered, where we were prepared to see a rise. Sometimes, however, the deviating line bends round again, and after a few steps backwards we find ourselves unexpectedly advancing once more several steps forward; and even where at first sight we see

nothing but a confused *diversity* of Christological conceptions, we are quickly surprised by a *harmony* between more indefinite and more precise revelations of salvation, such as we hardly expected to find. Verily, while the thus developed Messianic expectation may be compared to a stately edifice, we may boldly inscribe over the entrance to it the testimony: "He that hath built all this, is God." And, however many questions, even regarding the origin, the composition, and preservation of single books of the Old Testament, have hitherto remained unanswered, yet we for our part scarcely know a stronger evidence for the fact that an extraordinary Divine *revelation* must be deposited in this collection of books, than precisely a glance at the Israelitish *expectation of Messiah*, therein preserved and so gloriously developed.

In truth, only a passing comparison is necessary between the indefinite expectations of salvation of Gentile antiquity, and the certain promises of salvation in that of Israel, in order to convince us that we are here moving on what is entirely another soil, and that between the two preparations for the coming of the Son of God in the flesh there exists a difference not merely of *degree* but of *kind*. In the expectations of the Christ in the Gentile world we see the fruit of a natural *human* presentiment, however much called forth under the secret influence of the Logos, who there also has prepared His way. In the Messianic predictions of the Prophets of Israel, on the other hand, we discover the fruit of a direct, *extraordinary* revelation from above, which it is true attached itself to the development of that age, and

was proportioned to its wants, but can by no means be explained as the purely natural fruit of the seer's own consciousness, or of the spirit of the times. There we see the sighing creature rising as high as possible on its own wings, in order to discover whether the day of salvation is not yet coming. Here, on the other hand, we see God in compassion bending down, in order to communicate to the deeply fallen son of man something of a blessed secret, of which without His special enlightenment, the eye would never have seen anything, nor the ear ever have heard. It is equally unreasonable and superficial to obliterate the boundary-line, which has in this respect often been drawn between Israel and the nations,<sup>26</sup> as it is to doubt the existence of a preparation of the Gentile world also, for the day of salvation. Above either form of exclusiveness the Apostle has already risen, where he so emphatically terms God a God of the Jews, though not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles; yet by no means in the same sense in which He was the God of the Jews.<sup>27</sup>

Is any one in danger of supposing that this express announcement of the Messiah before His manifestation in Israel was a benefit of small *significance*, or at least, now—when the shadow has given place to the light—merits no special attention? The nature of the case, no less than the voice of history, would loudly contradict this assertion. By the prophetic promise of Messiah's appearing the nation of Israel was inspired with courage

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<sup>26</sup> Psalm cxlvii. 19, 20; Acts xiv. 16, 17.

<sup>27</sup> Rom. iii. 29; comp. verses 1 and 2.

in the darkest days, and in the midst of the severest temptations was pledged to faithfulness towards Jehovah, who had set so glorious a prospect before the descendants of His friend. The hope of a salvation-bearer who should not merely exalt Israel, but also be the light of the whole world, must preserve the people of the Lord against a narrow particularism, otherwise almost inevitable. The Gospel, which was thus even under the Old Testament mingled with the threatenings of the law, was able to console those who were grieved on account of their sins, and the expectation of the judgment connected with Messiah's appearing, to move the disobedient to repentance. And when at length the day of salvation dawned, then precisely the comparison of the prophetic image of Messiah with the historic reality must convince the Lord's contemporaries that He was truly the one who should come, without its being needful to expect another after Him. No wonder that Jesus Himself constantly appealed to the prophets, and rebuked the unbelief which was blind to their literal fulfilment. No wonder that in the discourses and epistles of the Apostles there is found, notwithstanding all diversity, a remarkable harmony in the use and appreciation of prophetic Scripture. No wonder either that for centuries thousands of unbelieving Jews have been led by this blessed means to the acknowledging of the hope of their fathers. And is the value of these announcements in any way diminished for us, who live to see the day of fulfilment? This has not seldom been asserted, and the assertion is natural from the standpoint of those who would deprive the



prophetic words of the venerable character of an extraordinary Divine revelation, and even estimate the literal fulfilment of definite prophecies as nothing higher than an accidental, unmeaning phenomenon. But the Apostle Peter at least judged otherwise, when he exhorted even Christians to take heed to the word of prophecy, which—thus it reads literally—is *the more firm*, namely, since it has received confirmation by the issue; as unto a light that shineth in a dark place.<sup>28</sup> The believing Church of all ages has, with most perfect right, attached the greatest weight to the proof for the Divine origin of the Gospel derived from fulfilled prophecy.<sup>29</sup> How many unbelievers occupy a standpoint scarcely so high as that of the contemporaries of our Lord, who must first learn to know Him aright even by the examination of the prophetic Scriptures! And where is the believer who does not constantly stand in need of fresh strengthening, and who would wish to despise a means thereto appointed by God, and already blessed for thousands? Let only Christendom return to a believing acknowledgment of the prophetic word as the word of the living God, of which the claim is now, alas, often so profanely ignored by a science falsely so-called, and then will it perceive that here lie gold mines still inexhaustible, for the knowledge, the faith, and the life of the Christian, of which the first veins are as yet scarcely disclosed.

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<sup>28</sup> 2 Pet. i. 19.

<sup>29</sup> Compare the beautiful *Pensées de Pascal*, Article 10, under the title, *Preuves de Jésus-Christ par les Prophètes*, and then the admirable sermon of A. Monod, entitled *La Crédulité de l'Incrédule*, in the second series of his *Sermons*, pp. 311—367.

Or shall it, finally, present a difficulty for any one, that this announcement of Christ under the Old Covenant *lasted so long*, and that only so late was it followed by a personal manifestation? It is true, the night, in which this light shined, rested long on the earth. Almost two thousand years passed between Abraham and Christ, and now, already almost nineteen centuries after His appearing, the kingdom of God has not yet come to half the human race. But is not this very slowness in its preparation one proof the more for the value and the glory of the New Testament day? As in the natural, so also in the spiritual domain, that which is greatest and noblest is brought to completion last and most slowly. Usually, when God purposes an extraordinary deliverance, He first allows human wisdom and power to exert itself to the uttermost, that in this way its powerlessness may be made manifest before the eyes of all, and not the creature, but only the Creator, may receive the glory of the salvation. Only when Ishmael is brought to the verge of death does the Angel of the Lord open the eyes of Hagar, that she may perceive a well of water. Only when the hosts of Sennacherib are already before the gates of Jerusalem, does the Angel of destruction stretch in the dust one hundred and eighty-five thousand men at a single blow. Only when sinful and wretched humanity had made all kinds of attempts to raise itself from its state of misery, was the Saviour of the world born. Who knows, moreover, whether Christ would not have appeared earlier in the flesh, if the preparation for His coming had encountered less opposition, and believing

desire had been just as general as the power of sin and unbelief now is? Had not the field to be carefully prepared, ere the tree of the Kingdom of God was planted? and does not history show that the long-enduring prophesying of this salvation has brought forth so much the fairer fruit? However this may be, he who in Israel truly revered the word of prophecy as a word of the Lord, found in it full amends for an otherwise painful deficiency. If it was the very Spirit of Christ Himself who spake by the prophets:<sup>30</sup> the Israelite thus, as it were, heard His voice, even before he saw His form. His image stood before the eye of His people, in the mirror of prophetic Scripture, and what with this light was still wanting in point of accuracy and clearness to their conceptions, was partially supplied by that which was in another way presented to them concerning His person and work. And this leads us to speak of the shadowings forth of Christ's appearing, which are met with under the Old Covenant.

When we assert that the Son of God before His incarnation was not merely announced, but also *shadowed forth*, we are only repeating in other words that which the Lord and His Apostles have said to us in various ways. We at once think here of the Epistle to the Hebrews, which may be termed a prolonged demonstration that the Old and the New Testament stand to each other in the same relation as the shadow to the reality. Moreover it is not this writer alone who has expressed

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<sup>30</sup> 1 Pet. i. 11.

this thought, and taken peculiar interest in its elucidation. Paul, too, declares that the Old Testament rites were only "a shadow of things to come; but the body is (that of) Christ."<sup>31</sup> He calls the first Adam a figure (*Typus*) of Him that was to come;<sup>32</sup> and says elsewhere, to mention no other instances, that Christ was the Rock, whence the Children of Israel drank in their desert-journeyings.<sup>33</sup> Peter sees in the flood a type of Baptism; John, in the earthly Temple, an image in many respects of the heavenly one. And who does not know how the Saviour Himself compared His lifting-up upon the cross with that of the brazen serpent; beheld and clearly pointed out in the manna the image of Himself as the Bread of Life; how He saw, not only in the words, but also in the work and lot of the old prophets, a definite reference to His own appearing? In connection with such manifold points of agreement between the Old Testament and the New, we cannot feel surprise that these have often been observed and pursued into even trifling details, and that a special domain of so-called *Typical* Theology has arisen, and has found, especially in former centuries, able and acute defenders, as it has in later centuries powerful opponents.

It does not belong to our present task to give the history of Typical Theology even in broad outline, or to decide as to its value in general. We sincerely respect the acumen of a Coccejus, a Vitringa, a Witsius, and others, who saw Christ shadowed forth even in those

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<sup>31</sup> Col. ii. 17.

<sup>32</sup> Rom. v. 17.

<sup>33</sup> 1 Cor. x. 4.

features of the Old Testament, in which certainly no one without their guidance would ever have observed the allusion. But we believe that in this domain, as well as others, men have only too often proceeded too far; the gradual progress of Divine revelation has been often overlooked, and the distinction between shadow and light has not been sufficiently observed. When Christ has been not seldom found shadowed forth in persons and institutions of the Old Testament, to which not the most distant allusion is made in the New, there a large field must have been granted, not only to reason, but also to caprice. An over-estimate of the light in this way shed under the Old Covenant must, on the other hand, lead to distrust and misrepresentation; and, whilst in former times not a few were to be met with, who sought a figurative meaning in almost every history or institution of Israel, now one meets with many more who reject all Typology (doctrine of types) as a fruit of superstition and prejudice. We shall certainly be preserved from both extremes, if we here also attach ourselves as closely as possible to the teaching of the Apostles; and to the question, By what was Christ shadowed forth under the Old Covenant? simply return the answer, *Expressly by such persons and ordinances as are indicated to us, by Himself and His inspired messengers, as figures of His person and work.*

Perhaps, however, it may not be superfluous for some to indicate a little more definitely what we mean by the word *type*. We cannot better do so than in the words of one equally eminent for his piety as for his learn-

ing:<sup>34</sup> "God has been pleased to give, as well in remarkable persons of the Old Testament, in whose case something unusual has occurred, as in the whole institution of religion, a true delineation—and one worthy of so great an artist—of Christ, together with His spiritual body. As often as there is found in an antitype the likeness of the type, we assert with justice that God, who knew all things from the beginning, has so constituted the type, that the antitypical reality should be found already indicated therein; unless indeed any one should assert that the agreement between the artistic painting and the object depicted is to be ascribed to accident, and not to the design of the painter, which is contrary to all reason." Evidently something infinitely higher than a mere *external* and *accidental* agreement between the Old Testament and the New is to be thought of. When we speak of *types*, we do not mean simply such persons and things as now, regarded after the coming of Christ, admit of our perceiving some resemblance to the Lord and His Church; but such as were originally *destined* and *ordained* by God, to be images of that person and that salvation, which in the fulness of time should appear in reality.

That the Old Testament is rich in such types, or rather forms in its totality *one* type of the New Testament, follows necessarily from the entirely unique position which belongs to Christ as the centre of the history of the world and of revelation. As we constantly see the principle embodied in the vegetable and animal kingdom,

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<sup>31</sup> Witsius, *Oeconomia Foederum Dei*, iv. 4, §§ 5, 6.

that the higher species are already typified in a lower stage of development, so do we also find, in the domain of Saving Revelation, the highest not only prepared for, but also shadowed forth, by that which precedes in lower spheres. Such types are, as it were, prophecies in *things* and *facts*—*sächliche und thatsächliche Weissagungen*—of the blessedness of the future, which, side by side with the prophetic *word*, run on in parallel line, and in many respects explain it. How much or how little the Israelites themselves understood of this *higher* significance of the events and institutions under the Old Covenant above referred to, can indeed never be determined otherwise than by conjecture. Equally arbitrary is it to assert that they—*i.e.* the most advanced and devout amongst them—understood *the whole*, as that they did *not* understand *the least* of that which was signified. What, moreover, was unknown to them, did not necessarily remain so for those higher beings, who admired God's manifold wisdom in the founding and guiding of His Church.<sup>35</sup> What remained unknown for them is, at any rate, in part unsealed for us, who see pointed out to us, as with the finger, by infallible guides in the New Testament, the typico-symbolical character of so many a *personality* and so many an ordinance of the earlier days.

And what a noble succession of "figures of Him that was to come," presents itself before our eyes! Foremost of all stands *Adam*, the father of our fallen race, in this respect resembling Christ, that they are both spiritual

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<sup>35</sup> Ephes. iii. 10; 1 Pet. i. 12.



heads, the one of the fallen, the other of the regenerate humanity; from whom on the one hand has proceeded death, on the other, life and blessedness.<sup>36</sup> Then *Melchisedec*, King of Salem, as King and Priest in the unity of the person image of that heavenly High-Priest, who sits at the right hand of God, and even by the mystery in which His whole personality is involved, a worthy representative of Him who occupies a place wholly unique in the history of humanity.<sup>37</sup> Not less so is Moses, the Mediator of the Old Covenant, as Christ is of the New, who was a servant in the same house, of which He—the First-born—was the Son.<sup>38</sup> Then *David*, the man after God's own heart, who in his sufferings and in his glory is so greatly the type of his adorable descendant, that the latter is even sometimes designated by the name of David.<sup>39</sup> With him *Solomon*, the Prince of Peace, to whom the whole East renders homage, and whom the Queen of Sheba honours in a manner which the more strongly sets forth the unbelief of the contemporaries of the Lord.<sup>40</sup> After him *Jonah*, who, according to the word of Jesus Himself, shadowed forth by his three days' sojourn in the fish, the miracle of the Lord's resurrection after three days' rest in the grave.<sup>41</sup> Yea, may we not see a reference in every prophet who more or less corresponds to the ideal of the *Servant of the Lord*, so strikingly depicted by Isaiah, to Him who as such should perfectly and for ever fulfil the counsel and will of the Father? In fact,

<sup>36</sup> Rom. v. 12—21; 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22.

<sup>37</sup> Heb. vii. 1; cf. Ps. cx. 4.

<sup>38</sup> Heb. iii. 1—6.

<sup>39</sup> Ezek. xxxiv. 23, 24.

<sup>40</sup> Ps. lxxii., and Matt. xii. 42.

<sup>41</sup> Matt. xii. 39, 40.

the longer we contemplate these venerable forms, the more clear becomes the agreement with One, in whom all that was exalted in them is found in the highest measure, but without any accompanying imperfection. As it were in image and likeness the contemporaries of the kings and prophets saluted the Messiah, although they beheld the promise of His coming only afar off, and believed it, and embraced it.

And may not the same be said of so many an *institution* of the Old Testament, of which the highest aim is investigated, only when this institution is brought into direct relation with the salvation which has appeared in Christ? Solemn is the memorial feast of Israel's exodus, ordained by Moses in the Paschal supper; but what is the deepest significance of that Paschal Lamb, of which not a bone was to be broken? "Even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us,"<sup>42</sup> exclaims Paul to the Corinthians, and finds thus in the Israelitish Passover the symbolical reference to a better redemption, which is effected by the sacrifice of Christ. Beneficial is the uplifting of the brazen serpent, by which death and destruction is arrested in the camp of Israel. But what significance has this ordinance of Moses, not merely for Israel, but for all following centuries? "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, *even so must the Son of man be lifted up*, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> 1 Cor. v. 7; comp. John xix. 36.

<sup>43</sup> Numbers xxi. 4--9; John iii. 14, 15.

Majestic is the sacrificial ritual, which is performed day by day in the Tabernacle and the Temple; but has it no higher aim than only for the moment to calm the heart and conscience of the sinner? Yes, for here also the law has "the shadow of good things to come." Every propitiatory sacrifice which bled upon the altar of atonement is a striking type of Him, who by one offering hath made perfect for ever all His people. The High Priest in his raiment of office becomes the image of that better High Priest, who with the offering of His own blood appears before the presence of the Father; and the Most Holy Place in its mysterious splendour presents the Heavenly Temple as it were visibly and clearly before our eyes. But we should need to transcribe the whole Epistle to the Hebrews, if we would recount all, by which not only the Central Person, but also the whole economy of salvation under the New Covenant, is already shadowed forth in the Scriptures of the Old. All Israel, regarded as a people of Kings and Priests, may be called a living image of the Church of the New Testament, with all its privileges, obligations, and expectations. "All these things," writes Paul of the experiences of Israel in the wilderness, "happened unto them *for examples* (types); and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."<sup>44</sup> Yea, we believe a Christian philosopher was not exaggerating when he gave utterance to the suggestive words, "The whole biblical history is one grand prophecy,

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<sup>44</sup> 1 Cor. x. 11.

which receives its fulfilment in all ages, in the soul of every man.”<sup>45</sup>

We would not willingly assert that no other types of Christ existed in Israelitish antiquity besides those which have been expressly mentioned by Jesus and the Apostles. On the contrary, as there are without doubt other Messianic prophecies, besides those expressly mentioned in the Gospel, so assuredly there are other types besides those mentioned as such in the New Testament Scriptures. Even the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews (not to speak of any other) mentions different things, “of which he cannot now speak one by one,” to which he manifestly attaches a higher significance.<sup>46</sup> We cannot accordingly feel surprised that many, not satisfied with the comparatively little actually referred to in the Bible as a type, have considerably enlarged the limits of this class of predictions. Abel and Enoch, Noah and Abraham, Isaac and Joseph, Moses and Elijah, Boaz and Samson, Joshua and Zerubbabel—but where shall we make a beginning or an end, if we would enumerate all the heroes of sacred history in whom types have been discovered; as in Abel, though innocent, put to death; in Isaac, who was offered as a sacrifice; in Joseph, rejected of his brethren, and afterwards manifested to them in glory? In like manner have the enemies of the kingdom of Christ been seen shadowed forth; *e.g.*, in Pharaoh, the persecutor of Israel; in Saul, the enemy of David; in Haman, the adversary of the

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<sup>45</sup> Hamann.

<sup>46</sup> Heb. ix. 5.

Jews; not to speak of an Antiochus Epiphanes, a Nero, and so many others. Here, however, it is evident that no small amount of caution is necessary, in order not to say too much, and yet on the other hand not too little. As the eye when it has long gazed on the sun, perceives sunshine on every object which it afterwards looks upon, so the Christian, who daily contemplates his Lord with the eye of faith, recognises the lineaments of His image in the countenance of many an historical person. Who can—to speak of names already mentioned—contemplate the offering of Isaac on Mount Moriah, without soaring higher in thought, and placing himself at Calvary? or read the account of the deliverance of Moses in Egypt, without thinking of the flight from Bethlehem to Egypt? He who sees in this resemblance nothing more than the fruit of accident, has little eye for the steady progress of God's government, which in all ages follows the same rules, and brings forth light out of darkness, leads from the depth of humiliation to the height of honour, and to like causes attaches like consequences. Only the fact must never be lost sight of, that *resemblances and types are in any case not words of one signification*; and it must be remembered, moreover, that these comparisons can be made only *in a given respect*, and in such wise that the original difference between the cases is fully acknowledged. It is not difficult to proceed a few steps farther in the track marked out by the Apostles and Evangelists; and as, for instance, a prefiguration of the sacrifice on the cross has been seen in the propitiatory sacrifices of the Old Covenant, so

now to find in the Day of Atonement, in the Goël (*Kinsman Redeemer* of Levit. xxv. 25; Ruth ii. 20, etc.), and in the Cities of Refuge, a very distinct reference to the saving benefits of the New Covenant. But the difference always remains, that for this last-named interpretation we lack the authority of *infallible* guides, such as those who explain to us the significance of the Manna, of the Brazen Serpent, or of the Passover; and this remark, taken in connection with the boundless misuse made of Christian liberty in this respect, must of itself recommend an increased degree of caution. With full certainty, we can only say that Christ is shadowed forth by *those* persons and ordinances of the Old Testament, with regard to which the New gives us this assurance. Every favourite mode of interpreting Scripture writers in the typical sense, runs the risk of degenerating into extravagance; and however really the Old Testament is in itself a compact *whole*, which, as such, points to something future and higher, it is at any rate safer to rest content with observing the before-mentioned agreements in general, than to descend to minute and often trifling details. Only a practised spiritual taste can preserve us on the one hand from superficially overlooking the depths of Scripture, and on the other from confounding the play of our own imagination with the manifold wisdom of God. Resemblances, which in the opinion of one are highly surprising, appear to another not seldom in the highest degree forced; and we must never forget that between that which we *think* we see, and the truth itself, the distance may still be

immense. The doctrine of the *types* of Christ in the Old Testament is, from the nature of the case, much better adapted to confirm the Christian in his faith, than to move to belief the unbeliever, whose eye has not yet been opened for the glorious harmonies of the Scripture. Let not then this strong meat be furnished to those who, especially in our day, need first to be fed with simple milk. One thing, however, must stand immovably firm, amidst all the diversity of opinions, on this point also, that the whole Old Testament Cultus displays a *symbolical* character, to which the only fitting key is to be found in the person and work of that One, for whom it must prepare the way.<sup>47</sup> And when it becomes ever increasingly apparent, that nothing has here taken place by chance, and nothing without design, faith may adore the unsearchable wisdom of Him who, not only by word, but also by deed, has prophesied of the grace that is come to us, yea, set forth in sacred hieroglyphics the glad tidings, ere they were proclaimed throughout the whole Jewish and Gentile world!

We now come naturally to the last question of this chapter; namely, In what sense and with what right may it be said that the Son of God before His incarnation

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<sup>47</sup> It is pleasing to read in a work like the *Christologie* of A. Coquerel, Senr., which in other respects leaves so much to be desired (both from a scientific and a believing point of view) the statement which appears on p. 27 of vol. i.—“La perspective de la venue d'un Messie et de l'établissement d'un Règne de Dieu me paraît la clef de l'Ancien Testament; supprimez cette espérance nationale, la destinée de l'Israel et la Bible deviennent des énigmes sans mot.”



was *personally manifested* and *appeared* to the fathers under the Old Covenant? The answer to this depends especially on the answer to another question: *What have we to think of that exalted Person who, in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, is definitely characterised as the Angel of Jehovah, the Angel of the Presence, and the Angel of the Covenant?*

He who is not entirely a stranger to the first and larger half of Scripture, will remember that, in distinction from the whole heavenly host, as well as from other single angels, mention is often expressly made of one highly glorious angel, who not only arises and acts in the name of Jehovah, but whose name is even used interchangeably with that of Jehovah, and who receives what is in the true sense of the word *Divine* honour and reverence. He appears to Hagar, when as a fugitive she sits by the water-fountain, and promises that He will wondrously increase her descendants, and is addressed by her under the name of "God of vision."<sup>48</sup> By the terebinths of Mamre, He enters into Abraham's tent, accompanied by two other heavenly spirits, from whom He is at once clearly distinguished as the Lord, before whose face the patriarch still continues to stand in prayer.<sup>49</sup> Then He prevents the sacrifice of Isaac, with the words, "Now I know that thou fearest God, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me."<sup>50</sup> He wrestles with Jacob in a vision by night, and calls forth from him the thankful exclamation: "I have seen God face to face, and my

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<sup>48</sup> Gen. xvi. 10—13.

<sup>49</sup> Gen. xviii. 16—22.

<sup>50</sup> Gen. xxii. 12.

soul is delivered.”<sup>51</sup> The dying Israel speaks of Him in one breath with (and yet in distinction from) the God before whose face his fathers walked, and implores His blessing upon his descendants.<sup>52</sup> In the burning bush He appears unto Moses, speaks as the God of the patriarchs, and lays claim to Divine homage.<sup>53</sup> He is given by Jehovah as Leader of the Children of Israel: “Keep thyself before His face,” says the Lord, “and obey His voice; provoke Him not, for He will not pardon your transgressions: *for my Name is within Him.*”<sup>54</sup> Under His guidance Israel at first goes forth, but when they had been guilty of the worship of the calf, Jehovah threatens that He will no longer *Himself* go before their face, but will send an angel who shall drive out the inhabitants of Canaan; which can thus only be understood of an angel of lesser rank, else why the announcement of his being sent as a punishment? and whence the grief experienced by Moses and Israel?<sup>55</sup> Only when Jehovah’s *Presence* (*Countenance*, Face, ver. 14) goes with them—in other words, when the Angel of Jehovah’s face (Isa. lxiii. 9) has again placed Himself at the head of the host—is the mind of Moses perfectly set at rest. Joshua sees Him, as the Prince over the hosts of heaven, standing before the walls of Jericho, a warrior with drawn sword in His hand; and as he worships before

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<sup>51</sup> Gen. xxxii. 24—32. (Dutch version.)

<sup>52</sup> Gen. xlviii. 16.

<sup>53</sup> Exod. iii. 1, and following verses.

<sup>54</sup> Exod. xxiii. 20, 21; comp. Josh. xxiv. 19, and Isa. xlii. 8.

<sup>55</sup> Exod. xxxii. 34; xxxiii. 2, 3.

Him with his face to the earth, he is commanded further to loose his shoes from off his feet.<sup>56</sup> He appears to the wife of Manoah, then to Manoah himself, to announce to him the birth of Samson; and says, in answer to the question as to His name, that it is *Wonderful*,<sup>57</sup> and departs to heaven in the flame of fire, which ordinarily in Scripture is represented as specially a messenger of God. Thus had He earlier come to Israel in Bochim, to reprove them that—lax in the expulsion of the Canaanites—they had not listened to His voice;<sup>58</sup> and had, speaking as Jehovah Himself, commissioned Gideon to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Midianites.<sup>59</sup> He appears, to mention no other instances, as the messenger of revelation before Zechariah, in the night visions of this prophet—evidently exalted above other angels—as interceding with Jehovah on behalf of the devastated Jerusalem;<sup>60</sup> and it is not improbable that no other than He is designated in the book of Daniel, under the name of Michael.<sup>61</sup> He comes, finally—and here the appearing of this Angel of the Lord is brought into direct relation with the Messianic expectation—in the prophecies of Malachi, as the Lord to His Temple, preceded by the second Elias as His herald. Thus we meet with Him almost from the first page to the last of the Old Testa-

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<sup>56</sup> Joshua v. 13—15.

<sup>57</sup> Judges xiii. 3—20; comp. Isaiah ix. 6, 7, and Psalm civ. 4.

<sup>58</sup> Judges ii. 1—5.

<sup>59</sup> Judges vi. 12—24.

<sup>60</sup> Zech. i. 11, 12; comp. Ezek. ix. 2, etc.

<sup>61</sup> Comp. Hengstenberg, *Beiträge*, i. p. 165, and *Christologie des A. B.* 3rd. ed. of the original work, vol. ii., p. 52 and following.

ment, and the question arises with augmented emphasis, Who can He be, who, amidst the messengers of the counsel of God and the interpreters of His will, occupies so exceptional a position? We for our part know not how to return any other satisfactory answer but this: It was *the Logos, already active in Israel as the Angel of the Covenant, even before His incarnation.*

Let us not be misunderstood when we subscribe to this answer not without hesitation. We are by no means unacquainted with the objections which are raised against this our view, and which, even within the most recent period, have been maintained specially on the orthodox side. We do not assert that this high rank of the heavenly messenger, of whom we have been speaking, was already known to Israel under the Old Covenant;<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Very guardedly does Muntinghe express himself, *Gesch. der Menschh.* iv. p. 180, where he says, "Was then this Ambassador our Saviour Jesus Christ? If I transport myself into the age of Moses, and into the conceptions men then had, and only could have, then I cannot answer this question right off. It is surely one thing to determine whom the reflecting Israelite must see represented in this thought, and another thing to decide whom we, with our eyes enlightened by a nearer revelation, can perceive in Him. This alone is certain, that the longer the Israelite cherished this conception, the more he learnt to familiarise himself with the thought of the Godhead revealing Himself to the senses, by means of a person, who should present and represent the Deity, in whom he could perceive Deity speaking and acting, in whom he must adore and reverence the same; and we Christians see in this mode of Divine revelation at least a nearer preparation for the manifestation of Him whom we now humbly and believingly adore as God manifest in the flesh, as Him in whom the Father is." He who will become acquainted with recent literature on this subject may read especially C. J. Trip, *die Theophanien in den Geschichtsbüchern des A. T.* (Hague Prize Treatise, 1856).

but yet we believe, upon mature consideration, that the view we have expressed presents fewer difficulties, and is supported by stronger arguments, than any other, which might be commended to us instead of it.

Or must we here think simply of a created spirit of specially high rank, who, appearing and acting in the name of Jehovah, as His representative receives Divine honours? But in all the narratives mentioned there is not contained a single proof that we have here to do only with a finite *creature*. The Angel of the Covenant unceasingly speaks and acts as Jehovah *Himself*, and accepts a homage which—in the days of the New Covenant—we see a bright heavenly messenger reject with the words, “See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow-servant: worship God.”<sup>63</sup> High does He stand above all other heavenly messengers, who do His will on earth; and “*My Name is within Him*” are the words of Jehovah to Moses, as later Paul declares of Christ that in Him the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily.<sup>64</sup> But is then the Angel of Jehovah only a momentary form of revelation for Jehovah, at other times invisible, and no person in any way distinguished from Him? This view also is equally wanting in support from Scripture. For the Angel of the Covenant, who often identifies himself with Jehovah, is in other places again definitely distinguished from Him, sent by Him, subordinate to Him. And how can the Angel of the Covenant in Malachi be represented as the *Messiah*, if He is no personal being,

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<sup>63</sup> Rev. xxii. 9.

<sup>64</sup> Col. ii. 9.

not for a moment to be confounded with his Sender? The opinion, finally, that we have here to think only of an impersonal power of nature, which is in a metaphorical way characterised by the name "Angel of the Lord," calls for no special refutation. Conceive of a power of nature which appears, which promises or threatens, which receives Divine honour and worship!

Thus we are naturally led back to the thought which we have already ventured to utter: The Angel of the Covenant is the Logos before His incarnation. This view in reality has in itself not a little to recommend it, and besides finds no slight support in the Scriptures of the New Testament. On this question also the latter must shed its light on many an enigmatical page of the Old Testament; and we cannot regard the question, "Who was the Angel of the Covenant?" alone, but must do so in connection with all that we already know of the Son of God before His incarnation. If He was truly the One by whom all things were made, after whom—as the image of the Father—man was originally created, from whom all light and life, even in the heathen world, proceeded, and to whom the people of Israel was, more than any other, placed in a very definite relation—then it is even *a priori* probable, that He would become, so to speak, the chosen organ of revelation of God for His ancient people. A fact, moreover, so peculiarly unique as the incarnation of the Son of God in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, might and must very fitly be in such wise prepared for, shadowed forth, indicated, by preceding, more fleeting and mysterious phenomena, which

stand related to that incarnation itself, as the twilight to the day, as the bud to the perfect fruit. In visible form the Logos thus presents Himself from time to time before the eyes of the children of men, in the midst of whom He at length, appearing as man among men, shall most gloriously dwell. Thus is Israel prepared for the personal manifestation of God in the lowly form of a servant, and the incarnation of the eternal Word is no isolated fact, but the meet crown to a long series of increasingly glorious appearances, *which accordingly after the fulness of the time are no longer witnessed*. Ordinary appearances of angels we still meet with in the days of the New Testament; but the Angel of the Covenant, who in the first half of the Scriptures occupies so important a place, has in the second vanished without a trace. No wonder! to what end should He appear any longer in angel-form, who has reached the culminating-point of the revelations of God's love, and as man among men has been born, has died, and been glorified?

As well the letter as the spirit of Scripture favours this our view. Its constant doctrine teaches us to recognise God as a Spirit, whom no man hath seen nor can see. When, therefore, the men of God declare that they see Jehovah in His glory, we are naturally led to think of that Logos, in whom all that can be known concerning God was revealed, and by whom the Infinite communicates Himself to the finite creature. Thus thought the Apostle John also, where he expressly assures us that Isaiah, in the hour of his prophetic consecration beheld



the glory of the (not yet incarnate) Christ.<sup>65</sup> Yet farther does Paul proceed, when he declares that the Spiritual Rock, from which the Children of Israel drank, was Christ; and that the Israelites tempted Him in the wilderness.<sup>66</sup> According to Peter also—we have already

<sup>65</sup> John xii. 41; Isaiah vi. 1—3.

<sup>66</sup> 1 Cor. x. 4. It may perhaps not be without interest for many if we speak something further on this enigmatical place. For its right understanding one must have regard to the context. The Apostle reminds his readers of some remarkable facts of Old Testament history, from which it is convincingly evident that even the possession of great privileges does not secure against rejection, if we thanklessly despise them. Then he directs attention, among other things, to the miraculous supply for the thirst of Israel, with an allusion to Exod. xvii. 5, etc. We must probably understand the utterance of God which occurs here, "*Behold, I will stand before thee there, upon the rock in Horeb,*" in this connection, as indicating that the Lord, in the *Shekinah* as the sign of His presence, would show Himself visibly above the rock. If now there dwelt in this *Shekinah* the Angel in whom was the name of God—in other words, the Logos before His incarnation—then He may also be looked upon as the Author and Source of the refreshment provided for Israel. This rock is spoken of as *spiritual*, because the water flowing from it was, like the manna, of miraculous origin, and is therefore regarded as no ordinary water. When the Apostle writes that this Rock *followed* them, he does not mean that the rock itself accompanied them; the idea of a rock now journeying, now resting with the Children of Israel, is too absurd to mislead the mind of an Apostle. We must rather call to our help the words of Psalm cv. 41, and thence infer that the water which flowed forth most copiously from the rock for the refreshing of a whole nation, accompanied them as a stream through a considerable portion of the wilderness; while from Numbers xx. 11, it is clear that the miracle was repeated more than once. And when Paul now says finally, "*the rock was Christ,*" he certainly cannot mean that the Son of God became first a *rock*, as He afterwards became a *man*; but only that it was Christ who, already living and working under the Old Covenant, in such wise showed forth His Divine miraculous power, in,

made repeated reference to this—it was the Spirit of *Christ* who spake in the ancient prophets; an expression which necessarily leads us to the idea not merely of a personal existence, but also to that of an actual operation of the Son of God in an earlier period. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews seems to have before his mind at the same time an earlier Old Testament *coming* of the Son of God before His birth, when he places in His mouth an utterance of the Psalms of David;<sup>67</sup> and certainly could not with higher title name the Lord “the *Apostle* of our confession,”<sup>68</sup> than if He had been through all ages God’s highest messenger to His people. And although the Saviour Himself has not, so far as we know, expressly spoken of these His earlier appearances, yet who does not feel what emphasis His words in Gethsemane have, “Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?”<sup>69</sup> and what majesty this assurance breathes, when we see in Him no less a being than the “Prince of the heavenly host,” who in earlier days appeared to Joshua, and promised him the capture of Jericho.

If we now add that the view we have given expres-

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upon, and in connection with the rock, that He *Himself* might, as it were, be termed the rock. As concerns, finally, verse 9 in the same chapter (1 Cor. x.), “Neither let us tempt Christ,” etc.,—even though we read, with Lachmann and others, *the Lord*, instead of *Christ*—it is certainly most after the mind of the Apostle, to suppose that in such connection he intended by this appellation, *the Son of God*, whom he regarded as already exercising His power among the Israelites. Compare Numbers xxi. 5—7.

<sup>67</sup> Heb. x. 5.

<sup>68</sup> Heb. iii. 1.

<sup>69</sup> Matt. xxvi. 53.

sion to has been advocated by the most eminent Fathers and the leading Theologians of all ages; that, on the other hand, the opposition to it has been not seldom made in the name of a more or less unbelieving Rationalism; that the distinction between a God thus revealing Himself and an otherwise hidden God is not only made in Scripture, but is also favoured by the earliest and best Rabbis, yea, even by the religious teachers of the Persians; that, lastly, every other interpretation of the passages under review—in connection with which such revelation and operation of the Son of God in Israel is denied—suffers from manifest unnaturalness and inner improbability: then the right will not, we trust, be contested to us, of placing ourselves on the side of those who, in reading the words of the prophet, "*The Angel of His presence (face, or countenance) saved them,*"<sup>70</sup> think definitely of the Mediator of the New Covenant, who as regards His Divine nature was active in a peculiar manner even during the days of the Old.

Or are there really any insuperable objections to this explanation? It is regarded as improbable that the Logos should have taken the nature of *angels*; more especially since this seems to be expressly denied in Heb. ii. 16. This passage, however, is to be understood in the following manner: He does not in compassion espouse the cause of the angels, but of men; He becomes the Redeemer, not of fallen heavenly spirits, but of the lost sons of Adam. Moreover, *we* also do not assert that

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<sup>70</sup> Isaiah lxiii. 9.

the Logos appeared in the *nature*, but only that He several times appeared in the *form* of an angel, which form He assumed for the particular moment. It is said that Scripture nowhere makes such distinction between the unseen God and the God visibly manifesting Himself, as our interpretation presupposes, and that the latter is of suspicious philosophical origin. But a single glance at the passages mentioned below will serve to refute such denial, and to confirm our title to the distinction in question.<sup>71</sup> It is asked, lastly, In what then does the peculiar distinction of the New Testament consist, if the Logos was thus personally manifested and appeared, even under the Old? As though there did not exist, even in connection with our view, an immense difference and a glorious series of gradations, between a momentary, rare, fleeting appearing in angel-shape and form, and the real assuming of human nature, henceforth for ever to be inseparably united to the Divine. He, who—this is the difference—in old times now and then passed before the eyes of highly privileged men of God, was in the fulness of time sent exclusively and in truth in the likeness of sinful flesh. Until this decisive moment, we see Him coming ever nearer and nearer, the more the ages of preparation roll onwards towards their end. Ever afresh does He present Himself in the name of the Father to this Israel, which He overwhelms with temporal and spiritual blessing, and ever afresh is He rejected. But even this indifference to Him does not cool His love to His

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<sup>71</sup> Exod. xxiv. 10, 11; xxxiii. 18—23; Isa. vi. 1—5; John i. 18; xiv. 8, 9; 1 Tim. vi. 16; and many other passages.

people and to the world. From century to century is He *proclaimed, shadowed forth, manifested*, in that nation, in the midst of which He shall eventually arise as the Son of David. At last the hour strikes, in which He who had in a spiritual manner dwelt in the tabernacle of witness, for the salvation of our race will clothe Himself with this our mortal flesh and blood. Once more He appears, but this time no longer as the Angel of God's presence, but made a little lower than the angels; and the heavenly hosts shout with joy: "The good-pleasure of God (is) in men!"

And now the point is reached, at which the Divine and human come not merely into personal *contact*, but shall be inseparably united, and there is ground for the note of exultation: "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> John i. 14.

## PART II.

## CHRIST IN THE FLESH.

ONLY three-and-thirty years does that period embrace, to which this second part of our contemplation is devoted; while on the other hand the former, so far as it was not lost in eternity, extended over a space of not less than four thousand years. Yet the material is here infinitely more plenteous, than that which offered itself there; because we now see the Divine—which we have hitherto contemplated *in relation* to the finite—henceforth entering into personal *communion* with humanity. Christ in the flesh! No, we are not surprised that the noblest of our race have so often desired that they might live to see the days in which the Son of God and Son of man here went about in the lowly form of a servant. Of the most memorable of all histories but comparatively little has been written; over thirty years of it is thrown an impenetrable veil; of the remaining three years, many a day and many a week has fallen into oblivion—and yet the little that we do know awakens an impression of dignity, fulness, and power, which every renewed contemplation serves only to deepen. In fact, it is as a celebrated Theologian of our day writes: “To sound the depths of the history of Jesus

is what the most distinguished men have for centuries been seeking after; and even those who are impelled by an undefined influence to seek after truth, without as yet clearly apprehending what they really want, desire at bottom nothing else than to explore these histories. The highest and the deepest, the mightiest and the most tender that humanity has brought forth out of its innermost and truest essence is nothing but the wreath which entwines itself around this sacred stem and its history. At every fresh step forward in the path of this investigation, new depths begin to open themselves up before the thinking mind; with every new progress of the art which will visibly express this ideal, the unattainableness of the ideal makes itself more deeply felt; and if we turn our glance to the silent chamber of devotion, and into the hidden workshops of the science of faith, we see how every height which has been already attained, only serves to lead us in deeper humility to kneel before that Name which is above every name in heaven and earth. If I might call in a comparison to my help, I should point to the vault of heaven, the image of infinite space. The more we are absorbed and lost in the contemplation of the heavens, the more does the conception of end and limit escape us. We take the telescope in hand; we become acquainted with the astonishing calculations of science; the conception of infinite space thereby gains yet more in clearness and fulness; but all serves to this, that we find the final point of all, whence really to survey and measure this space, retreating ever farther from our reach. So is it with the



history of the Lord's life, it makes the impression of infinitude upon us."<sup>1</sup>

Yet we must speak of the infinite in the forms of the finite, and the period of which we have here to speak is bounded on the one hand by the moment of the miraculous conception, and on the other by the equally miraculous ascension, of the holy God-man. Naturally, however, we have not here to speak of all the particulars which are the object of express treatment in the *Life of Jesus*. There indeed we seek, in connection with a purely historic examination, to delineate the Lord trait by trait, and thus to show who He was; here, on the contrary, where our contemplation displays a more *historico-dogmatic* character, we desire especially to make manifest *what* He was, to sketch in broad outlines His entirely unique dignity and greatness, and to turn our attention not only to the outward form of His appearing, but also to the inner exaltedness of His whole person, in connection with the work accomplished by Him. This part of our examination is thus necessarily limited to a more general contemplation, and all that we have to present gathers itself around some four prominent main particulars, at which we reverently pause. They are:—

*The voluntary Incarnation.*

*The earthly Appearing.*

*The deep Humiliation.*

*The beginning of the Exaltation of Christ.*

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<sup>1</sup> Baumgarten, *Die Geschichte Jesu*, p. 2.

## I.

## THE VOLUNTARY INCARNATION.

**E**VEN though we saw every day of the year the arrival of a Job's messenger, there is yet *one* day which to the most unhappy among us brings glad tidings. It is the day on which the words of the first preacher of the Gospel, on Bethlehem's plains, are repeated: "Unto you is born a Saviour." What fairer festival than that of which Chrysostom testified even in his day, "that, though yet young, it was nevertheless observed with enthusiasm as great as though it had been in use from time immemorial!" Now so many centuries old, it is ever afresh hailed with new joy, and—once more to use the language of the same Father—"as a good and noble shoot when it is planted, in a short time rises on high and brings forth much fruit," not otherwise has been the experience of Christendom with regard to this festival. The child hardly becomes weary of looking at the child in the manger. The man exhausts not the thought: "God's good pleasure in men." The devout old man even feels his breast glow with higher emotion at the joyful message that God has had towards him also thoughts of peace. Yea, we cannot even conceive the possibility that in the course of centuries, this festival too should grow

obsolete, or be abolished ; it stands there, resplendent with everlasting youth and unfading beauty, at the very threshold of the sacred series of festivals ! What questions then can have greater significance for the Christian, intent on *understanding* as far as possible the mystery of the kingdom of God, than precisely those which press upon him in relation to the incarnation of the Son of God, namely, *What conception are we to form of this Incarnation ?* and, *What value must we attach to this Incarnation ?* To the answering of these two questions must the present chapter be devoted.

It is scarcely necessary to show that we have with justice spoken of the Incarnation of the Son of God as a *voluntary* one. This assertion is simply the natural result of our faith in the pre-existence of the Logos, for whom the incarnation was thus no inevitable *lot*, but a free, self-conscious *act* of omnipotence and love. Scripture also sets us the example in this respect, since in many places it regards His appearing in this light. According to the teaching of Paul, He *humbled* (emptied) *Himself, in taking upon Himself the form of a servant*, and displayed His grace in this, that being *rich*, He became *poor*.<sup>1</sup> According to that of John,<sup>2</sup> the denial that Jesus Christ *is come in the flesh* is an apostasy from true Christianity ; and as this word contradicts those who called in question the *human* nature of the Lord, so does it at the same time indirectly condemn those who did not acknowledge His *Divine* nature. For cer-

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<sup>1</sup> Phil. ii. 5—8 ; 2 Cor. viii. 9.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John iv. 3.

tainly the expression, *Come* in the flesh, would hardly have been used of the Lord, unless He had already *existed*, before His coming in the flesh. In a similar sense had the Lord previously declared, that He had come forth from the Father and was come into the world, and in like manner again leaves the world to return to the Father.<sup>3</sup> With the highest right, therefore, has the believing Church of all ages—in its commemoration of the Lord's birth—adored, not only the love of the Father, who sent His Son into the world, but also the compassion of the Son, who, moved by nothing but pure love, entered upon this mission with the words: "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God!"<sup>4</sup>

But then what a *wondrous* incarnation, which has already for eighteen centuries afforded to Christendom an inexhaustible subject for thanking and thinking! Every measure is wanting to us, to determine—even in some degree—the distance which separates the Divine from the human. It is true, the opposition between Divine and human is not absolute, but relative.<sup>5</sup> Yea, truly, man was created after the image and likeness of God—spirit of His spirit, life of His life. God made him a little lower than the angels, crowned him with glory and honour, set him over all the works of His hands. The Logos assumes the nature, not of the irrational animal or the inanimate plant, but of the first-fruits of the creatures of God. There existed, as we have before seen, even from the morning of the Creation,

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<sup>3</sup> John xvi. 28. <sup>4</sup> Heb. x. 7. <sup>5</sup> *Natura humana capax Divinæ.*

a direct relation between Him and humanity, which even by sin was not entirely broken. But yet, notwithstanding all the affinity between the Divine and the human nature, there existed an original difference; and the distance, already so great in itself, became through sin a wide, and apparently insuperable, gulf. What is this poor earth, for Him who as Mediate Cause called all things into existence? What is, on this earth, the equally transitory as sinful and lost man? And yet this distance was bridged over, in the moment when the Word was made flesh; and—O wonder of wonders!—the Divine and human nature in Christ blends together into one Divine-human personality. Do we mean by this confession merely that the Logos *reveals* Himself in an harmonious, spotless human life, as in less degree He is revealed in every particle of the Creation? We should in that case arrive at no other conception than this: Christ the pure embodiment of humanity, and, *as such*, the visible image and the highest revelation of the Godhead; and we have already observed how far this conception falls short of the depth and force of the Gospel utterances. Not that the man who has normally developed himself is, as such, the Son of God; but that the eternal Son of God appeared as faultless man, is the doctrine of Scripture and of the Church.—Have we then to understand the matter in this wise, that He, who according to His Divine nature filled heaven and earth, *confined* and, as it were, *imprisoned* Himself within the narrow limits of a human body, and even the body of a child? It is well known with what thoughtless and

unworthy mockery this idea has been hailed, even in our own day, and how some of the mouthpieces of the modern science have not been ashamed to compare the highest miracle of omnipotence and love, as conceived of in this form, with the tales of Eastern magic. For us it is enough, that the Gospel idea of the *self-limitation* of the Logos does not afford the slightest ground or occasion for such ill-treatment.<sup>6</sup> Precisely this we deem the ever unfathomable miracle—that the Logos, as such, is and remains truly and everlastingly, God; that, even in the fulness of the time, He did not cease to be one with the Father, and to uphold all things by the word of His power;<sup>7</sup> that, as Son, He may be truly said to be in heaven, while in the form of a servant He appears upon this mean earth. But He, who was truly and eternally God, *assumed the true human nature*, of the flesh and blood of the Virgin Mary, through the operation of the Holy Ghost.<sup>8</sup> He continues to be God, and becomes man. He does not give up the supreme *possession*, but only the unlimited *exercise*, of His Divine nature and

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<sup>6</sup> Very accurately is this thrice-sacred subject dealt with by Thomasius, who writes, (*Evang. Luth. Dogmatik*, ii. p. 130), “He, the eternal Son of God, the second Person in the Godhead, submitted to the form of human limitation, and thus to the limit of an existence in time and space, under the conditions of a human development, within the confines of an historic existence; in order to live in our nature as in the fullest sense of the word the life of our race, without on that account ceasing to be God. *He determines to have His Divine nature only in unity with the human.*”

<sup>7</sup> *Netherlands Confession*, Art. 19; comp. Art. 2 of the Church of England.

<sup>8</sup> *Heidelberg Catechism*, Ans. 35; *Westminster Shorter Catech.* Ans. 21.

attributes. He, the exalted, Divine *Person*, very God, even as the Father, voluntarily unites Himself to the human *nature*, and from this peerless union arises nothing less than the highest object earth has ever witnessed, a *Divine-human personality*.

It is already apparent, in what sense and with what justice we may speak of an incarnation of *God* in the person of our Lord. This language is incorrect, if thereby is meant that either the whole Divine Being, or God the Father, as man, was born, died, and was buried. With good reason did Christian antiquity condemn the heresy of *Patripassianism*, which conceived of an incarnation of God the Father; who is represented as having left His throne and kingdom, to live, suffer, and die, immured in a human body. Expressions like the ancient, "God Himself is dead," are better avoided, and give rise to dangerous misconception. Not the Divine Nature in itself, and not the Father, but the Son of God, was made flesh, sent into the world by the Father to this end. We are thus not warranted in speaking of Mary as the mother of God, and just as little in speaking of her merely as the mother of the *man Jesus Christ*, but as the mother of the *God-man*. But He, whom as a child she brings into the world, is and remains, nevertheless, as to His higher nature, the Son, from all eternity one with the Father. And if this Son is very God, not less than the Father and the Holy Ghost, the incarnation of the Logos is accordingly nothing less than a personal incarnation of *God*.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> At the risk of incurring one or other name of heresy, which proves absolutely nothing against the justice of our position, we



At all times those who with Scripture definitely distinguish between the Divine and human nature in the Lord, run the risk, *either* of too greatly separating the one from the other, *or* of overlooking the distinction

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may assert that the much-discussed words of Chateaubriand, however liable to misinterpretation they undoubtedly are, may also be understood in a sense consistent with perfect truth, "Le Souverain des cieux dans une bergerie; celui qui lance la foudre, enveloppé de bandelettes de lin; celui que l'univers ne peut contenir, renfermé au sein d'une femme." For, certainly, He who is born as man does not cease to be the Son of God, which He was before His incarnation. But if He remains this, wherefore may not the names and dignities continue to be ascribed to Him, which He bore independently of this incarnation? Here also the saying is true, "He who is afraid of paradoxes, does not love the truth." The same is the case with the oft-censured language of Vollenhoven, in his "Triumph of the Cross," where he says of Mary:—

"Zij schepsel baart haar Schepper, zij een kind  
Haar Vader, dien ze in slechte doeken windt."

This opposition is unevangelical, if the idea is expressed by it, that the Lord *as to His Divine nature* was borne and swaddled by Mary; but that He whom, as to the flesh, she brought into the world and nursed, *was*, and notwithstanding His deep humiliation, *continued to be*, the Mediate Cause of the creation of the human race, the Father of eternity—can be denied only by the opponents of the Gospel doctrine of the Godhead of Christ, and it may certainly be permitted to a Christian poet to speak thus. The boldness of such oppositions as is to be found, *e.g.*, in the "*nascitur æternitas*," is certainly less open to objection than the position of preachers who, while retaining even in the pulpit the ordinary Biblical expressions with regard to the Saviour, attach to them a meaning entirely different from that in which the congregation has always understood them, or place on the lips of the flock a hymn of adoring homage to a Lord, who in their own estimation is absolutely nothing more than a sinless man. [The author, however, in his *Christian Dogmatics* (§ ci. 2) condemns the expression, "Incarnation of God," for which he would substitute the more accurate expression, "Son of God."]

between the two. The former was the error of *Nestorius*, patriarch of Constantinople, who, in opposition to Cyril, patriarch of Alexandria, acknowledged only an *outward union* (συνάφεια) of the Divine and the human in the person of the Lord, and on that account was condemned by the Synod of Ephesus (431). The latter was the opinion of *Eutyches*, Archimandrite of Constantinople, condemned at the Council of Chalcedon, in the year 451, who, in order to escape this rock, would acknowledge what was really only one nature in the Lord, the Divine, in which the human was necessarily lost. From the former standpoint one would necessarily be led to presuppose a twofold consciousness in the Lord, a Divine *side by side with* a human consciousness; from the latter, on the other hand, in place of an assumption of humanity (ἐνανθρώπησις) on the part of the Son of God, to substitute a reception of humanity into the Divine nature. To the former extreme the Swiss Reformers inclined, when they declared, *e.g.*, that Christ *as to His human nature* hungered and thirsted, and as to His *Divine*, healed sick men. To the other was only too much the leaning of Luther, when, without any nearer definition, he asserted that Mary had borne, suckled, cradled, and fed *God*. Owing to the limitation of our human thought, and the poverty of our language, nothing is easier than to attach to others the stigma either of Nestorianism, or of Eutychianism, especially if one himself acknowledges only one nature in the Lord, namely, the purely human, as such one with the Divine. The highest problem is in this way, not solved, but simply annihilated; the

troublesome knot is hewn through, not untied. But he who, with the Lord and His Apostles, believes that the Divine and the human must here by no means be reduced to one, or confused, readily appreciates every attempt so to present the union of the two natures in Christ, that on the one hand the original and essential *distinction* between the two is unreservedly acknowledged, and on the other full justice is rendered to the conception of a not merely outward connection, but inner *union*, of the two different factors. As such an *attempt*, the ecclesiastical decision of the seventh century, that the two natures in Christ are united *inseparably, unchangeably, indivisibly, and without confusion*,<sup>10</sup> deserves to be thankfully acknowledged. The venerable men who fixed such doctrinal definitions would themselves certainly not have regarded them as an absolutely final solution of the Christological question. No one, however, has less right to look down upon these attempts as mere human hair-splittings, than he who reverences in the Lord nothing higher than "the greatest Son of Nature," the Son of Mary, (possibly also of Joseph!) and for whom thus the difficulty, on the solution of which the noblest minds have laboured through many centuries, *does not in reality exist*.

It suffices for our present purpose to indicate our conception as to the *nature* of the incarnation. No mere *manifestation* in a life simply human; no *imprisonment* or *indwelling* in a human body, in the sense that

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<sup>10</sup> Synod of Constantinople, A.D. 680.—ἀδιαίρετως, ἀτρέπτως, ἀμεικτῶς, ἀσυγχύτως.

during three-and-thirty years the Logos dwelt and exerted His power nowhere else than in the man Jesus; but *union* of the personal Logos, not with a human *individual*—in this way two personalities would arise—but with the human *nature*, which as such is designed for, and capable of, entering into communion with the Divine. No incarnation in which the Son ceases to be a sharer of the Divine nature, but one in which He henceforth shares it in communion with the human; no mutation of the Son of God *into* a man, but a manifestation of the Son of God *as* a man; no merely external connection of the two natures, but also no fusion, from which a new third nature arises. A union, in a word, equally essential, equally intimate, and yet from the nature of the case equally inscrutable, as the union of man's body and spirit in one person, who knows that he consists of the two, and very easily distinguishes what must be regarded as the operation of the body, and what of the spirit. Or shall we, for the sake of clearness, give another illustration, one that has been often employed? Think of two circles, a smaller and a greater, each perfect in itself, and existing the one outside the other, but which meet in one point, the common centre in which they unite. Thus it is with the two natures in Christ: originally distinct, they meet as it were, and coincide, in the consciousness of the God-man. But to this last thought we shall return hereafter. The *fact* of the union of Godhead and humanity existed much earlier than the consciousness of it, which only gradually developed itself in the growth and progress of the Son of man in

wisdom and knowledge. For the moment we remain in presence of the miracle of the incarnation itself.

If what has been said is not entirely without foundation, it will at once be admitted that the conception of the Lord by the Holy Ghost, and His birth of the *Virgin Mary*, however truly miraculous in itself, was only the natural consequence of His superhuman nature and dignity. For how could it be that the eternal Word, when about to appear in the flesh, should, as one of us, be born "of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man"? (*ἐκ θελήματος ἀνδρός.*) In truth, nothing is easier than to render doubtful the stupendous miracle with which the earthly life of the Lord begins, if it is regarded entirely alone, and His personal pre-existence is denied. If once His own distinct utterances on this last point are set aside; if there is brought to the study of the Gospel history a due measure of philosophic doubt and dread of miracle; and if then the narratives of the birth given in Matthew and Luke, are judged of apart from all connection with that which precedes and follows, the issue may easily be predicted. The difference between the two accounts is magnified into irreconcilable opposition; their miraculous character, which it is now found cannot be effaced by any exegetical artifices, is in itself sufficient to call forth increasing suspicion, and as a result, we hear the utterance of the critical judgment, that the credibility of these communications, and consequently, the whole extraordinary birth of the Lord, is to be regarded as at least problematical, while in thought the critic only too easily allows himself to proceed a step

farther. Something different, however, is it when one contemplates these narratives in the light, not only of the so-called historical criticism, but also of the Lord's own indubitable utterances, which surpass all power of invention, and in those of His Divinely enlightened witnesses. Then the contents of these accounts become on internal grounds probable, yea, highly worthy of God; and far indeed from its proving a stumbling-block to us that the beginning of life of the incarnate Son of God was other than in all the sons of men, we should, on the contrary, have felt a natural and involuntary surprise if it had been in all respects perfectly like our own. No isolated objections, whether of an historic or a philosophic character, can accordingly shake our faith in this mystery of godliness. The silence of the Lord as to a circumstance of this kind, was not only natural, but absolutely inevitable. The silence of some Evangelists and Apostles detracts nothing whatever from the value of the testimony borne by the others. And he who stumbles at the idea of a miracle, let him finally have the courage to write over the Gospel history in its totality, the name of "cunningly devised fables;" but then also the honesty no longer to inscribe upon his banners the name of *Christian*, unless this word is henceforth to mean something very different from what it has ever hitherto meant.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Compare further our *Life of Jesus*, Pt. i. pp. 344—350, and the writers there mentioned; to which add especially Ebrard, *Christl. Dogmatik* ii. p. 8, who more nearly formulates this miracle as follows: "That which was created was, not the *Person* of the

Let no one, however, suppose that we have not a lively perception of all the stupendousness of such a miracle as the incarnation of God's own Son, by the power of the Holy Ghost, of the virgin Mary. When we consider for a moment the incomparable antithesis! "He who was and continued to be God—became man," we feel that we stand on the brink of a depth which no one has yet been able perfectly to sound. Once only do we see nature, after the creation of the first man, depart from the law to which it has attached the maintenance and continuation of the human race. At the bidding of Omnipotence we see a pure virgin bear under her maternal heart Him "whose goings forth have been from of old, from the days of eternity."<sup>12</sup> We thus see the Creator extend the hand to the creature, heaven to earth, the All to the Nothing. Who could believe this, unless it were confirmed by proofs which can stand any reasonable test, and—unless the unbelief which refuses to hail the appearing of Christ as an incarnation of the Son of God were doomed to split upon yet greater rocks than those which it supposed it had escaped? Verily one may apply to the incarnation also the assurance which

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Redeemer, for this already existed; neither was it a mere *body*, for the Son of God assumed not a human body, but human *nature*; there was not, however, created a human nature in the sense of concrete subsistence (a man), for the Son of God was not united to a son of man, but *became* man, assumed the properties of the *human form of existence*; what was created was only the bodily material necessary for the *new form of existence* of the Logos." The reader may for the rest, consult Ebrard himself, who, in his effort to define the *modus quo* of the miracle, has perhaps gone a little too far.

<sup>12</sup> Micah v. 2. (margin of Engl. version.)



a highly gifted preacher of the Gospel of our century a few years ago expressed with regard to the Divine character of the Gospel: "When I open my Bible, and cast my eyes upon this doctrine, so foreign to the philosophy of the age; when I think of that Son of God, who dies for sin-laden men . . . . Oh! then my faith is, I will not say made to waver, but clouded, and as it were bowed down under the weight of these mysteries of God, and I am like a man who feels his sight grow dizzy, and who must sit down, in order not to fall. Who knows? In such moments perhaps a terrible temptation might present itself to my spirit, if unbelief, however comfortless for my heart, could at least offer me a system which was able to satisfy my intellect. But what have I found there? Difficulties yet infinitely greater!" To us also they present themselves, when we bring into question either the Divine nature of the Lord, or the miracle of His extraordinary birth. For if we deny the former, we see ourselves compelled to maintain that He was either a deceiver or a fanatic; and if we rank the latter in the list of legends, we find no explanation of the enigma, that He, of all the sons of men, has remained pure and without sin. Thus we find ourselves, even apart from our own choice, led back to the Gospel conception, which we have before heard rejected as absurd. And, once more to speak with the same faithful witness, "the contradictions with which unbelief abounds, repel me, and leave me no other refuge, than faith with its sacred obscurity. In fine, if belief has so many clouds, this arises from the fact that it sheds so clear a ray of light; if it displays to us

deep abysses, it is because it knows such lofty mountain-heights; if it bears the keys of hell, it is because it bears at the same time the keys of heaven. There are no doubt things that I do not comprehend, but *I comprehend also that I cannot comprehend them.* Frail creature that I am, flung down in a corner of Thy kingdom, how shall I be able to take in at a glance all that Thou observest from the central-point of all Thy works? Nature has its mysteries, and yet I believe in God; the Bible has its mysteries, and yet I believe in Christ. I believe, because it is Thou, O Lord, who speakest; and I desire henceforth to be the most believing of men, in order not to be the most credulous, the most foolish of all."<sup>13</sup>

We shall no doubt be excused this long citation, because it indicates, better than we could express it, the only true standpoint whence the sacred mystery which occupies us can be satisfactorily judged of. But where we are thus more than ever penetrated by the *miraculous* character of the voluntary Incarnation, no one can be surprised that the question makes itself heard with redoubled emphasis, Are we indeed to suppose that the eternal Word was *truly* incarnate? However old this doubt is, and however apparently legitimate, we can nevertheless boldly oppose it, and, without any kind of hesitation, ascribe to the Son of God a *real* incarnation. Even in the days of the Apostles we meet, it is true, with not a few who doubt of "the reality of His body."

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<sup>13</sup> Adolphe Monod, *Sermons*, 2e. edit. ii. pp. 361—363.

Under different forms the denial of the true humanity of the Lord, known as Docetism, manifests itself in the midst of the Church militant. And even at the present day there is perhaps no view with regard to His ever-blessed Person so commonly entertained as this, that He, the Son of God, walked about on earth in a human *body*, much in the same way in which the angels earlier appeared in a bodily form. But is anything further needed, than a cursory glance at the letter and spirit of the Gospels and Apostolic Epistles, to make manifest the untruthfulness of this conception? We see the Lord, as any other son of man, developing Himself not merely as to the body, but also as to the spirit, increasing in wisdom and knowledge; so that He learns what He did not before know, and becomes conscious of that which He did not at first perceive. As against the tempter, He applies to Himself the rule, that *man* shall not live by bread alone, and later reproaches the Jews that they wished to kill Him, *a man* who had nevertheless only told them the truth.<sup>14</sup> In the course of His life we see, not only that He alternately experiences, and finds satisfaction for, the necessities of the body, but also that in it emotions of the soul, of joy and sorrow, anger and compassion, perturbation and surprise, constantly succeed each other. And though every other proof were lacking, the great events of Gethsemane and Calvary would incontestably prove, that His true humanity was something more than an illusive appearance. However

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<sup>14</sup> Matt. iv. 4; John viii. 40.

deeply His Apostles are impressed with His heavenly glory, this does not prevent their laying the greatest emphasis also on the other side of the matter. Full of the Holy Ghost, Peter on the day of Pentecost proclaims Jesus as a *man* whom God had pointed out to them by signs and wonders as the promised Messiah; and Paul gives to the Mediator of God and men the name of *the man Christ Jesus*.<sup>15</sup> Yea, the Saviour Himself denies, even after His resurrection, that He is a spirit, as His disciples fear; and Paul does not hesitate to term Him "*the second man*, from heaven."<sup>16</sup> The beloved Apostle represents the denial of the true humanity of the Lord as the very spirit of Antichrist,<sup>17</sup> and the Church, in the year 381, condemned the opinion of Apollinaris, that in the God-man the *Logos* had taken the place of the human *spirit*, as diametrically opposed to the truth. She has rightly done so; for he who denies that the incarnate Son of God had a truly human *reason*, does not less assail His person, than he who asserts that Christ underwent the death of the cross in a phantom *body*. On this account, although it is easily comprehensible that one should feel a secret hesitation about accepting without any limitation the words: "in *all things* like unto His brethren, except sin;"<sup>18</sup> and although this error is comparatively much less hurtful than the presumption of those who would deprive the Son of man of the crown of His true Deity, yet we have to be on our

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<sup>15</sup> Acts ii. 22; 1 Tim. ii. 5.

<sup>17</sup> 1 John iv. 3.

<sup>16</sup> Luke xxiv. 39; 1 Cor. xv. 47.

<sup>18</sup> Heb. iv. 15, as compared with ii. 17.

guard against turning aside either to the right hand or to the left. Not without very good reason did an excellent Christologian, in giving expression to the proposition, "in the doctrine of the incarnation of the Son of God, the reality and unchangeableness of His *Divine* nature must not be in the least degree surrendered," immediately add this other proposition, "and just as little may anything of the truth and reality of His *human* nature be surrendered."<sup>19</sup> Here also the saying applies: "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

Nevertheless there remains in one respect an immense difference between the Lord and those whom He is not ashamed to call His brethren. The real and miraculous incarnation is at the same time a *holy* one. This it *must* be, if it was to answer to its incomparable end. "For such an high priest became us, who is *holy, harmless, undefiled*, separate from sinners." And this He accordingly *was* in reality, as we shall later see: as Adam before his fall, so does the second Adam stand before us without a single stain of sin. It is true, this unsullied purity of the Son of man is, so far as we know, nowhere in the Gospel brought into *direct* connection with His miraculous birth. When, however, we observe—as is everywhere taught us by Scripture and experience—that the children born of sinful parents are sinful too, and that precisely He alone remained free from the stain of sin, who by the way of a supernatural birth entered into communion with our race, we shall be naturally led in

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<sup>19</sup> Sartorius, *Christol. Vorlesungen*, pp. 25—28.

some way to connect the one with the other. We lay less emphasis upon the fact that Jesus had no human father, but attach a high importance in particular to the fact, that Mary became His mother *through the power of the Holy Ghost*. This Spirit undoubtedly in such wise prepared her body, and in such measure sanctified her spirit, that she was perfectly meetened to give life to Christ, without communicating to Him the fatal gift of the defilement of sin on His coming into the world. On this account, it is equally unnecessary as it is in conflict with the history of Mary's life, to suppose—as the Romish Church of our day has at length determined, after long hesitation—that she also was conceived and born immaculate. If this supposition were necessary, we should still have to go back one, nay, many steps further, and to suppose that, by a miracle constantly continued, not only she but also the long succession of her ancestors had been preserved free from the melancholy consequences of Adam's fall. For us it is enough to believe that, according to the word of the Angel, the Holy Ghost came upon the blessed one among women, and the power of the Highest in such wise overshadowed her, that she was in soul and body entirely qualified, without moral disturbance, to fulfil her high destiny. As the sun from the womb of the morning, so do we see the Christ proceed from Mary's virgin womb, to be truly man as we are, but a man who bears not the name of sinner. A following chapter will afford us the opportunity of giving an express answer to the question, what we understand by the sinlessness of the Lord, and of

investigating to what extent this His unsullied purity can be historically proved.

Now, however, while we are still contemplating the beginning of the appearing of the God-man, and have learnt to regard the incarnation of the Son of God successively as a miraculous, real, and holy one, we have by slow gradations attained to a height whence we can now recognise His incarnation as also a *deeply condescending* one. Where shall we find words to sound the fulness of that compassion which stoops as deeply as possible to the wandering and the lost? An Apostolic writer supplies us in some measure with a standard in the words: "He layeth not hold of the angels, but of the seed of Abraham He layeth hold."<sup>20</sup> According to the express teaching of Scripture, which reason has no right to contest, there exists a kingdom of personal evil spirits, created at first pure and holy, but as a punishment for their pride cast down into the deepest misery. Let us then suppose that the Son of God, in order to redeem these, had taken upon Him the nature of an angel, and now arrayed in this robe of light had descended into that abyss of misery. Even then the self-humiliation had been incomprehensibly great; for the Lord would have appeared as a servant, the Creator as a creature, the Eternal One in the likeness of those who were once called forth out of nothing. Far lower in the scale of being than the least angel stands sinful man, who trembles when he beholds an angel's appearance, and of whose race thousands were slain by a

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<sup>20</sup> Heb. ii. 16. [For the use of the *word*, comp. ch. viii. 9; Matt. xiv. 31.]



single heavenly messenger, with one stroke of the sword.<sup>21</sup> And yet the Son of God deigns to become the Redeemer, not of angels, but of men, and associates Himself with frail beings, of whom whole nations are esteemed as a drop in the bucket, and as the small dust of the balance. "If," writes a Christian Father, "we saw the sun suddenly leave the heavens and come down to the earth, how should we be struck dumb with astonishment! But now the sun of the spirit-world has left His heavens, and walked among men." Yea, truly, here "the glory of the Lord manifests itself to us in a lustre unknown before, but a glory measured not by an earthly, but by a heavenly standard. It is great to bear crown and sceptre, but it is greater to renounce crown and sceptre, and, where one can rule, out of free love to be the least of the servants. And this greatness we see the Logos display, when—to speak with John—He *tabernacles* in human flesh. He remains that which He was from eternity, equally Divine, adorable, and glorious. To avail ourselves once more of a faint comparison, it is with His Divine nature, as with the human eye, which raised on high beholds heaven and earth, downcast perceives but little, and closed can discover nothing, without its peculiar nature as an eye being on that account in the slightest degree changed.

Thus also the Deity of the Logos changed not its nature, though it hides the beams of its glory behind the veil of flesh. Even where it is united with the human

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<sup>21</sup> 2 Kings xix. 35.

nature in Christ, we may on this account adore it as veritable Deity. But this Godhead we see stooping to a depth, into which perhaps the eye of the archangel cannot follow without growing dizzy. To cite a bold expression of faith on the part of Luther, "Christ is God, but He *wills* not to be so, in order to be our servant." All that might fill our race with terror He embraces, as it were, with His own hands; and in the most lovely form does the Divine personally present itself to us, in the form of a helpless child. We know not whether in other spheres of Creation too, besides those of men and angels, the discord of sin has penetrated, and whether their inhabitants may equally rejoice in a personal manifestation of the Logos in their nature assumed by Him.<sup>22</sup> But certainly an honour has been conferred upon humanity by His voluntary incarnation, than which no higher can be conceived of; and when we then regard the union of Divine wisdom, holiness, and love, visible in this whole event, and consider the matchless end contemplated in the incarnation of the Lord, we feel the need to bow deep in the dust in adoration, and exclaim with the poet:—

Creation, as compared with this proceeding,  
Is but the prime colour (first touch) of Thy power.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Compare in this connection a very interesting and important dissertation of Weisse in the *Theol. Stud. u. Krit.*, 1844, iv., pp. 913—966, under the title "Christus das Ebenbild des unsichtbaren Gottes," and think somewhat deeply on the Apostolic hints, Ephes. i. 10; Col. i. 20. [Does it not rather seem from the latter place that by the *one* manifestation of the Son of God incarnate in human nature, and by His sacrificial death on Calvary, τὸ αἷμα τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ, the whole Creation was to be led up to God?]*—Tr.*

<sup>23</sup> De schepping is bij dit beleid,  
Slechts doodverw uwer mogendheid.

*Or what value must we attach to the voluntary incarnation?* This question, we feel, must not be allowed to pass entirely unanswered, if the image of Christ, as presented in Scripture, is to display itself in all its lustre before our eyes. We need to know in what connection this incomparably great event stands to the whole work of redemption and to the great world-plan of God. The Gospel of Holy Scripture does not even here leave us in perplexity, and however many questions as to the *how* of the matter it may leave unanswered, it has yet sufficiently explained itself with regard to the *why*.

By the voluntary incarnation of the Son of God we see first of all *a new revelation afforded us*. Highly do we prize that which Creation and Providence shed upon God's nature and works. But yet, rightly regarded, what may this be called more than a faint glimmer, compared with the light which streams forth to us from Bethlehem? All the Divine perfections, of which we successively perceive the manifestation in the work of His hands, we find here blended as in a central-point; even those attributes which for our short-sighted human eye might seem to be more or less opposed to each other, such as righteousness and grace, holiness and love, we see here—so to speak—as sisters embrace each other. It is especially the *love* of God, the manifestation of which in the sending of His Son is most highly extolled by the Lord Himself and His Apostles. He, who had penetrated more deeply than we into the mysteries of the Father, could mention no higher proof of His love than this, that He sent His Son, *not that He might condemn the world—*

the Lord feels that it might, and on account of our sins must have taken place—but *that the world through Him might be saved*.<sup>24</sup> “*Herein is love*,” cries John, in sacred ecstasy: this may indeed be called love without measure and without equal, “*not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins*.”<sup>25</sup> And as the sending of the Son of God in itself proclaims to us the freest, noblest, most heart-subduing love, so is His whole appearing in the flesh a revelation of Deity itself, above which we know no higher. “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath *declared* (interpreted) Him.”<sup>26</sup> While it belongs to the nature and essence of the Father to dwell in a light which no man can approach unto, the Son comes forth to us as it were out of the obscurity, and in Him has the Unseen One become *visible*. Divine omnipotence and wisdom, love and faithfulness, omniscience and holiness, are not henceforth things of which the imperfect conception is left to each person’s individual *judgment*; but they have appeared visibly and palpably, in a being who presents to us the image of the Infinite Himself, in that form in which He comes nearer than in any other to our power of apprehension—that of a pure and holy Man. No wonder that Scripture constantly makes known to us this revelation as the last and highest. According to the well-known parable, the sending of His Son was the extreme measure, to which the Lord of the vineyard at

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<sup>24</sup> John iii. 16, 17.

<sup>25</sup> 1 John iv. 9, 10.

<sup>26</sup> ἐξηγήσατο, John i. 18.

length has recourse, after the unthankful husbandmen had already put to death so many of His servants. The speaking of God by the Son is reserved to the last days; after which no period of higher revelation is to be looked for, but only one of final retribution.<sup>27</sup> Yea, as in this way there is given to man God's *highest* revelation, so is a *new* revelation afforded to the spirit-world in Christ and His kingdom. He who was manifested in the flesh and justified in the spirit, also—according to the significant word of the Apostle—*appeared unto the angels*,<sup>28</sup> *i.e.*, according to the most probable interpretation, *became visible* to the angels in a glory and brightness till then unknown to them; and through the Church, founded by God's incarnate Son, is now made known to the principalities and powers in heavenly places the manifold wisdom of God.<sup>29</sup> Thus it becomes clear to us, even without referring to other passages, that the question so often answered in the affirmative or the negative, as to whether a higher revelation of salvation is still to be looked for, after the revelation of God in Christ, rests upon nothing else but an abstract possibility. It amounts to much the same thing as asking whether our earth will, one day, in consequence of the progress of art and civilisation, be irradiated by a better light than that of the sun.

Though we could speak of no other benefit than this, that "the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true,"<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Matt. xxi. 33—44; Heb. i. 2.

<sup>29</sup> Ephes. iii. 10.

<sup>28</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 16.

<sup>30</sup> 1 John v. 20.

even then we should have an infinite subject of thanksgiving. But the Gospel leads us to attach a higher value to the incarnation of the only begotten Son of God. We see, yet further, *a new communion founded* by it. Is it still necessary to sound the depth of the chasm which the hand of sin had wrought between man and his Maker? For forty centuries did the bond of communion between heaven and earth remain broken; man trembled before the angels, the angels wept over deeply fallen man. Then appears the Son of God in the flesh, and the atonement, which could not possibly proceed from the creature, is brought about by the Creator Himself. It is worthy of notice in what various ways the Lord and His Apostles bring the miracle of the incarnation into direct connection with the redemption of Adam's fallen race. According to His own words, He was born and came into the world, not only to bear witness to the truth, but also *to seek and to save that which was lost*.<sup>31</sup> "This is the bread of God," He exclaimed on another occasion, "which cometh down from heaven, and *giveth life* unto the world."<sup>32</sup> The world was thus devoid of the true life, because it was laden with guilt, the curse, and the dominion of sin: in what way is this life afresh given to it? God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.<sup>33</sup> As one of us, He became partaker of flesh and blood, that *through death* He might destroy him that had the power of death, *i.e.*, the devil, and on that account might deliver us from all fear of death.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Luke xix. 10.    <sup>32</sup> John vi. 33.    <sup>33</sup> 2 Cor. v. 19.    <sup>34</sup> Heb. ii. 14.

It is as though the sacred writers were striving constantly afresh to remind us that not the appearing of the Lord in itself, but the humiliation which begins with this, and attains its climax in the death of the cross, is the mediate cause of our salvation. This is the case, where Paul declares that He, who was found in fashion as a man, humbled Himself, and became *obedient* unto death, the death of the cross.<sup>35</sup> It is so, where the same Apostle assures us that God, sending His Son into the world, has done that which was impossible to the law, and *condemned* sin in the flesh of Christ; which certainly has reference, not to His appearing in general, but specifically to His death on the cross.<sup>36</sup> And equally little can we stand in doubt as to whether the same Apostle alludes to this where he declares that Jesus Christ came into the world *to save sinners*,<sup>37</sup> which salvation, again, He must certainly ascribe to His sacrificial death, although this is not here expressly mentioned. In like sense John lays manifest stress upon the fact that God sent His Son (into the world) to be a *propitiation* for our sins,<sup>38</sup> a benefit which is everywhere regarded definitely as the fruit of His *blood*. An important hint that we should never in our contemplation remain merely at the *manger* of the Lord, but always, even from that point of view, look forward towards the *cross* on which He accomplished all things! *Only to such an extent does He save sinners by His coming, as this coming was the decisive step to His atoning death on the cross.* But should we,

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<sup>35</sup> Phil. ii. 8.    <sup>36</sup> Rom. viii. 3.    <sup>37</sup> 1 Tim. i. 15.    <sup>38</sup> 1 John iv. 10.



on that account, hesitate to speak of the incarnation itself as an indispensable link in the chain of the plan of our redemption? We cannot; for this incarnation is after all the beginning of a life which shall end in the deepest humiliation, but, through this very humiliation, in the raising and exaltation of a lost world. It is the first step in the path of the obedience of the second Adam, which attained its wondrous culmination in the death of the cross; and through which many shall be, for the judgment of God, constituted righteous, as through the disobedience of the first Adam many were constituted sinners.<sup>39</sup> It is precisely this voluntary character of His incarnation, as afterwards of His self-surrender to the death of the cross, which gives to this sacrifice of obedience an absolutely inestimable value. Being become truly man, He can do that which would otherwise have been impossible, in our place suffer and die. Being holy man, He can also make atonement for a guilt which has remained ever alien to Himself, and in death receive the wages of a sin in which He had personally no share. Being God-man, in an entirely unique sense of the word, He extends a hand at the same time to heaven and to earth, and bows down to the greatest possible depth, in order to raise a lost race to the forfeited position of the children of God. Thus is He, in the fullest sense of the word, our Mediator, who, with His innocence and perfect holiness, covers before the face of God our sins, wherein we were conceived and born.<sup>40</sup> Thus, in the days of the

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<sup>39</sup> Rom. v. 19.

<sup>40</sup> *Heidelb. Catech.*, Ans. 36.

New Testament, the deeply felt want of humanity was satisfied, which, for the restoration of its lost peace, perceived a need for nothing less than the actual incarnation of God Himself.<sup>41</sup> With justice might the Christian Father exclaim, "We owe even more to His poverty, whereby we were redeemed, than to His riches, whereby we were once created." Or, to speak with Bernard of Clairvaux, "It had become evening, and the day was far spent. No angel any longer appeared, no prophet any longer was heard. Only a faint light of Divine knowledge was still glimmering: unrighteousness had triumphed, and the fire of love was quenched. The multitude and abundance of earthly goods had caused the heavenly to be entirely neglected and forgotten. But when thus the spirit of the age was dominant, eternity broke in with its light. The Word of the Father came, God sent His only begotten Son. O man, be dumb before this infinite love, and rejoice in the great dignity to which thou art restored!"

But we must not conclude without proceeding at least one step further. The value of the incarnation of the Son of God is only imperfectly perceived, so long as it is

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<sup>41</sup> With justice is it remarked by Edmond de Pressensé, in his work already several times referred to, *Le Rédempteur*, p. 147, "Si nous éprouvons un besoin profond de voir le Fils de Dieu sans intermédiaire, de le voir, de l'entendre en personne, qu'avons nous besoin de la créature? C'est le Verbe Eternel, qu'il nous faut. Si un Ange eut pu être le Christ, Marie l'eut reconnu dans Gabriel, mais l'Ange comme Marie ont parlé du Saveur promis, parce qu'il n'était pas encore venu. Les Anges ont pu célébrer sa naissance, mais aucun d'eux n'aurait pu le remplacer. L'humanité connaissait les Serviteurs, elle aspirait à posséder le Maître."

regarded only in connection with the enlightenment and reconciliation of each sinner in particular. Not merely the personal communion of man with his Creator, but also the reciprocal communion of believers with each other, yea, the reunion of heaven and earth into one great society, is, by this miracle of miracles, on the one hand rendered possible, and on the other absolutely guaranteed in the future. For, in the last place, with the incarnation of the Son of God *a new Creation is begun.*

“Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth;” thus spake Jehovah once to Israel,<sup>42</sup> and the fulfilment of this promise has been, we do not say by any means completed, but at least begun, in the days of the New Testament. Truly God has, with the appearing of Christ, begun to make something new, so that the former things shall not any longer be remembered.—In sending His Son, He created *a new member of the Human Family.* As the gardener, who will recal a sickly stem to new life, does God, as it were, graft a new fresh scion into the disordered stock of humanity, that from it a purer and healthier sap may be diffused through the arid branches. Not *of* and *from* the tree of humanity, by the way of a natural development of its own powers, was Christ born, as if to prove how much that is fair and noble humanity is able to produce of itself—he who asserts this seems to have torn out one half of the Gospel, and openly contradicts the other—but He was engrafted *upon* the tree of

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<sup>42</sup> Isaiah lxx. 17..

humanity ; or, to speak without a figure, having entered into communion with our race, out of a higher, invisible order of world, Christ becomes henceforth inseparably one with humanity. Over against the line of those who bear the image of the first Adam, there now begins to develop itself a second, a new and holy line of those who are redeemed by His blood and sanctified by that Spirit, of whom the second Adam according to His humanity was born. In communion with Him the sinner now becomes a new creature, through whom flows a new life, yea, to adopt one of the boldest expressions that ever fell from an Apostle's pen, he becomes "partaker of the Divine nature."<sup>43</sup> Not as though, even at the highest stage of development, the distinction between the Head and the members of the new humanity would ever be entirely obliterated, far less that any one should ever be able to rise above His absolutely ideal perfection. As many as have received Him, to them has He given power to be and to be called *men of God*;<sup>44</sup> but *the God-man*, in all the force of the word, He alone remains for ever and ever. But yet, save this limitation, it is absolutely indubitable, that all that we see in Christ which is glorious and Divine is destined in varying measure to be at the same time the heritage of all His people. He God's eternal Son by nature, we in Him the children re-adopted into God's family. He the High Priest and King, we priests and kings with Him. He the Light of the world, we called together with Him to shine

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<sup>43</sup> 2 Pet. i. 4.      <sup>44</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 11.

as lights in the world. He one with the Father, but also all His people destined, according to His prayer, to become one with Him, with the Father, and with each other. He the God-man in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth bodily, we appointed to be one Kingdom of God, one spiritual body, which, made perfect in Him, is joint-partaker of His glory, and destined through Him to be filled unto all the fulness of God.—While raising the sinner to such a height, God creates in Christ *a new world*, more and more the opposite of the old sin-defiled one. Who can deny that from the time of Christ's birth a new principle of life is implanted in humanity, from the mighty influence of which even they cannot wholly withdraw themselves who refuse to bow before the Christ of Bethlehem? Or does not religious life owe to the Coming of Christ a development till then unknown; philosophy a higher flight; art a new baptism; society a beneficial leaven; the family a better order; the state in many respects a happy revolution, as compared with what existed before? Is not a new world of the heart opened for all His people, a higher communion of faith, hope, and love founded, of which the Jewish and heathen world had scarcely a faint conception? Are there not everywhere to be found prints of the blessed footsteps of Him, who even now in spirit, as of old, goes about through the land doing good, healing the sick, and casting out devils, whose name is *legion*? Yea, is it not truth which the holy Pascal, the sage for all ages, as Neander has rightly named him, somewhere declares: "Without Jesus Christ the world would not even exist; for either it would have

been already destroyed, or it would have become like a hell." It would form a striking opposition to place all which human wisdom and power has been able to effect apart from Christ in the moral domain, over against all that which the world owes exclusively to Him. As often as this opposition presents itself before us in broad outline, there is awakened in us—and certainly not in us alone—the presentiment of something yet higher and more glorious.—We see, finally, a *new union of heaven and earth* announced, guaranteed, and perfectly accomplished, by the incarnation of the Son of God. Union, this magic word of our century, is also the highest key-word in the decree of God, with this one all-embracing distinction, that God by means of spiritual forces accomplishes that which man in vain seeks to accomplish by material forces, and that instead of a Babel of confusion He calls into being a Zion of peace. That the angels of God descend to sing the first Christmas song is the meet type of the great final aim of the incarnation: union of heaven and earth. "Henceforth," said the Lord to His first disciples, "ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."<sup>45</sup> The communion between heaven and earth, indicated in this figurative promise, is however by no means destined to be restricted to Him alone. From Him, as from the living Centre, flows forth an all-embracing power for the reuniting of all that is still separate; and heaven and earth are henceforth destined to become two parts of a

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<sup>45</sup> John i. 51.

boundless kingdom, which acknowledges Him as Lord and King. To speak with one of the greatest Theologians of our day, "That which the appearing of the first Adam is for nature, that is the appearing of the Second for the whole human race. As man was placed in the midst of Creation, in such wise that all the other forms of nature stand related to him as fragments to the whole, as scattered rays to the all-combining focus, so that the whole diversity of nature is, as it were, destined to be united under man as its head and crown: so does the human race again present a fragmentary diversity of individual oppositions, activities, and powers, which first find their point of union in Christ—under whom the great body of humanity must be gathered together as under the Head. And just as man, a member in the chain of beings, not only unites nature in himself, but also stands above it, so also is Christ again a particular member of the human race, who not only microcosmically presents the whole race to our view, but stands above the same, as Mediator between God and men. His individuality is related to that of every other human being as the centre of the circle to every other point of the periphery. And as He is the centre of the world of men, so is He also of the Universe—the Head of the whole Creation, in whom the heavenly and the earthly, the visible and the invisible, the forces of Creation, the Angels, Principalities, and Powers, find their bond of union."<sup>46</sup> That this union will one day become a perfect

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<sup>46</sup> Martensen, *Dogmatik* i, pp. 295, 296.



one, can from the Christian standpoint by no means be open to doubt. With His appearing in the flesh begins the unceasingly progressive moral renewal of the earth, on which sin had destroyed God's fairest work; begins the removal and abolition of so many things, which for ages had caused Creation to groan; the brotherly union of holy angels and saved sinners, no longer hopelessly separated from each other. In Him heaven descends to earth, to make earth afresh the gate of heaven. The Word becomes flesh, in order that—in the sound Evangelical sense—flesh may be conformed to the Word. He who was in the form of God made Himself of no reputation, in order that at length God may be all in all.

We shall presently have abundant opportunity of returning to the more full treatment of that which we can here but touch upon. At the first glance of the appearing of the Son of God in the flesh, we could not possibly refrain from spending a few moments on the glittering mountain-heights of faith and hope. For the present our path again wends itself downwards, and we take a step forward into a sanctuary of which our foot has hitherto only trodden the threshold of the outer court.

## II.

## THE EARTHLY APPEARING.

UNLESS all we have hitherto said is utterly unfounded, it follows naturally therefrom, that also the *earthly appearing* of our Lord must display an entirely peculiar character. Without doubt, His life on earth, from His birth to His death upon the cross—for of this we are here particularly thinking—was a thoroughly human life. On this very account it is possible, under the guidance of the Evangelists, to describe the Life of our Lord, *i.e.*, to compose a connected account of His deeds and the events of His life, just as well as the life of the noblest of our race has been historically presented. The doubt as to the possibility of a *Biography* (properly so called) of the Son of God, which has often been expressed, especially on the believing side, is connected with ■ perhaps only half-conscious ignoring of the truly human nature of His appearing and activity. When He, who from all eternity was in the form of God, appears in the form of a servant, He lives out His own *history* here below, as every one of the sons of Adam. But, on the other hand, it must be at once brought into the foreground, that He, who forms the central person of this history, is infinitely more than man; that His life in the flesh, from beginning to end, was a Divine-human life in all the force of

the word ; that His appearing upon earth, in brief, may be regarded as a personal manifestation of God in a true and spotless human life. It is accordingly expressly from this point of view that we are now about to contemplate it.

That which has been said already determines in a preliminary manner the character and extent of the examination which awaits us in this new chapter. No historical review, still less an express explanation of all the details which the Gospel communicates to us in connection with the Lord's life and work, least of all an attempt in any degree worthily to set forth the glory of His appearing in the flesh ; but simply a definite answering of the question, how we must—shall I say—think, or conceive, of the character of this manifestation ; a pointing out of that which the man Christ Jesus on the one hand had in common with all men, and of that which on the other hand definitely distinguished Him from all others ; an examination as to the connection in which the human and the more than human in the Lord stood to each other, and to His whole work—this is the task to which, so far as this is granted to human weakness and our own limited capacity, we must now address ourselves with all our might. Considering the abundance of the material at our disposal, we shall do best to sum up the results of our prolonged examination as to the earthly appearing of the Lord in a few important *propositions*, of which a preliminary proof has been given in the former sections of this book, and to the further treatment of which the present chapter shall be devoted.

I. *Once become man, the Son of God became subject voluntarily and during His whole life to all the laws and limitations of human nature.*

Thus stated, this proposition certainly appears so simple and acceptable, that no one at first hearing feels the need for its elucidation or defence. Is it not acknowledged by all, that God sent His Son *in the likeness* of sinful flesh, and that with one great exception, He became in all points like unto His brethren?<sup>1</sup> But by no means has every one the courage to think out this proposition to its last consequence, and we are far from being the only one, or the first, who has made the observation that the true humanity of the Lord is not much less ignored by His Church, than His Divinity by its opponents. How many are scandalised at the supposition that the Lord had made greater progress in His thirtieth than in His twentieth year, in His twentieth than in His tenth or fifteenth! How few have been truly reconciled to the thought that He really did not know something; that He really had need of the strength and solace of prayer; that He could look forward with deeply felt anguish of soul to His sufferings and death; that even on the cross His sense of the Father's nearness and love could be for a moment obscured! Men speak with all kinds of evasions, twist in all directions, in order to understand this, and so much more which in the estimation of many sounds *too* human, in another sense than that which the letter of Holy Scripture requires. They accept *in principle* a

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<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 3; Heb. ii. 17.

true incarnation, but constantly shrink from its legitimate application. It is certainly therefore not unnecessary to contemplate a little more closely this truly human element in the Lord, among other reasons in order to show in this way how little ground a thoughtless unbelief has for comparing the God-man whom we adore, with a phantom,<sup>2</sup> of which nothing truly human is left, except form and shape.

*Become very man, the Son of God developed Himself in a truly human manner.* To the idea of a truly human development belongs necessarily a gradual progress and growth. Man is not at once what he must be, but becomes so by slow gradations; not immediately, but by the use of definite aids, without which it is impossible he should attain to the height set before him. Is it not as though the third Evangelist, who has most brought into relief the truly human nature of Christ, silently feared that it would only too soon become placed in the shadow? With manifest emphasis, he repeatedly tells us how the child Jesus grew in body and in mind, and relates a very remarkable exemplification of this growth.<sup>3</sup> Even in this respect there is seen an infinite distance, not merely between the conception of the Christ in the Canonical Gospels and that of the Apocryphas, but also between the facts which are recorded for us concerning Christ, and the store of fables related to us about the geniuses and heroes of heathen antiquity. We are told, *e.g.*, of a Hercules, that, even, in his cradle shortly after his birth, he squeezed to death with his baby

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<sup>2</sup> Matt. xiv 26.

<sup>3</sup> Luke ii, 40—52.

hands a pair of serpents sent to kill him : of Jesus in the manger or in the flight to Egypt we read nothing which hinders us from frankly speaking of Him as a *child* in all the force of the word. Any one who had been privileged to see Him in the parental abode before His first visit to the Temple, would unquestionably have felt something about this child, in tone, bearing, word, or deed, which indescribably attracted him, but nothing which must necessarily suggest something supernatural. If it is often in the present day thought a recommendation that it can be said of a child, he is greatly "in advance of his years," we read nothing about Jesus which leads us to such a supposition ; rather must it be His highest encomium, that at every period of life He corresponded to the requirements of *those* years, without rising beforehand to the development of a later period. The child Jesus must thus learn, like every other child, that which without this He could not have known. The boy of twelve years did not *give* instruction in the Temple, but *received* it of the Jewish doctors ; and though the way in which He received it and listened raised Him in the eyes of all above all other children and youths, yet He Himself ceased not for an instant to feel Himself really a child. The fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily in Him, from the moment of the incarnation ; but the consciousness thereof is at first not experienced, afterwards but faintly and in the form of supposition and presentiment, and only at length awakens with full clearness and force and vivacity within Him. If, as without doubt was the case, Mary spoke not to Him

of the secret of His miraculous birth, He must naturally have looked upon Himself at first as a son of Joseph, until His awakening inner self-consciousness gave Him testimony in an immediate manner of His miraculous heavenly origin. There is thus no ground for the oft-expressed thought, which has been clothed in divers forms, that even His childhood was already clouded by the sombre images of the thorn-crown and the cross. In vain should we seek, either in the letter or the spirit of the sacred narratives, for the slightest proof for this view. If the Lord was developed in a truly human manner, He cannot have seen the end of His path at the very beginning, with *the same* clearness with which He afterwards foresaw it. Rather is it to be expected, from the nature of the case, that only *after* He had come to the full consciousness of His personal *dignity*, must the great *work* of His life present itself more clearly before His eyes; and again, that only when He took a view of this work in all its extent, and had taken some account of that sacrifice which obedience to His vocation would demand, the presentiment of the terrible fate that awaited Him must awaken powerfully in His soul. It is most highly probable that the significant word of the child of twelve years indicates for us the moment at which the consciousness of His wholly unique relationship to the Father for the first time and in the most artless manner expressed itself.<sup>4</sup> His second word, that addressed to John,<sup>5</sup> shows us moreover that

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<sup>4</sup> Luke ii. 49.<sup>5</sup> Matt. iii. 15.



He did not for a single moment hesitate to place Himself on a level with the greatest of the Prophets, and that He perceives, with perfect clearness, what definite obligation is imposed upon Him by His special life-vocation.

It does not belong to this place to inquire as to the *means* of which the Lord availed Himself for His human culture and perfecting. In whatever these may have consisted, certainly they could not alone have made Him what He afterwards became, had there not been present in His Personality itself the cause and basis of all that which was lovely and glorious which afterwards showed itself in Him. That He enjoyed a so-called *learned* education, in the strict sense, is in the Gospel denied in so many words;<sup>6</sup> and that He was really a member of the order of the Rabbis—with the title of which He is often addressed as a token of respect—and was therefore as scientifically educated, prepared, and equipped, as was later, according to the Talmud, usual in the case of members of the distinguished Rabbinical order, is one of those ingenious conjectures which by means of a very doubtful exposition find an apparent support in single expressions of the sacred narratives, but which are definitely contradicted by the total impression which is made upon us by the history of His life here on earth. Joseph and Mary must have forgotten all that they had already heard before His birth about His person and destination, if they had brought Him up as a scientific competitor for the laurel of scholarship, instead

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<sup>6</sup> John vii. 15.

of (save as far as concerns the use of those means employed in the education of every child) simply leaving Him to become that which according to God's counsel and foreknowledge He must become. This, we repeat, He *became* in a truly human manner, not as by a magic touch, but gradually and in making progress from one stage of development to another; in such wise, that the sun of His perfection was not in the morning already standing at meridian height, but at that very point of the heavens at which, according to the law of a regular progress, it must definitely stand at that hour. Thus His knowledge unceasingly grew in extent, clearness, exactness; His feeling in delicacy, depth, force; His will in pureness, firmness, elasticity; His whole life, in a word, in inner and outward harmony and perfection. With the most perfect right, therefore, does the Scripture testify,<sup>7</sup> that though He was a Son, He *learned* obedience by the things which He suffered; not because He had before been disobedient, but because obedience, as a truly human virtue, can first develop *extensively* its *intensive* force, when it is exposed to the highest test.

*In becoming truly man, the Son of God indeed by no means renounces the personal possession of His Divine nature and properties; but yet entirely renounces their unlimited use.* To this proposition, already previously expressed, we now, on account of the great importance of the subject, return. "*He made Himself of no reputation* (*ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσε*)," says the Apostle,<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Heb. v. 8.

<sup>8</sup> Phil. ii. 6, 7. [Think also in this connection of 2 Cor. viii. 9.]

“taking upon Him the form of a servant.” But the deep meaning of these words is by no means yet perfectly fathomed and penetrated. To the nature of the *self-abnegation* here meant, it belongs also of necessity (this is implied in the original signification of the word), that henceforth He manifests the properties which He retains unchanged, not in a Divine, *i.e.*, absolute and infinite form, but in a *human*, *i.e.*, finite and limited one.—By nature the Logos is *almighty*. But once incarnate, He manifests this omnipotence in a *manner* entirely other than when, before the times of the ages, He was “seated upon the throne of the great Universe.” He works miracles, but only with the definite aim of founding the kingdom of God. He turns water into wine, and multiplies the food ; but, without creating *out of nothing*, He attaches, so to speak, to the already present material the manifestation of His miraculous power. He calls forth Lazarus out of the grave ; but before He does this, He thanks the Father, who had heard His silent prayer, and, on account of the multitude that stands around, He utters this thanksgiving, that they all may believe that the Father has sent Him.—By nature the Logos is *omnipresent*. But once incarnate, though He is able to work at a distance by His all-embracing will, He Himself *is* nevertheless only in one place at a time, not everywhere bodily present. When the sickness of Lazarus is made known to Him, He remains yet two days in succession where He was. He at first remains away from the feast of Tabernacles, but afterwards goes thither as it were in secret. To His disciples He speaks

repeatedly of His going away and coming again, of His coming forth from the Father, and His coming into the world, which after a short sojourn He leaves again.—By nature, finally, the Logos is *omniscient*. But once become incarnate, He clearly manifests that He does not know absolutely all that can by any possibility be known. He desires in vain to remain unknown, when He enters into a house on the confines of Tyre and Sidon; and asks after the grave of Lazarus.<sup>9</sup> He seeks figs upon a tree by the wayside, and finds Himself disappointed when He discovers nothing but leaves.<sup>10</sup> He declares expressly that no one knows the day and the hour of the last judgment, neither the angels, *nor*, what is more, *the Son*, but only the Father.<sup>11</sup> We have just as little right by any artifices of exegesis to deprive such facts of their significance and force, as on the other hand to overlook the countless proofs which place it beyond all doubt that the Lord was, nevertheless, in possession of a higher, miraculous, and truly Divine knowledge. That which He needed to know as King of the Kingdom of God, He penetrated immediately, with infallible glance. The depths of the heart, the depths of the sea, the depths of the future, lay naked and open before Him. But for the very reason that His knowledge, however Divine, was still *Divine-human*, it was also of necessity, during the days of His flesh, *limited* in a human manner. His knowledge is capable of development, extension, yea, of being rendered increasingly clear. As He has now once deter-

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<sup>9</sup> Mark vii. 24; John xi. 34. <sup>10</sup> Mark xi. 13. <sup>11</sup> Mark xiii. 32.

mined to be man, He will not know that which as man He cannot know without ceasing to be man. Of free choice He manifests and employs His Divine properties, not in a Divine-infinite, but in a human-finite manner.<sup>12</sup> He lives in the present, recalls to mind the past, longs for the future; because, in once becoming man, He entered within the limits of the finite. Thus also, as God-man, He has needs, which He did not experience in this form before His incarnation. Need, not merely for communion with the Father, but also by prayer to the Father to strengthen Himself against the approaching sufferings. Need, not merely to see men happy, but also in communion with men to find support amidst the crushing anguish of soul which He feels rising upon Him at Gethsemane's gate. Need to rest Himself after a toilsome day, whether by a brief sleep, or by withdrawing for a short time into solitude; which He certainly would not have regarded as needful, if He had been willing to avail Himself of His Divine omnipotence, to bring help in a miraculous manner to His human nature, or to raise it above its natural limits. Precisely in this consists the depth of His humiliation, that He, the God-man, experiences needs, and submits to limitations, and endures privations, which He, very God from all eternity, had.

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<sup>12</sup> Ebrard, *Dogm.* ii., p. 143. "So soon as the nature of God appears in a form *belonging to time*, it is of itself purely *human*; it did not enter into the temporal form *in the abstract*, but into the concrete form of the human nature; the Logos becomes not stone, plant, etc., but Man. The dominion of the spirit over nature, as we see it in Christ—this *applied* omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence—is purely human."

never thus known before His incarnation. To what shall we compare it, this mystery of Godliness, of which we speak only with reverential awe? It is the same sun which stands in the heavens in unclouded splendour, and which afterwards weaves a veil of cloud about its bright face; and yet what a change in a few hours! not in its essence indeed, but in its manifestation. It is the same eagle which soars upon the azure path of heaven in the face of the king of day, and which then, confined within a narrow cage, dashes its mighty wings against the strong grating; and yet where is now the use of those properties of swiftness and strength, which it still, as an hour before, possesses? It is the same king's son who to-day dwells in the palace of his father, and to-morrow, out of love to rebellious subjects, in a remote corner of the kingdom, renouncing his princely glory, comes to dwell amongst them in the form of a servant—limiting of his own free-will the prerogatives of his original rank, which he has never laid aside—and is known only by the dignity of his look, and the star of royalty on his breast, when the mean cloak is opened for a moment, apparently by accident!

*Become truly man, the Son of God can and must receive of the Father, that which, definitely in His character as God-man, He has need of.* Not seldom has surprise been felt, in reading the history of the baptism of the Lord in the Jordan, that the Holy Ghost could and must be poured out without measure upon Him, who nevertheless, as regards the Spirit of holiness,<sup>13</sup> was

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<sup>13</sup> Róm. i. 4.

the Son of God, inseparably one with the Father. How, it has been asked, could He receive the Spirit, since He with the Father and the Spirit is and remains true and eternal God? Did He then live thirty years without this Spirit, and thus stand even beneath a John, of whom we read that he was filled therewith from his birth? Not a few have sought to obviate the difficulty by assuming that what occurred at the Jordan was a manifestation, of whatever nature, only with respect to John, not with respect to Jesus. From this standpoint, Jesus at His baptism received nothing, because in reality He stood in need of nothing which He did not already possess; a conception which involuntarily rests upon a misapprehension as to the real humanity of the Lord. If I seriously believe in the latter, what hinders me from supposing that in the hour of the baptism the Father, in answer to His prayer, conferred upon Him all that would henceforth be necessary in order to fulfil an entirely unique life-task in an entirely unique manner? Even in the flower-bud lies hidden the capacity and the power for unfolding to a glorious flower, but yet, though it begins to swell, it first opens its fragrant cup only when a fostering sunbeam falls upon it from heaven. That the Son before His incarnation could receive the Holy Spirit, or needed to do so, is nowhere written. But once incarnate, to appear as Messiah in Israel's people, He is by the Spirit furnished with those heavenly gifts and powers which, according to the word of prophecy, should descend upon the perfect servant of the Lord.<sup>14</sup> For

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<sup>14</sup> Isaiah xi. 2, *sqq.*



like reasons He could be afterwards refreshed and strengthened, when a voice from heaven solemnly declared Him the Son of God's good-pleasure; and could receive from an angel, in His conflict in Gethsemane, a strengthening, whether of soul or body, which the Son before His incarnation had never needed, but which the *God-man* in His anguish of soul could not a moment longer forego.

*Become truly man, the Son of God accordingly displays the peculiar character, not only of the humanity in which, but of the nation in the midst of which, and of the time at which He appears.* The question as to the character of Jesus, often put by psychology, and answered in different ways, is in itself perfectly legitimate; because the Logos, who has assumed the human nature, now appears as a *Divine-human* individuality, it is true, but still as a human one. "Being found in fashion as a man," He must necessarily possess that which distinguishes Him from *other* men; but precisely because this one person is THE Man, *par excellence*, we see in Him nothing of the one-sidedness which, in greater or less degree, distinguishes all strongly marked and striking characters. There is in Him no predominance of the imagination over the feeling, of the intellect over the imagination, of the will over the intellect, which is thus oppressed or hindered in its operation. There is in Him an uninterrupted harmony of all the powers of body and soul, in which that serves which ought to serve, and that rules which ought to rule, and all works together to one adorable end. But this man, the perfect and holy One, appears definitely amongst the *Israelitish*

*people*, appears at this *time*, so strange and peculiar in many respects, in which we see Him arise according to the Gospel : ought these two peculiarities to be entirely passed over in the contemplation of His earthly appearing? It lies in the nature of the case, that the Word could become flesh only among that one highly privileged people which was favoured with the knowledge of the only True One in consequence of a special revelation, and afterwards was prepared during a number of ages for His appearing. He now accordingly appears definitely as an *Israelite*, and Christendom has no need to be ashamed of the ineffaceably Jewish traits upon the countenance of its Lord, if at least it believes in His true *humanity*. Salvation is of the Jews, not of the Romans or Greeks : if it could have pleased God to send His Son, not as a Hebrew of the Hebrews, but, *e.g.*, as an Athenian of the sons of *Hellas*, the form of His personality, the impression left by His appearing, would perhaps have been in many respects different from that which it now is. But, arising as the Son of David according to the flesh, the Supreme Wisdom reveals its mysteries in the language of that people to which the Christ belongs ; walks about in the garb, not of the Greek philosopher, but of the Hebrew Rabbi ; descends to the standpoint, to the capacity, the needs by which *that age* was definitely distinguished from earlier and later ones. Of unjustifiable accommodation to the prejudices and errors of the nation, such as is supposed by unbelief, we have on that account no need to assume a trace ; the very opposite we may suppose with regard to Him, who not

only lived and laboured as man *among* His contemporaries, but as God-man, who appeared in order to reveal to them the truth, stood so infinitely far *above* them. But this may not prevent our observing that the earthly appearing of the Lord, precisely because it was a truly human one, bore also the colouring of its *age* and *nation*, and that that which in its nature is eternal and unchangeable, was revealed in a definite *historical* form. Yea, what is more, the glory of Christ shines forth to us in this very fact, that He, while true Israelite, remained entirely free from Jewish narrow-mindedness and exclusiveness, and as Prophet of the truth corresponding definitely with the requirements of *His own* age, yet presented it in such wise as to meet the unchangeable necessities of *all* times and *all* nations.

*Become truly man, the Son of God can, if He will, sin, and suffer, and die.* We have no thought, in thus speaking, of asserting that for the incarnate Son of God *either* sin, *or* suffering, *or* death, was in itself something inevitably necessary. For us is this, alas! at least to a certain extent, the case. Born of sinful parents, we are not in a position at once and fully to restrain every manifestation of the corruption of our nature. Voluntarily or by compulsion we must take our share in the burden of suffering, which here below is imposed upon every one who bears the name of man and sinner. And death, originally chastisement of sin, has now become a law of nature, before which even the strongest and the noblest must at last bow his head. The God-man, on the contrary, needs not to sin, to suffer, to die, so long as He does not Him-

self will it. Born of the power of the Holy Ghost, He is free from the preponderating inclination to evil which animates us from our birth. Though manifold injury is done to Him by others, He merits it not, any more than He carries about in Himself the fountain of sufferings. His body, polluted by no sin, bears in itself no seeds of death; and His spirit, weakened by no exhausting conflict against the demands of the flesh, needs no violent tearing from its impure prison-house of matter. But though the necessity for all this does not in the least exist for Him, the *possibility* thereof is involved in His true incarnation itself. The Logos, *before* His incarnation, can no more transgress, or suffer, or die, than can the Father; the Logos, become very man, sees the possibility of the one and the other present itself to Him. Not a few Christians secretly doubt the *possibility* that Christ could sin. To such an extent justly, in so far as sinning must ever become for Him less *morally* possible, in proportion as He more deeply felt His oneness with the Father, and in the midst of the most severe temptations more powerfully maintained it. But the *natural* possibility of sinning must surely be ascribed to the God-man, or we make of His temptation an empty display; of His victory, a deceptive appearance; of His crowning, an idealistic homage.<sup>15</sup> If His perfect obedience was simply an inevitable consequence, we had almost said a mechanical product, of His true Godhead,

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<sup>15</sup> We must distinguish between *He could not sin*, *He would not sin*, and *He did not sin*. To the two last assertions, in relation to the Lord, we subscribe; the first we deny.

this is deprived of all merits, properly so-called, and the well-known words, "*Wherefore* God also hath (exceedingly) highly exalted Him,"<sup>16</sup> cease to have an intelligible meaning. No, if we will rightly judge of the Lord in this respect, we must compare Him, as to His moral constitution, with Adam before his fall. As Adam was possessed of all that could put him in a position to continue standing, but also was placed in the possibility of sinning (a possibility which for him only too quickly became a reality); so humanity appeared in the second Adam, furnished with all the gifts and powers which belonged to its original nature, and called a second time, *but by free choice*, to show forth obedience and love. Therein consists—we shall presently treat of this subject more at large—therein consists the glory of the second Adam, that He continued to stand where the first succumbed. He, however, who simply asserts that Christ could not possibly have succumbed, just because He was God, and not man as we, has not penetrated to the innermost depth of the idea, *God-man*, and openly contradicts the Apostles. Instead of the possibility here referred to being an empty abstraction, it was in reality the more fearful and real, in proportion as precisely He, above all others, was exposed to temptations, the severity and danger of which we can scarcely form a conception of. Although this possibility was deprived of its chief force by the victory in the wilderness of temptation, it nevertheless continued to exist, even in the Garden of Geth-

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<sup>16</sup> διὸ καὶ ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερύψωσε, Phil. ii. 9.

semane and on the tree of the curse. And that He could there endure even the severest sufferings, was no consequence of His true Godhead, but, on the contrary, precisely of His true humanity.<sup>17</sup> His life, also, He needs not to lay down, if He will at any price retain it; it is, on the contrary, an act of power, as well as obedience and love, when He surrenders it. But that He *can* perform this act, results from the fact that "as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same." And in this very thing we have to adore His unparalleled humiliation and self-abasement, even unto the cross, that He, the originally Holy One, should by His incarnation render it *possible* for Him to entertain the evil which is in absolute conflict with His whole nature and being; that He, the One living from all eternity, should, so to speak, place Himself within the influence of the oldest foe of the human race, the wages of sin, the negation of all light and life—His original nature—under the dominion of *death*!

Surely no justification will be thought needful, if we deduce a few necessary consequences from the position that the Son of God became *very* man, and do so somewhat at length. Only then will the God-man be brought nearer to so many of our race, to whom He has become more or less strange, if we are more and more convinced that the well-known saying of the poet, "I am a man, and regard nothing human as foreign to me," remains in the fullest sense applicable to Him. It is not

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<sup>17</sup> Only the *Logos incarnatus* becomes the Christus passibilis, ὁ χριστὸς παθητὸς, as Paul terms Him in Acts xxvi. 23.

possible that the *moral* greatness of the Incarnate Word should inspire us with enthusiasm, so long as we shrink from accepting in its widest application the doctrine of His becoming really man. We are often and rightly warned against a too human conception of the Redeemer, blessed for ever. We ourselves are grieved and wounded, when we see Him described as *mere* man, and hear His pure humanity spoken of—as is done by so many in the present day—not as the *temple*, but as the proper *essence* and *kernel* of the (so-called) Godhead of Christ. Human and Divine nature must here be not indeed separated, much less confused, but yet duly distinguished; and this we are not wearied of proclaiming. On the other hand, we shall understand something of the love of the Father and the grace of the Son, only when we have been wholly penetrated with the thought of all that was involved in the fact of such a thrice-glorious Person becoming *man*, man in all the force of the term, without refusing to accept His part in a single human limitation, humiliation, weakness, or distress. Only from this point of view can we raise with our whole heart the note of rejoicing, “Behold, the Son of God is become as one of us.” Christ becomes now no airy form, no reflected image, but flesh of our flesh, bone of our bone, a palpable form, the central figure of the world’s history. With the reality of His incarnation stands or falls the reality of our redemption by Him. There is and remains but *one* Mediator between God and men, and He is called *the man* Christ Jesus.

The development of this first proposition has in itself prepared the way for our contemplation of a second.



II. *Voluntarily subjected to all the laws and limitations of human nature, the God-man nevertheless, from the beginning to the end of His earthly manifestation, preserved Himself absolutely pure and free from all sins.*

While we already know beforehand that in every human being we meet with a sinner, and tacitly presuppose that in his history there are blemishes, even where we are not able actually to point them out, the history of the earthly appearing of the Lord makes, on every fresh contemplation, an ever deeper impression of absolutely spotless perfection. And far indeed from Himself saying or doing anything which could weaken this impression, He on the contrary makes declarations which can only renew and strengthen it. He, the meek One, and lowly of heart, assures us in so many words that no one can convince Him of sin; that He always does those things that are pleasing to the Father; that He has glorified the Father on the earth, and finished the work which the Father gave Him to do.<sup>18</sup> It is impossible to understand these declarations in the same sense in which the testimonies of particular men of eminence concerning the purity of their life and endeavours, or the testimony of their friends and disciples in this respect, must be apprehended. No high degree, merely, of moral excellence, but absolute freedom from all sin, both outward and inward, does the Son of man ascribe to Himself; and—we must repeat it—there is no other choice than to suppose in Him *either* a self-deception

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<sup>18</sup> John viii. 29, 46; xvii. 4; and elsewhere.

without a parallel, *or* a pride without limits, *or else* to accept these utterances of His immediate self-consciousness as the utterances of an absolutely indisputable *truth*.

In the last-named view we are not a little confirmed, when we consider by what manifold voices this testimony of the Lord concerning Himself is *supported*. The fact in itself is of no small significance, that His bitter *enemies*, however gladly they would do so, found themselves absolutely unable to adduce the least thing against Him; that Pilate, Herod, and Judas confess His innocence, and thereby condemn themselves; that even the murderer at His side and the centurion at the cross receive a deep impression of His moral greatness. Yet more does it say, that all His first witnesses, who carefully observed Him, and were enlightened by the Holy Ghost, agree in the confession of His perfect sinlessness; so that it is not possible in any degree to gainsay this marvellous appearing in the history of humanity, without coming into decided collision with the teaching of the Apostles.<sup>19</sup> And, what outweighs everything, the testimonies given to Him by *the Father* in the most solemn moments of His life, and by His resurrection after dying, leave no room even on this point for the slightest doubt. The voices from heaven, which were heard thrice—at the end of His life of seclusion, in the midst of His public life, and at the beginning of His sufferings; the signs which were wrought at His death and His resurrection, and

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<sup>19</sup> See, *e.g.*, 1 Pet. i. 18, 19; ii. 24; 2 Cor. v. 21; 1 John iii. 5; and many other places.

above all, this resurrection itself, by which the seal of the most unequivocal approbation was impressed upon His person and His work, here speak more powerfully than any words. In our estimation, at least, the last-named proofs, especially, are conclusive, and will remain so, so long as it has not been shown on the other hand, *either* that these signs never occurred, *or else* that the spotlessly holy God could crown in this way a sullied person and an imperfect work. And how could the Lord be exalted to the throne of the Universe, if He had, even on a single occasion, been compelled at its foot to implore forgiveness of His own sins?

Yet the unbelief of our age has hazarded on this point, also, not only a timid doubt, but an open denial. However powerfully and emphatically the perfect sinlessness of the Lord has been defended, within the last few years, and in accordance with the need of our times, against the earlier Naturalism and Rationalism,<sup>20</sup> yet the so-called Modern Theology has unequivocally shown that it hesitates to ascribe entire sinlessness and perfection to Him, whose moral *superiority*, yea, incomparable *excellence*, it readily acknowledges. Only a few years ago, this last was maintained with special preference, particularly by those who recognised no distinction between the Divine and the human nature in the Lord, and made His Divinity, plainly speaking, to consist merely in the fact that He was to be called *the perfect man*. Upon this perfect man, however, they would not admit that any

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<sup>20</sup> Comp., especially, the celebrated work of C. Ullmann, *The Sinlessness of Jesus*.

stain could rest. He was the highest ideal, to which all must look up, according to which all must be formed and developed. Whoever ventured to assail the sinlessness of the Saviour, was regarded as standing beyond the limits of Christianity. This doctrine was regarded as an indispensable corner-stone, on which the whole temple of Christian Theology must rest ; and he who held firmly to this perfect sinlessness, in other words, to the *ideality* of the Lord, however widely he might deviate on other points, was still recognised as a Christian and Christian Theologian.

Yet it was seen in this case also how impossible it is to stand still on a sloping path ; and when the Godhead of Christ had been tacitly surrendered, in order to delight oneself in the contemplation of the pure man, a newer school would not allow its right to be challenged, to ask with increasing emphasis, whether then this absolute purity of the most human of all men was indeed thus raised beyond all doubt. It urged the objection that so complete and unparalleled an exception to the universal rule of the sinfulness of our race might in itself be considered something highly improbable, and could only be explained on the supposition of a direct and miraculous intervention of God in the ordinary course of the development and the history of the race, which, it is well known, is rejected as an absurdity from the standpoint of the modern view of the world. It pointed to different isolated words and deeds of the Lord, which seemed as little able to stand the test of the strictest morality, as to serve for examples to others. And thus it ended with

the question, whether it would not be more self-consistent, after once having learnt to regard and honour Christ as *mere* man, to begin to look upon Him *wholly* as man; and whether one might not thus easily admit that even He, in however slight degree, had also His part in the moral imperfection which—witness history and experience—remains absolutely inseparable from the present condition of mankind.

As for us, we are not for a single moment in doubt concerning the answer we must give to this question. If we recognised the Lord exclusively as a sharer of *our* nature, we should not hesitate to go yet one step further, and also seriously to call in question His moral purity. He who sees in Christ only man, and moreover regards His conception of the Holy Ghost either as doubtful or as without significance in relation to His sinlessness, may suppose he has still his reasons for contending for this sinlessness, but solid *grounds* for doing so, properly speaking, he has *none*. Never will he be able to afford a conclusive proof, which shall convince the opponent, or reduce him to silence. We know that thirty years of the Lord's life are veiled in almost complete obscurity, and, of the remaining three, there were whole days, weeks, perhaps months, with which we are totally unacquainted. For a miracle like that of the spotless life of the single Pure One among the impure, there is from this standpoint no room; and that also the voices from heaven, the resurrection and ascension of the Lord, and other details, to which we have appealed above, are for the modern science extremely questionable phenomena,

there is no need here to remind the reader. Though one may not be able to point out any actual blemishes in the character or conduct of Jesus, yet he who recognises Him only as man can scarcely doubt that they were actually present in Him. "Where is ground for the thought," it has been asked, "that human nature without the interposition of a miracle is incapable, after ages of struggle, of bringing forth its greatest Son? Is nature then elsewhere incapable of realising its idea in a natural way, and should she be so only in the domain of man?"<sup>21</sup> But where is ground for the thought, we ask in return, that the Son of Mary (and Joseph?) knew how to preserve Himself free from a stain of sin which sullies all others; that He had learnt to run in the way of perfection without ever stumbling; that even in thought He had never transgressed a law, against which the mind of the flesh is incessant enmity? In truth, the opponents of the miraculous compel us to believe very wondrous things, *e.g.*, that a pure one can proceed from the impure, that an evil tree can bring forth good fruit, that the idea of a perfect humanity could accidentally realise itself precisely once. In place of such an *absurdity* we give the preference to the *miracle*, that the Son of God became true and holy man, and, although tempted in all points, preserved Himself to the end perfectly pure. He who denies the supernatural in Christ can at most only suppose that the Lord, in consequence of prolonged effort, at last *attained to the position* of no longer sinning; but that

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<sup>21</sup> Scholten, Professor of Theology at Leyden.

He should really have been from the beginning perfectly "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners," is contrary to all analogy, and no less to all experience, in the name of which the miracles of the Gospel are now so boldly contested. Regarded from this standpoint, condemned by us, it has been justly said, "Christ would be on a level with a physician who, after long sickness, having at length become robust, should approach the bedside of one sick with a mortal ailment, and, pointing out and commending to him a rule of health confirmed in the physician's own experience, should, straightway taking him by the hand, exclaim, 'Come, pluck up heart, you have vigour enough in you yet, develop it, follow me, do as I have done, and you will get well.'"<sup>22</sup> No, be honest, and show yourself not so wholly inconsistent! If Christ is for you only man, entirely man, nothing but man, acknowledge that you cannot advance beyond the position occupied by Strauss, when in his best period he saluted Him with the name of a genius in the domain of religion, perhaps even the greatest genius in this province—that is to say, up to the present time. Speak of Him as a hero in the conflict for the highest interests of humanity; find in Him (so far as you can still decipher, from an uncertain tradition, the traits of His image) your own ideal of self-denial, of love, of filial communion with God, from which, even in your best moments, you feel yourself infinitely far removed. But

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<sup>22</sup> S.G. Jorissen, *Bedenkingen op het gebied der Godgeleerdheid*, etc., iii., p. 75. Very fitly does the writer add: "Unhappy Christendom, if this were Christianity!" [See *Christian Dogmatics*, pp. 498-506.



do not require that, in contradiction alike with experience and history, an absolute perfection should be ascribed to Him; since then, according to your own view, He could not remain purely human. Do not require that, to meet the exigencies of your system, one should assume there was no single stain upon a person of whose deeds and experiences during whole decenniums nothing at all is known to you, and of whose public life even by no means all is known to you, and of that which is known it is far from the case that all is known to you with equal certainty. Cease from the attempt, whether with or without the supposition of an actual miracle, to maintain the perfect sinlessness of the Lord upon historical and philosophical grounds, since the former are incomplete, and the latter perhaps prove more against than for this position—unless, with us, you acknowledge Him, in the honest sense of the term, as *very God manifest in the flesh*.

Once this last position accepted, and we cannot merely regard as amply sufficient the *testimonies* in favour of the unsullied purity of the Lord, which we mentioned at the beginning of the treatment of this doctrine, but can also triumphantly reply to the historical and philosophical *objections* brought against this miracle of the world's history. Let the philosopher now come and say, "The ideal of moral perfection cannot be realised in an individual, but must be realised in the race." You are right, is our answer; but here is more than an individual among, of, and beside, other men; here is the Lord from heaven, who (in the fulness of the time) of grace assumed our

human nature; the fresh layer, engrafted by the heavenly Gardener upon the sickly stem of sinful humanity, that the individuals of the race, who enter into communion with Him, may be made partakers of His Divine life. "Experience testifies," it is continued, "that no man is, or can be, without sin." You are right, is our answer; but the correctness of the deduction as regards the Lord we dispute; for although *also* man, He was at the same time infinitely *more* than man, He who was conceived of the Holy Ghost, the Son of the living God. "Where are the wise and the good," it is further objected, "who have risen to the height of faith and obedience, on which we afterwards see them, by any other path than that of stumbling and falling?" You are right, is again our answer; it belongs without doubt to the peculiarity of an *ordinary human* development, that one cannot advance without stumbling, cannot stand without from time to time falling; but to the peculiarity of a *Divine-human* development, that it displays at every period that degree of perfection, which precisely at this time—in distinction from a later or earlier—it must display. We need not say more. It is self-evident, that just as little reason as experience can, with sufficient authority, advance anything against the idea of such a perfectly unsullied and holy God-man as—this we readily admit—in Christ stands before us entirely unique and incomparable. The question can now simply be, whether perhaps in the history of His life, which we acknowledge as trustworthy, even solitary traits are to be seen, which warrant the assertion, that anything, even the least, was wanting

to the perfection of His obedience, of His love and His purity.

An interpreter of the Modern Theology gives an affirmative answer, and contests the sinlessness of Jesus with weapons derived from the history itself. Now it is the language of Jesus to His mother at twelve years of age, and then the severe word He addressed to her on the occasion of the marriage at Cana; now the driving of the money-changers out of the Temple, and then the withering of the barren fig-tree; now the injury He inflicts upon a herd of two thousand swine, and then the strange manner in which He combats the Pharisees; now His apparent severity towards the Canaanitish mother, and then His saying to the rich young man, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God;"<sup>23</sup> now His prayer in Gethsemane, and then His complaint upon the cross, which is thought more or less irreconcilable with the ideal of sinlessness and perfection which Christendom supposes to be realised in its Redeemer.<sup>24</sup> It is not necessary for our purpose to deal

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<sup>23</sup> [The best MSS., however, read, "Why askest thou me concerning good? there is One that is good." With this change, the objection, such as it is, disappears.]—*Tr.*

<sup>24</sup> We have before our mind in these remarks the once greatly discussed work of F. Pécaut, *Le Christ et la Conscience*, Paris, 1859, which (especially p. 228, *sqq.*) has developed with unmistakable talent these and other objections against the sinlessness of the Lord. It is not here the place to enter into a formal criticism of that remarkable book. We may be permitted, however, to express the conviction that *the book of Pécaut is, in our opinion, the perfectly legitimate outcome, though far from the last outcome, of the principles of the Modern Theology; and that it can be victoriously*

singly with each of these objections, and expressly to bring to the test the more or less successful manner in which they have been replied to by the Apologetes. But one observation of a more general character we cannot refrain from. *In the defence also of the Lord against such objections, one does actual injustice, and even runs the risk of losing one's cause, if one regards Him wholly and solely as the Son of man.* We at least frankly acknowledge our inability, from no higher standpoint than this, entirely to reduce to silence the opponent, who judges Him exclusively by a human standard, and applies to the Gospel history the notions of morality ordinarily current, when he accuses the prophet of Nazareth here of rudeness, there of fickleness, and there again of asperity. What is more, if Jesus is not really the Son of the living God, neither is He a sinless man; for He has in that case boasted far too highly of Himself, and, judging from the Gospel, made Himself guilty of exaggeration and untruthfulness. But how entirely different

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*refuted only by one who, in standpoint and principles, differs from this last.* He, on the other hand, who shares these, and nevertheless feels himself impelled to take up the controversy against Pécaut, will perhaps find it possible to reply more or less satisfactorily to some of his objections, and to afford an argument for the sinlessness which possesses the value of an *argumentatio à tutiori*; but he will not be in a position to substitute for that view another which really satisfies the faith, the intellect, and the conscience of the Christian. Only he is in a position victoriously to repel every philosophical or historical assault upon the sinlessness of the Lord, who with Paul and John believes in His true Godhead. Either God-man, or not sinless; we know no third position. *Either back to the Gospel faith in the superhuman nature of Christ, or forward to the standpoint of Pécaut, and—presently also further than this.*

becomes the position of the controversy, when we acknowledge Him as the One, as whom a Peter, a Paul, a John regarded Him! Only His words and deeds must not be judged of in accordance with some handbook or system of morals, but in the light of His *Divine-human personality*. I have, therefore, not to defend the destruction of the swine at Gadara with the observation that the flesh of the drowned animals was not altogether lost; but simply to ask, Was it not equally permissible to the incarnate Son of God to allow a herd of irrational animals to be drowned, in order that a human being might be delivered, as it is to Omnipotence, by a destructive tempest, to purify the infected atmosphere? In connection with the withering of the fig-tree, I have not expressly to show that the Lord was by no means embittered against an innocent plant; but merely to raise the question, whether the Word, by whom all things were made, had in His incarnation lost the right of making a part of His own creation a foretoken of approaching judgment upon a guilty nation. I have not to defend the Lord, in the cleansing of the Temple, against the charge of excessive zeal, by an appeal to Phineas and other zealots; but ask in my turn of the doubter, with what right he disputes the competency of the Lord of the Temple to come in such a manner to His Temple. And if, after all this, any one replies to me that on such a view of things the example also of the Lord can no longer be presented for us to follow, since He is in this way more or less raised above the claims of justice and morality, before which every *human being* must surely

bow; I answer, finally, that the following of the *God-man*, which is demanded of His disciples, by no means consists in the *imitation* of that which He did—any more than the following of God consists in the mimicking of the works of Creation—but only in the cultivation of the same mind and feelings, by which we *as men* accomplish our task in a like manner and a like spirit to that in which He as *God-man* fulfilled His life-long work on earth.

It will surely not be thought that the moral purity of the Lord, which we have hitherto treated of, loses its highest value when it is brought into direct connection with His Divine-human nature. While a sinless man, born of sinful men, would in the deeper meaning of the question be for us an insoluble enigma, and stand before us not as an attractive model, but as a silent Sphinx, the spotlessly pure and morally perfect God-man is the object of our deepest adoration. Precisely when in Christ we behold the God-man, do we feel on the *one* hand that His temptation on earth must have been infinitely more severe, His conflict against sin infinitely more fierce, than that of any other son of Adam. For it lies in the nature of the case that with the very possession of the highest gifts and powers is united the severest temptation to their arbitrary use, and that in the moral domain, too, the highest mountains border on the deepest abysses. But who shall conceive what it must have been to be invested with Divine omnipotence, and never to apply that power to His own advantage, to His own deliverance? with Divine knowledge

to sound the deepest depths of hearts, and yet never to relax in the exercise of unlimited benevolence; with Divine holiness to hate the least semblance of sin, and yet with untiring love to bear upon His holy heart the cause even of the most guilty sinner; yea, to name only *one* fact, in which we may regard this whole life as concentrating itself, to feel oneself the Son of God, and—then not to come down from the cross, notwithstanding all the mockery and challenges of hell! If, on the ground of Scripture, we believe in a personal activity of the kingdom of darkness in opposition to God's Holy One, it can scarcely be doubted that the Father of Lies, who had already with so much cunning ensnared the first Adam, directed yet more deadly arrows against the breast of the second Adam, the Lord from heaven. The Gospel actually gives us deeply significant hints, to the effect that the whole public life of Jesus may be called one period of constantly returning temptation;<sup>25</sup> and how much He who knew not only man and the Father, but also Himself, as no one else could, considered watching and conflict necessary in opposition thereto, is evident—pardon the expression, we know no better one—from the sacred impatience and energy with which He repels many a temptation as perilous, in its innermost core Satanic.<sup>26</sup> But also, on the *other* hand, there now shines forth before our eyes the Divine perfection of the Lord in so much the fairer lustre, since, however supernatural in its origin, it was displayed in a purely human manner.

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<sup>25</sup> Luke iv. 13; John xiv. 30; and other places.

<sup>26</sup> See, *e.g.*, Matt. xvi. 22, 23.



Divine is the power by which He calls forth life in the kingdom of nature and of grace ; but He manifests this power in a truly human dependence on God His Father. Divine is the knowledge by which He fathoms that which is hidden and that which is future ; but in a truly human manner does He display this, in showing that in this state of humiliation He does not at once and at all times perceive all things. Divine is the holiness with which He recognises, combats, and overcomes the Prince of this world ; but it stands before us as a purely human obedience, which in the fire of the severest temptation is developed to the highest degree. Divine is the love with which He bears and embraces all ; but it presents itself to us as a purely human friendship ; it pours forth its grief in purely human tears of sorrow ; it affords us the spectacle of the highest perfection of God in the pure garb of the highest human virtue. Thus the earthly manifestation of the Son of God bears the stamp of a higher heavenly harmony. One feels it, even without fuller explanation, that the oft-employed word *Sinlessness* is far too weak in any degree worthily to depict such an excellence. One must speak boldly of perfection, of Divine-human holiness even, made manifest in the most bitter trials. While the noblest of our race bear for the more deeply penetrating eye the visible scars of the wounds they have received in the conflict of obedience, the Lord brings forth from every scene of conflict no other memorial than an ever fairer wreath of victory. No wonder, indeed, that even they who contradict the most essential truths of the Christian revelation,

can scarcely satisfy themselves in the extolling of His person and character. "To what a height," exclaims one of them,<sup>27</sup> "does the character of Jesus Christ tower above the most exalted and yet ever imperfect types of antiquity! What human being ever knew how to present a more manly opposition to evil? Who endured, better than He, weariness and contradiction? Where was such a development of moral strength united with less of harshness? Has any one ever appeared, who could make himself heard with such kingly authority? And yet none was ever meek and lowly and good-natured as He. What inner sympathy at the sight of the misery and spiritual distress of His brethren! and yet, while His face is bedewed with tears, it continues radiant with an untroubled peace. In spirit He dwells in the house of His heavenly Father; not for a moment does He lose sight of the invisible world, and at the same time He shows a moral and practical sense equalled by no son of the dust. Which must we most admire, the bloom of princely greatness shed over His person, or the inimitable simplicity which His whole self-manifestation breathes? Pascal had seen it, this heavenly form, when he wrote thus, in a manner worthy of the object: 'Jesus Christ was lowly and patient, holy, holy, holy before God, terrible to the devils, without any sin whatever. In what great splendour and what wondrous beauty has He appeared for the eye of the spirit which is opened for wisdom! In order to shine forth in all the

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<sup>27</sup> Pécaut, as above, pp. 245—247.

princely lustre of His holiness, it was not needful that He should appear as king, but yet He has come in all the glory of His order.' He is Master of all, because He is really their brother. His moral life is wholly penetrated with God; He presents to me virtue under the form of love and obedience. On our part we do more than esteem Him, we render Him the tribute of our love." Admirably spoken, well-meaning sceptic! Only, how is it possible not to feel that he who really comes so far, must necessarily advance one step farther; and that it is impossible any longer to see in Jesus the Ideal of humanity, if in opposition to His own declarations one must regard Him as nothing more than man?

To this last, however, we shall return in the development of the third proposition. At present we take leave of the second, with the observation that, according to the express teaching of the New Testament, the spotless purity and holiness of the Lord, not less than His true humanity,<sup>28</sup> stand in direct connection with the whole work of redemption. Christ is made unto us of God, according to the words of the Apostle,<sup>29</sup> wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; but neither the one nor the other could He be for sinners, if His Divine-human life were sullied with even the slightest blemish. Not our *wisdom*; for where the heart is impure, there also the eye of the understanding is obscured, so that it

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<sup>28</sup> See the first proposition.

<sup>29</sup> 1 Cor. i. 30. Not to enlarge further on this point here, we refer the reader to the before-mentioned work of Ullmann, *fourth* division.

no longer beholds unveiled the heavenly truth, and a fallen son of Adam could not possibly be in himself the highest revelation of the Godhead, the visible radiance of God's spotless perfection. Not our *righteousness*; for we should be wanting in all security that He had surrendered Himself to death out of pure love to men, and out of perfect obedience to the Father, if there existed even the smallest ground for doubting the moral purity of His will and work. Himself sinful, He must have died on account of His own sin, and could not possibly present to the Father the offering of a perfect obedience. Child of wrath, even by a single act of transgression, He could never by His blood deliver sinners from the wrath to come. Not our *sanctification*; for what spiritual power of life could proceed from an imperfect Head of the Church to equally imperfect members? and how could one heartily and unconditionally surrender oneself to Him, whom one could not without reserve admire, trust, love, yea, whom one might perhaps sooner or later be able to distance? And our perfect *redemption* from the consequences of sin—begun even in this life, advanced by death, and for ever completed in heaven,—how could it be conferred upon us by a Mediator who Himself only very imperfectly accomplished the Father's will, and, in reality, required a sacrifice for His own sins?

But now that, on the contrary, the Lord has really to the end combated and vanquished the power of evil, to which He was His life long exposed, and has thus left the world as pure as when He entered it, we can with the most perfect justice revere Him as the one and all-

sufficient Saviour. His word we can perfectly trust; for a pure mouth can speak nothing but truth, and even that which in His teaching He adopts from others is by that very act confirmed and sealed. His sacrifice we can look upon as perfectly sufficient, and at all times confide in His intercession; for Jesus Christ is the Righteous One, and His blood that of a Lamb without blemish and without spot. In His communion we may expect not only to be improved, but in truth to be renewed and sanctified; for in Him is no sin, and He was manifested that He might take away sins. Yea, we cannot be surprised to hear of Him, that He shall judge the world; for He is altogether free from the sins of that world, which He has Himself borne in His own body. Can we ever sufficiently thank God, who has given us a perfect Saviour and Lord in His Son? The more carefully does it behove us to be on our guard against being deprived at any price of faith in His perfect purity; but also against ever otherwise presenting, proving, or defending it, than in the manner and with the weapons which the Gospel itself affords to us. And this leads us naturally to the *third* proposition.

III. *While appearing in such a true and holy humanity, the Lord continues perfectly to partake of the Divine nature which He before possessed, and is clearly conscious thereof in all His thinking, speaking, and acting.*

We have already seen that the incarnation of the Logos was not conceivable without the limitation of the *use* of His Divine powers. We have now, in order to obviate all

misunderstanding, to lay so much the greater stress upon the equally indisputable truth, that the *possession* of these characteristics remains the unalterable property of the *Son*, even in the midst of the deepest humiliation. Not His nature, but His condition, was changed by the coming into the world. A Divine *Person* assumes the human *nature* in voluntary obedience, and the consequence of this matchless union is the arising and appearing of a Divine-human personality.

We meet with the Lord, during the days of His flesh, in different periods and conditions, but of these there is no single one in which He ceases to be the Son of the Father's good-pleasure. He is and remains so, when as infant He slumbers on the mother's breast; when as child He grows in wisdom and knowledge; when as youth He prepares for the great work of His life; when as man He publishes the Gospel of the kingdom; when as a captive He appears before His judges; when as the crucified One He must breathe out His last breath amidst the most terrible sufferings. Around Him and for Him all is changed, so soon as the life of humiliation passes over into that of glorification; but He Himself stands in no other relation to the Father, whether He suffers death or vanquishes death; and as He once appeared in the world as God's only begotten and beloved One, so does He leave the world in the same character, to return to the most immediate communion with the Father, from whom He was here below never, not even for a moment, separated. Divine-human, in a word, is thus His birth, His suffering, His death, His glorification.

That the *consciousness* of this union must be clearly distinguished from the *fact* itself, lies in the nature of the case, and has already been observed by us before. Here we can only inquire as to *the manner* how, and *the means* by which this consciousness gradually unfolded itself in the God-man. On this question the Gospel preserves silence; but certainly there is no ground for the opinion that an outward revelation, *e.g.*, at the baptism on the bank of the Jordan, must first *proclaim* to the Lord in what an entirely unique relation He stood to God His Father. He felt immediately in Himself, and knew of Himself, that He, who here wore the garb of humiliation, was the same who had glory with the Father before the world was; that He who here not only received, but had need of, the ministrations and strengthening of the angels, as Lord of the heavenly host had whole legions placed unreservedly at His disposal. As in the youth, the more mind and body attain to maturity, the more is there developed the sense of what he as man is, and can do, and purposes; so must Christ in the course of years have grown, not only in wisdom and knowledge, but also in the clear consciousness of that which He *was* and must do. On His coming forth as a public teacher, we accordingly see this consciousness already so perfectly developed, that from the beginning to the end of His public life it expresses itself with equal certainty and clearness. Will it be necessary to collect from the Gospels the proofs for this assertion? But for whom, that contemplates Him in all His speaking and acting, do they not rise naturally before the mind? If it be true that



the most exalted testimonies of the Lord concerning Himself are found in the fourth Gospel, it has already been shown that He declares not less great and Divine things with regard to Himself in the first three. Even when, not actually speaking of His heavenly descent, He speaks of Himself simply as the Son of man, He yet feels and shows Himself the Son of God, as no one else; and those who are offended at His employing this appellation with regard to Himself He corrects by an appeal, now to Scripture, now to the works which He wrought in the Father's name, now to the testimony He has received of the Father.<sup>30</sup> As such He declares that He does in all things the will of the Father; that He must be honoured, even as also the Father; that He has received a commandment from the Father, and speaks that which He has heard and seen with the Father. As such He forgives sins, and avails Himself of His power to lay down His life and presently to take it again. Yea, when the night of suffering descends upon Him, this consciousness is not obscured, but remains unchangeable for Him, even in Gethsemane and on Calvary; and the Risen One also shows that He stands to His God and Father in a relation entirely different from that of His disciples.<sup>31</sup>

If we only hold fast to this distinction on the ground of His own word, many an objection which has been often raised finds its simple refutation. It has been asked, whether there must be ascribed to the Lord only one single *consciousness*, or indeed a double one, namely, a

<sup>30</sup> Comp., *e.g.*, John ch. v. and x., and other places.

<sup>31</sup> John xx. 17.

Divine and a human; simply one, or a twofold *will*, namely, one according to His human, and another according to His Divine nature. Just as well might one have asked whether His intellect, His feeling, His judgment, must be regarded as merely one, or as twofold. The Divine and the human do not here stand *externally side by side*, but *in inner unity* the one with the other; and all that the Lord thinks, and speaks, and performs upon earth, is thus *just as little merely human as exclusively Divine*,<sup>32</sup> but *perfectly Divine-human*. It is the same Divine-human consciousness which expresses itself when He says, "Before Abraham was, I am," as when He acknowledges, "of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." It is the same Divine-human will which here pours forth the plaint, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me," and there prays, "Father, glorify Thy Son." It is the same personality, in a word, which now sighs, now rejoices; now combats, now overcomes; now declares, "I and the Father are one," and now, "The Father is greater than I." That

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<sup>32</sup> Very justly does Lange say, *Evang. Dogm.*, p. 741, "For the extreme Rationalists Jesus is simply the Man precisely in whom the possibility that man should become one with God is realised. For the extreme supra-naturalists the Lord Jesus is simply God, absolute Omnipotence, appearing in the midst of time, neither as Divine Omnipotence conditioned by the other (Divine) attributes, nor as the Son of God conditioned by the Father, nor as the Son of man conditioned by the Logos, nor as historical man conditioned by historical duty and obligation." The true conception is born simply of the resolving of the two extreme members of the opposition into a higher unity.

sometimes the human presents itself in greater prominence than the Divine, and sometimes the Divine than the human, need not, and ought not to be denied. But as separate they never appeared, and that it is in one place exclusively the Son of God, in another exclusively the Son of man, who speaks, or acts, or suffers, is one of those arbitrary assumptions above which a believing-scientific view of the Lord's person and work must henceforth entirely rise. Nowhere does the Lord, in His utterances with regard to Himself, suggest even the slightest opposition between His human and His Divine nature; nowhere do we discover a trace of the supposed fact, that as God He knows, or wills, or does the very opposite of that which as man He perceives, or desires, or performs.<sup>33</sup> On the contrary, as our human personality is brought about by the union of body and soul, originally distinct the one from the other, so is the Divine-human personality the necessary result of a union

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<sup>33</sup> Thomasius, *Dogm.*, ii. p. 23. "Both series of utterances refer to the same *subject*, the same *I*—and that not in such wise as though the same were thought of at one time as human, at another as Divine, or as Divine *and* human, but it is one and the same *I* which is conscious of the pre-mundane existence with God, and of the human existence in the world as His condition; the deepest oppositions there converge in one, they appear as different phases, expressions, or activities of *one* and the same personality. Nowhere a trace of the twofold nature (*Duplicität*) of the consciousness, and just as little of a double series of acts running side by side, of which the one had their principle in the Divine, the other in the human in Him; but there is absolutely one single consciousness, one Divine-human life, one Theanthropic personality, the incarnate Logos."

of Divinity and humanity, in connection with which, in the consciousness of the God-man, all the points, so to speak, flow together and mutually cover each other. Thus He is at the same time Lord and servant, our Creator and our brother, King and bondsman, lion and lamb, omnipotent and powerless, glorious and wretched, the Prince of life and a child of death, the Lord of glory and the Man of sorrows. And all this is as little self-contradictory as that man, according as he is looked at from his bodily or his spiritual side, is at the same time a child of the dust and a citizen of heaven, a mortal and an immortal being, a little higher than the animals, and a little lower than the angels. Yea, precisely this is at once the difficult task and the highest boast of faith, that it has to see in Christ, even in His deepest humiliation, never simply the man, but at the same time also the Son of God; and again in the same Christ, in His glorious exaltation, not merely the sharer of the Divine nature, but also the man. He who, as the matter thus stands, is offended at the name of *God-man*, shows that he does not in the least degree comprehend the revealed mystery of the personality of our Lord.

Will it be necessary formally to prove the importance of the proposition thus far considered? Its importance is self-evident, so soon as it is seen to be *truth*; since, if it is that, every view of the Lord's person and work which is in conflict therewith is seen to be necessarily one-sided or false. But it is so, not less for another reason, namely, that more than one important conclusion may be deduced from it—a conclusion of high significance

for all time as regards the due contemplating and estimating of the Lord's earthly self-manifestation.

*If the Son of man was, and was conscious of being, at the same time the Son of the living God ; then we see that which was apparently contradictory in Him most perfectly united, and the most surprising opposition resolved into glorious harmony.* Will you have an illustration of the extent to which this union proceeds ? We know not how to give it better than in the words of a renowned Church Father :<sup>34</sup> "What is more glorious than to see Him in fashion as a man, who is the Creator of men ? He who in eternity is in the bosom of the Father, is conceived in the body of an earthly mother. He who from all eternity was born of the Father without a mother, is in time born of a mother without a father. He who clothes the earth with herbs and trees, adorns the heavens with stars, fills the sea with living creatures, lies wrapt in swaddling clothes. He whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, is enclosed in a narrow crib, and nourishes Himself at the breast of His mother. He whose wisdom is without beginning and without end, grows in wisdom ; whose eternity knows no increase nor decrease, grows in age ; He who is the source of all grace, grows in grace ; He whom the creature adores, before whom every knee shall bow, is subject to His parents. He is baptised, the Lord by a servant, God by a man, the King by a subject. He to whom the angels minister, is tempted of the devil. He who is bread,

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<sup>34</sup> Anselm.

experiences hunger; who is the fountain, experiences thirst; who is the way, is weary. The glory allows itself to be mocked, the majesty to be humbled, the life surrenders itself to death." For him who denies either the eternal Godhead or the true humanity of the Lord, such antitheses are nothing but unmeaning sounds, oratorical figures, an unwarranted transferring to the one domain of that which originally belongs to another. But for him who believingly acknowledges both parts of the great mystery, precisely such antitheses, which might be multiplied almost without limit, serve vividly to set forth the manifold fulness and the glory of the revelation of salvation in Christ, and are for him a new proof of the justice with which a sacred poet once sang the praises of a God "who dwelleth on high, who humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth." Have not the Lord's Apostles themselves preceded us in the utterance of oppositions like the above, which moreover were not invented by human ingenuity, but were given by God Himself? What else does it mean, when Peter addresses to the Jews at Jerusalem the words, "*The Prince of Life have ye killed*"?<sup>35</sup> when Paul writes, "Had they known (the wisdom of God), they would not have *crucified the Lord of Glory*"?<sup>36</sup> when John describes the *Lamb* as it had been slain, as standing in heaven; and hears the song of praise of the redeemed sung to the Lord as the slain Lamb?<sup>37</sup> So long only as it is never forgotten that such appa-

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<sup>35</sup> Acts iii. 15.<sup>36</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 8.<sup>37</sup> Rev. v.

rently lowering conditions and necessities are never ascribed to the Logos *per se*, but to the Logos in taking upon Him human nature, who now, as incarnate in human flesh, lies in the manger, grows up, eats, drinks, dies, do we know nothing to prevent our in such wise asserting that which is apparently contradictory with regard to this unique God-man, for whom and in whom it is no longer irreconcilable contradiction.

*If the Son of man was, and was conscious of being, at the same time the Son of the living God; then all the Divine and all the human properties, in most intimate union, must be equally ascribed to His whole person.* We by no means assert, with the old Lútheran Church, that the human nature of Christ has transferred its properties to the Divine, or conversely, His Divine nature to the human. It seems to us that this opinion, in its consistent development, can only lead to the heresy of Eutychianism, and it has therefore with justice been more than once emphatically opposed by the Reformed Church. "As the Divine nature hath always remained uncreated, and without beginning of days, without end of life, and filleth heaven and earth; so the human nature hath not lost its properties, but hath remained a creature, having had a beginning of days and a finite nature, and retaineth all that belongeth to a true body."<sup>38</sup> But we must not on that account overlook the fact that the same Christ simultaneously possesses and reconciles in Himself both kinds of properties; so that, while the human nature indeed

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<sup>38</sup> *Neth. Confess., Art. xix.;* comp. *Heid. Cat., Ans. 48.*



has not become the Divine—any more than the Divine is absorbed in the human—yet both natures have communicated all their properties to one and the same *person*. To speak in the words of the great Reformer: “We assert that the Godhead was in such wise connected with, and united to, the humanity, that each of the natures retained its definite character, and yet out of the two *one* Christ exists.”<sup>39</sup> This union is so essential, that never in Christ does the man alone think, or speak, or act, while the Godhead is inactive; nor, on the contrary, is the Godhead presented as acting, while the humanity does not act. But at the same time so inseparable, that we may confidently regard the one nature as a sharer of that which from the nature of the case can be done or endured only by the other. God in Himself can just as little suffer and sorrow, as sleep and die. But now that God has become incarnate in Christ, and the Lord in His humanity suffers and mourns and complains, it cannot but be that the Divine nature in Him should also personally and actively share in all this. And, conversely, where the God-man overcomes death, and ascends the throne of the world, there—by virtue of the law of innermost community of life—must also the human nature in Him be raised and exalted to the honour and dignity of the Divine. Thus—but we shrink from proceeding further, and becoming involved in the thorn-bushes of doctrinal disputes, in connection with which we more than ever feel the limitation of our knowledge.

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<sup>39</sup> Calv., *Inst.*, ii. 14. 1.

We think in time of the words of Melancthon, "This is to know Christ, to know the benefits of His grace, and not, as others say, to search so very deeply into His natures, and the manner of His incarnation." This little, however, we consider we ought not to withhold, because it concerns questions which naturally arise in every thoughtful mind, while the answer belongs to no small extent to the right conception and appreciation of the thrice blessed Person of the Redeemer, as will soon further become apparent.

*If the Son of man was, and was conscious of being, at the same time the Son of the living God; then also, in the contemplating of His manifestation on earth, all such conceptions and questions are to be avoided, as would be suitable only in the case of His being nothing more than the sharer of our nature.* Not seldom has the reproach been brought, and not always unmerited, against the defenders of the orthodox confession, that in treating of the deep things of God they have lost sight of the rule, "to be wise unto soberness."<sup>40</sup> But may it not be recalled to mind, on the other hand, that often, in the contemplation of the Lord's earthly life, points are raised and notes are struck, in connection with which it seems to be entirely forgotten that He was not merely true man, but *God-man* in all the force of the word?—Here one gives the reins to the imagination in connection with the Lord's childhood and youth, as to all that may have passed in His soul during the days of preparation and development, con-

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<sup>40</sup> Rom. xii. 3, according to the Dutch version.

cerning the fair expectations and dreams of His earlier years. Is it not as though men would be wiser than Scripture, in which a veil is cast over a period of eighteen years, a veil that even remains wholly untouched in most of the Apocryphal Gospels; and would it be possible to become so greatly absorbed in questions of such nature, if reverence for the *Son of God* always kept equal pace with curiosity as to that which befel the *Son of man*?—There another speaks of a *plan* which the Redeemer of the world formed for Himself, in the sense that, after long hesitation, and with more or less of modification of views formerly cherished by Him, He had decided on a line of action, just as philosophers and founders of a new religion among other nations had struck out a path for themselves. Is such a conception in harmony with the Divine greatness of Him who in the fulness of time appeared to realise that which His own Spirit had ages before spoken by the mouth of the prophets?—Elsewhere a third gratifies himself and others with a view of the Saviour in prayer and thanksgiving, in which He is presented as almost entirely on a level with the most distinguished saints of old, so far as the *nature* and *character* of His secret intercourse with God is concerned; but in connection with which it is not sufficiently considered, that He, who received and asked everything of the Father, yet ever was and remained the Lord, who could say without exaggeration, “Father, all mine is Thine, and Thine is mine.”—And now again, not a few in the congregation are shocked, when they hear questions raised, even in the pulpit, of which they have—out of

reverence for the superhuman greatness of the Lord,—never yet thought, or at least never thought without reverential shrinking, *e.g.*, “Why at least did the Saviour of the world remain His whole life *unmarried*?” Whether the question was answered by the conjecture that, among all the daughters of Israel, there was no single one great enough to fill a heart like His, or with the remark that He renounced this domestic joy also, in order to consecrate Himself more unreservedly to His high vocation; or—for this also has been done—the key to the enigma is sought in the earlier circumstances of His life, or in His presentiment of what would probably be an early death: what, *we* ask, can entitle one to raise such questions as these, if, at any rate, in accordance with Scripture, one sees in the Lord something infinitely more than man? The unwillingness and aversion manifested even by comparatively frivolous and worldly-minded persons in relation to investigations of this nature—we could almost term it the expression of a natural sense of modesty or of a Christian instinct—is wholly justifiable. Shall men oppose with all their might the interpretation of the ancient record,<sup>41</sup> that heavenly beings formed a marriage union with daughters of men, because they assert the unfitness and unnaturalness of such a thought; and yet shall they not shrink from the presentation, even in thought, of the *God-man* as wedded to a sinful daughter of Adam, and perhaps also from wishing to know why He was not favoured with the blessing of a numerous offspring! A

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<sup>41</sup> Gén. vi. 2.

cry of indignation must arise from every Christian heart and conscience against such a scandalous desecration of the Holy of Holies, and must combine from on all sides to reduce this attack to silence. When will men at last comprehend, after so many ages, that the Apostolic warning against foolish questions,<sup>42</sup> which are unprofitable and vain, is applicable to such-like rationalistic-sentimental reveries, and that the person of the God-man, however truly human, yet on the other hand continues too super-human for men thus to "give that which is holy to the dogs"? Every delineation of His earthly life, which presents it as only somewhat more human than is done by the sacred narratives, would quickly degrade this life to the level of the every-day and common-place, and denies in reality the Divine greatness and glory of that life, which it perhaps still confesses with the lips. In this case, also, the striving after too great historical and biographical completeness has an extremely dangerous side, and the Evangelists themselves afford us the unsurpassed model of a becoming, holy *sobriety*.

Rather does the opposite of the perversity we have just combated become us. *If the Son of Man was, and was conscious of being, at the same time the Son of the living God; then, also in His Divine-human nature and appearing, is He to be worshipped by us.* It is undoubtedly the high prerogative of the Christian not to stop short at the Son of God; but, as He Himself has taught us, by Him and in His name to go to the Father. When, moreover, we

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<sup>42</sup> Titus iii. 9.

worship God in the glory of His threefold nature, then already the glorification of the Son is tacitly associated with that of the Father and the Holy Ghost. But is it not on that account allowed us to direct our humble prayers more immediately to the Son of the Father, and thus to glorify Him as the sharer of the nature and majesty of God? The affirmative answer, which we for our part do not hesitate for a single moment to give to this question, is simply the natural consequence of all that which we have hitherto treated of. If the Godhead and humanity is in reality in Him most intimately united, who shall blame our prayerfully looking up to Him who, possessed of Divine omnipotence, wisdom, and love, can and will hear His people; since—even after His incarnation—the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily? It is indeed worthy of remark, that in the public prayers of the Reformed Church the name of Christ Himself is nowhere directly invoked, but rather is God the Father addressed in the name of the Mediator; and as a rule, witness the Our Father, this is also the best form of prayer for Christians. But to infer from this that the former would conflict with the doctrine of our Church, or, what is more, with that of the Gospel, is in our opinion to make an extremely hazardous deduction. If Christ is very God, as He became true man, then not only may, but must, be rendered to Him, as well as to the Father, the Divine homage of adoration; although always, according to the teaching of the Apostle and the example of the inhabitants of heaven, in such wise that it redounds to the glory of the Father, and ends in the

reverential extolling of the whole Divine Nature. It is thus not alone in His character of glorified Head of the Church, that such homage becomes Him—as men were wont to render honour to Eastern kings on bended knee—but besides and before this, in His character of Son of the living God. He who asserts that such an adoration of Christ, within the bosom of the Evangelical Church, is an equally questionable phenomenon, as is the adoration of Mary within the bosom of the Roman Catholic, overlooks the wide difference between the *human* Mary and the *God-man* Jesus Christ, and only shows that he forms a lower estimate of the Lord than was done by His first friends and Apostles. These did not for a moment hesitate to call upon His name in prayer and thanksgiving. Witness the prayer directed to Him as the Searcher of hearts on the occasion of the first choice made by the Apostles; witness the language of the dying Stephen; the prayer of Paul, caught up into higher spheres; the doxology often consecrated to the *Son* of the Father, in the Apostolic Epistles.<sup>43</sup> Not unacquainted with that which is adduced in favour of another interpretation of these and other places of Scripture, we are nevertheless still of opinion that these must be understood in such wise as perfectly to justify our worship of the Son of God, as this has indeed been rendered without hesitation by believers of every age, and may be termed the natural expression of a deeply felt need of the truly Christian heart. It is certainly deserving of censure, if the adora-

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<sup>43</sup> Acts i. 24; vii. 60; 2 Cor. xii. 8; 2 Tim. iv. 18; 2 Pet. iii. 18; and other places.



tion of the Son takes place *at the expense* of that of the Father, as not seldom has been the case, *e.g.*, among the Moravians and the Swedenborgians. But where, on the other hand, it rises to this last, and satisfactorily resolves itself into this, there it is certainly well pleasing to the Father Himself; since it is the simple manifestation of belief in the Divine dignity of the Son, and a powerful means of refreshing in the communion of the Holy Ghost.

Or was this last demand raised too high? Let this objection be held in suspense until with us you have considered a *fourth* and *last* main proposition.

IV. *The God-man, in His earthly self-manifestation, the highest ideal of manhood, and the highest revelation of the Godhead.*

Who has ever glanced at the first pages of the history of mankind without deeply bewailing that the first father of our race so quickly fell from his high standing? There is no doubt that if Adam had by voluntary choice continued to stand, and had thus passed out of the condition of unsullied innocence into that of proved holiness, the ideal of humanity would have been realised in him. But his fall becomes the fall of his posterity, and he, who was first created after the image of God, receives a son after his own image. Does it not seem as though it must become again and again apparent, that the realisation of the ideal of humanity is impossible, so long as God Himself has not entered into an extraordinary and personal union with our fallen race? The most distinguished heroes of faith and virtue arise; but they

continue infinitely below the idea of the perfect Man, which was present to the mind of the Creator. Even the most venerable countenance bears the traces of natural weakness and sin; even the most devout must constantly mingle the tone of humiliation with the tone of thankfulness. And why do we speak of the most devout? These were only the rare exceptions to a universal and fatal rule; and the earth was "filled with violence," as well after as before the days of the flood. A deep seriousness underlies the jest of the heathen philosopher, when he kindled his lantern at midday, in order to seek for men. Poor Diogenes, *men*, that fully deserve this name, you could not find around you; because the perfect *Man*, the Restorer of our race, had not yet appeared upon earth. The ideal of the true Sage, as the Greeks depicted him, was just as little perfect, as it was to be considered attainable. Here, one found his greatness in a superiority to the sufferings of earth, in connection with which the voice of nature is stifled; there, the highest happiness of man was sought in sensual enjoyment. Even in a Socrates the traces of a true moral greatness are associated with those of the most melancholy littleness; and Plato looks in vain for the coming of a perfectly wise and righteous one. Unsurpassed in beauty is the image of the Servant of the Lord depicted by Isaiah; but where is the greatest of the prophets, who must not hesitate to recognise himself in it? Even John the Baptist, the greatest of all who are born of women, what is he more than a reformer of the nation, like Elijah—powerful like the old Tishbite,

but at the same time sullied with the weakness of this his illustrious predecessor? Then He appears, who is the end of the law, and also the desire, unconsciously to themselves, of all nations; not crying, nor lifting up, nor causing His voice to be heard in the street. Scarcely three years does He go about through the land doing good; and after He has withdrawn from the earth the memorials of His life are written by a few unpractised writers, unacquainted with the ideals of antiquity, standing far, very far, beneath the object of their reverential homage. And yet, it is impossible to collect the traits of His image here scattered, without the conviction pressing itself upon us with irresistible force: here the ideal of humanity is attained. The more attentively we contemplate the image of Jesus of Nazareth, the more deeply do we feel that the *idea* of man in his personal communion with God—and this it is which first really makes man to be *man*—is in Him perfectly realised. The Father is, in the fullest sense of the word, the centre of all His thinking, feeling, willing, and acting; His breathing is in the fear of the Lord,<sup>44</sup> His life a life-long unbroken personal communion with God. And precisely because—forgive me the expression—God is as it were the centre of gravity of His inner life, do all the powers and faculties of body and soul with Him stand in most perfect equipoise. His human development is free from all one-sidedness, even in temperament and character; He is always *Himself* and *the same*, because He is

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<sup>44</sup> [A reference to the Hebrew of Isaiah xi. 3.]—*Tr.*

every moment God's. Here is found not the slightest discrepancy between outward and inward life, between reason and conscience, between affection and vocation, between the *will*, the *can*, and the *must*. The highest destination of man, the glorifying of God on the earth, is the joy and delight of His soul. There is an unbroken unity in His life and endeavour, which stands forth in the sharper contrast as compared with the conflict and discord around Him. The nation among whom, and the time at which He appears, give to His personality a peculiar colouring, but without enclosing it within narrowing limits. The spirit which He manifests is not exclusively Jewish, and still less Grecian, but the higher unity of the two, the true *human* spirit, as God originally willed this. Powers and faculties, which elsewhere are found separately, and to the exclusion the one of the other, are in Him simultaneously present; and, as the Apostle says that in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead, so may we add, in Him dwelleth all the fulness of humanity bodily. He is no poet, but a world of poesy slumbers in His beauteous parables; no military hero, but the conflict of His life is a moral warfare and triumphal procession; no philosopher, but wisdom, speaking out of its abundance, discloses its fairest oracles by His mouth. Where is the thought too lofty for Him to utter? and again, where is the sphere of life which He thought too common or unclean for Him expressly to concern Himself with it? It is impossible alike to say greater things of Himself and to be more lowly of heart. His self-denial is just as little overwrought as forced;

His love, raised above all weakness, but also above all variation of fervour; His purity, not like that of the cold marble, but like that of the snow fresh fallen from heaven. His perfect knowledge of man in all his wickedness detracts nothing from His matchless compassion for sinners; neither His remembrance of the past, nor His expectation of the future, ever renders Him one moment unfitted for the task which is incumbent on Him to-day. While He bears on His heart a world with its spiritual need, He at the same time presses a child to His bosom; and while His eye is unceasingly directed to things heavenly, even the smallest duty on earth is for Him precious and sacred. His life on earth is one stately hymn, which ceaselessly rises heavenwards, and runs through all the scales, without being interrupted by a single jarring note. Well indeed might one of the earliest Fathers of the Church already remark,<sup>45</sup> that “not only one, but all the seven gifts of the Spirit in their higher unity had descended upon Him.” He is in a moral aspect the *King* of humanity, upon whose head all the crowns, which God has destined for the firstfruits of His creatures, are as it were blended in one—the true the fairest, the unique Man, in whom ideal and reality no longer stand opposed to each other. Say not, as unbelief does, that we transfer to Him our *own* ideal of perfection, and—as Goethe reproaches Lavater with doing—“rob a thousand birds under heaven of their precious feathers, as though these were not their own

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<sup>45</sup> Justin Martyr : *comp.* Isaiah xi. 2.

rightful possession, only to deck therewith our own bird of paradise." The ideal of the perfect human being is not only *realised* in Christ, but in its full exaltedness was first *born* of the contemplation of this Christ; and it may be shown with certainty that the ideal Christ is not other than the actually historic one. And, once more, *such* a history is to be called the fruit of the excited imagination of certain Galilean fishermen and tax-gatherers!

Only let this one thing never be forgotten, that in Christ the ideal of humanity is realised, *because* in Him *the Son of God became true man*. No, we see in the Lord no proof how far a son of man can advance by his own powers and means; we should just as little assert that He is the one in whom humanity itself, "by the power inherent in it," has overcome sin. The idea of humanity is realised in Christ, because in Him the Logos became incarnate, the Logos after whose image man was originally created, to become conformed to whose likeness he was from the beginning ordained. Only in consequence of the personal union of the Godhead and humanity in Christ is the true Man presented before us. And now it becomes self-evident with what right we hail His appearing as at the same time *the highest revelation of the Godhead* itself. Or *by whom* is this revelation given? Not by one of the wise and pious members of our race, upon whom the Spirit of prophecy has descended; not even by an angel or archangel, but by the Son, who, even while he walks on earth, continues to live in personal communion with heaven; who proclaims, not merely that

which was made known to Him by outward communication from the Father, but who speaks that which He Himself has seen and heard with the Father; who without exaggeration could say that the Father sheweth Him *all things* that He Himself doeth. *How* is this revelation conferred? Not, as in the case of the ancient prophets, by dreams and visions of the night; not even as with Moses, when God talked to His servant face to face; but by the fact that the Father is *in* Christ, as the Son is in the Father, so that not only His word, but His whole person, may be spoken of as a visible and palpable revelation of the Father. God presents Himself to our contemplation in this form, in which He can best be understood and comprehended by men, in the form of a truly human, but Divine-human life. In his incarnate Son, He Himself walks among the children of Adam, and does not merely tell them, but shows them, who He is and what He wills for their salvation. And *what* does this revelation *contain*, of which the earthly manifestation of Christ is the great theatre? Not only, like that of the Old Covenant, a proclamation of God's holy *will*, but a making known of His adorable *nature*, of that property of His being which, seen under the old dispensation only as in a cloud, clearly shines forth to us under the new—His *love*, which has been not without justice termed the kernel and centre of the life of the Godhead. It is more than the thoughts of His *mind* for the redemption of a lost race, it is the treasures of a Divine *heart*, which He reveals to us in Jesus, yea, with all that is His, He communicates to us also *Himself* in the Son of His love. Not



seldom has it been asked, What is the essentially *new* in the Gospel, which justifies us in giving the name of Revelation to the contents of this simple roll? No doubt, that which the Lord declares of God's spiritual nature, of His holiness, of His grace even, was found already more or less clearly indicated in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. Admirable demands of morality, the demand even of forgiving love towards one's foe, this was found, although in a less perfect form, even in heathen philosophers. That, too, which Jesus proclaims as to immortality, resurrection, and eternal judgment, however full and sublime, one can scarcely assert it to be entirely strange and unknown to the Jews of His day. But *this* is that which is, properly speaking, new in the revelation of salvation in Christ, that in Him God became man, in order to make man partaker of the Divine nature; that faith in Him is the only, but also the infallible, way of raising sinners to the lost rank of children of God; that not our love to God is the means of restoring us to His forfeited favour, but that God's anticipating love first came down to us in Christ, to confer upon us through grace forgiveness of sins, and to fill us, by faith in this forgiveness, with new courage and strength for that which He demands of us. *That* the greatest philosopher had not uttered; *that* the prophet most highly privileged had only caught a glimpse of from afar; *that*, to speak in the language of the Apostle, is the mystery which had been silent from the times of the ages, but now has been made manifest. Every attempt to seek the peculiarity of the Gospel elsewhere, than where the Lord Himself and the

Apostles point it out as with their own finger, must inevitably lead to a false estimate of the Christian revelation of salvation, and to the glorifying of human wisdom, as on a level with or above it. On the other hand, with the recognition that *this* is the substance and the crown of the Revelation given in Christ, it is self-evident that no note can be set too high for its praise, and the boundary-line between that which human wisdom could calculate and Divine wisdom could reveal remains, to the glory of the latter, drawn visible to every eye. And if we now ask, in conclusion, *for whom* this revelation is destined, then our right to call it the highest is raised above all doubt. Verily, not like that of the Old Testament, for a single nation, but for absolutely all nations, is it given in Christ. Given in one man, it is suited to all that bears the name of man; and while it answers the highest life-questions for the sinner with irrefragable authority, it is adapted to every sinner in like measure. It may be that an age or nation no longer rises to the height of the Gospel, but the Gospel stands on the level, nay, above the level, of every age, and of every different nation. It is not merely that there exists no reason to *expect* a nearer and more perfect revelation, but, rightly considered, there exists even no possibility of *conceiving of* a higher revelation. Or how can a higher revelation be conceived of than a personal appearing of God in human flesh? And this has been given in Christ, in its nature equally unique and unparalleled as the boundlessness of the ocean, or the lustre of the noonday sun. The Lord on that account naturally directs us simply to the Holy Ghost, who shall

interpret His word, recal it to mind, confirm it, but never alter it; and the Spirit in turn points back unceasingly to the word of Christ. He is and remains the highest Prophet, whose testimony needs not to be succeeded by another, but in whom God has spoken His last word to man; and whose word, precisely because He is the Son, must be unreservedly believed and obeyed. He is the everlasting High Priest, in whom the communion between heaven and earth has been for ever restored, and who by the offering of His perfect obedience reconciles sinful humanity, and represents it before God. He the only King in the domain of truth and of life, whose word for ever finds an echo in the human heart and conscience, and of whom it will never cease to become more and more evident, "every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." Besides the general revelation in conscience, nature, and history, no other can be spoken of, from the Christian standpoint, but the continued and increasing manifestation of Christ's government, and His last appearing in glory.

We cannot quit the subject of the Lord's earthly appearing without having regard to the phenomena and wants of the present day, dwelling yet a moment on that which may be naturally deduced from what has been said, concerning

*The glory of the Christ,*

*The miraculous in His history,*

*The rights of reason in presence of His decisive utterances.*

"Thou art fairer than the sons of men." Is it needful that we should prove our claim to apply this poetic

expression of the Psalmist in our contemplation of the image of Christ? If we take our stand in the two following chapters, first at Christ's deep humiliation, and afterwards at the beginning of His exaltation, then especially will there be occasion for contemplating the all-surpassing glory of His person and nature. But even now, in our indicating the standpoint from which in our opinion His earthly appearing must be more generally regarded, we feel how the most glorious object the earth has ever borne is here passing before our eyes. What a Son of man, who has entered into time, but is related to eternity; even as the Angel of the Apocalypse stood, with his left foot indeed upon the strand, but his right upon the boundless sea! What a personality, simultaneously irradiated with the light of the Old Covenant, which is fulfilled in Him, and of the New, which is brought in by Him! What a wide distance between the importance and effect of His appearing and that of the most renowned men *before* and *after* Him! "All the philosophers," even unbelief has been compelled to confess, "have had no perceptible influence on the morals of the street in which they lived; and Jesus Christ has new-created the world." We are not surprised that even those who will see in this nothing supernatural, yet contemplate in Christ what is probably the culminating point of human perfection, and readily admit that it is extremely difficult to conceive of anything higher, and impossible in the moral-religious domain to rise above Him. But what we especially wish to be observed is, that this homage degenerates into an unintentional mis-

representation, when one sees the greatness of the Lord in all things, except precisely in that one respect in which, above all other respects, the Gospel presents it to us, that in Him *God was manifest in the flesh*. What would it avail, to return to a figure already employed, that in reference to a king's son among rebellious subjects I should celebrate all the admirable qualities in him—the wisdom of his word, the kindliness of his heart, the nobility of his character, the praiseworthiness of his intentions—if I lost sight of *one* point, his princely *rank*? Just as little is justice done to the inner *glory* of the appearing of Christ by those who behold in His image no other than the little imposing proportions of an excellent moralist and example, and even willingly accord to Him the name of the highest *genius* in the sphere of morals and religion. We might perhaps admit this name, if nothing else was hinted at by it than the greatness of the impulse Christ has given to the world, and the absolute impossibility of explaining, in a natural-human way, His appearing and operation. Yes, we also can heartily say, “that which applies with regard to God's decree concerning the world, applies in like measure to the appearing of Christ in the world: O depth!”<sup>46</sup> But the name of *genius* has no meaning with regard to Christ, except as an equivalent for that of *Son of God* in the above-defined sense of the word; and this *supernatural*, *i.e.*, *more than genial*, character of the Lord, we do not suffer ourselves to be deprived of at any price. We are

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<sup>46</sup> Lange, *Evang. Dogm.*, ii. p. 783.

reminded, in order to make the rise of such a religious genius explicable to us, of the peculiarity of the nation among whom He arose, the Israelitish people, the most religious of all the nations of the ancient world; but, we well see, the difficulty is in this way only pushed a stage farther back. Of course it now becomes the question, how precisely this people, in many respects less advantageously situated than other nations, could rise to such a height of religious development; unless it was the bearer of an extraordinary revelation, and all its history one series of extraordinary facts or miracles. The supernaturalistic view of the world, with which the religious life in Israel was inseparably connected, was *either* an arbitrary one, *or* it must have been the result of *facts*, the historic reality of which has been frequently impugned, but never yet disproved. And equally so the appearing of Christ in Israel: it continues to be inexplicable for us, so long as we see in Him nothing higher than a religious genius,<sup>47</sup> and finds its solution only in His own indisputable utterances, touching His superhuman descent and dignity. If we must forego these utterances, perhaps we could not do better than to demand for the Lord the name of a wholly *unique* genius; but how can we do this now, without rejecting His own word?

We know well that *the miraculous in His history* here continues for very many the great stumbling-block; and we do not expect by a single word to be able to terminate a well-known controversy on this point. But it is cer-

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<sup>47</sup> See Ullmann's interesting treatise on *the service of genius*, in the *Theol. Stud. und Kritiken* of 1840, i.

tainly open to us to deduce from all that has been said the conclusion that the doubting of the miraculous is purely ungrounded. We hear it asserted, even in our own day, that a Christ who does no miracles is to be considered much more lovable, more exalted, more worthy of adoration, than the miracle-worker of sacred history; but surely it is not the question what Christ this or that person, *nach Belieben*, calls the most exalted, but what Christ history *proclaims* to us. That the Gospels set before us a wonder-working Christ, and that the Church of all ages has believed on and confessed Him as such, needs no special proof. Were they right in doing so? We, for our part, do not hesitate to defend the Christian belief in miracles, as a consequence of belief in the holy *God-man*. If the Lord was really the One, as whom we have learnt to know Him, then His acts may be miracles for *us*, for Him they were only the highest *nature*. If even the discoveries and occupations of the more cultivated man are incomprehensible for the wilder tribes; if even the man of rational and moral culture is able, *mechanically* and *psychically*, to bring under the material world, how much less for Him in whom the supreme Godhead was united with a pure humanity could the material world prove an insuperable barrier, where He will work *dynamically*! The human spirit is by nature higher than matter, how much more the Divine! The evidence against the possibility of such miracles, derived from daily experience, signifies nothing, so long as the right of the experience *of the present day*, to contradict in a lofty tone that which ages ago was observed *by the*



*experience alike of eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses*, is not better proved than hitherto. And if it is demanded of us that we should prove the *possibility* of such rare phenomena, this possibility is sufficiently guaranteed for our faith—for our *faith*, mind—by the Christian idea of an almighty, wise, and loving Architect of all things, existing not only *in*, but *above*, the world. For this God the laws of nature are no *chains*, with which He has bound Himself, but *threads*, which His hand, so often as He thinks necessary, can alternately contract or loosen. If any one chooses to look down upon such a conception, and to say that the connection between God and the world which we accept as true is “a wholly external one,” we must console ourselves under this charge; and will rather have the name of remaining at a moderately antiquated standpoint than run the risk of destroying all essential distinction between God and the creature, and of regarding the *necessity of nature* as the highest in creation.<sup>48</sup> It is enough for the present to have repeatedly heard from distinguished natural philosophers of our day that the science of nature has yet by no means reached the height at which it would have the right to pronounce in a decisive tone the word *impossible*, the moment that a deviation from the ordinary course of nature presents itself to our eyes. If a miracle is, according to our view, “the suspension—not the violation—of

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<sup>48</sup> Expressed in the ordinary scientific language: we desire to occupy, not the *Deistic*, but the *Theistic* standpoint; yet, with the recognition of the *immanence* of God, not to overlook His *transcendancy*, that we may escape falling into *Pantheism*. [Compare *Christian Dogmatics*, pp. 128 ff., 245.]

a law first established by God," it must not be forgotten that this suspension is only *temporary*; that it takes place in consequence of a wise and almighty *will*; that it is for the accomplishment of an *end* worthy of God; and by virtue of a *law* not less Divine than that ordinarily in operation. It is as though in the realm of nature we saw a rift formed in the clouds with which, as a rule, the whole face of heaven is covered on a gloomy day; so that we now discover behind this veil the pure azure in a *higher* streak of air, which till now had remained concealed from us. What should hinder our believing in a distinction between lower and higher laws of nature, between the ordinary and the extraordinary course of nature, between supernatural and contranatural? Supernatural for us, not for the God-man, may we confidently speak of miracles as being; and explain them by an appeal not only to the law of opposing causes, but above all by an appeal to the will of Him, for whom it was not too wondrous, although the Son of God, to become true man, and for whom it could be just as little impossible as man to maintain His character as Creator and Lord of nature.

We are prepared for the accusation that such a belief betrays the extreme of unscientific character. But this little disturbs or troubles us; since at the close of this chapter it becomes evident to us that *the rights of reason as opposed to the decisive utterances of the Lord* are by no means unlimited and sovereign. Without doubt reason has to investigate the meaning of His word, to test the evidence for the Divinity of His mission, to probe the

coherence and God-worthiness of the revelation of salvation given in Him; and this it will the better accomplish in proportion as it is enlightened by the Holy Spirit.<sup>49</sup> *But if the manifestation of Christ was a manifestation of the God-man on earth, then the individual reason of the sinful man has no right to place its utterances above or on a level with His.* His word is then the truth, not only where He testifies of the Father, but also where He interprets the Scripture, reveals the secrets of the world of spirits, removes the veil from the mystery of the future. For nothing of all this lies beyond the province of religion, in which we must acknowledge Him as Lord and King, and sooner is it possible that our rules of Scripture interpretation, our view with regard to the

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<sup>49</sup> We constantly hear the reproach that, with all our belief on the ground of authority, we in reality occupy *rationalistic* ground; since we also appeal to utterances and testimonies, of which the validity is perceived *by our own reason*. To this wretched sophism, for more it is not, no better answer can be given than in the words of Pascal, ii. 6, 2: "Il faut savoir douter où il faut, assurer où il faut, se soumettre où il faut. La raison, dit Saint Augustin, ne se soumettrait jamais, si elle ne jugeait qu'il y a des occasions où elle doit se soumettre. Il est donc juste qu'elle se soumette, quand elle juge qu'elle doit se soumettre; et qu'elle ne se soumette pas, quand elle juge avec fondement qu'elle ne doit pas le faire, mais il faut prendre garde de ne pas se tromper." So little are we inclined to make any concession as regards this principle, that in our opinion the *credo quamquam*—not *quia*—*mihi absurdum* has yet more right in the Christian domain than the *intelligo ut credam*. The last can only be maintained where no other voice of God to us than the voice of God in us is allowed; in other words, where a supernatural revelation is denied, and one thereby places himself at another than Christian standpoint.

spirit-world, our conception with regard to the consummation of the ages—however acceptable to us—may stand in need of revision, than that the word of the God-man should ultimately be seen to have been no word of truth. Belief on the authority of that word, even when the contents of it are not yet or only partially comprehended, is a demand so little degrading for the Christian, that it is rather the natural consequence of the infinite distance which exists between Him and each one of us. He who has learnt to know the earthly manifestation of the God-man in its heavenly splendour, assuredly esteems as sacred his duty to *know* the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. But if, after all, no other choice were left him than either to accept the apparently incredible on the ground of well-proved testimony, or only to choose to believe that which he perfectly comprehended, would the choice from a Christian standpoint be difficult? Not to make belief reasonable, but to make reason believing—this is the *first* consideration for all who are to testify of this His appearing in the spirit of the Apostles, and who desire to see in it that which these adoringly beheld therein.

## III.

## THE DEEP HUMILIATION.

WE have looked at the earthly manifestation of the Son of God and Son of man in its peculiar character and its all-surpassing dignity. But in what condition do we see Him, who was the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature, ordinarily live and move here below? An Apostle of the Lord answers this question, in reminding us that He made Himself of no reputation, taking upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. "And being found in fashion as a man, *He humbled Himself*, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."<sup>1</sup> But thus we see the way naturally prepared for us more closely to contemplate *the deep humiliation* of God's incarnate Son. To sketch the *image* of this humiliation; to estimate the *value* of this humiliation; to compute the *effect* of this humiliation,—this is the threefold task which awaits us in the present chapter.

It is not easy to sketch the *image* of the Lord's humiliation in such wise that it shall visibly stand forth before our eyes in all its extent. If Jesus was really that which He professed Himself, a humiliation like His

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<sup>1</sup> Phil. ii. 7, 8.

is unfathomably deep. We can thus feel no surprise that the theologians of earlier times distinguished by name different *degrees* or *steps* in this humiliation, in order thus the better eventually to take into view and judge of the peerless whole. We follow their example, and see the Word, which was with God and was God, descend through these different stages to such a depth that His glory for our sensuous eye altogether disappears. Thus Jacob in his dream saw the heavenly messengers, by means of a ladder with different steps, reach the dust of the earth.

The *first* step in the humiliation of our Lord has already been described in part in the last chapter but one. It is the *lowly birth* of the Son of God in human flesh with which the chain of sorrows begins. Assuredly the incarnation of the Logos may be termed a revelation of His glory, not less than the creation of heaven and earth by the life-giving word of His power. But it is the glory of a love which denies itself, in order to become the least of all, where by nature it was the greatest. Regarded entirely in itself, the incarnation is, as we saw before, an act of self-humiliation and self-renunciation in all the force of the word. It would have remained so, even had the God-man been born and grown up under brighter circumstances than ever any son of Adam enjoyed. What is earthly glory for Him who could clothe Himself with light as with a garment! But yet that He appears definitely in the garb, not only of humanity, but of a poor and needy humanity, this renders even greater for the dazzled eye of faith His

first step upon this constantly descending path. The voluntary *act* of the Eternal Logos transports Him into an entirely unique *condition*. Even with His conception of the Holy Ghost, that humiliation begins in secret, to become presently visible to the world, on His birth of the Virgin Mary. Is it not as though, even from the beginning of His life, all must be far removed which could be suggestive of splendour and honour? His virgin-mother cannot become the blessed one among women, without for a time being exposed to the reproach of the most painful suspicion. His foster-father, although sprung from kingly blood, bears the humble name of a carpenter. For Himself the earth is inhospitable, from the first moment when He beholds its light. The manger of the cattle becomes the earliest resting-place for Him whom, according to His Divine nature, the heavens, yea, the heaven of heavens, cannot contain. No festive shout proclaims at Jerusalem that outside, at Bethlehem, the King of the Jews has appeared. There are not wanting indeed unequivocal signs that the Holy One born of Mary is really to be called the Son of the Most High; but every ray of light which breaks through is as it were tempered by a cloud. An angel proclaims His birth, but to shepherds of no repute; a heavenly host celebrates His advent, but in the gloom of night. At the crib itself there appear no heavenly messengers, but only the poor and lowly of earth; and the babe who lies there is in nothing outwardly distinguished from a thousand other children. For us, it is true, who know Him, this lowly birth, far



from giving rise to any kind of difficulty, is in perfect harmony with the spiritual nature of His kingdom. What is more, precisely to the matchless character of the opposition between an infinite God and a helpless Child does the history of the nativity owe that irresistible charm, by which it still ever afresh enchains us after the lapse of so many ages, even as it has afforded to Christian art the inexhaustible material for its fairest creations. But yet from every height to which admiration raises us, the eye returns again and again to the depths to which the God-man humbled Himself, and the more powerfully does this strike us in connection with the natural observation, that He who there lies in swaddling clothes, Himself at that moment possesses absolutely *no consciousness* of that which He unchangeably *is*. The Divine power of life slumbers within Him, only later to become known to Himself.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> He who is not at once at home in this conception may ponder the beautiful words of W. F. Gess, in his *Doctrine of the Person of Christ*, p. 305 of the original work. "In the human soul we must distinguish its essential nature (*Wesenheit*) and its free activity. It was the same essential nature which, in the year 1517, as a praying, searching, working, struggling soul, began the work of the Reformation, as thirty-four years before lay rocked in unconscious slumber. At the time of this slumber there *were present* in it all those mighty forces which were required for the Reformation of the Church, but the soul of the little Martin was conscious neither of these powers nor of itself. Thus in the womb of Mary slumbered unconsciously the same essential nature which thirty-four years later presented itself a spotless offering to the Father. At the time of its slumbering *there was* already in it that indissoluble life, by virtue of which it fulfilled the High-Priestly work (Heb. vii. 16), and that power of one day knowing the Father,

Soon His earthly manifestation reached a *second* step of humiliation. It is *His life under the law, in privation, unrest, and manifold inner and outward sufferings*. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law."<sup>3</sup> Originally as sharer of the nature and majesty of God, the Logos, before His assuming humanity, stood by no means under, but infinitely above, the law given to the deeply dependent creature. Or rather, He was a law unto Himself, and had only to do that which the most ardent love to the Father, with whom He was one, prescribed to Him. The Angels, by whose intervention Moses received the law, stood at His behest; and Israel, to whom the law was given, was the people whom He Himself, as the Angel of the Presence, led. Scarcely, however, has He, who was in the likeness of God, appeared in the form of a servant, when He is at once—always by virtue of His own voluntary choice—bound as such to fulfil all the demands of the law. Looked at from this point of view, His circumcision on the eighth day obtains its significance; that is to say, if we recal to mind that which an Apostle of the Lord declares, that "every man who is circumcised is a debtor to do the whole law."<sup>4</sup> As the Son of God by His incarnation became a partaker of our *nature*, so does the Incarnate One, by the undergoing of the rite of the

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whom none besides knows (Matt. xi. 27), but it knew it not and knew not itself. Yea this unconscious slumbering nature was the same who before, as the Logos, was God with the Father, but it no longer was conscious of this, and no longer was conscious of itself."

<sup>3</sup> Gal. iv. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Gal. v. 3.

Old Covenant, become *ipso facto* a member of the Israelitish people, and as such personally under obligation, even as the least of the sons of Abraham, to respect every requirement of the law. Henceforth His life must be regulated according to this definite *norm* and *form* of obedience, which was ordained and prescribed in the Mosaic law. He, for instance, who was originally Lord of the Sabbath, is now bound to the precise Israelitish observance of the Sabbath; not indeed as it was later modified under the influence of a rigid Pharisaism, but yet as it must be regarded according to the spirit and letter of the ancient record. He, who was originally exalted above all that bears the name of man, is now under the most solemn obligation to honour His foster-father and His mother, and stands to both in the relation first of an unconscious, and afterwards of a conscious dependence. He, the great Son of David, must be able at His first entering upon public life to say no less than His illustrious progenitor, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within my heart."<sup>5</sup> And it is in reality seen that this feeling and this choice ever penetrates Him in increasing measure. Scarcely has He attained the required age of twelve, when He, now "son of the law" in all the force of the word, hastens with His parents towards the temple; and when, eighteen years later, He comes to ask baptism of John, He puts an end to all hesitation with the words, "Suffer it to be so now; for thus *it becometh us* to fulfil all righteousness." Nota-

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<sup>5</sup> Psalm xl. 8.

bly He, no less than John, has before His mind the sacred vocation of every pious Israelite, to answer to the full requirement of the law, and thus to be righteous before God. When with this end in view He undergoes baptism, He enters precisely by this path into the most intimate communion with a sinful humanity, which has need in the highest measure, not only of the *symbol* of purification, but of the *thing* signified thereby. Yea, it is as though He would as far as possible efface every boundary-line which originally existed between Him and the members of the favoured race, of the chosen people. He may be reproached with not following the traditions of the elders; but it cannot possibly be shown that He loses sight of either the greatest or least requirements of the law itself. On the contrary, there is no single universally recognised religious duty above the obligation of which He esteems Himself raised. In common with all who seek instruction and edification, He is wont on every Sabbath day to enter into the synagogue. He regards Himself, as a rule, as under obligation to observe the high festivals at Jerusalem; and even the positive certainty of His approaching sufferings and death cannot restrain Him from going up to the capital, when the feast of unleavened bread draws nigh. The great principle, in a word, which He uttered in His sermon on the mount, "I am not come to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil them," reveals the course of action He has marked out, not only for His disciples, but also for Himself. And only by that death, in which He perfectly fulfils the righteousness of the law, is He released

from its demands, under which He had placed Himself, henceforth in perfect freedom and blessedness to live to God.

The earthly life of the Lord, however, is, more than that of any one else, full of self-denial, unrest, and suffering. Surely we say too little when we limit the touching history of His sufferings to the last four-and-twenty hours; rightly regarded, this history endured no less than three-and-thirty years. "In body and soul He endured His whole life long (although specially at the end of His life) the wrath of God against the sin of all mankind."<sup>6</sup> What is implied by this expression—with which without reason men have not seldom taken offence—but that the Lord during His whole life bore the heavy consequences of sins in the commission of which He had no share, and therein experienced God's terrible displeasure against the sin of the world? The whole history serves to confirm His claim to the name of "Man of sorrows." No sooner is He born, than tyranny threatens His infant life, and the lawful descendant of David must tarry as an exile in Egypt. Only with the death of Herod does He receive freedom to return to His fatherland; and under the lowly roof of Nazareth He presently grows up, without form or comeliness. It is true, He grows in wisdom and in favour (*χάρις*) with God and with men; but no outward glory surrounds Him, and the offering of penury, brought at His presentation in the temple, became the prelude of a life characterised by

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<sup>6</sup> *Heidelberg Catechism*, Ans. 37.

manifold self-denial. Having become poor—though He was by nature rich—He lived His whole life in voluntary poverty. We do not, it is true, see Him actually exposed to pinching want. The garb in which He walks about is that of simple propriety; the hand of generous friendship provides as well for Himself as for His disciples with the most delicate consideration; and in the end His friends can declare that while they were with Him they have had lack of nothing. But yet much less than want was abundance and luxury His portion; His disciples were once even compelled, in default of other food, on the Sabbath morning to pluck off the ears of corn and eat, and small seems the store of money which is ordinarily found in the common treasury.<sup>7</sup> If He, who was the Son of God, was at the same time the man of purest, finest feeling, we can only tacitly conjecture how keenly He must experience so many a deprivation, whether greater or smaller, of those things which others freely enjoy, and which He had a perfect right to claim. And if, with this deprivation, there had only been *repose* prepared for Him on earth! But “the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, yet the Son of man hath not where to lay His head.” He, the Lord of the Angels and the King of the kingdom of God upon earth, has less than the least of the irrational crea-

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<sup>7</sup> [See for an illustration of the strange blending of wealth and poverty in the case of Him who, as Son of man, had “all fish of the sea” put under His feet, the narrative of Matt. xvii. 24—27.]

tures; and, while He goes through the land doing good, He not seldom finds Himself rejected as an evil-doer. On one single occasion He is allowed to remain two days in a town of the Samaritans; on another He is refused common hospitality, because His face was as though He would go to Jerusalem. Capernaum He chooses as His dwelling-place; but it is for little more than constantly to journey thence and to return thereto. If He withdraws with His disciples into solitude to rest for a little, He is very soon followed again by the impatient crowd. If He sits down to eat bread, the repast is embittered by the malignity of His enemies, or disturbed by the urgency of unhappy sufferers. Even where He seeks to be hidden on the confines of Tyre and Sidon, He cannot remain unknown; and when in the land of the Gadarenes He has wrought the most striking miracle, they pray Him to depart out of their coasts. Now He must withdraw from Galilee, because Herod seeks to kill him; now He can no longer walk openly and unhindered in Judea, because the Jews have formed designs on His life. Even into the sanctuary of friendship and repose which Bethany affords Him do the glances and plots of enmity extend, and only a secret appointment as to the place where He will celebrate the last Passover can secure Him still one untroubled and quiet evening in the circle of His disciples. We could speak of more, but why further confirmation for that which every glance at the pages of the Gospels proclaims to us? Verily, what Moses testified in general concerning the life of his contemporaries, "the choicest



thereof is labour and sorrow,"<sup>8</sup> may, with the most perfect right, be made the superscription upon *His* history!

And as yet we have not spoken of the manifold inner and outward *suffering*, which stamps upon the whole period of Jesus' life on earth the definite character of a deep *humiliation*. Certainly it would be extremely one-sided, if we could doubt that the Son of God and Son of man had also His joyous hours here below. He rejoiced in spirit, when He could hear that the seed sown by His messengers had the promise of abundant fruit; when He beheld penitent sinners at His feet; when from the lips of His disciples He received the confession of a firm and independent faith. But yet, even over the gentle smile of His joy is diffused a trace of melancholy; and even in His nearest surroundings we see opened for Him many a fountain of secret sorrow. His mother undesignedly prepares this for Him, by her untimely interference in the work of His higher vocation; His brethren contribute in their measure to this result, when they refuse to believe in Him, and even on one occasion declare Him bereft of reason. How painfully must the deep degeneracy of His nation have affected Him, even before His coming forth in public! and what must it have been for Him to see the prince of this world, whom He knew of old as the head of the fallen angels, in arms against Him! It is true, He triumphs perfectly over this enemy, but Satan departs only for a time; and where no snares of temptation have availed, presently

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<sup>8</sup> Psalm xc. 10. Dutch version.

the arrows of terror are directed against the heart of the God-man. Only in passing do we refer to the outward sufferings which awaited Him in the days of His flesh; as men would now cast Him over the brow of the hill, now take up stones against Him; here send forth servants to put Him in bonds, and there invent the most senseless blasphemy, in order to lower Him in the eyes of the people. Great as all this is, it is in a certain aspect nothing as compared with the inward grief occasioned by the daily experience that He, come to His own property, is not received by His own people. What is the thankful homage brought to Him by some few, compared with the indifference and opposition He encounters on the part of thousands! His very Divine-human knowledge infinitely augments this suffering; since, while He beholds the conduct of His enemies, He at the same time penetrates their hearts with infallible glance. Step by step He sees Judas advance on the downward path of destruction; day by day He sees the serpent's seed of unrighteousness grow up in the hearts of the company of priests; in the hosannas, even, of the multitude, He already hears the prelude of the sanguinary cry for the cross. It is true, the fidelity of His Eleven affords Him a relative counterpoise against all that inward and outward suffering; but yet, who is there of them who has not from time to time mingled a bitter drop in the cup of His life-long suffering? Peter must be repelled with the word, "Get thee behind me, Satan;" the sons of Zebedee merit the reproach, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are

of.”<sup>9</sup> All in turn grieve or vex Him by their little-minded disputation about superiority, by their earthly-mindedness, inattentiveness, incapacity for understanding, dulness. For John, Jesus was everything; but what did Jesus find even in John! and how must He constantly make good again that which has been spoiled by the perversity of His disciples!

Think of the scene at the foot of Tabor, of Gethsemane, of the palace of the high priest. Assuredly there was need, in connection with a knowledge and holiness like His, of a truly Divine love and longsuffering to bear with and cherish such feeble friends. Every day was a conflict either with friends or foes, in opposition to which the night of prayer afforded only a short breathing time. And to some extent we understand how the Lord must sometimes feel Himself, as regards them all, absolutely lonely and uncomprehended, and once at least could breathe the tone of longing *Heimweh* towards the Father’s house: “O unbelieving and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I bear with you?”<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> [Or, “know ye not what spirit ye are of?” (Luke ix. 55). The genuineness of these words as an integral part of Luke’s Gospel is maintained by the author in his *Commentary on Luke*. While not supported by the five oldest MSS., they are found in many of the earliest versions and fathers; and on the ground of internal evidence it can hardly be doubted that they form part of a genuine Apostolic tradition. The fact of the Lord’s rebuking James and John is given in all the MSS.: not so the words of this rebuke. See Alford *in loc.*]

<sup>10</sup> Matt. xvii. 17. Remarkable and highly suggestive is the similarity between these words and Jehovah’s language to Moses in regard to Israel, Numb. xiv. 11, 27.

With hesitation do we venture to speak of the *third* step in the way of His deep humiliation—His *last sufferings and death*. Had there been in this case nothing more than a purely human suffering, yet the history of the last hours of the Lord's life might be termed one of the most affecting ever experienced on earth. But now that we see in Him something infinitely more than man, or angel, now that we see in Him the God-man in all the force of the word; who, even when trampled in the dust, in nature and essence is one with God His Father; now there falls from our hands the sounding-line with which we would fathom the ocean of this humiliation. To be that, to *know* Himself that with perfectly clear consciousness; to *feel* Himself that, immediately, infallibly, unchangeably, and then to surrender Himself to a suffering such as Gethsemane and Calvary speak of—John understood something of what that is, when he wrote: "*Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God, rises from the supper, and lays aside His garments.*" But the foot-washing, of which the account is introduced with these words, was still only the beginning of the last humiliation, of which it forms at the same time the touching emblem. Deeper does the path descend, as He who performed it presently enters the dark valley of the Kedron, there in lonely prayer to prepare Himself for the last conflict. He who is above all, must in vain seek of His three feeble friends solace and refreshment; and the Prince of the heavenly host receives from one of His servants out of the spirit-world

a strengthening of which He has urgent need to prevent Him from sinking. In word and deed He shows His superiority over His mean captors; but no sooner is He in their hands than He is spared no single humiliation, either on the part of God or man. Free as to the spirit, He is as to the body bound as the commonest malefactor; perfectly innocent, He is accused, condemned, ill-treated, as though He were a monster of crime. Meanness spends on Him its defilement, blasphemy its arrows, vengeance its utmost force. It is too little that He is brought before the Procurator, He must also be examined by the Tetrarch; too little that He is placed on a level with a malefactor, He must be placed even beneath him; too little that He is arrayed in a robe of mockery, He must also wear the crown of thorns. His enemies triumph, His friends flee, and one of the best of them adds to Him the disgrace of wishing not to know Him in the presence of a malicious company of servants. While He can say, "Behold me, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow," reproach is poured forth as water upon that Holy head, which upon Tabor was radiant with the glory of heaven; and at the end of this touching path of suffering arises at last the long-foreseen cross before His eyes. The cross—brief epitome of all that can be conceived of as painful and shameful for man, for the Roman, for the Jew; but what for Him who even here does not forget, that already long ages before He had sat on the throne of the Universe! It surely will not be supposed that the thought of suffering all this as an innocent one could banish from His soul the sense of

pain and shame. So far is this from being the case, that this very feeling must infinitely augment that sense of pain and shame : who could better measure the depth of His humiliation than He who descended from such a height of glory ! So far does this humiliation proceed, that He, as the chief of malefactors, is held up to display upon the middle cross ; that in this pitiable state He is mocked alike by high and low, in that which is holiest and dearest to Him ; that He, the fountain of life, must pine for a single refreshing draught, and sees the vinegar of compassion embittered by the gall of mockery. So far even, that in His deepest and innermost consciousness He feels Himself separated from that Father, the light of whose countenance was His only consolation in this night of gloom. It is true, after three hours of inner and outward darkness, the sun breaks forth again from among the clouds ; but it is only to shine upon a dying countenance. Even as the weakest of the sons of Adam, He will, but now also He must, bow the head before the king of terrors ; and the Lord of glory has, like the most deeply sunken slave of iniquity, to receive the wages of sin in His holy body. For whom can death be anything more contra-natural than for Him, to whom the Father has given to have life in Himself ? Yet He undergoes this, not in appearance, but in reality ; yea, He *tastes* it, to make use of an Apostolic word, *as* death in all its bitterness, as a separation between body and soul, as a sentence pronounced against sin. Whom does it surprise that nature is stirred to its very depths, and trembling puts on the garb of mourning, as if to celebrate the

decease of a King? Even though Scripture had given us no single hint with regard thereto, we should reasonably conjecture that the moment of the death of the Lord was for hell a moment of hitherto unknown triumph, for heaven an occasion for reverent adoration. Above a history closed like this may the prophetic word be written as a superscription: "He was despised, and the rejected one among men."

And yet we must follow the Lord *one* step further upon the path of His humiliation. It will be already supposed that we refer to His *burial*. While speaking of this advisedly in the present, and not in the following chapter, we by no means overlook the fact that this event had also another side, and one most honouring for the Lord. Think only of the portion which His enemies had designed for Him, even after His death; of the full homage rendered to Him on this occasion by His friends; of the meet resting-place afforded Him; and the salutary activity to which perhaps He saw Himself called after His appearing in the world of the departed.<sup>11</sup> But, this notwithstanding, we may confidently speak of Joseph's grave as the last link in the chain of that humiliation, of which we found the first at Bethlehem's crib. Or was not thus the absolute certainty of His shameful death placed beyond all question, and His body committed to the grave of decay, in which the dust of every sinner passes into dissolution. Did it not also seem as though the king of terrors had gained a perfect victory over

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<sup>11</sup> 1 Pet. iii. 19; iv. 6.



Him and His cause? and does it say little that the body in which the fulness of the Godhead dwelt is consigned to a narrow grave, and only removed one step from corruption? It is true the personal union of the Logos with the humanity assumed continues even in the period between death and resurrection; the Godhead *is* in Him who lies there without movement, even as it *was* in the yet unborn child who reposed under Mary's maternal heart. But He Himself, in whom God and man are united, cannot surely be more deeply humbled than where enmity watches with triumphant attitude at His sepulchral tomb. And although we know that the fetters of death after forty hours were broken, yet we do not in imagination see them borne by the Prince of Life without the question rising to our lips: Could even a Divine intellect conceive of a deeper humiliation than here became a reality?

Hitherto, in sketching the *image* of this humiliation, we have constantly sought to bring into special prominence who He was that voluntarily endured it. Yet the attention to this point, however indispensable and deeply important, is by no means sufficient, where it is a question of estimating *the true value* of this humiliation. It will be felt that everything here depends on the *motive-principle* from which, the *manner* in which, and the *end* for which it is endured. We must accordingly direct the attention somewhat more closely to these *three* particulars.

The value of an act is almost exclusively determined by the *motive-principle* from which it proceeds. In an act so entirely unique as the self-humiliation of the Son

of God, the question naturally arises, as to what it was that moved Him to present a sacrifice so unparalleled. We are thankful for the fact that the Gospel has in no wise failed to give an answer to this question. Once and again we have already heard an Apostle of the Lord declare that He humbled Himself, *having become obedient*; and this assertion entirely harmonises with the Master's own word, "I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me."<sup>12</sup> This saying affords us a deep glance into mysteries which would otherwise have remained entirely hidden from us. One may speak in a very just sense,—however often the conception is misused and misunderstood,—of a Divine *Counsel of Peace* for the salvation of sinners. According to the profound teaching of Paul, it was God's eternal purpose in due time to gather together the whole visible and invisible creation under one Head, and this Head should be no other than—the Son. Sin entered into the world; but, far indeed from being able wholly to frustrate God's plan, it only gave a peculiar tendency to its development. The Head of the whole creation should now be the Redeemer of sinners—the Image after whom man was created become the Restorer of man's fallen race. But if this is to take place, the will of the Son must in this respect also be in entire harmony with that of the Father, and—it has been so from the beginning to the end, as witness, together with His own utterances, the whole history of His deep humiliation. Even His incar-

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<sup>12</sup> John vi. 38.

nation may be termed an act of voluntary obedience. What indeed but the delight of doing the will of the Father could have moved Him to exchange the glorious life of heaven for the life of deprivation, disquiet, and suffering, in the midst of a vain and sinful world? But having once, according to God's will and counsel, voluntarily appeared in its midst, it is then His highest delight to be in the things of His Father, and His meat—His soul's food and supreme joy of life—does He esteem it to accomplish the Father's work. Every decisive step upon His life's path is therefore taken with prayer. Praying He consecrates Himself, at the baptism in the Jordan, to the exalted task of His life; praying He prepares Himself for the great work of the choosing of the Apostles; praying He strengthens himself against the temptation to ascend an earthly throne; praying He sanctifies Himself for the supreme sacrifice on that lonely mountain which straightway becomes the mountain of transfiguration; praying He arms Himself in Gethsemane for the last conflict, which can only end with His death. That can be literally said of Him, which Isaiah declares of the future Branch of David, that "His breathing is in the fear of the Lord;"<sup>13</sup> and the word of His last night of life, "Not my will, but Thine, be done," may be regarded as the maxim of His whole life's day. Had the will of the Father permitted it,<sup>14</sup> we should not have been

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<sup>13</sup> Isaiah xi. 4.

<sup>14</sup> [The will of the Father is here naturally equivalent to the whole gracious purpose of God with regard to the salvation of sinners, in and through the person of His Son. *Comp. Chr. Dogmatics*, pp. 446—457.]—*Tr.*

required to believe in a true *incarnation* of the Logos ; unless one could doubt that, in His estimation too, rest is far preferable to unrest, enjoyment to want, honour to shame. But now that He sees His way marked out in an opposite direction by the counsel of the Father, He daily exercises that self-denial which He enjoins with so much emphasis upon His disciples. He refrains even from that higher and nobler enjoyment of life here below, which otherwise for a mind and heart like His would possess its undoubted value. Dear to Him is the solitude in which He can hold undisturbed communion with the Father, but no sooner do the disciples come to Him at break of day to say that the multitude is seeking Him than He is ready to follow them ; and when later from His nocturnal sanctuary He beholds the distress of His disciples upon the stormy waves, He quits it at once to hasten to their relief.<sup>15</sup> Welcome to Him is the refreshment prepared for Him by love and friendship : but this sweet luxury of life He allows to Himself only at those rare moments when no higher duty makes demands upon Him. How much more frequently do we see the Lord sitting at the table of the Pharisees and Scribes than at that of a Mary and a Martha ; yet assuredly not because access to the latter was ever denied Him, but above all because at the former He could especially seek and save that which was lost. Pleasing indeed to Him must have been the grateful homage of the recipients of His benefits : but He ever dismisses them, and enjoins upon them silence,

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<sup>15</sup> Mark i. 35—38 ; vi. 46—48.

because, as is written of the perfect Servant of the Father, "He will not cry, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street." Agreeable would it have been to Him to have prolonged His stay in a town in which He was received with a reverential faith, such as He found hardly anywhere in Israel: but after two days' sojourn in Sychar He returns to Galilee, and suffers Himself to be hindered in the way of His obedience by no ingratitude or opposition.<sup>16</sup> Yea, where they will take Him by force, and make Him a king, He compels the disciples at once to repair to the ship, and Himself withdraws to the mountain of prayer.<sup>17</sup> But why multiply illustrations? He imposes on Himself, as it has been truly said, greater toil and more steadfast self-restraint to escape and put from Him the most coveted blessings of earth than others apply in order to become possessed of these. It is because He simply and always does that which is well-pleasing to the Father. From the dominion of this one great principle springs up in the infinite diversity of His unresting life a perfect unity. Obedience does He display where He labours or reposes, where He suffers or enjoys, where he speaks or is silent, where He grants or refuses, where He comes or remains away, where He maintains His purpose or yields to entreaty,<sup>18</sup> where He lives or dies. For this very reason the well-meaning advice of Peter, to have pity on Himself, and not enter upon the

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<sup>16</sup> John iv. 43.

<sup>17</sup> John vi. 15.

<sup>18</sup> [The histories of Matt. xx. 20—23; John xi.; Matt. xv. 21—28, will at once occur to the reader. The whole force and beauty of the last of these depends on its being understood in this connection.]—*Tr.*

path of suffering, is for Him an allurements of Satan; because He is conscious of seeing in these the things of *God*. "This commandment have I received of my Father" is His assurance, when He is speaking of the voluntary laying down of His life, presently to take it again; and when at last He is to take the decisive step from the Paschal chamber to the last scene of conflict, it is with the ever-memorable words upon His lips, "that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do."<sup>19</sup> Thus it is that He who sought not His own honour could give testimony of Himself that He had kept the Father's commandments and abode in His love, and afterwards sum up the whole history of His outward and inner life in the word of prayer, "I have glorified Thee on the earth."<sup>20</sup> He continues to do so, where He now receives the cup of suffering (from which He had just before shrunk), with the sublime question, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" What the will of the Father is He sees clearly presented in the mirror of Holy Scripture; and on that account the realisation of the prophetic ideal of the Messiah is the great desire even of His last hours and moments. He corresponds to it, as He suffers Himself to be bound and led away as a lamb to the slaughter; with this ideal before Him does He ascend the tree of the curse; this He has in His own consciousness fully attained, as dying He cries, "It is finished." Well might Paul declare that Christ

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<sup>19</sup> John x. 18; xiv. 31.<sup>20</sup> John xv. 10; xvii. 4.

"pleased not Himself,"<sup>21</sup> and He Himself derives a proof of the truth of this testimony from the fact that He seeks not His own honour.<sup>22</sup>

Yet higher in our estimation rises the deep humiliation of the Lord, when we consider in what *manner* it was endured by Him. If the manner in which humiliation is regarded and endured may at all times be looked upon as a test of heart and character, what words shall worthily set forth the praise of His, who could testify with infinitely higher meaning than His Apostle afterwards did, "I know how to be abased"? In order rightly to appreciate Him we must yet once more emphasise the fact that the Lord both was and continued to the end perfectly conscious of His pre-mundane glory. If that were indeed true, which has been represented as the necessary consequence of the orthodox view, that "the Logos must have determined on self-forgetfulness, and have drunk the water of Lethe at His coming into the world,"<sup>23</sup> it would have had relatively less significance that He voluntarily and steadfastly displayed the obedience of which we have already spoken. But He takes every step into the depths after His coming forth in public in the clear and indelible consciousness of the height at which He originally stood, and to which He had an unalterable right. We do not repeat what we have already recalled to mind, as to the absolute sinlessness of the Lord, but rather ask attention to another remark. Not only has He never done evil, but the good in Him had absolutely

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<sup>21</sup> Rom. xv. 3.

<sup>22</sup> John v. 30 ; vii. 18.

<sup>23</sup> Hase.



nothing by which the hatred of His foes could be even to any extent justified. "They hated me without a cause," could He declare at the end of His life. No harshness, which repels; no pride, which offers a stumbling-block; no want of self-consistency, which awakens legitimate surprise. He resembles not the moon, which is now seen as full, now as half, now not seen at all; but the sun, which moves along its bright path without variation or repose, and ever again raises its head out of the clouds which rise over its face. At all times He continues to be Himself under the most changeful circumstances, and everywhere we recognise the same Son of God and Son of man, in the house of mourning and in the house of fasting, in the presence of sinners and of publicans, in the midst of imperfect friends and of implacable foes. His accomplishment of the Father's will bears the character of the most constant *zeal*. There are but very few days in the history of His public life which are fully described to us; but, to judge from these, the opportunity for doing good is literally increased and multiplied; and, mindful that life's day has only twelve hours, we see Him His life long walk in the light, without His foot stumbling, but also—without for a moment standing still. Where, to adopt His own figure, He has once put his hand to the plough, He never looks back again, and advances unceasingly forward on the portion of the field allotted to Him. He adheres strictly to the terms of His commission, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," and only a faith, which makes of one, a Gentile according to the flesh, a

spiritual daughter of Abraham, can move Him to deviate from this rule.<sup>24</sup> But in Israel itself no condition is so high, and none so low, that He does not esteem it His joy and delight to become all things unto all. So long as He is in the world, He will be the light of the world, and work so long as for Him it is day.<sup>25</sup> What more natural than that so much hatred and opposition should cause Him at length to relax in His endeavours, from the consideration that His labour was after all in vain? But no, at the end of His course He allows Himself just as little repose as at the beginning. Even when He weeps over Jerusalem, He continues to say and do all that could open the eyes of the blinded ones; and even on the way to the cross He exhorts the daughters of Jerusalem not to mourn over Him, but over themselves. Though but few years are assigned to Him on earth, in which to found a kingdom of peace which shall endure through the ages, so much does He accomplish, that His bosom friend considers the world, so to speak, hardly large enough to contain all the books that must be written, if everything should be worthily commemorated.<sup>26</sup> And this unceasing activity is now characterised by attributes which render it almost incomprehensible that the whole world, so far as it beheld Him, did not sit at His feet. Think of the unfeigned *humility*, which leads Him, with all the consciousness of His rights and claims, to avoid everything which might call forth unnecessary wonder, and which renders Him accessible even

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<sup>24</sup> Matt. xv. 21—28.<sup>25</sup> John ix. 4, 5.<sup>26</sup> John xxi. 25.

for the poorest, meanest, most wretched. Think of the sympathetic *kindliness*, in consequence of which we never read that His person, regarded in itself, made upon any one a repelling impression, but, on the contrary, that it exerted upon the most diverse men an attractive and fascinating one, which rendered Him an unequalled friend of children. Think of the immovable *equanimity*, which is just as little elated when He is above measure extolled, as disappointed when He is without cause humiliated. Think of the incomparable *patience*, when all press around Him or combine against Him, or because of Him are split into two parties, which every day stand more sharply opposed to each other. Think of the clear *presence of mind*, by which He is always and at once equal to every occasion, is in harmony with the requirement of every moment, and never speaks where it would be better to keep silence, never keeps silence where it would be better to speak, but ever leaves the arena of controversy, into which the enemies have enticed Him, conqueror in the moral sense of the word. Think of the quiet *dignity* with which He ever remains infinitely exalted above the depths into which His foes would humble Him, and even ennoble reproaches by the way in which He endures them. Who does not recal from the touching history of the last passion, the surprising moments in which He stands before us as a King placed in chains in the midst of rebellious subjects, and by the majesty of His speaking and silence astonishes even a Gentile Procurator? But we should never end, if we would recount all by which the Lord has glorified Him-

self in the midst of His deep humiliation. That, however, of which we cannot be silent is the *love* which may be termed the key-note, never unstrung, of His Divine-human heart. The purest love, even if it is not discouraged by obdurate resistance, will at least be sometimes embittered, or else more or less one-sided in its choice out of numerous objects. But what the earth has never seen in any other son of man it has seen in this Christ, who with perfect confidence could prescribe a love like His as an absolutely new command to His disciples. No hatred could be so bitter, no scorn so cutting, no falsehood so mean, as to be able to provoke Him to the utterance of a well-merited word of bitterness. There is grief and reproach, but no pride or disdain in the question which on a certain occasion He put to the Jews, for which of the many excellent works He had shown them from the Father they would now stone Him. Without doubt His love also has its preference; it would have been no human love, had it known no different degrees and stages; not even a Divine love, since the golden thread of the election of eternal love runs through the whole of sacred history. But there was no friend who could complain that he was slighted by the Lord in his important interests for the sake of other, more particular friends; there was no one of the enemies who for the sake of the friends must content himself with a less wide place in that heart of love, in which, just because it was in truth a Divine-human heart, there remained equal room for all. Who experienced most the proofs of this love, the faithful or the faithless disciples? the

band which leads Him away, or the company of women which bewails His decease? the executioners who crucify Him, or the penitent malefactor at His side? The perplexity to which this question reduces us becomes an equally undesigned as unequivocal encomium; and, to confine ourselves only to the immediate circle around Him, we feel with what justice a John could declare, "as He loved His own which were in the world, so He loved them unto the end."<sup>27</sup> But if love is the highest quality, as well in the infinite God as in finite man; and if love has never equalled, far less surpassed, that of Christ; what further proof is needed that the manner in which Christ endured His humiliation is to be regarded as absolutely incomparable?

Such a love, under such circumstances, even the God-man could scarcely have displayed, had He not had a wholly unique *end* in view. If, however, any one desires to hear to what *end* He endured all this, we have especially to be on our guard against representing as the *main object* that which was only a subordinate one, or *vice versâ*. Undoubtedly He humbled Himself to give us the highest *revelation* of the truth, and sealed by His own death the good confession which He constantly witnessed.<sup>28</sup> How could He have been the life of mankind, if He had not at the same time been the way and the truth? and how could we fail to appreciate the value of the stamp impressed by such a death on the testimony of such a life? But yet, he who seeks therein the *main*

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<sup>27</sup> John xiii. 1.

<sup>28</sup> John xviii. 37; 1 Tim. vi. 13.

object of His deep humiliation, will hardly be able to meet the objections: why the Lord's public ministry endured so short a time, after so many years of retirement; why the proclamation and introduction of this doctrine must be accompanied with such fearfully humiliating suffering; why, finally, God did not rather leave to a man or an angel the work of bringing to men and sinners the doctrine of the Gospel, the more so since far from all of this Gospel was new and unheard of.—Undoubtedly, we grant to others, the Lord submitted to the deepest humiliation in order to afford in this respect also a spotless *example*. He Himself expressed this on the occasion of the foot-washing; and His Apostles Peter, Paul, John, have frequently insisted, with special emphasis, upon this fact.<sup>29</sup> Who could look upon Him who was above all, as in ministering love He denies Himself, without feeling himself impelled to tread in those sacred footsteps? But can it escape our observation that even this feature, however important in itself, is by no means most prominent in the Apostolic Scripture; and that if any one will go to the trouble of a special investigation of the question, *in what respect, and on what ground*, the following of Christ on the part of His disciples is demanded in the Gospel, he will very quickly come to an entirely different view from that of those who with manifest preference constantly lay *all* the stress upon the *example* of the Lord. Nay, little as we under-

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<sup>29</sup> John xiii. 15. Comp. Matt. xx. 27, 28; Phil. ii. 5, 6; 1 Pet. ii. 21; 1 John ii. 6; and some other places.

estimate the sacred duty of the following of Christ for His true disciples, equally little do we overlook the fact that it can be a question of doing this only when another object, which we may unhesitatingly call the *main object* of His deep humiliation, is at least in its beginning attained in us.

No one will surely be in doubt as to what we mean. In order, however, to avoid the charge of regarding this thrice sacred subject more from the standpoint of the Apostles than from that of the Master Himself, we prefer to take our start from His own utterance, "The bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and *which giveth life unto the world.*"<sup>30</sup> According to the constant teaching of the Lord, which is confirmed alike by the nature of the case and by experience, the world, in consequence of its corruption by sin, is deprived of that true *life*, which alone deserves to bear the name of life. It must be so; for sin causes separation from God, who is the fountain of life and blessedness. God and man, originally destined to be most intimately united, are in consequence thereof opposed to each other; and only then can this fatal condition be brought to an end, when the *communion* between the two is restored. So long as this is not the case, man, who has torn himself away from God, is under the sway of another, a gloomy and hostile power, which entirely governs him, and makes him feel the effects of his accumulated guilt in nameless misery. And God, on His side, stands

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<sup>30</sup> John vi. 33; cf. 40, 51.



towards man as an injured father towards a disobedient child, as an insulted lawgiver towards the rebellious subject, as a lawful creditor towards the powerless debtor.

What is thus necessary, if the sinful and corrupted world is to find life? Two things, which are inseparably connected. The *guilt* of sin must be cancelled, and thus the broken communion restored; the *power* of sin must be annihilated, and thus life itself be given anew. And indeed the former in the first place, not in the second, the latter not in the first place. A new creation of the corrupted human race remains impossible even for Divine omnipotence, so long as the gracious forgiveness and acceptance of guilty humanity has not first taken place. Forgiveness is not the necessary consequence, but rather the indispensable condition, of renewal and sanctification. We have neither pleasure, courage, nor strength, to walk in newness of life, so long as we are not certain that the old guilt is put away; it is impossible to do better in the future, unless the past is first repaired, not *by* but *for* us. What must thus the Good Shepherd do, if the sheep are in truth to have *life* and abundance? He must first of all redeem them from the *death* which threatens them; He must then, and precisely thereby, animate them to new *life*. And this is exactly what the Lord declared He did, when He said that He would give His soul a ransom for many, and shed His blood for the remission of sins.<sup>31</sup> In reality *this* twofold

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<sup>31</sup> Matt. xx. 28; xxvi. 28.

utterance forms the true basis of the distinct testimony which is given in another form by His Apostles concerning the atoning and redeeming power of His suffering and death. Yea, even the old prophet had proclaimed the same gifts of salvation, and in the same relative order, as the blessings of the New Testament day. "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts. . . . They shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: *for I* will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more."<sup>32</sup> For a less exalted end probably a humiliation of such matchless depth as that of the Lord would have been too deep; but we at once feel that it is impossible to conceive of a higher aim, and not too great is even the price of *His* blood, if the world is really to recover in this way its wasted and forfeited *life*.

And thus we are naturally brought to the *third* part of the task prescribed to us in this chapter. We must attempt to estimate the *fruit* of this deep humiliation, of which we have already sketched the image and at least to some extent appreciated the value. In this place also we shall only be expected briefly to sum up that which has already been developed in our *Christology of the Old and the New Testament*, especially in the treatment of Paul's doctrine of the Atonement. Let us, then, briefly review the fruits borne by the deep humiliation of the Lord, as well for *others* as for *Himself*.

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<sup>32</sup> Jer. xxxi. 31—34.

"*As by one man's disobedience many were made (constituted) sinners: so by the obedience of one shall many be made (constituted) righteous.*"<sup>33</sup> In these words the Apostle Paul describes the precious fruit which the deep humiliation of the Lord has borne for *others*, for millions. It has often been asked, of *what* obedience we are here expressly to think, and the theology of the Church has sharply distinguished between the *active* and the *passive* obedience of the Lord. In connection with the first, His holy life, whereby the demand of the law was fulfilled, was thought of; in connection with the second, His innocent suffering and death, whereby the chastisement of sin was borne. But we believe this whole opposition belongs more to the schools of the theologians than to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. Here the faultless obedience of the God-man is represented as one great whole, which embraces both His life and His death, and, to use the language of a meritorious theologian of the present day, "We do very wrong to separate in the work of redemption the death of the Lord from His life; it is most closely connected therewith, and forms the crown of it. If He was obedient *unto* death, He was so *not merely in* death. If He who knew no sin was made sin in His crucifixion, He was so equally in all the suffering which preceded His death; and this last manifests itself as the highest point of His redeeming activity, which *embraces* His whole earthly existence."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Rom. v. 19.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. E. de Pressensé, *Early Years of Christianity*, p. 241.

To present clearly to ourselves the character of the salvation brought us in Christ, it is first of all necessary that, with the before-named Apostle, we regard Him not merely as *a* man, but as *the* man *par excellence*, the *God-man*, in whom the Godhead is united with the nature of man. As such He is the second Adam, the spiritual head of the new humanity, received afresh into God's favour. Even as God demands a perfect obedience to His holy law, of which *love* is the great centre. This path of obedience was wantonly forsaken by the first Adam, and by virtue of their natural kinship with him all his descendants were at the same time constituted transgressors. Sin and death, like two inseparable streams, issuing forth from the lost Paradise, have spread over the whole world; and the more deeply the human race—a living unity—was weighed down by the power of sin, the more did it become also a prey to a misery for which there is no name. Sin fills the guilty heart with dread, unrest, and fear; fear necessarily excludes love, which is the only true principle of all obedience. How could thus a single sinful man present to God the sacrifice of a perfect obedience? and the Pure One, who could and would do so, who could produce Him out of us impure ones? Behold, He then appears, in accordance with God's counsel, and moved thereto by His own free love—He who was in the form of God appears on earth in human flesh. Voluntarily does He submit Himself to the consequences of sins which He Himself had never committed. Throughout His whole life He is exposed to severer temptations than that before which Adam fell;

but He remains firm in His allegiance to the Father, and endures, combats, overcomes them. No single inch does He deviate from the commandment which the Father has given Him; and when He could not escape death, except by unfaithfulness to His sacred vocation, He will rather die than bow before the power of darkness: As He has already endured countless other consequences of sin, so does He now voluntarily submit to death, the wages of sin; to the death of the cross, the climax of shame. The sun hides its face, when His suffering approaches its terrible culmination; but the lustre of His perfect obedience pierces through the gloom. He shrinks from absolutely nothing, except only sin. And when His cry, "It is finished!" is heard, it is made for ever impossible to display an obedience more perfect than His unto the death of the cross.

Now this obedience, because it was manifested wholly voluntarily, by His own Son, has in the Father's estimation an absolutely priceless *value*. In Christ there arises a new humanity, purified and glorified in the sight of God; and those who have become by faith one plant with Him,<sup>35</sup> God looks upon them no longer as they are *in themselves*, but as they are *in Him*, from whom—as the living Head—flow forth streams of true life into His believing members. Humanity is now regarded as having presented the offering of a perfect obedience to God; because Christ, the collective man, if we may so express ourselves, has presented it at the head, and in

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<sup>35</sup> Allusion to Rom. vi. 5, according to the Dutch version.

the name of, humanity. His perfect righteousness is now imputed and conferred on the part of God upon all His people as their own—as perfectly as though they had themselves never committed the least sin. And this righteousness is by no means an *alien one*, since “both He that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of *One* ;” and, by virtue of the law of innermost communion of life, it *cannot but be* that what is the property of the Head should also be the portion of His members, and thus the obedience of Christ is, in the sight of God, *in principle*, the obedience of all His people. So great was the Father’s satisfaction with the obedience of His incarnate Son, that on account of it He accepts and acquits sinners, and recompenses the deed of love of this one Man with the salvation of millions who are inseparably one with Him.

But how could the Lord’s perfect obedience exert such a redeeming power, since assuredly the guilt of former disobedience still continued to rest upon the human race? Here we are compelled to take a step further, and yet more expressly to treat of the *atoning* power of that sacrifice which found its terrible climax in the sufferings and death of the Son of God. For God’s righteousness demands that not only a perfect obedience be rendered to Him, but also that the disobedience committed be duly punished: He wills not merely that the *requirement* of the law be met, but also that the *curse* of the law be borne. The latter was accomplished not less than the former by the humiliation of the Lord to the death of the cross. For this death was, after the sentence of Paradise,

the punishment due to sin; and from this merited punishment Christ redeems us in such wise that He undergoes it in our place. It is unnecessary here to repeat all the places in the Old Testament in which we have found this idea expressed. Even those who call in question the doctrine of atonement through the expiatory suffering and death of the Lord would hardly be able to prove that any other than this is the doctrine of Jesus and the Apostles. It is indeed a strange question, whether God could not have forgiven sin without its chastisement being borne; whether He could at least have devised no other way of accomplishing this end than the deep humiliation of His own Son. So far as this last is concerned, we reply with Augustine, "They are foolish who assert that the wisdom of God could not otherwise redeem men than by assuming human nature, and being born of a woman, and suffering all these things at the hand of sinners. To them we say, He could, no doubt; but if He had done otherwise, it would have been equally displeasing to your folly."<sup>36</sup> But we at once add that now, when the matter is regarded *à posteriori*, in the light of God's own testimony, it can be easily shown how precisely the method of redemption here chosen was especially adapted so to manifest and glorify *all* the perfections of God, that no single one of them should be obscured. And as far as the first objection is concerned, we doubt whether its representatives have ever thought

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<sup>36</sup> Aug., *De Agone Christi*, cap. 11. [Comp. *Chr. Dogmatics*, p. 608, where this saying of Augustine is charged with "a certain vagueness."]



deeply enough on the spotless holiness of God, or understand what a faithful conscience unceasingly cries to them: "sin—at the same time *guilt*." As opposed to every sophism of the intellect, the proposition, "God wills the satisfaction of His righteousness," is confirmed by the power of conscience; and the heathen who even passed their children through the fire in order to find a ransom for their soul were nearer to the truth than those Christian professors who, without any perception of the necessity for the sacrifice of a Mediator, from their heart repeat the words of the poet:—

"Allen Sündern soll vergehen  
Und die Hölle nicht mehr sein."<sup>37</sup>

It is not, therefore, the question, what notion of God is thought most acceptable by our reason, which is on this point equally little enlightened as impartial, but what kind of a God is proclaimed to us by the word of His revelation; and this is a God who certainly pities the sinner, but who hates sin itself with perfect hatred, and rather will permit that which is most terrible to take place than allow sin to rage on unpunished. The sacrifice of perfect obedience presented to Him must be a sacrifice unto the death of the cross; because only by this death, endured in our stead, was the guilt of sin expiated. Justice must be done, even though the world should perish:<sup>38</sup> what is more, it would really have perished, unless upon

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<sup>37</sup> "To all sinners there shall be forgiveness, and Hell shall be no more."—SCHILLER.

<sup>38</sup> The feeling of this necessity is expressed in the proverb: *fiat justitia et pereat mundus*.

Calvary the claim of the law had been satisfied. And now, by the unspeakable grace of the Father and the Son, this satisfaction has been accomplished in such wise that the innocent One places Himself in the room of the guilty, and the Prince of Life in His holy body undergoes the sentence of death. He does what we could not do, He bears what we could not bear—the weight of God's terrible displeasure, under which we must have for ever sunk. The expiation of sin, which was shadowed forth by the sacrificial ritual of the Old Covenant, becomes a reality in His atoning death, and for this very reason have those sacrifices been abolished: now the substance of the atonement is given, the pre-indications thereof may safely be wanting. Thus He averts from us the punishment which we had deserved to suffer;<sup>39</sup> and while He is regarded and treated as sin personified, we in Him are accepted again as children and heirs of God.

It is our well-grounded conviction that every presentation of the fruits of the Lord's deep humiliation for guilty sinners, which detracts anything from that which has been said, fails of rising to the reality and importance of the subject. We know indeed that a number of intricate questions here present themselves to every reflecting mind; but we are not called upon to proceed farther in the answering of them than the Gospel of the Scriptures affords us light.—It has been asked whether Christ felt and endured in reality *all* which sinners must feel and bear—*e.g.*, the misery of the lost. The answer is simple:

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<sup>39</sup> [As to the character which this chastisement bears in the case of a perfectly Holy One, see the *Christian Dogmatics*, p. 603.]

that Holy Scripture *does not* teach this last; that the infinite wretchedness which too late springs from the feeling of one's own guilt could not possibly be suffered by Him who, even where He put Himself in the place of sinners, ever remained God's beloved and holy One; that it is, consequently, amply *sufficient* that He tasted death *as* death—*i.e.*, as the wages of sin—in all its bitterness, and that even for Him this death was preceded by a sense of the deepest desolation and anguish.—Men have disputed as to whether this atonement was of absolutely universal force and value, or whether it availed only for the sin of the elect. But why weaken by any artificial explanation the unequivocal statement: "God was in Christ, reconciling *the world* unto Himself"? That this sacrifice of perfect obedience is amply sufficient to counterbalance the guilt of a whole lost world, and, if necessary, of a thousand worlds, is just as certainly the teaching of Scripture as that the actual fruit of this sacrifice avails only those who in truth believe in Christ. "Preach the Gospel *to every creature*" still remains the commission of all the ambassadors of the cross; and for the rest, let him who regards it as impossible so to combine the doctrine of a universal atonement with that of a personal election, that no single problem remains unsolved in connection therewith, consider that the Gospel presents to us both lines, but not the point at which they touch. In the Divine edifice of redemption we see the two sides ever running upwards; but the point at which they unite we do not discover, for the simple reason that we stand with our feet *upon earth*, while in order to look

upon this culminating point one must be placed in the light *above* the edifice.—It has been said that if the view here presented is a just one, the grace is shown especially on the part of the Son, rather than on the part of the Father; since in this case the forgiveness of sin is not an act of the compassionating love, so much as a necessary result of the equity of God. As though, is our answer, it were not from the first the *love* of God which led Him in His Son to give grace to the sinner, though always in such wise that nothing should be in the least detracted from His holiness and righteousness; as though it were not equally true that we are *dearly* purchased,<sup>40</sup> and that we are *freely* justified,<sup>41</sup> the former in relation to the *price*, the latter to the *ground* of our salvation.—It has been asked, by way of objection, whether, then, *a change* was wrought in God by the sacrifice of Calvary, so that He, who *before* that sacrifice was angry, became *in* that sacrifice propitiated, and *by* that sacrifice was *moved* to grace? Certainly not the last, we reply; on the contrary, it was nothing but grace which moved God Himself to provide that sacrifice which no creature on earth could present. But you forget that the sacrifice which stands before *us* as presented in the fulness of the time is, on the other hand, in the contemplation of God, an *eternal* deed; since He had ages before designed, contrived, approved it; so that it is consequently not the question how God stood to the sinner *before* and *after* the sacrifice of Christ, but in what relation He stands to the sinner

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<sup>40</sup> 1 Cor. vi. 20 a, Dutch version.

<sup>41</sup> δωρεάν, as a free gift, Rom. iii. 24.

*without respect of, or having regard to, that which the Son has accomplished. And then it can be shown from the Gospel that God, apart from Christ, is a consuming fire for the sinner, and only in Christ a God of grace; and that by no means has His Nature been changed, but only His relation to the sinful world been in a peculiar manner determined by that which took place on the cross. God was holy love before the death of the Lord, He remains holy love after that death; but this holy love has in the humiliation of the Saviour of the world displayed a grace which, by virtue of its purity and righteousness, it could not confer if no atonement had taken place.—The same answer affords a reply to the objection: How then was the justification of sinners effected under the Old Covenant? Then, too, God never looked upon humanity in any other than the Son, who in due time should present the perfect sacrifice; and those who thus, through faith in the promise of salvation, trusted in the grace of God, and already saw the salvation of the New Testament in the shadows of the sacrifice, stand before God absolutely upon the same level as all those who for ages past have looked back upon the world's Great Day of Atonement. Otherwise, "He must often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."<sup>42</sup>—And now he who asserts, after all this, that our God is like a sanguinary Moloch, whose wrath must be appeased by*

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<sup>42</sup> Heb. ix. 26.

Divine blood, and that our doctrine of atonement and satisfaction is not to be found in Scripture, but was only gendered in the sickly brain of an Anselm, as a monstrous product of the middle ages, may here see what reply we shall make to him. It is exceedingly ignoble, and at the same time a great proof of one's own weakness, when one has recourse to a *caricature* of the opposed view. Children may perhaps be frightened by scarecrows: a man looks upon them without fear or astonishment. The Moloch here exists only in the imagination of the opponents, equally as the God who forgives without satisfaction being made to His holy law. And as concerns Anselm, we do not contend for his theory as such: we are the disciples, not of Anselm, but of Jesus and His Apostles. We discover weak sides also in his apprehension of the truth; yea, the strictly juridical presentation of the doctrine of the atonement becomes one-sided—and on that account dangerous—when we rest content with a *merely external* imputation of Christ's righteousness, instead of placing expressly in the foreground the *inner* union of believers with Him, by virtue of which it cannot but be the case that in justification there is also given the germ of sanctification. What is more, every systematic presentation of this doctrine will be found inadequate to convey the full truth. "The sunbeams," we say with Tholuck, "you cannot bind together in a bundle, nor put the sea into a goblet. I also have tried it and failed, have applied the square of theoretically acquired formulas to the great mystery of Godliness, until the square shrivelled up in my hand, and I could

no longer measure, till it was cast away.”<sup>43</sup> But yet, *this* tremendous thought: all mankind pressed down under an infinite weight of guilt; this guilt to be expiated only by a sacrifice of perfect obedience; that sacrifice presented by Christ in such a manner that our salvation is the fruit, not of our merits, but of His, and His interposition is not only the guarantee, but the mediate cause, of the forgiveness of transgressions—this of a truth is no product of mediæval sophistry, but the infallible teaching of the word of eternal life. He who contradicts this has not to do with church fathers or schoolmen, but with God and Christ, with apostles and prophets, with the redeemed on earth and the glorified in heaven; for all combine to give the most decisive testimony concerning this thrice glorious truth. “*Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. By the obedience of one shall many be made (constituted) righteous.*” “In this doctrine of atonement,” to speak once more with the before-mentioned writer, “is the shewbread in the temple of the Lord, which the faith of a David may receive; the despised fountain of Siloah, which springs forth from the rock, and can water Jerusalem alone, while elsewhere there is no water; the dry path for the children of Israel through the Red Sea of their sins, by which they can pass on, while right and left the waves pile themselves on high.”

Is it still necessary to show that the atoning power of the Lord's death is at the same time a new-creating one,

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<sup>43</sup> *Wahre Weihe des Zweiflers*, 9th Edn. p. 63. See also pp. 96—104.



and that, once the guilt of sin is put away, the abolition of its dominion follows, for the redeemed of Christ, as an absolutely necessary consequence? Even if the Gospel had not in every way proclaimed to us that sanctification is the end of forgiveness, and restoration to God's image the crown of our acceptance, who has not considered within himself that faith in a grace such as we have just extolled of itself affords joy and strength and courage to walk in newness of life? The difficulty: why then must we continue to fulfil the law, since Christ has fulfilled it in our place? can have any force only with those who have never yet personally felt the attractive power of the cross. He who has in reality found for himself in Jesus' death the propitiatory offering of perfect obedience, knows at the same time that he is most solemnly pledged to consecrate himself as a thank-offering to God. Or did the Lord say too much when He uttered the words, "For them I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth"? <sup>44</sup>

Once more we sum up all that may be advanced, on the authority of the Gospel, touching the fruit of the Lord's deep humiliation, *so far as others are concerned*. In the estimation of God His Father, it is a deed of such high significance, that it is regarded as making perfect amends (the equivalent) for the guilt of sin, which from and by the first Adam has passed upon all his posterity. The Father is glorified by it in the most perfect way; and, as His grace is there revealed, in His surrendering

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<sup>44</sup> John xvii. 19.

His only begotten Son to such a depth for our sakes, so also His righteousness, in the fact that He causes the chastisement threatened to our transgression to rest upon Him, and now also saves and justifies all those who comply with the great demand of faith in Christ. *The sinner* is by this sacrifice of perfect obedience delivered both from the guilt and the dominion of sin, restored to God's favour and friendship, and made an heir of everlasting life. The terror of *death* is overcome thereby; since, for all those who are in Christ, death exists only as a condition of nature, and a transition to a higher life—no longer as the wages of sin and the king of terrors. *The power of darkness* is broken, just where it seemed to celebrate its highest triumph; since the Prince of the world has nothing in that pure and holy One who, where all seems to be lost, can already exclaim, "I have overcome the world." On the cross He triumphs over the principalities and powers of hell, and makes an open display of them in their powerlessness.<sup>45</sup> In the form of His humiliation He conquers countless hearts, and everywhere where He is victorious are the dwellings of Satan changed into temples of the Holy Ghost, and a new obedience taught by Him is the joy and delight of His people. Thus He founds a *Kingdom of God*, of which all true members—like the King—count it their best food to do the will of the Father. His sacrifice is the inauguration of the New Covenant, of which the ministry is not, like that of the Old, a ministry of the letter, but

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<sup>45</sup> Col. ii. 15.

of the Spirit ; not of condemnation, but of righteousness ; not a transitory, but abiding one. The cross, at first to the Jews a stumbling-block, to the Greeks a folly, has cast down the middle wall of separation, and united both in one body.<sup>46</sup> Even *the Angels* have found in the sacrifice there presented an inexhaustible material for contemplation, and in the Church thereby purchased a new revelation of the adorable wisdom of God. And the *reconciliation of heaven and earth*, their union in one blessed eternal fellowship, in which the discord of sin is never more heard—by whom is this effected but by Him who, obedient unto the cross, has slain the enmity, and in this way made *peace*?

We can draw only a few drops from an inexhaustible sea. If nevertheless we ask in closing what fruit this matchless humiliation of the Son of God has borne *for Himself*, the answer, further elucidated in the next chapter, may *already* be given in few words at the end of this. The Son of God, once become man, has in this toilsome path learned *obedience* ; in other words, through this deep humiliation He has become perfected in that degree in which, according to God's will and counsel, He must be, in order to bring sinners to glory and blessedness. As His humiliation was in itself the *fruit* of the Divine obedience of the Logos, so was it at the same time the *path* by which to lead up the obedience of the God-man to the highest climax. Thus wholly made perfect, He—in the second place—*entered* through suffer-

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<sup>46</sup> Ephes. ii. 13—16.

ing *into glory*. If at all times the way to the glittering heights in the Kingdom of God has lain through the gloomy depths, for no one was this more the case than for Him who on *that very account* was exceedingly highly exalted, that He had been obedient to the death of the cross. And as thus this deep humiliation had *prepared* the Lord for this glory, and is now *succeeded* by the glory, so—in the last place—is the enjoyment of this glory beyond description *enhanced* by all the conflict which has preceded it. Thus glorious the joy of heaven would not be to the Son of God and Son of Man, had He not here known grief and anguish even unto the death; and on this account the song of the redeemed sounds so sweet to Him, because He has paid a price for their redemption, of which the Father alone can estimate the full value. But all this belongs already, to some extent, to that domain on which we are now about to enter: *the beginning of the exaltation of Christ*.

## IV.

## THE BEGINNING OF THE EXALTATION.

WHEN the Lord on the last night of His earthly life took a prayerful leave of His disciples, and, on looking back at the way He had traversed, had fearlessly confessed, "I have glorified Thee on the earth," He adds immediately, "and now, O Father, glorify Thou me with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." A little before He had said, "The hour is come: glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee."<sup>1</sup> In what way the Son glorified and magnified Him we have already seen. But how has the Father, on His part, glorified the Son of His love? It is to this question we now propose giving an explicit reply. It is to be remembered that we are still engaged in the contemplation of *Christ in the flesh*; so that we have to fix the attention definitely upon that period which begins with His incarnation and ends with His ascension. That which has begun after this last belongs to the following division, devoted to the presentation of the *God-man in glory*. But for this very reason we need not confine ourselves to a view of those degrees or stages exclusively which begin only *after* His suffering, death, and burial.

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<sup>1</sup> John xvii. 1, 4.

To those rays of light also, which display themselves in the midst of the night of this humiliation, may we direct at least a cursory glance; yea, we must do so, unless—through the neglecting of points of view of the highest importance—the image of Christ, which we are endeavouring to sketch, is to be presented in a one-sided manner. Certainly it would be in the highest degree incorrect to assert that the Father began to glorify the Son only *after* His last mediatorial sufferings and death. In speaking of the beginning of His exaltation during the days of His flesh, we have reference to *all* which the Father wrought to proclaim Him to heaven and earth as the Christ, the Son of God. And thus we see the beginning of the Lord's exaltation *prepared in the midst of His deep humiliation; entered upon by His resurrection from the dead; crowned by His ascension to heaven on the fortieth day.* While thus expressly considering these three particulars, we shall endeavour in each case to combine a conception of the *measure* of the exaltation in question with that of its *value* for us, and its *connection* with the work of redemption.

We see the beginning of our Lord's exaltation *already prepared in the midst of His deep humiliation* here on earth. We need not now repeat what we have observed concerning the depth of this humiliation itself. But now we must more expressly show how, in opposition to this dark shadow-side of the humiliation, there is seen ever anew a bright light-side, as though to prove that He who suffered such deep abasement was and unchangeably remained nothing less than the Lord of glory. Well might

the Lord on one occasion declare that He was by the Father *sealed*, *i.e.*, manifestly furnished with the evidences of the Father's approval from heaven. Throughout the whole history of His appearing on earth resounds the note, "He shall be great," raised by the angel at the announcing of His birth. Literally, it is true, the same thing was said of the Lord's forerunner;<sup>2</sup> but what a difference between the testimony which John receives of the Father and that which Jesus receives, and the greatness manifested by the one and the other! The birth of each is, like that of some distinguished men of the Old Covenant, proclaimed by an angel; but while the Baptist, like Isaac and Samson, was a son of old age, the Messiah—like no one before Him or after Him—is born through the miraculous power of the Holy Ghost, and that holy thing which Mary conceives bears on that account the name Son of God, in the proper sense of the term. Heaven, which at the birth of John remains closed, is opened at His birth; and, what has happened on no other occasion, angels descend to hail His advent with songs of joy. If His childhood is, more than that of His forerunner, exposed to great dangers, it is also protected by special heavenly guardianship; and as well the departure to Egypt as the return therefrom is lighted up with dream-vision and the appearing of an angel. As a child He is not presented in the Temple, without, through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, an express testimony being given to Him, as, the Saviour of Israel and of the world;

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<sup>2</sup> Luke i. 15, 32.



and when by baptism He is set apart to His life's work, heaven is again opened, and the voice of God proclaims, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." A second testimony of like nature is given to Him on the mountain of transfiguration, while heavenly forms reverentially come and hold converse with Him respecting His approaching suffering and death. A third He receives shortly before His death, in public, in the presence of a great multitude. And the traces of supernatural splendour in the midst of His humiliation are not confined to these. But a few times may angels appear on the scene during the conflict of His life; yet it is evident, as well in the wilderness of temptation as in the dark Gethsemane, that they stand willingly at the behest of Him, as their Lord and King. And afterwards, at His resurrection and ascension, their appearing glorifies the close—as before, the commencement—of His earthly history. And after the signs which accompanied His death on the cross, the earthquake which takes place at His resurrection shows that He, who became a little lower than the angels, is infinitely more than the angels.

It falls not within our design to reply to all the objections which from another standpoint may be brought, and actually have been brought, against most of the details here touched upon. Questions as to the actual occurrence, the historic credibility, and the immediate object of such miraculous facts are dealt with in treating of the life of Jesus. Here, however, we would in general show the point of view from which they must be regarded, and draw attention to their character as

worthy of God, in connection with the superhuman nature and dignity of the Redeemer. Those, indeed, who revere in the Lord nothing but the son of Mary, the sinless man, who was *morally* one with the Father, know not what to do with such facts, and will not rest until these have been set aside, first as matters of indifference, then as improbable, and finally as impossible. From this standpoint the miraculous birth becomes an absurdity; the song of the angel, a legend; the appearing of heavenly beings, "with their clapping of wings," to inhabitants of earth, the fruit of silly invention; the star of the Magi, as unhistoric as the *ignis fatuus* of nursery tales. The voices from heaven in honour of Jesus can then, it is self-evident, have resounded only in the imagination of the hearers, possibly also in that of Jesus Himself; and the glory on Tabor will be a vision of the half-awakened Peter or his fellow-witnesses. The signs at the death of the Lord are symbols, naturally unhistoric, of the mourning which Nature put on for the death of her greatest Son; and the appearing of angels at the resurrection or the ascension have no greater reality than must be ascribed to these two last events themselves. All this of an extraordinary character becomes a troublesome *hors d'œuvre* in the history of the perfect man, with which one after all knows not what to do: if it is not openly contradicted, it is tacitly set on one side. If the whole revelation of God in Christ consists in the fact that once in the course of the world's history one perfect man has appeared in the midst of so many imperfect ones, to what end should it be necessary to

encircle that noble head with an aureola of more than earthly brightness ?

But how is the whole aspect of things changed when we look at these and similar miraculous facts in the light of the Lord's *own* utterances concerning His origin and dignity ! If we hold fast to these His words, and allow them to mean what—according to the laws of a well-proved and hallowed exegesis—they alone *can* mean, then all which with regard to other excellent men would be supernatural or contranatural becomes with regard to Him natural in the highest degree ; and if we should see such a person presented to us without the halo of miracle around Him, it would produce upon us the same perplexing impression as if we saw the sun's disk arise in the heavens without a wreath of glittering rays. If He was truly one with the Father in nature and essence, angels are in place at His crib, as by the grave in which He rested ; extraordinary interventions of the heavenly world so little repel or disturb us, that, on the contrary, we should *à priori* expect them, and should have been more surprised had they been wanting than now they have actually taken place. It is in the highest sense of the word natural that the Father should not permit the Son to walk three-and-thirty years on earth, in the garb of a servant, without giving unequivocal testimony to Him, as His Son. If there is an infinitely closer connection between the natural world and the spiritual than is supposed by the great majority of persons, why might not His birth, His death, His resurrection have been indicated and saluted by extra-

ordinary phenomena in the visible creation? When should the earth tremble, if not at that terrible hour when it must drink in the blood of the God-man? when the sun hide its countenance, if not on the day in which its Creator and Lord goes down to death? A Gethsemane without an angelic manifestation would be, in our estimate, a coin without a reverse side; a resurrection from the grave without any special signs we should call a sun-rising without a dawn. The one belongs to the other. If it is really a God-man whose image the evangelists depict, the miraculous is a precious frame which is in perfect keeping with the entirely unique figure of the painting. The rejection of these miraculous facts is accordingly generally accompanied by the non-recognition or toning down of the Lord's testimony concerning Himself.

We cannot thus for a single moment admit that events like those mentioned form either very non-essential subordinate elements of the sacred history, or at least, after so many ages, without permanent value for the faith and life of the Christian. For when it is asserted that the transfiguration, for instance, originally formed no constituent part of the apostolic teaching, this assertion is arbitrariness itself. In all the three first Gospels it is emphatically presented in the foreground, and not less so in the Second Epistle of Peter; while the silence of John with regard to this heavenly scene may be sufficiently explained. Equally unfounded is the statement that a much lower degree of certainty attaches to the miraculous history of the Lord's childhood and

youth than to the main facts of His public life. While we admit that the proclamation of His first witnesses as a rule embraced only the period from the arising of the Baptist to the resurrection of the Lord,<sup>3</sup> it by no means follows from this that the history of the first years of His life, recorded by Matthew and Luke, calls forth legitimate distrust, on the ground of its miraculous character. For the porch is here in perfect harmony with the temple of the history of His public life; and it is not difficult to show that these accounts, too, are derived from thoroughly trustworthy sources. He, therefore, who attaches a high value to all that the Gospels communicate which is of a nature comprehensible for him, but on the other hand regards with a look of suspicion all that is miraculous; or indeed regards the words of the Lord as genuine or credible, but places the miraculous facts which accompany His manifestation on the list of cunningly devised fables, exercises a criticism which may be called the veriest caprice; since both kinds of accounts, the more and the less comprehensible, are supported by precisely the same evidences, external and internal, and both cohere so inseparably that they must be said to stand or fall together. How, for instance, can we understand the testimony given by John to the Messiah, if we do not admit the objective reality of the revelation at the baptism of the Lord? or explain the conversation on Elias at the coming down from the mountain of transfiguration, if it was preceded and called forth by no

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<sup>3</sup> Acts i. 21, 22.

manifestation whatever? It is by no means true that the significance and evidential force of these and similar miraculous facts is little or nothing for us. No doubt their primary adaptation was to the needs of their first witnesses; and a faith which rests exclusively or principally upon these testimonies of Jesus' more than earthly glory is certainly not the highest.<sup>4</sup> But though we lose the first sensuous impression of that which was here seen and heard of a miraculous nature, it does not at all follow from this that we could equally well forego the miracles themselves. What is no ground for the faith of the more matured believer may yet be a support for the faith of the less advanced. The question is first of all simply whether with good reason we may hold ourselves assured of the historic credibility of the particulars referred to. If so, they retain their force and value, although they did not fall within the sphere of our personal observation. A heavenly testimony, for example, given in an audible voice to the Son by the Father, is equally conclusive, whether it was given eighteen centuries, or less than eighteen minutes ago; it *affects* me far less in reading it than it did those who, above all, heard it, but it *says* to me still essentially the same thing. All the extraordinary Divine interventions in honour of our Lord justify my belief that He truly is that which He said He was; legitimate His high claims to my adoring homage, and unite to confirm my conviction that, as His person, so also His work was the

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<sup>4</sup> John xx. 29.

object of the unchangeable good-pleasure of the Father. Let him who unceasingly asserts that we could believe equally well in the Lord, even though all these things had either not happened or had not happened thus, take care lest he wish to be wiser than God, who, in giving us also these supports for our most holy faith, assuredly designed not that we should treat them with indifference or hide them in a dark corner, and still less that we should seek to break them to pieces in each other's presence.

That which has been said is of very special application to that event on which we must now more particularly dwell, we mean *the resurrection of the Lord*, with which the beginning of His glorification on earth was actually *entered on*.

If, as in the previous chapter, the burial of the Lord is presented as the last step on the ladder of His humiliation, the question arises, whether we must not reckon the beginning of His exaltation from the so-called *descent into hell* (Hades); in other words, from His appearing in the world of spirits during the intermediate state, of which mention is made by an apostle.<sup>5</sup> Certainly if our interpretation of this utterance is the true one, the Lord already at that time received the first recompence of the travail of His soul, and glorified His wondrous power in the deliverance of lost sinners. We do not, indeed, for a moment hesitate to testify with one of the best Christologians of our age: "He descended into the abode of the lost, into hell, there also to save that which would

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<sup>5</sup> 1 Pet. iii. 19; iv. 6; cf. Acts ii. 31.



be saved ; to the deepest depth of all did the Lord of heaven descend. This deepest humiliation of all, however, it was that shattered the bonds of this prison, and broke the power of its king ; so that we, if we cleave believingly to Christ, have no longer to fear the destructive influence of the false serpent, whose head He has bruised.”<sup>6</sup> If, with Calvin and the Heidelberg Catechism, one must here think definitely of the penal anguish and dismay which the Lord underwent during His whole sufferings, and especially on the cross, we should have to reckon His descent into hell as forming part of His deep humiliation ; in connection with our view, on the other hand, it may be regarded as already to some extent belonging to the beginning of His exaltation, or at least as forming the transition from the one to the other. In connection, however, with the difficulty of penetrating more deeply into this whole question than we have already done, and the impossibility of more nearly presenting to oneself the *how* of a fact, of which we readily acknowledge the *that*, we shall surely be excused if we rather direct our glance to an event which may be said to be the great turning-point on the path of the Lord’s deep humiliation. In answer to the question with what justice an apostle, after making mention of His obedience unto the death of the cross, could add, “*therefore* hath God also exceedingly highly exalted Him,” we think at once of the words of the Angel, “He is not here, He is *risen*.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Sartorius, *Christol. Vorles.*, p. 61.

<sup>7</sup> [On the reality and supreme importance of this great event, compare the Author’s *Christian Dogmatics*, pp. 563—571.]

To that which Paul had delivered to the Church at Corinth, as he himself had received it, belonged first of all (*ἐν πρώτοις*) the fact that Christ, after He had died and was buried, *rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures.*<sup>s</sup> It is not difficult to form for ourselves a clear conception of the proper *nature* of this resurrection.—The *Person* who rises again is the same whom we saw bleed and die upon the cross; not the man Jesus Christ alone, and just as little the Logos without the assumed humanity, but the God-man, “who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death.” While the Divine and the human nature were not even in the grave separated the one from the other, they appear afresh in their inseparable unity when the Lord leaves His last resting-place. The human nature, however, with which the eternal personal Logos is united, although remaining in its essence the same, now displays an entirely different character from before. He beholds the scene of His suffering behind Him, and advances with every step towards a glorification such as His humanity before the last suffering and death has never known.—The *condition*, out of which we see the God-man return to life, is the real and true condition of death. Not in appearance, but in reality, had He breathed out the last breath upon Calvary, and commended His liberated spirit into the hands of the Father. So far thus from awaking simply from a swoon, He returns, on forsaking the grave, to the

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<sup>s</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 4 [or, *was raised*. The passive form is used by preference by the Apostle, except in 1 Thess. iv. 14. “Lived” appears instead of “rose,” in the oldest MSS. of Rom. xiv. 9.]

lost life really laid down by Him. The circumstances which preceded, accompanied, or followed His death—the spear-thrust of the soldier, the exultation of His enemies and the grief of His friends, the manner of the burial finally, and the word of the Risen One Himself, “I am He that liveth, and was dead,” raise the certainty of His death above all doubt. It is true, He lived, in a higher sense of the word, while His body rested in the sepulchral cave. His departed spirit was with full consciousness in the Father’s own hands, shared with the penitent malefactor the blessedness of paradise opened to Him, and had the heart-gladdening retrospect of a completed task, as well as a joyous anticipation of the glorious resurrection. But that hour itself, in which spirit and body were again united together, first dawned for Him *on the third day*. Buried on the evening of the Friday, He arose with the first light of the Sunday morning, and was thus three different days—although not three whole days—in the heart of the earth. The forty hours, or nearly so, which He had passed in the grave, were thus long enough to confirm for friend and foe the certainty of His death, and yet not so long that the word of prophecy should not receive its fulfilment: “Thou wilt not suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption.” And since our Lord Himself had foretold that He would raise up the temple of His body in three days, we also recognise in this space of time the intervention of a higher power, which in this way fulfilled the word of His prediction, and renewed the sign of Jonah in Him who had spoken of Himself as a greater than Jonah.

If inquiry is made as to the *power* by which He returned to life again, the Gospel declares to us, now that He *was raised* (ἡγέρθη) by the glory of the Father, now that He *rose* (ἀνέστη),<sup>9</sup> because He Himself had power to lay down His life and to take it again. We feel, on a little reflection, that the one conception is only in apparent contradiction with the other. As everywhere, so is it also here God the Father who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which are not as though they were. But the Son is eternally one with the Father, and has received of the Father to have life in Himself. Just because He possessed life independently in Himself was it absolutely impossible—as we see *à posteriori*—that He should be held of death. The fulness of the Spirit which was in Him, and already in the days of His humiliation had thrice snatched the prey from the power of the grave, could not but reanimate His own body, when the fore-appointed hour had struck.<sup>10</sup> And when we see the temple of His body thus rise again from the outraged ruins, we with equal confidence repeat, “He that built all this is God,” as we do appeal to His own mysterious utterance, “Destroy (break down) this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”

The *circumstances* which accompanied the resurrection of the Lord may—we can here only briefly notice it—be termed equally astonishing and glorious. It is true the

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<sup>9</sup> [For the interchangeable use of these forms by the Evangelists, in reporting the same discourse of the Lord, comp. Mark viii. 31, with Matt. xvi. 21, and Luke ix. 22.]

<sup>10</sup> [Comp. the deeply significant words of the Apostle, Col. i. 18.]

moment itself of the Lord's return to life was not described for later confessors by any of His witnesses. And who indeed *could* have worthily described that unknown feeling which filled the breast of the Saviour, when in the gloomy sepulchre He awoke from the heavy sleep of death? who sketch the joy of everlasting life, with which He left that resting-place, and in the sanctuary of Creation anew consecrated Himself to the Father, and, as Lord of the angels, issued His commands to His reverently waiting servants? In truth, that silence of the sacred narratives as to the actual beginning of the new life of the Risen One breathes an exalted solemnity, more deeply impressive than any words. And then, what they *do* tell us sufficiently proves that on this page also of the miraculous history the beauty and the truth of the facts are most intimately combined. That peaceful garden; that gently breaking morn; that lovely group of women; that securely sleeping watch; then the bright angel-manifestation, the terror, the anxiety, the awakening expectation, the gladness of many; and as distinguished from all this, the heavenly calm upon the face and in the language of the Risen One,—all this forms such an inimitable whole, that whoever has once contemplated it can never again forget it, and that, read for the thousandth time, it still remains ever fresh and fair. It is as though the angels of the Resurrection, before they returned heavenwards, had communicated something of their own eternal youth to those pages of the Gospel which present to us the image of the risen Christ.

He who would form an accurate conception of the

resurrection-life of the Lord will no doubt ask as to the *body* and the *place of abode* of the Risen One during those forty days. With regard to the latter of these, assuredly the only confession of wisdom is, "We know not." Certainly there is no single ground for the opinion that the Lord lived in an entirely secluded circle of relatives and friends, and thence showed Himself from time to time to His disciples. On the other hand, it must just as little be forgotten that there was an undoubted difference between His whole heavenly life *after* His ascension, and that life in the first stage of its glorification *before* this event. Enough that we see Him again and again manifest Himself visibly, out of an invisible world, of which the map can be drawn by no mortal, but which exists as really as the visible world of the senses, and perhaps much more closely surrounds and encircles us than we in our short-sightedness are apt to think. Perhaps, too, we may suppose His activity in the world of spirits, to which we have before referred, to have been continued during the interval between His resurrection and ascension. As regards the body with which He appears in *this* world, it unquestionably is and remains, not less than before His death, a true *human* body. His eating and drinking, His speaking and breathing, the prints of the nails and the wound in His side, prove sufficiently with what right He could say, "A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." And yet it is equally clear, on the other hand, that this body was raised above the confining limits within which our body of humiliation on this side the grave ordinarily

moves. Unexpectedly He comes, and suddenly He disappears; now He is seen in one place, and within a very short interval elsewhere; closed doors do not exclude Him; those who formerly knew Him do not at once recognise Him; enemies nowhere behold Him, wherever He appears. Thus it seems as if we meet with a twofold presentation with regard to the body of the Risen One; and at all times so much stress has been laid upon the one side or the other, that the side apparently opposed to it has always been more or less sacrificed. But why hesitate to accept both, *side by side*, in undiminished force? Why not rather speak of a real, but not ordinary body; of a glorified, and yet not merely apparent body; of the same body, but with wholly different properties than before? No doubt there remain, here also, unsolved questions, but they would less perplex us if we less frequently forgot that the bodily condition of one brought back from the dead—and much more that of the God-man raised anew to life—lies wholly beyond the limits of our observation and experience; and that thus reason possesses not the slightest right, in this domain, authoritatively to determine what is possible and what is impossible. We may not apply as a standard to this history our fallible, perhaps arbitrary, conceptions of a glorified body; we must, on the other hand, form, and so far as necessary modify, our conception with regard thereto in the light of this history alone. He who here says, "It is impossible, and therefore untrue," acts with the extreme of rashness, so long as he has not proved that God's omnipotence is limited, or else that Christ is not



the God-man. He, on the other hand, who first asks whether the case has been proved by satisfactory witnesses, then whether it harmonises with what we learn elsewhere concerning the nature and dignity of the Lord, and in this way comes to the conclusion—*therefore it must be possible*—has chosen a highly rational and perfectly justifiable standpoint.

The only question remaining is, whether the *certainty* of the resurrection of our Lord can be satisfactorily defended on purely historical grounds. After what we have expressly advanced in our *Life of Jesus*, it may suffice that we here briefly but emphatically insist on the *force of the proofs* adduced in favour of this event, and the *invalidity of the objections* which are brought forward against it. As regards the former, we should be deceived were we to suppose that we have no other guarantee for the certainty of this resurrection than the word of the Lord's first witnesses; although their testimony still claims the first attention. It is true, the number of these witnesses is amply sufficient, their competency raised above all doubt, and the nature of the manifestations granted them such that self-deception was not only morally, but naturally impossible. But, it must not be overlooked, with their voice also unites that of the predictions and types of the Old Testament, which justified the expectation of such a resurrection of the God-man. His continued self-manifestation as Lord and King of the Kingdom of God, the outpouring of the Holy Ghost—the whole history of the Christian Church, in a word—shows that He lives and

reigns. And above all, the founding and establishing of the Christian Church by the preaching of the Apostles, in the midst of Jews and Gentiles, is and remains in our estimation an insoluble enigma, unless the Lord really rose from the dead. In truth, it requires some courage to speak of a "resurrection-hypothesis," in presence of a miracle which has more guarantees for its historic character than many a universally acknowledged account in the history of the world. When the shadow of the gloomy night is succeeded by the light of a clear noon-day, must it then be called an "hypothesis" that the sun has meanwhile risen in the east? If *anything* has come forth clear as day out of the renewed controversy awakened upon the question, it is that, without the resurrection of the Lord, just as little the rise of the Christian Church, as its preservation to the present day, can be adequately explained. It is plain that it was not the faith of the disciples which invented the resurrection of Christ, but, conversely, nothing but the actual resurrection of Christ could and did save the faith of the disciples from an otherwise inevitable shipwreck. The triumph of their faith is not conceivable, if Jesus Himself did not show Himself alive before their eyes; and this last, again, could not have taken place, if He did not bodily rise from the dead—unless we are to believe that the Faithful Witness Himself contributed to mislead His first friends by a deceptive appearance. He who denies the miracle of the resurrection must consequently believe the absurdity that all the Apostles and first friends of the Lord found in a creation of their own fantasy the

strength for a matchless working and warring; that they succeeded by means of an idealistic monomania, which was in diametrical opposition to all realities, in gaining over the Jewish and Gentile world to the accursed Crucified One, as Christ and Lord; that Saul, too, surrendered himself a prisoner to the voice of his deceived imagination; that the whole new creation called into life by Christ is the product of an inexplicable delusion; that the whole history of the world entered upon a new phase in consequence of belief in one or more (subjective) visions. For our part, we frankly acknowledge that our idea of a moral order of the world and our whole conception of God revolts against such a theory, and that we should find much more difficulty in retaining our belief in a wise, holy, and supreme Ruler of the World, were we to reject the resurrection of the Lord, than now that we believe it on the testimony of the Gospels.—Or are, then, the *objections* adduced with unwearied zeal against this event really insuperable? Appeal is made to the *differences* in the narratives, which we are told there can be no thought of reconciling. But with whatever talent the attempt may be made to bring into direct *opposition* accounts which are in their proper place *side by side*, all that can be deduced at most from this difference is the uncertainty of some of the circumstances, but in no case the unreality of the miraculous fact itself. On this point also the so-called Modern Theology in the main only repeats that which was brought out with masterly acumen by its renowned forerunner, Lessing, and is thus exposed to being ever afresh referred back to that which

has been earlier or later said in refutation of its contradiction, and which appears to have been only too soon forgotten. He who takes up the different narratives of the Evangelists, with the demand that they shall furnish him with an exact statistical account of all that happened, instead of giving a faithful reflection of the first Easter-joy in their differing forms, does not simply act unreasonably, but destroys for himself the enjoyment of one of the fairest scenes earth has ever witnessed. "Rightly regarded, these diversities are an important proof for the truth of the resurrection. It is indeed remarkable that just here, where Christian faith seeks, and really finds, the sealing of all its certainties, the security of the notary, that of external protocols, must so greatly retire into the background. Faith must find its support here also, not in the letter, but in the essential contents of the facts. But this essential feature here comes definitely to light, and reveals itself, precisely by means of the diversities; for precisely these are the sign of the wholly unwonted effect produced by the resurrection of the Lord in the circle of His Apostles. As in a festive motet the voices blend together in apparent confusion, apparently separate and come into opposition the one to the other, and yet all together blend in the execution of one theme, in full but also sublime and blissful harmony, so also here."<sup>11</sup> Or should it really prevent our believing in the resurrection of the Lord, that He did not even once appear to the people, or to His

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<sup>11</sup> Lange, *Commentary on Matthew*, in the *Bible-Work*; observations on Ch. xxviii.

*enemies?* But surely the objection drawn from the fact that the Lord did not show Himself alive to this wide circle has been so frequently refuted that it becomes almost impossible seriously to repeat it.<sup>12</sup> He who truly recognises the Lord in His exalted character as God-man; he who considers the crime the Jewish nation had committed in its rejection of the Messiah; he, finally, who thinks of the nature of that faith which He required from friend and foe, will regard it as not only comprehensible, but as in the highest degree worthy of God and of Christ, that the Risen One was manifested, "not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before of God." We doubt, then, whether any one would still lay particular stress on this difficulty, unless the miraculous character of the event in question itself remained after all the great stumbling-block. But here we must again call attention to the *Personality* of the Risen One, as that in which is to be found the only, but also sufficient, key for the solving of the difficulty, and once more ask the opponent as to his right to the statement that miracles either cannot be performed, or cannot be recognised, or cannot be believed. It seems to us, honestly spoken, unnecessary to waste a single word more in proving the arbitrary character of these assertions.

By slow gradations we have attained to the height necessary for comprehending the *beginning of the exaltation* of the deeply humbled Lord, in the miracle of His

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<sup>12</sup> See the *Christian Dogmatics*, p. 568. This objection is dealt with more at large in the author's *Leven van Jezus*, iii. p. 531, ff.

resurrection. That miracle is certainly first of all a striking manifestation of the dignity of His whole person. It is true, not a few attach to this fact but a very subordinate importance, and do not fear to declare that Jesus would have been none the less conqueror over sin and death, even though He had never been seen alive on earth after His death.<sup>13</sup> But they forget that if the Lord was not seen again alive, no one would have recognised Him as such a conqueror, or have experienced in himself Christ's victorious power; and equally, that He could not be seen again, if He had not really returned from the grave. All stress is laid upon the fact that the Lord lives and works imperishably as to the spirit; while His bodily resurrection on the third day—even where it is admitted as a fact—stands in no necessary connection with our Christian-religious belief.<sup>14</sup> But such a spiritual living on, what is it but the same as is on good grounds believed of all, and definitely of the pious departed? and is there not a world-wide difference between this idea and that which the Gospel proclaims to us concerning the resuscitation of Him who was slain on the cross? Even if any one will not acknowledge this last event as the basis of his own "Christian-religious" belief, it can hardly be denied that it has been the basis of the edifice of the Christian Church. Assuredly it is in itself comparatively indifferent,

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<sup>13</sup> H. Lang; e.g., in *German Switzerland*, who asserts that Christ still lives, while denying His bodily resurrection from the grave.

<sup>14</sup> Scholten, Professor at Leyden.

whether God raised our Lord from the dead on the third day or on the fourth ; but since He Himself expressly predicted the former of these, and not the latter, it is by no means without importance for us to know whether, and to what extent, this His definite prediction was also really fulfilled. If Jesus continues to live only spiritually, not bodily, then has His own word been contradicted by the issue ; and it follows, also, that He deceived His Apostles, and the Apostles the Church, by a false testimony. For it surely will not be denied in good earnest that the Apostles astonished and conquered the world by the preaching, not of a Christ who still continues to live spiritually, but of a Christ who was raised bodily from the dead ; and that, not even to refer to the Epistles of Paul, already the Acts of the Apostles become one series of improbabilities and contradictions, if the bodily resurrection of Jesus remains something which is less certain than His death and burial. It behoves not us indeed to suspect the heart of those who say that they revere and love Jesus, although His resurrection is for them something indifferent or even unacceptable. But, however it may be with their inner religious feeling, their Christianity is at least not that of the Apostles ; and we doubt whether the Christian community which feels itself attached to this last would ever find satisfaction in being called to celebrate Easter Sunday as the festival of the regeneration of our spirit, or the day of the Ascension as the festival of our immortality, while it is at the same time added that the narratives, to which this conception attaches itself, no longer deserve to be classed



in the list of facts uninvented and surpassing all power of invention.<sup>15</sup>

How glorious the harmony, on the other hand, which the image of Christ displays on all sides, if the miracle of His bodily resurrection stands immoveably firm! Upon His former life this resurrection sets the glittering crown; to His new life it is the sublime inauguration. It is in harmony with His previous *experiences*. We see angels in Joseph's garden, but also angels in Ephratah's fields. The guards we see flee, but also Herod we saw tremble before the star of the nativity. As He was born by the power of the Holy Ghost, so is He now raised by the glory of the Father; and as the Gospel of His birth was proclaimed to poor shepherds, so are the glad tidings of the resurrection first announced to mourning and desolate ones.—With His *deeds* also does this His resurrection most strikingly harmonise. He who here in His own power takes back His life, is the same who before restored three departed ones to their friends by a word; and while He then dynamically ruled the material, it is now seen in His own person that this His dominion is an absolutely unlimited one.—The resurrection, finally, is a response to the fairest and boldest *declarations*. "I do always those things which please the Father," exclaims the Son: is His witness of Himself

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<sup>15</sup> Very justly does Martensen say, *Dogmatik*, p. 360, "The denial of the miracle of the Resurrection is not simply the denial of an isolated historical fact, but the denial of the whole prophetic view of the world in the Christian Church, which has in the Resurrection its starting-point."

true? Yea, Amen, says the Father, and raises Him up; and thus declares that no stain attaches to His title of nobility. "I and the Father are one," He cried: was that more than an empty boast? Yea, Amen, says the Father, and manifests Him to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of sanctification, by the resurrection from the dead. Thus in the hour of resurrection the crown of thorns is exchanged for a crown of glory, and that is as it were repaired by God, which men had planned to the injury of His Anointed. Henceforth the cloud begins to separate, the sun of His glory breaks through; and while the mortal is swallowed up of life, He lives to God, not more fully, but more freely and joyfully than before, not only without defilement, but without temptation to sin. Thus the resurrection affords a counterpoise to all the humiliation which preceded it; and that which the Father previously thrice declared in *words*, He repeats and seals now, once more, by a wholly unique *deed*.

Not without weighty reasons did we pause comparatively long at this great turning-point in the history of the Lord. It is not only of inestimable value for the right appreciation of His *person*, but stands at the same time in direct connection with His prophetic, priestly, and kingly *work*. We can only touch on this slightly, and in few words. Our *justification*, our *sanctification*, and our complete *redemption* has its root in the new life of the Lord.

It is the eternally precious doctrine of the Gospel, that the Lord has by His death made atonement for sin,

brought in an everlasting righteousness, and perfectly satisfied every requirement of the Divine law for us and in our place. As a sacrifice for sin He gave up His soul to death; and that He was Himself convinced that He had done all that the Father's will required of Him is evident from His last cry of triumph. But *was* all really accomplished which "must be done to make atonement for the sins of the people"? It is not enough to calm us on such a vital point that we receive the testimony of an apostle, or even of an angel: God Himself must speak from heaven, if the possibility of even the last doubt is to disappear. All was finished on Calvary; and yet in a certain sense nothing, so long as He did not Himself impress the seal upon the voluntary offering of His Son. And now, that seal is given in the resurrection of Christ before the eye of heaven and earth. Or what, if there had been anything wanting in that sacrifice of obedient love, would God have accepted the imperfect for the perfect, the unfinished for the finished, the will—if we may so speak—for the deed? Nay, verily, if His flaming eye had seen one flaw or defect in the work of the Mediator of the New Covenant, He might perhaps have been able to forgive, but could not possibly crown. Precisely the resurrection of Christ shows that the Father had accepted the sacrifice presented by the Son on account of sin; and all doubting as to the redeeming power of the death of the Lord is not only unwarranted, but even sinful, because it openly contradicts God Himself. Thus also thought Paul with regard to it, when he said, Raised again for our justification, immediately after

saying, Delivered for our offences; and confirms the impossibility that any one should now condemn believers simply by the words, "It is Christ that died, yea rather, *that is risen again.*"<sup>16</sup> And we may proceed yet further. As the resurrection shows that Christ is really the Mediator ordained of God, so does it at the same time guarantee to us the personal possession of the atonement effected by Him; since He lives to make us by His resurrection personal partakers of the salvation He obtained for us by His death. And that He is perfectly qualified for this is evident, when we see all that was great and glorious which He had ever testified of Himself most wondrously sealed by His resurrection. Of Him who by His own power took away the keys from death, we cannot indeed ask whether He possesses the power to give eternal life to as many as the Father has given Him. And that, with the qualification for this, He also combines the unchangeable disposition to do so, who can doubt who contemplates, in His intercourse with His first disciples after His resurrection, the striking image of that which He will be for all? Thus alike the perfect victory which He in dying gained over death; manifested by His resurrection, and the approbation given to Him by the Father, is the security for the acquittal of His people. If Christ were not raised, we should be yet in our sins; and vain were our belief in His redeeming power. But if we, being enemies, were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, how much

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<sup>16</sup> Rom. iv. 25; viii. 34.

the more shall we now, being reconciled, be saved by His life!

As the Lord's resurrection is thus the crowning and continuation of His redeeming activity, so is it not less the great power for the *renewing* and *sanctifying* of His people. What we observe in the sacred history, that the certainty of the resurrection of the Master inspired His first friends with a wholly new and higher life, and that their communion with Him became precisely for this reason wholly different from that which it ever was before, is in this respect of high significance. If I know nothing more of the Lord than that, after an excellent life, He died upon the cross, and, like all the departed, lives on as to His spirit, I may then indeed think of Him with admiration or gratitude; but living, personal, abiding communion with Him I can only have when I know that He at this very moment as surely lives for my salvation as I am conscious of living myself. Perfectly just is the remark, "The Christianity of those who deny the miracles, and especially the resurrection, may be the Christianity of the disciples after the death on the cross and before the resurrection—a Christianity in which one exclaims with Peter, 'To whom shall we go?' with the women one may sit at the grave in contemplation and adoration, with the disciples unite in the expectation of an unknown future, with Thomas be in solitude a prey to silent despair."<sup>17</sup>

We will not affirm that such a state of mind is defi-

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<sup>17</sup> Chantepie de la Saussaye.

nitely anti-Christian, but certainly one cannot apply to it the words, "Old things are passed away: behold, all things are become new." This last can, according to Paul's express teaching and his own example, be said only of those who know Christ *in the power of His resurrection*. And it must be so, since the resurrection of the Lord is not only the *type* of theirs, but also the *incentive* thereto, and the *power* to effect it. The *type*: for as Christ was raised from the dead, so also it behoves His redeemed ones to walk in newness of life. As His resurrection-life was a life of unsullied purity, active love, blissful peace, so have all His people themselves died to sin, that they may live to God in purity, love, and peace. And just as He died before He gloriously rose again, so does the painful death of the old man still on every occasion precede the birth and growth of the new. The *incentive*: for the resurrection of the Lord directs us to the glorious issue by which the life of obedience and love is followed, and by that very thing incites us to lay aside the old man with his works, and to put on the new man, who is created after the image of God. And the *power* to effect this, how otherwise could it flow into the members of the spiritual body, than from communion with a *living* Head? If Jesus is not risen, as He said (*i.e.*, bodily), He is also not the Christ, the Son of the living God; then He does not continue from heaven personally to affect me; He does not *Himself* support me in the warfare I have to wage for my sanctification. Remaining under the power of death, He cannot possibly inspire His people with new

life. Only His triumph renders it impossible for them that believe any longer to serve sin.

And does it not now become self-evident that our complete *redemption* from the power of sin and death finds its highest security in the resurrection of the Lord? For this event is certainly, not to speak of anything more, according to the constant teaching of the Gospel, "a sure pledge of our blessed resurrection."<sup>18</sup> It will be felt at once that something infinitely higher than the mere immortality of the soul in the modern philosophic sense is here in question. Even assuming that, apart from the Lord's resurrection, this were demonstrable for reason, it would still ever be the question whether such an incorporeal form of life would in itself be particularly desirable for man, or blissful for the sinner. But something infinitely higher is proclaimed to us in the words, "I am the resurrection and the life." Not merely an uninterrupted spiritual life, but a restoration of the whole man, a resuscitation, therefore, of the dead body, to be again united with the departed spirit, is that which is promised in the Gospel. And observe how intimately this hope is connected with the resurrection of the Lord. Precisely this event guarantees to us the *possibility* of a future resurrection: that which has once taken place cannot be regarded as afterwards inconceivable, and the same power of God which restored the desecrated temple of the Lord's body can also change the body of our humiliation, and make it like unto

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<sup>18</sup> [Allusion to the words of the *Heidelberg Catechism*, Ans. 45.]



His glorious body. The *certainty* of this hope is in the same way irrefutably established. Jesus lives ; but thus, then, are all His assertions confirmed ; this among others : "Because I live, ye shall live also." His relation as Head of His people imperatively demands that, where He already lives, His members should not continue in death ; and that, where the firstfruits are already gathered in, the full harvest should also follow. Yea, His Spirit is already in the believing heart the pledge that He who raised up Christ out of the dead shall also quicken their mortal bodies.

And when, finally, does the *glory* of this resurrection-life beam forth to us thus uncloudedly, as when we cast our eye upon His life after death ? The forty days during which He showed Himself alive are the mirror and type of the joy of the new life which is laid up for all His people. They, too, continue that life which was only apparently broken in the hour of death, and, like the Lord, carry over into the new life their consciousness, personality, and memory. They, too, are raised from a wearisome body, called to a holy and blissful task, united again to all with whom they felt themselves bound by the higher bonds of the spirit. They, too, after and by means of the intermediate state, approach an hour of perfect glorification at the last coming of the Lord, even as after His resurrection He looked for an ascension morning. This is His new life, the assurance of the perfect triumph which He shall celebrate over all His foes and theirs, when the last enemy shall eventually be destroyed. It is the expectation of this which even

now places on their lips the song, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

From this future our eye is yet once more directed back to the past. In the history of Christ in the flesh we now turn over the last page, and see the beginning of His exaltation *crowned by His ascension on the fortieth day.*

On this point also men have found a difficulty, in the fact that some of the Evangelists and Apostles have passed over the ascension in silence; but this is to be explained by a due examination of the significance of this event. This ascension on the fortieth day, as it forms the final point of the first visible manifestation of the Lord, so does it again form a transition to a new, but by no means last, period of His wondrous history. In this is to be sought, we think, the deepest ground for the great fact of Olivet being presented in so little prominence by the Apostles. It is yet no point of *termination*, but a point of *repose*. The Lord is gone, it is true, but to come again; and the whole life of heaven, into which the ascension introduced Him, is only one great century-embracing interval between His first and His second *manifestation*. When a John and a Matthew in this hope saw Him depart, they could not feel irresistibly impelled to describe with diplomatic accuracy the last moment of their intercourse with Him, as though by this ascension an end were at once and for ever put to all connection between their Master and the earth. The angels of the ascension themselves declared that the history of His visible appearing is not completed, but only for a moment broken off, hereafter to be *con-*

*tinued.*<sup>19</sup> At the same time it is not unknown to us that the history of the Lord's visible ascension in our days encounters yet louder opposition than that of His resurrection, and that not a few who do not as yet publicly assail the latter, nevertheless most strongly doubt the former. Are there no pulpits even in our own land in which on the fortieth day the congregation hears that miracle publicly contested, to celebrate which they have assembled in the house of God? But we here confidently appeal to the proof several times given, by ourselves and others, that in this respect also we are not following cunningly devised fables. The diversity of the Gospel accounts with regard to the ascension is anything but contradiction; the silence of some writers of the New Testament as to it is perfectly explicable, and the miracle itself affords insuperable difficulties only for him who—in opposition to Christ's own utterances and those of His Apostles—recognises in Christ nothing but man, and in His body, even after His resurrection, only an ordinary human body. In opposition to this the words of N. Beets retain their force, "The *miracle* lies not in His ascension, but in His descent into Hades; not in His taking His place at the right hand of God, but in the incarnation of the Word." He who stumbles at the conception that "in rising through the clouds one draws nearer to heaven," must, in order to be consistent, feel a secret shame as often as, in the sacred hour of prayer, he

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<sup>19</sup> Compare what is said in my Commentary on Luke (Lange's series) on ch. xxiv. 49—53, pp. 415—417 of the *third* edition of the original work.

commits the sublime folly of raising his eyes on high. That the ascension of the Lord *begins* with His being bodily raised above the dust of the earth by no means forces upon us the defective idea "that heaven exists somewhere just above Palestine, and that there are paths by which one can go in and out of this heaven." And he who regards as incredible first the appearing of the angels, and then their promise as to a visible return of the Lord, presupposes the very thing which has still to be proved, that the universal expectation of the Christian Church with regard thereto is baseless and ridiculous.

It is in some respects difficult—that we readily admit—to form for ourselves a clear *conception* of this bodily ascension of the Lord, to the reality of which, on the authority of the sacred narratives, we hold with immovable firmness. In connection with the conception of the heaven of glory, in which is the throne of the Omnipresent One, as a *place* in the vast universe, we must feel a lively sense of the limitation of our human thought. Scripture nevertheless sets us the example, in speaking of heaven, of pointing not merely to a happy *condition*, but to a certain *place* in creation, which it depicts to us under the fairest colours. And why should the thought necessarily be rejected as absurd, that a definite place exists in the immeasurable creation, in which the Omnipresent One reveals His glory yet more immediately, and grants to enjoy His blessedness yet more abundantly, than anywhere else? To this place it is that we confess the risen Lord was carried up, through sky and clouds, and conceive of His ascension as the decisive transition from

the condition of glorification in its initial stage to the life of perfect glorification. From this it naturally follows that we look upon this ascension as a change of locality, in the proper sense of that term, in consequence of which the Lord returns thither, where according to His Divine nature He was before,<sup>20</sup> and, as regards His human nature, is crowned with a glory and joy such as was never tasted by Him in the days of His deep humiliation. The humanity assumed by Him is thus glorified in communion with the Godhead, without, however, the former being resolved into the latter, or losing its peculiar character. In consequence of this union—great is the mystery of Godliness—He is in respect of His Deity omnipresent and supremely glorified, while the humanity shares in the glorification of the Godhead, without becoming omnipresent.<sup>21</sup> We prefer accordingly to describe the ascension of the Lord as that great event by which, as a recompence for His sufferings and death, He was glorified alike as to His human and as to His Divine nature, without the peculiar characteristics of either being effaced.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> John vi. 62 ; xvi. 28.

<sup>21</sup> On the Lutheran doctrine of the *ubiquity* of Christ's glorified body, see the *Chr. Dogm.* pp. 573, 574.

<sup>22</sup> With the old Reformed Dogmatists we thus describe it as a "*real and local translation of Christ from this world into the highest heaven ;*" and term it, in opposition to those who assume only a "*disappearing from sight*" (*visibilis disparatio*), a passing from one place to another, in consequence of which Christ is now as to the body absent from us. To speak with Calvin, there is a "*vera et realis loci mutatio, cujus terminus est locus seu spatium quoddam definitivum, in quo, veluti palatio suo regali et augusto,*

It will surely not be necessary here more than briefly to glance at the majesty of that *exaltation*, of which Christ in the flesh was made partaker at His glorious ascension. With it was for ever ended that life of humiliation which He had here led for three-and-thirty years, and the name that is above every name became an abundant compensation for so many a name of dishonour patiently borne by Him here below. Henceforth His outward condition is brought again into perfect harmony with His inner worth, and the highest desire of His Divine-human heart in the gloomy hour of suffering is now for ever fulfilled. The Son reposes again in the bosom of the Father, after all His toil and conflict; the King of the Kingdom of God is clothed with a splendour proportionate to the exalted character of His dominion; the Son of man sits at the right hand of God, and His personal glorification is at the same time that of our whole deeply dishonoured race. Assuredly, even though His ascension had brought to the world no inestimable blessing, he who loves the Saviour must already have rejoiced, on His own account, that His word, "I go unto the Father," has received so glorious a fulfilment. But with regard to the mediatorial work of the Lord, also, it can be sufficiently shown that this, far from being in any way arrested or hindered by His departure from the earth, is, on the contrary, in this very way continued, advanced, and brought

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Christus corpore suo residet, summe gloriosus, non magis ullis conclusus angustiis, quam cum in hoc sublunari orbe et pro arbitrio ambularet, quocumque vellet." See the passages, cited by Ebrard, *Chr. Dogmatik*, ii. p. 243.

nearer to its completion. Even when we look at His own parting discourses and promises alone, we gain a multitude of proofs for the wondrous statement, "It is expedient for you that I go away." Yes, His going is a going before, a going to prepare a place, and afterwards to come again, is the great condition under which, on His side the communication, on that of the disciples the reception, of the gifts of the Holy Ghost becomes possible. As is evident alike from the nature of the case, and from history, the ascension is the crown upon His prophetic life, the continuation of His priestly life, and the inauguration of His kingly life. Thereby is His word fulfilled; His life becomes one heavenly intercession and salutation from within the innermost sanctuary; His throne is ascended from Olivet. No wonder, indeed, that also the Lord's Apostles, that especially the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, frequently speak with a sublime fervour of His exaltation as an indispensable link in the chain of His redemptive work. But enough, as often as we contrast the beginning of the Lord's exaltation here below with His deep humiliation we feel that such a conclusion to His earthly history is the meet one for such a beginning and such a middle; and that, so to speak, the one half of the ring exactly fits into the other.



## PART III.

## THE GOD-MAN IN GLORY.

HAVING reached the last important turning-point upon the path of our contemplation, we feel ourselves involuntarily impelled to pause, and look back once more upon the path left behind us. In seeking to sketch in broad outline the image of Christ according to Scripture, and in doing so to place ourselves—as once John placed himself—at the standpoint of a believing contemplation, we rose first with reverent shrinking to the heights of eternity. In the light of sacred revelation we saw the Son of God before His incarnation, in His whole unique relation to God His Father, to the creation called into being by Him, to the whole human race, and especially to the Israelitish people. As a natural result this conception, based upon the teaching of the Gospel, came into constant collision with many a philosophic presentation of the image of Christ, commended on different sides in our day. This was in an increasing degree the case when, passing in thought from the heights of eternity to the fulness of the time, we would contemplate Christ in the flesh. His voluntary humiliation we learnt to recognise as the deed of infinite love, by which He who was from all eternity in the likeness of God, in a miracu-

lous manner took on Him human nature of the Virgin Mary. His earthly manifestation presented itself before us, not merely as that of the pure human being, who had in an independent manner so developed Himself that He at last *became* even wholly sinless; but as that of the spotlessly holy God-man, who on earth also was one in nature and essence with the Father and the Holy Ghost, though made like unto His brethren in all points, save only sin. Thus contemplating Him, we felt ourselves in a position to appreciate at least to some extent worthily the depth of His self-humiliation, and could accompany Him upon the ever-descending path, from the manger to the cross, from the cross to the grave. But here the way began before our eye gradually to turn from the depth to the height. After a cursory glance at the traces of more than earthly glory which were already displayed during His walking on earth, we paused especially at the great fact of the resurrection, and learnt to regard it, under the guidance of its first witnesses, not merely as a continued development of the life of the Lord—which was not wholly extinguished by the cross—but as a miraculous restoration of life by the power of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. We gazed upon Him as He ascended visibly to heaven, and were anew convinced how rash and arbitrary is the criticism which would brand as a forgery the last page of the history of the appearing of the Son of God upon earth. And now we yet stand in spirit upon the brow of Olivet, but can this be the end of our believing investigation? A single reminiscence from the testimony of Scripture concerning the glorified Christ

convincing us at once of the contrary. "The life that He liveth He liveth unto God," declares an infallible apostle,<sup>1</sup> and if only comparatively little is made known to us in the Gospel touching the heavenly life of the Redeemer, yet is that little sufficient to show us that also *the God-man in glory*, not less than the Son of God before His incarnation, or the Christ in the flesh, has His own *history*. To the questions: in what condition does the glorified Son of man now exist? to what activity is His present life devoted? in what relation does He constantly stand to each one of His believing ones, and to His whole Church? what has mankind further to expect from Him, and into what shall His history, as well as theirs, finally resolve itself?—to these questions Scripture has an answer to give, an answer lightly esteemed by those alone who set the utterances of their own wisdom above those of prophets and apostles. We have already seen<sup>2</sup> what each of them separately proclaims with regard to the glory and the coming of the Son of man; now we have, on this point also, to combine the different traits in one compact *whole*. In this last part we desire to collect in one all that in any way serves to display to us the image of the glorified Christ. Instinctively does our eye first of all raise itself to heaven, and reverently do we receive the beams of light which thence penetrate to us. But then we cast a glance around us, and we see how the image of the Christ encounters us in the heart and life of all His people. We listen to the voice of history, and we

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<sup>1</sup> Rom. vi. 10.

<sup>2</sup> In the *Christologie des O. en N.V.*

perceive how He constantly comes in the world, and there gathers to Himself a church, which in many respects may be called a visible revelation of His glorious perfections. Finally, we anticipate the future, and see at the end of the ages the image of Christ shine forth with a splendour now unknown, when He appears the second time, and brings to completion the blessed kingdom of God. We thus seek to embrace in a comparatively few pages the result of an investigation which could not possibly be exhausted, even in a number of volumes. We describe once more, under four distinct aspects, the glorified God-man, as He lives and manifests Himself,—

*In heaven ;*

*In the heart ;*

*In the world ;*

*In the future.*

## I.

## THE GOD-MAN IN HEAVEN.

TOWARDS the end of the first century of our era there dawned for an aged disciple of the Lord a moment never to be forgotten. Filled on the day of the Lord with sacred rapture of spirit, John hears upon Patmos a voice which sets in vibration the finest chords of his soul: "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last!" And as he then turns round to behold the face of the speaker there beams forth to him a majesty of which the brightness overpowers his sight. In the midst of seven golden candlesticks he sees the Son of man arrayed in a stately royal robe, which reaches down to His feet. A golden girdle encircles His awful form; a consuming fire beams forth from His sparkling eye. Head and hair are as white wool or as fresh-fallen snow in its purity, and His mighty feet glisten as brass that has just left the furnace. Seven stars shine in His right hand; a sharp two-edged sword comes from between His lips; His voice is as that of the roaring sea, and the light of His countenance like that of the clear noonday sun. Is it surprising that John, overpowered by the vision, sinks down at His feet as one dead, and that his terror abates only when he feels himself touched by this mighty hand, and is calmed by the

words, "Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore" ?<sup>1</sup>

Not unwillingly do we begin our presentation of the life of the glorified Saviour with recalling to mind His last appearing to the most beloved of His disciples; because this, more than any extended digression, makes us feel at once the sublimity, but also the difficulty, of the task to which we now address ourselves not without hesitation. If the sight of the kingly glory of the Lord could dazzle the eye of a John, who are we that we should venture on a formal description thereof? Hopeless would this attempt unquestionably be, if we had here no other guide to follow than that of our own sanctified imagination. But we have the word of prophets and apostles, which is "very firm," and to which we can here, too, give heed, "as unto a light that shineth in a dark place." It cannot be impossible so to combine the different traits which are scattered in Holy Scripture that the image of the God-man in heaven shall be displayed to our eyes in a form not too misty. Nevertheless, if we do not desire to be wise above that which is written, the reminder is here especially appropriate, "We know in part, and we prophesy in part."

If, then, we are in thought to follow the risen Lord to that heaven, into which He entered on the fortieth day, we must first of all form a clear conception of His *Personality*. "Glorify Thou me with Thine own self [at Thy

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<sup>1</sup> Rev. i. 9—20.

side], with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was : " thus had He prayed before His death on the cross ; and declared that, in leaving the world, He was again returning to the Father, from whom He had come forth.<sup>2</sup> It by no means follows, however, from this that His personality was again entirely the same as before His incarnation. No, we must in reality make a definite distinction between the glory of the Logos and that of the God-man. The purely Divine majesty, which He had possessed before His coming into the world, He receives again at His exaltation, and is now for ever raised above every limitation in the use of His Divine properties, to which He had at His incarnation voluntarily subjected Himself. He, however, the brightness of whose Divine nature henceforth shines again with unveiled splendour, has also taken with Him our human nature to heaven. This is glorified with the Divine, without being wholly changed, far less annihilated. In a truly human body, bearing on it the marks of His wounds, the Son of God thus ascends the throne of the Universe. A human soul and spirit in like manner pertains to Him ; since the nature, which He has once assumed, He will indeed continue to glorify, but will never lay down again. Thus He retains, together with His Divine nature, His truly human—but holy human—nature, with all its powers and properties. That would be impossible, only if Divine and human were irreconcilably *opposed* the one to the

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<sup>2</sup> John xvi. 28; xvii. 5. [On the difference between the *παρὰ σεαυτῷ* of this last verse, and the *πρὸς τὸν θεόν* of the first chapter, see Lange on John i. 1.]



other ; it is possible, because the two, however essentially distinct, are yet *akin* to each other, and man, as we have already seen, was created after the image of the Logos. It is and remains therefore the sharer of our nature, whom we see in Christ seated at the right hand of God ; but at the same time the Son of the Father, who in this His glorification enters on a state of existence for Himself wholly new. To the glory which the Logos already possessed before, there is now added a *new* one, which in the Gospel is very definitely represented as the fruit and recompence of the obedience displayed by Him. It is the name above every name, which He has received as the crown of His conflict ; the joy, already earlier set before Him, which shone forth to Him so attractively that for the sake of it He endured the cross, and despised the shame.<sup>3</sup> What can such utterances imply, but the name of King of the Kingdom of God, which was founded in His blood ? What but the joy of making so many whom He has purchased by His blood fully to participate in the life everlasting ?

It needs no proof, therefore, that the glorified God-man is by no means to be conceived of by us as having returned without consciousness into the Deity ; but as with personal self-consciousness and freedom, *living* and working in that glorious place in the creation, where God displays His majesty yet more immediately than here, which we in our children's language call *the heaven of heavens*. Nor is it to be doubted that He there

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<sup>3</sup> Phil. ii. 9—11 ; Heb. xii. 1, 2 ; cf. Isa. liii. 10, 11.

enjoys a *bliss* proportionate to the wholly unique perfection which He on earth displayed, and to the wholly unique sorrow which He on earth endured. And especially may we, with the Gospel in our hand, declare with regard to Him, that He is clothed with a glory which infinitely transcends all glory on earth. Three manifestations of the glorified Christ are described to us by His first witnesses, in some respects similar to the ten which had taken place between His resurrection and ascension—that to Stephen, to Saul on the way to Damascus, and finally that to John at Patmos. But, leaving out of sight for a moment the form in which they took place or were given, it is remarkable that the glory which surrounds these manifestations is a dazzling one, but one which is yet ever on the increase. Stephen sees the Son of man *standing* at the right hand of God, as though having risen for a moment from His heavenly throne to help His apostle and bring him home; Saul sees Him encircled with a light brighter than that of the sun; John in the presence of a majesty so great sinks down at His feet as dead. The whole Apocalypse is one description of His glory, veiled, it is true, in oriental imagery, but concerning the real meaning of which there can be no room for doubt. Think of the titles of honour given to the glorified Redeemer in the superscription of the seven epistles to the churches of Asia Minor; of the representation of the rider on the white horse, who went forth conquering and to conquer; of that of the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, surrounded by a hundred and forty and four thousand chosen ones, while the song of

the redeemed resounds to His honour; of Him who is Faithful and True, on whose vesture and whose thigh is written the name King of kings and Lord of lords. In addition to this think of the new song which is raised to His praise in the heavenly temple, and is taken up before the listening ear of John by every creature, those, too, which are on earth, or under the earth, or in the sea. And now let any one ask whether it is possible to conceive of a higher degree of splendour and glory than is ascribed to the God-man in heaven by the Scriptures, especially those of the New Testament.

This splendour is indeed wholly in harmony with the *rank* which He occupies above. There He not merely continues to live, as we know this of all the pious departed, but He reigns there as King, invested by the Father with all power in heaven and on earth. In connection with this important part of our examination we must contemplate in detail the *nature*, the *origin*, the *extent*, the *aim*, the *activity*, the *blessing*, and the *end* of the mediatorial rule of the glorified Christ—seven distinct traits, which, like the different colours of the rainbow, blend together in one harmonious whole, of which He Himself is the living centre.

As regards, first of all, the *nature* of the kingly sway of Christ, it is at once the question whether we ascribe it to Him in the real sense of the term, or merely in a figurative one. Not seldom is the case presented in this way: that Christ after His departure from the earth exerts only a moral and spiritual influence upon believers; by the doctrine He left behind; by the example

He gave; by the impulse, in a word, which they have received from Him to their own religious development; and this is called His *rule* or *dominion*, which He exercises in the moral-religious domain. Christ is thus represented as being King of the truth, much in a similar sense in which the ancient world declared that every wise man is a king, and as Socrates and Plato, for example, may be said to have influenced the mind and heart of their adherents by the philosophical principles they have left behind them. As early as last century opponents of Christianity in such wise wrested the declaration of the Lord, that His kingdom is not of this world, as entirely to explain away all properly so-called kingly dominion on the part of the Mediator; and in the present day a flourishing theological school boldly asserts that the Church has no longer any need of Christ after His death; that the bond which exists between Him and believers is the same as that which exists among believers the one with the other; that Christ possesses no other power than that which His Church itself possesses, the power of the truth.<sup>4</sup> But, rightly viewed, can there be a more gross misconception of the whole letter and spirit of the apostolic teaching? What? the Lord shall be the Head of the Church, and between Him and the living members there shall exist no personal, direct, continuous, reciprocal communion! He shall be made "Head over all things to the Church," and upon these things shall He not be able to exert even the slightest

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<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., Professor Scholten's *Initia Dogmatices Christianæ*, pp. 251—253, of the second edition.

influence! He shall declare that the Father has given Him power over all flesh, and this power shall be found in the end to consist in nothing else than in the moral effect of His word and example, in the vibration from the shock which He has once for all produced in the moral world! Assuredly, if we first deprive the most unequivocal utterances of the Lord and His Apostles, one after another, of their force; if we declare the Apocalypse to be a book of Jewish fables and reveries, and have already relegated all related in the history of the Acts, which serves as a proof of an enduring personal government of Christ, to the domain of myths and legends, then is it possible to understand by the dominion of the Lord, honestly speaking, nothing more than the after effect of the appearing of a religious genius. The theology which recognises no other than a merely human Christ, remains perfectly self-consistent in denying His kingship in the Apostolic sense of the term.<sup>5</sup> From this

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<sup>5</sup> See *Christian Dogmatics*, pp. 620—626; and compare the place occupied by the βασιλεία τοῦ Χριστοῦ in the New Testament, e.g., in Col. i. 12, 13. With regard to this whole negative school the remarks of the gifted Emile de Bonnechose, in the preface to the third edition of his *Reformateurs avant la Reformation* (Paris, 1860, i. p. 13) are worthy of particular attention. They were written in relation to the most consistent representative of this school, the Pécaut to whom reference has been before made (p. 203). "I do not recognise the Saviour in that son of Mary, whom a science as barren and inconsistent as it is incomplete in vain seeks to reduce to its own mean proportions; I do not see Him in that Jesus, whom it robs of His incomparable dignity, of His super-human greatness, and of His Divine perfections; whom it presents to us as at once full of the highest wisdom, and a victim to the wild illusions of enthusiasm, as penetrating the secret thoughts of men, and not

standpoint one feels it would be absurdity itself still to look up to Christ as to a Lord who hears and delivers us when we call upon Him; this adoration itself is a homage which, even though it should be presented to Him, would die away as a sound in the air. We are convinced, however, that whoever has read with an unprejudiced eye the Gospels and Epistles will come to a different conclusion. Nay, verily, it is not Peter and Paul alone—as some would maintain—who proclaim with so much emphasis the kingship of Christ, that it is, *for us* at least, incomprehensible how any one can regard all this as mere imagery, and can see in it only an indication of the moral ascendancy exerted by the truth brought to light by Him. John, too, if at least the Apocalypse is his work—of which we have not a single moment's doubt—renders testimony to Him, as the Prince of the kings of the earth,<sup>6</sup> in a manner which leaves scarcely the possibility of misunderstanding him. And the Lord Himself, in saying that His kingdom is not of this world, indicates that His kingdom is indeed of higher than earthly origin, but not at all on that account that He can only be called a king in a metaphorical sense. The truth is by no means His only kingly *domain*, but the chosen *means*, of which He makes use to bring subjects under His sceptre. If He

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knowing Himself; whom, finally, it sets before us as our ideal model, our guide and our master, and as at the same time unconsciously attributing to Himself powers which were not conferred upon Him, as usurping without knowing it His title of Messiah, His character as Mediator and Christ." This whole preface is very well worth perusing. <sup>6</sup> 'Ο ἀρχων τῶν βασιλέων τῆς γῆς (Rev. i. 5).

declares, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should *bear witness* unto the truth,"<sup>7</sup> He implies by this last, not merely *teaching* and *preaching*, but the *making* the truth *recognisable* as truth, by *confirming* it in every possible way. Thus we read elsewhere that God by signs and wonders *bore witness* to the word of His grace, in almost the same sense in which it is said in another place that the Lord, working with His witnesses, *confirmed* their word. In no case can His memorable confession before Pilate be understood in such a manner as to detract in the least from the majestic declaration which He had just made before the Sanhedrim: "From henceforth shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming upon the clouds of heaven." This declaration points back to the well-known vision of Daniel,<sup>8</sup> in which the prophet sees given to the Son of man dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him; an "everlasting" dominion, in opposition to the mighty monarchies of the world, which he had just before seen arise and again vanish away. Undoubtedly it was understood in no other sense by David when "in the Spirit" he heard addressed to his Son and Lord a "Sit Thou on my right hand." We doubt whether justice is rendered to the force of this last well-known expression, so frequently

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<sup>7</sup> John xviii. 37; cf. Heb. ii. 4; Mark xvi. 20.

<sup>8</sup> Matt. xxvi. 64; cf. Dan. vii. 13, 14. For a good note on these words of the Lord, see Meyer's comment on the former of these places.



employed with regard to the kingship of the Lord, if anything less is understood by it than a *personal participation, as well in the glory as in the power, of the Divine government of the world.* And now, although some may suppose they have their philosophical reasons for considering such a kingship as something absolutely inconceivable, as a result of exegesis it is in our opinion indisputable that neither the Lord nor His Apostles speak of anything less than this. Under the guidance of their teaching we conceive of the God-man not simply as a thrice-glorious person who, eighteen centuries ago, *lived* on earth, but as yet living and *ruling* for evermore; and as on that account not only existing in a *condition* in the highest degree blissful, but as constantly devoted to an important *task*, not unlike that imposed upon mighty monarchs for the well-being of their states. He is not thus, after His departure from the earth, like a sun which has gone down, and now only by a bright sunset gives testimony of its former glory. No, it is precisely the sun risen to noontide height which here displays itself before our eyes; and as, notwithstanding all conductors of heat, it is the sun itself of which the force unceasingly flows forth to us through these channels, so is it the living Christ *Himself*, who rules *notwithstanding*—nay, *by* the means through which He continues to operate in His ransomed Church. The Gospel nowhere teaches a government of Christ by means of the Church, but rather a future government of the Church by and with Christ. Certainly we must not conceive of this government of Christ in a form too gross

and sensuous; but still less may the Bible teaching be apprehended in such a one-sided spiritualistic manner, that with the form also the idea itself is altogether lost. In connection with a truly believing view of the Lord's person and work we cannot possibly suppose that He is even to any extent *separated* from His people by time and space. Precisely by the fact that even after His ascension He has not ceased to be the *personal* Head of His Church, is He distinguished from *all* other, *merely* human, personalities.

If we ask as to the *origin* of this dominion, it is, according to the constant teaching of the Old and New Testament, the *Father* who has *given* to the Son power over all flesh. "All things are delivered unto me of my Father," was the emphatic declaration of the Lord Himself; and to His believers He promises no other power, to His foes threatens no other judgment, than that which He has Himself received from the Father.<sup>9</sup> This power, we have already remarked, must be clearly distinguished from that which He had before His incarnation. It is not now the world-creative power of the Logos, of which we spoke; but the world-ruling power of the God-man, which penetrates all spheres. He has received it, not only *after*, but *upon* and *on the ground of* His most meritorious suffering and death; His *claim* to this dominion is founded not so much upon His Divine Nature, as definitely upon that which as *God-man* He has done for sinners. While earthly princes not seldom open a

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<sup>9</sup> Matt. xi. 27; Rev. ii. 26, 27.

path to the throne through the blood of citizens and foreigners, this King has thus through His own blood acquired the title to His crown. The question which has so often been answered in different ways, and calls forth difficulties apparently insuperable—the question as to what distinction and what connection there exists between this government of Christ and that which is the properly so-called government of Divine Providence—in our estimation admits of only *one* solution. We must by no means suppose a twofold *domain* of government, as though the one part were delegated to the Son, the other reserved by the Father to Himself—so that, *e.g.*, the Son presides over the spiritual interests of His Church, and Divine Providence, on the other hand, cares for the temporal necessities of all the children of men. This opposition, which is at once seen by every reflecting mind to be radically untenable, is moreover already condemned by that which Scripture teaches us as to the true extent of the domain of Christ's government, of which we shall be called presently to treat more at large. No, the case is simply this, that the Father now rules *by the Son*, as before He by the Son created all things, without His being on that account Himself unoccupied and inactive. Or was the Father no Creator of all things, because He made all things by the Word of His power? Does the Father absolutely not reward or punish, because He has committed all judgment to the Son? The objection indeed retains any force only when, according to the Arian view, we regard the Son of God as God's most excellent creature, who as such stands *without* and

*beneath* the Father. He, however, who has been deeply penetrated with the thought that the Son is one with the Father in power and will, and consequently also must be one in nature and essence,<sup>10</sup> will agree with us when we maintain that the opposition between the government of Christ and the Providence of God is a purely imaginary one. As the Christian knows no other creation than that which took place through the Logos—so that, be it said in passing, every presentation and proclamation of God's creative omnipotence, in which no mention is made of Him, belongs more to the Jewish synagogue than to the Christian pulpit—so he can conceive of no Providence *parallel with, or outside of,* much less *in opposition to,* the personal government of Christ. To the continued activity and intervention of the glorified Mediator He ascribes not only all spiritual, but also all temporal benefits, which he none the less receives *from the Father*. Or, if you will make still further distinction here, understand by Providence the *counsel* of the one unchangeable Divine Being, and by the mediatorial government of the God-man the chosen *means* by which this counsel is executed, to the salvation of sinners and to the glory of the Father. For our thought there remain here certain unfathomable depths; even for our imagination it is difficult to conceive of a God-man in heaven, inseparably one with the Father and the Holy Ghost, who upholds absolutely all things by the word of His power. But that this, and no other, is the

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<sup>10</sup> See on this point the *Theology of the New Testament*, sec. xix. 2. •

teaching of the Apostles we regard as absolutely indisputable; the sacred obscurity of the subject detracts nothing whatever from the truth or value of the doctrine, and we shall do best to seek the ground of the government of the Son in the will and good-pleasure of the Father, without supposing the Father to be on that account condemned to inactive repose. Here, too, the words of the Lord, spoken during His earthly life, have their application: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I also work."<sup>11</sup>

In what has been said we have tacitly assumed the absolutely unlimited *extent* of the government of Christ thus far described by us. Is there ground for a supposition on which, it will be felt, so very much is dependent for the remainder of our investigation? It cannot be denied that there are single utterances of the Apostles which seem to favour the opinion entertained by many, namely that the kingly sway of Christ is confined exclusively to His ransomed Church. Thus it is, *e.g.*, with the thanksgiving which Paul presents to the Father who had delivered the Colossian Christians out of the power of darkness, and had translated them into the kingdom of the Son of His love.<sup>12</sup> Does not the idea underlie this form of expression, that the heathen world *as such* belonged not yet to the kingdom of Christ, but was groaning under the dominion of gloomy powers? and does not the same undertone resound when John, after the bitter conflict and the victory of the kingdom of

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<sup>11</sup> John v. 17.

<sup>12</sup> Coloss. i. 12, 13.

God, hears the exulting cry, "The kingdoms of this world *are become* the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ"?<sup>13</sup> The same Paul, however, declares not less unequivocally, that God has set the Lord at His own right hand in heaven, "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and put *all things* under His feet, and given Him to be *head over all things* to the Church."<sup>14</sup> John also, in the Apocalypse, mentions first the new song of the redeemed, and then, immediately after, the homage of the whole creation rendered to the Lamb that was slain.<sup>15</sup> According to the presentment of the Apostles, the one idea thus by no means excludes the other; and why should it be difficult to combine the two? Without doubt Christ reigns in another sense and in another manner over the yet unbelieving world from that in which He does over the Church, in the midst of which His kingdom is established. *In* this last He actually reigns; because in the midst of it He is acknowledged as King, and by His word and Spirit labours for the salvation of sinners. But at the same time He reigns *over* the world, with the definite aim of bringing it into subjection to His Church, and making it a province of His vast empire. "*All things* are put in subjection under His feet," says the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and deduces from this fact the conclusion that

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<sup>13</sup> Rev. xi. 15. "The kingdom over the world is become our Lord's and His Christ's," is the better supported reading.

<sup>14</sup> Ephes. i. 20—23.

<sup>15</sup> Rev. v. 8—14.

there is absolutely *nothing* excepted from being put under Him.<sup>16</sup> In our inquiry, therefore, as to the extent of His kingdom, we may not even stop short at the uttermost ends of the earth, which with their heathen inhabitants are promised to Him as His inheritance; but must rise higher, mindful of the word of Peter, that He ascended to heaven, "angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him."<sup>17</sup> Without any limitation He is thus the Firstborn, *i.e.*, the Head and Lord, of all creatures,<sup>18</sup> visible and invisible, rational and irrational. When we direct our glance to the starry heavens, and discover distances before which the boldest imagination confesses itself powerless, we exclaim with awe that it is impossible to measure the boundless kingdom of God; but we can at once add that it is equally impossible to assign limits to the kingdom of Christ. Yea, *all power* in heaven and earth, and thus by no means merely over this little speck of creation, has the Son received of the Father; and in no case can His dominion now be less unlimited than before His incarnation. If all things, solar systems and the motes in the sunbeam, were created by Him, and are constantly upheld and governed by Him, they belong necessarily to that domain of which after His ascension He wields the kingly sceptre. To His will, therefore, are those worlds subservient which exist beyond our own, or which may yet arise out of nothing. His behests the angels of all orders and ranks fulfil, with reverently veiled face; His life-awakening

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<sup>16</sup> Heb. ii. 8.<sup>17</sup> 1 Pet. iii. 22.<sup>18</sup> Col. i. 15, 16.



power extends over all the spheres and forces of Creation. Even death is no exception to this subjection: He is a servant in His immeasurable kingdom, and we hear the Glorified One Himself saying, "I have the keys of the invisible world and of death."<sup>19</sup> The very opposition between living and dead does not exist for Him, even as it does not for the Father: "To this end Christ both died and lived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living."<sup>20</sup> Even the dying thus cease not to belong to His dominion; but simply pass to another province of the same kingdom, without being henceforth subject to a different law. "Here, then, opens for us," might a believing Swiss theologian well exclaim, "the wondrous glance into the economy of God, that it is a son of Adam who governs not only humanity, not only the earth, but also the angels and all world-spheres. Out of the dust of the earth was the body of Adam formed, and from the seed of Adam does Christ descend, according to the flesh. But the glorified earthly body of Christ it is in which the fulness of the Godhead now dwells in heaven, and in which this not only lives and acts, but rules all the circles of creation, and fills them with their vital forces."<sup>21</sup> Enough, of this God-man heaven is emphatically the throne, and this poor earth the footstool of His feet, which still swarms with countless foes—Rule Thou *in the midst of Thine enemies*, has the Father said to the Son of His love—but on which He nevertheless works,

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<sup>19</sup> Rev. i. 18.

<sup>20</sup> Rom. xiv. 9; according to the most ancient MSS.

<sup>21</sup> Gess, as before, p. 271.

without any one being able to hinder it, and from which He will not withdraw His hand, until it has become a kingdom of truth and righteousness. A kingdom—no, only the province of a kingdom, of which, we must repeat, neither bound nor limit is to be found. What a tyrant of earlier times asserted in foolish boast, that upon his states the sun never set, is a saying which in relation to this empire still falls far short of the truth. All creatures on earth belong thereto; all spirits of heaven serve therein; all starry paths are but the highways, which bear in different directions His attendants, to and from His royal capital. His kingly dominion manifests itself in the Church, which believingly acknowledges Him, but thence, and precisely by this Church, He by degrees subdues the world. He rules over the world, as a king over provinces which for the time being are in rebellion against him, but have none the less continued to be His lawful possession. Thus is the extent of His dominion in principle absolutely unlimited; but in the actual state of things still capable of infinite extension. To the domain assigned to Him belong, according to the counsel of God, not less the enemies who obdurately reject Him than the friends who believingly worship Him. Only the former must at last involuntarily confess, what the latter already willingly acknowledge, that God hath made Him to be both Lord and Christ.

It will be rightly conjectured that such a wholly unique dominion was not devised and founded without a wholly unique *end* being contemplated in connection with it by eternal Wisdom. Nor are we left to our own

fallible insight in the defining of this object. The Lord Himself has unequivocally expressed Himself with regard thereto, and not less so His divinely enlightened Apostles. Expressly do we hear Him testify that the Father has given Him power over all flesh, that He may give *eternal life* to all whom the Father hath given Him. Yet more distinctly does that aim present itself before our minds when we hear Him mention as the highest object for which He lives and works and prays, "That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee; that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me."<sup>22</sup> A union thus of all believers with Him, in Him with each other, and at the same time through Him with the Father; a communion equally intimate and perfect in its nature, as that which united Him to the Father; a unity at the sight of which it should be impossible for the world any longer to refuse credence to the Gospel—this is the lofty ideal which even in the last night of His earthly life was clearly present to His mind, and to the realisation of which His whole heavenly life is devoted. Union, not, as this is so often sought on earth, with the sacrifice of true liberty and independence in the spiritual life, but rather with its full preservation; union, not in one outward bond, but in one spirit, into one living body, in one spiritual family, of which the Father is the Head, and He Himself the Firstborn among many brethren. In the accomplishment of that end the nations strive, and the

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<sup>22</sup> John xvii. 2, 21.

princes take counsel, and the times are straitened, as though to bring forth the blissful day, looked for by the whole groaning creation with increasing desire. So long as that end yet awaits its fulfilment, and even one cry of rebellion is yet heard against Him and His Father, He does not cease to stretch forth the sceptre of His majesty, and, if so it must be, to dash in pieces His opponents, as with a rod of iron. "For He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet."<sup>23</sup> We see that the God-man could repeat upon the throne of His glory that which He once spoke on earth, that He seeks not His own honour, but esteems it His food to do the will of the Father. The glorifying of the Father and the salvation of men is the great end for which He has ascended the throne.—We may proceed yet a step further. The same Paul, who in his wondrous conversion presents so striking a manifestation of the reality of Christ's government, has, enlightened by the Spirit of truth, afforded us a glance into its aim and end, in connection with which our eyes are dazzled. "He ascended up," writes the Apostle, "far above all heavens, *that He might fill all things*;" and again, that God had "purposed in Himself, in the dispensation of the fulness of the times, *to gather all things together again in Christ*, both which are in heaven and which are on earth."<sup>24</sup> He is thus, in other words, the centre in which heaven and earth meet; the living Head, not only of the Church, but also of the whole creation, visible and invisible; in whom all things unite,

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<sup>23</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 25.<sup>24</sup> Ephes. i. 10; iv. 10; cf. Col. i. 19, 20.

through whom all must be raised to one blissful kingdom of God. Who would venture to fathom the depth of such a conception? It is the expansion of the highest wish of the Lord in His parting prayer, to which we have just listened, without being on any point in contradiction therewith; a proof at the same time how, in Paul also, the promise of the Lord was fulfilled, that the Holy Ghost should *take of the things which are His*, and proclaim them to the Apostles. Certainly utterances like these, concerning the object of Christ's government, would be entirely misunderstood if any should wish to deduce from them the conclusion that they necessarily lead to the doctrine of the restoration of *all* things. The Apostle, it is true, says that God will gather together all things in Christ, which are in heaven and which are on earth; but he by no means adds, which are *under* the earth. To gather together in one is not in itself at all the same thing as to make holy and blessed; and, besides the voluntary homage to Christ as Lord and King, an enforced homage is still conceivable; but yet, that God aims at nothing less than, by the exaltation of Christ, bringing to an end all discord and separation in His natural and spiritual kingdom—although then also the man who wilfully hardens himself for ever bears the punishment of his own disobedience—this is an idea so exalted and magnificent, that we do not hesitate to apply to it the Apostle's own utterance: "Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard it, neither hath it entered into the heart of man." It is equalled only by that other saying, with which he speaks at once of the aim and the close of

the government of Christ, and to which we shall presently return: "That God may be all and in all."

An end like this cannot possibly be attained, unless He by whom it is realised has also wholly unique means at His disposal; and thus we are naturally led to speak of the *activity* of the King of the kingdom of God. Here, too, it will not be difficult to combine in a higher unity the various hints scattered in the Gospels and Epistles.

We begin with the word spoken by the Lord before His departure, "I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world,"<sup>25</sup> a word which proclaims nothing less than His constant personal, though spiritual, presence with His people even to the most distant future. On the eve of His going away the whole heavenly life of the Lord presents itself to Him as an endless *To-day*, in which—although departed as to the body—He is still with and near His disciples. For the disciples (not yet favoured with the discovery of modern science, that believers no longer need the personal presence of their Lord) mourned over His departure from the earth as an irreparable loss. The Master, in opposition to this grief, shows them repeatedly, for their comfort, that the bond between Himself and them should by no means be broken; and should they not themselves remain alive until the end of the world, a promise like this must, from the nature of the case, directly apply to the least and last of His believers. It is accordingly in this belief that we see the Apostles constantly look up to Him, hear

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<sup>25</sup> Matt. xxviii. 20; cf. xviii. 20.

them ask from Him in prayer that of which the Church has need, point to Him as the King and Friend invisibly present and ever near. Following in their footsteps, we are not merely justified, but obliged, to conceive of the Saviour not as *having* once lived and worked, but as personally and unceasingly *active* to the blessing of all His people, and as by no means separated from them by time and space. A belief like this is certainly to be reprobated by him who does not admit the Godhead of the Lord ; but, on the other hand, for him who acknowledges this last, would be sufficiently legitimated by that very fact alone, while at the same time it stands in the most immediate connection with the freshness and elasticity of the Christian's spiritual life. For what is spiritual life but personal communion with the living and glorified Christ ? and does it not lie in the very nature of such a communion, that it must be reciprocal, and consist not simply in a receiving on our part, but also in a giving on His ? No doubt it is still difficult to form for oneself a distinct conception of the manner in which the Lord is thus near us on earth, while at the same time filling and penetrating all heaven with His majesty. We here stand in the presence of a similar difficulty to that which arises when we are asked, how God can at the same time be said to dwell in heaven and yet to be everywhere present on earth. But once more, the sacred obscurity of the *how* cannot in the least shake the certainty of the *that* ; and how can that which we daily see exemplified in one of God's works be absolutely impossible for the great Architect Himself ? Do we not see the sun standing in



the heavens, so far away that even a cannon ball would require years to reach its disc, while yet its light in a few minutes reaches the earth, and penetrates with its kindly beam into the deepest clefts of the rocks? In like manner is Christ glorified in heaven, and yet also Himself present on earth, invisibly, indeed, and spiritually, but not on that account less really. In becoming separated from His first friends, so far as concerns His body, He has drawn equally near, yea, indescribably nearer, to His people everywhere.<sup>26</sup>

The nearness which the glorified Saviour displays to His friends cannot possibly be an ineffectual one. For the Lord is by no means a passive witness of the conflict and toil of His people. On the contrary, He continues to care for that which concerns them. In the activity of the King of the kingdom of God the Gospel indeed teaches us to distinguish *two* sides: that which is directed more immediately to the *Father*, and that which is more definitely directed to His *Church*.

"I will *pray* the Father," thus we hear the Lord address His disciples in His parting hour; and there certainly exists not the slightest reason for supposing that He is here speaking exclusively, or even principally, of an intercession *before* His approaching death. Clearly enough does the fact beam through His parting discourses, that His heavenly life shall be uninterruptedly a

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<sup>26</sup> Admirably is this truth brought out by Lavater, in an article on *Jesus Christ, not limited by time and space, nor by the unworthiness of believers*, which he called a *New Edition of the Old Gospel for pious and truly believing Christians*.

life of prayer for the blessing of His people. The same idea also underlies the demand that the disciples should approach the Father *in His name* [in communion with Himself]; which clearly presupposes that He would stand in abiding relationship as well to them as to the Father. It is true, He presently declares, "I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father Himself loveth you;"<sup>27</sup> but if we will not suppose that the Lord contradicts Himself, this saying can surely have no other intention than to guard them against a one-sided and indolent confidence in His intercession, to the neglect of their own supplication. It is not even necessary, He means, to induce the Father to listen to you, that I should first intercede for you, since you are already yourselves partakers of His favour, on the ground of your intimate relation to Myself. That while He was on earth He was wont to pray for His people is evident from His warning address to Simon.<sup>28</sup> It is consequently entirely in harmony with the Master's own word, when Paul declares that He who is at the right hand of God there also *maketh intercession for us*;<sup>29</sup> and John, that we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.<sup>30</sup> A *Paraclete*, it reads literally, the same word being used as is employed by the Lord in John xiv. —xvi. with regard to the Holy Ghost, and is in our ver-

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<sup>27</sup> John xiv. 16; xvi. 26, 27. [On the latter place Lange well says, "Not in the sense that I must first obtain for you His favour or the Spirit of adoption; rather will you experience that the Father Himself loves you and has communicated Himself to you."]

<sup>28</sup> Luke xxii. 32; cf. John xvii. 9—19.

<sup>29</sup> Rom. viii. 34.

<sup>30</sup> 1 John ii. 1.

sion rendered by *Comforter*. As thus the Holy Ghost is the representative of Christ with His people, so in heaven is the interceding Christ the representative of His people in the presence of God His Father. He represents them there, and has—according to the beautiful idea in the Epistle to the Hebrews—for them entered into the heavenly sanctuary, in order as High Priest to *appear* before God.<sup>31</sup> We feel that this presentment exalts the Lord to a position wholly unique. Nowhere in the Gospel is it taught of any creature that he is the advocate on high with God for other creatures. It is indeed here required of the living that they should pray for the living; but nowhere and never of an inhabitant of heaven that he shall plead on behalf of the children of earth. Of the Christ, on the contrary, we read that He ever liveth to make intercession for His people.<sup>32</sup> If already on earth the interchange of communion between the Son in His humiliation and the Father was indescribably close, who can conceive how intimate and blessed and efficacious it is now in heaven! Yet it is not impossible to form some idea of its *nature, extent, object, and value*.

In no case does the intercession of the Lord detract anything either from the perfect blessedness of His heavenly life or from the eternally expiatory power of His sacrificial death. "By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are being sanctified." But their continuing weakness renders ever afresh necessary

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<sup>31</sup> Heb. vii, 25; ix, 24.

<sup>32</sup> On the Intercession of Christ, cf. *Christian Dogmatics*, pp. 616—619.

that they should be anew directed to that offering, renders ever-renewed intercession necessary, if they are not constantly to expose themselves again to God's holy displeasure. Thus also was the high priest in Israel wont not only to offer sacrifices and to bless, but at the same time to pray to the Lord for the people. God needs not to be moved to display His favour, but the constant interposing of Christ for His people is the indispensable condition to which the uninterrupted enjoyment of His grace is attached for them. This condition the Lord *can* satisfy, because He perfectly *knows* every one of His people; and He *will* do so, because He unchangeably *loves* them. None thus are the objects of His intercession, but His sincere, though weak, disciples. He who, turning away from Christ, still belongs to the unbelieving world, cannot console himself with the thought that he has an Advocate on high. But if it is *only* His disciples, it is at the same time *all* His disciples whom He thus remembers in interceding love. He confesses them, according to His promise,<sup>33</sup> before the Father and the angels; He mentions as such their names with prayerful urgency, commends them as His friends to the Father's protection and kindness, and constantly remains the Mediator, through whom they receive the good gifts of the Father. Such an intercession can have no less an object than that they should be unceasingly preserved in communion with Him; and thus He might say to each of His disciples what He once declared to Peter: "I

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Matt. x. 32 ; cf. Luke xii. 8.

have prayed for thee, *that thy faith fail not.*" And how great the value of this intercession is, we should be able to express only if we could to some extent calculate how many fiery darts of Satan have been warded off from the Christian by this intercession, how many temporal and spiritual benefits have been by this means obtained for him. This we know, that the Father hears the Son always; and only he who forgets how heavily the sense of guilt and misery may press even upon the redeemed of the Lord will assert that the Gospel presentation of Christ as our heavenly Advocate remains without great significance for our consolation and sanctification. He who understands what sin and grace is, will thankfully join in the words of Luther:<sup>34</sup> "That Christ is gone to heaven, in order that by His intercession He may for ever preserve us in God's favour, and give us the victory over all the temptations and assaults of Satan." And presently after: "What could and would we desire greater and better—if we must ourselves wish it—than such a Mediator and Advocate with God, whom God Himself has appointed thereto; so that we have no longer to fear any anger or disfavour, if we believe in Him, but may expect only fatherly eternal grace, consolation, and help?"

Not less rich in blessing is that activity of the God-man which is more definitely directed to His *Church*. This is the case, since *He sends forth the Holy Spirit to His people on earth, and prepares a place for them in heaven.*

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<sup>34</sup> Luther on the Hundred and Tenth Psalm. Compare also the beautiful remarks of Thomasius, as before, iii, 1, p. 329.

“Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that *will I do*,” so spake the Lord, without even the slightest limitation. But who shall express the silent majesty which makes itself felt in such an utterance? For He could not possibly give such a promise, unless He had united in Himself Divine omniscience and Divine omnipotence, thus perfectly to satisfy the wants which He perfectly fathoms. The satisfaction of all wants He, however, comprehends in the promise of the Holy Ghost, which, more frequently than any other promise, He proclaims to His sorrowing and dejected friends. Not only does He assure them that the Father in answer to His prayer will send the Comforter, but at the same time that He Himself will send them this Spirit from the Father.<sup>35</sup> A promise of sublime and inexhaustible fulness! For *what* is it that He promises His disciples? The Spirit, the highest gift they require, but also the last that any creature could of his own strength confer upon his fellow-man; the highest in God, an unspeakable gift, it is true, but in and with this gift at the same time the thrice-glorious Person, from whom it unceasingly flows forth, and who Himself forms from eternity to eternity the bond of communion between the Father and the Son. *To whom* does He promise this Spirit? Without doubt first of all to those who very soon should arise as His witnesses; but by no means to these

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<sup>35</sup> John xiv. 13, 14; xv. 26; xvi. 7. The student may compare, on these and other texts of Scripture here adverted to, especially the interesting writing of Dr. H. G. Hasse, *Das Leben des verkörperten Erlösers im Himmel*, a work characterised by an equally thorough as believing grasp of Scripture.

alone. To all who should believe in Him He promises this Spirit in accordance with their different necessities and capacities; and while an Elijah hesitated before his ascension to promise to a single Elisha, in response to his prayer, two parts of his prophetic spirit, it is said of Him, without any limitation, that He baptises with the Holy Ghost. *From what time* does He communicate this Spirit to His believers? Certainly there proceeded spirit and power from Him to His disciples, even during His life of humiliation on earth; but yet He Himself declares that, so long as He had not gone hence to the Father, the Comforter could not come to the Apostles, and it is not difficult to comprehend, at least to some extent, the connection between the exaltation of the Lord and the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. Yet no sooner is He glorified, than His disciples are endued with power from on high; not only His first witnesses, but all His believing ones are filled with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, partly of an extraordinary, partly of a more ordinary kind; and the prayer of Moses, "Would God that all the people of the Lord were prophets, that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!" is in the most striking manner fulfilled. This dispensation of the Spirit extends not only to the apostolic age, but to all following centuries; *only* where the Word is proclaimed, but *everywhere* where this is the case, is His quickening operation seen; as a fresh stream does He unceasingly continue to flow forth from Christ, the fountain of living waters. And *with what result* is this Spirit now given by the Lord to His people? It is not here the place to speak even in general of the different



powers and operations of the Holy Ghost. Enough, it is that Spirit, by whom all living members of the body are personally united to Christ, their glorified Head. It is true, the Christian life is an *independent* spiritual life; but it is the independence of the branch, which has indeed its own life distinct from that of the other branches, but yet withers so soon as it abides not in the vine. The Spirit is the oneness of life, which unites vine and branches; the great power which by degrees penetrates, new-creates, and glorifies the whole outward and inner life of the redeemed. He it is by whom the *Church* is founded, preserved, completed as a holy temple, in which the living Christ with the fulness of His grace can dwell. He, who convinces the *world* of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, and from its midst constantly wins new subjects—who were once enemies—for Christ. He, by whom *the Lord* is glorified, since the ever-continued outpouring of the Holy Ghost is the ever-renewed revelation of His omnipotence, wisdom, love, holiness, faithfulness. He, finally, by whose almighty operation the good pleasure of the *Father* is accomplished, in the founding of one spiritual kingdom of God, embracing heaven and earth. Of a truth we are not surprised that he who looks somewhat below the surface regards Pentecost as the crown of all our Christian festivals: even the gift of the Son of God, what could it have availed us, had not the Son received power to shed forth the Holy Ghost upon all flesh? But, at the same time, we feel that He who could make such a promise, and who has already during so many successive ages fulfilled it, can be nothing less than

the very sharer of the nature and majesty of God, in all the force of that expression. We at least confess that such promises, in the mouth of a Christ who is nothing more than an excellent creature, would sound to us almost blasphemous ; and that we could conceive of their fulfilment only on the part of Him who can with confidence say to the Father, "Father, all that is *Thine* is *mine*."

Yet one more activity of the exalted Redeemer must we mention by name. *He prepares for His people a place in heaven.* "I go to prepare a place for you:" thus He addressed His first disciples, and in them all His disciples.<sup>36</sup> We regard it as no easy matter to apprehend the exact meaning of these words, and have more than once observed that the explanation given of this text, often cited and developed in preaching, has been exceedingly obscure and misty. That the Lord, by the sending of the Holy Spirit, prepares His friends for dwelling in heaven, is easily understood. But what is meant by saying that He not only prepares them for the place, but the place for them, in the dwellings of the Father ? Is it simply a figurative expression, adapted to their childlike understanding, to console them in the prospect of His departure ? or, if it is more, is it really needful that in the wide, glorious heaven a place should be *prepared* for the friends of Jesus ? We could not have believed it, unless He had Himself said so, and that repeatedly.<sup>37</sup> In connection with this expectation it may perhaps be remarked that while an

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<sup>36</sup> John xiv. 2.

<sup>37</sup> Comp. also ver. 3.

absolute unchangeableness is in the Gospel ascribed indeed to God Himself, this is not said to be the case with the heaven of His abode; and that, as heaven has been opened up to us by the death of the Lord upon the cross, so perhaps in this heaven itself obstacles must be removed which might prevent the entrance of once lost sinners. Be this as it may, it is definitely *setting in order* and *preparing* of the heavenly dwellings of His people which the Lord presents as the object of His departure. In what, then, this His activity consists, what surprises He has prepared for His people there, what things He is engaged in accomplishing in heaven, in order—speaking after a purely human fashion—to render these dwellings wholly meet for His people, who can even distantly conjecture? <sup>38</sup> For us it is enough that in this respect also His glorification is an unspeakable gain, as for His first disciples, so also even for His last. And it may be well for us to think of the King of the kingdom of God, not only as He here below forms the future sharers of His throne, and there presently expects them, but also as He is already actually doing all that is needful to assure to them a wide place, and one proportioned to the capacity of each, in the “many dwellings” of the Father’s house.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Hasse, as before, p. 208, in like manner deduces from these mysterious words of the Lord the conclusion, “*Something must take place, with a view to the preparation of heaven for us, in order to render it a meet place for our reception;*” and in answer to the question What this *something* may be, he hazards the conjecture, “*That the inhabitants of heaven must be disposed to willingness to receive us.*” His whole treatment of this passage merits careful attention.

<sup>39</sup> [One thinks naturally in this connection of Heb. vi. 20, and

So far as possible we have looked at the activity of the God-man in heaven from different points of view ; but now also we have first reached a height from which to estimate at least something of its blessing. Every observation with regard thereto confirms the truth of the wondrous utterance : "It is expedient (advantageous) for you that I go away."<sup>40</sup>

Only in passing do we observe what inestimable gain the glorification of the Lord brought to His *first apostles*. The bond which attaches them to the Master does not on that account by any means cease to exist ; since it is He *Himself* who invisibly comes to them and exerts a personal influence upon them by the sending of the Holy Spirit. Their spiritual life is raised precisely by the loss of His bodily presence to the required degree of independence ; their love towards each other becomes the greater, where the visible centre is wanting to their little circle ; and the consciousness that they have a Lord in heaven fills their heart with an all-conquering power. Thus the Lord gives the last finishing touch to the forming and training of His witnesses by leaving their circle ; and here, too, it becomes evident that God's thoughts are not only wholly different, but also infinitely higher than the thoughts and ways of men. But also *for all His people* is the heavenly life of the Lord the source of

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Philemon 22a. Does not His *very presence* in the glory make heaven a "meet place" for His children ?]

<sup>40</sup> Compare on these words an admirable paper of Vinet, under the title, *Jésus invisible*, which appears in his *Etudes Evangeliques*, p. 373.

inestimable blessing. We have already spoken of His continued intercession, and of the sending of the Holy Ghost; we now direct our glance to another point. We think of the heavenly spectacle which John beheld,<sup>41</sup> when he saw the sealed book of the Divine decree, which no one in heaven or on earth could open, delivered to the Lamb, who, still bearing the marks of His having been slain, appeared before the throne of heaven. Assuredly he who perceives in such a vision nothing but the excited imagination of the seer himself must be disinclined to rest any definite conception as to the Lord's life and work above upon such poetic imagery. He, however, who with us is convinced that this vision, too, was the fruit of an extraordinary revelation granted by God Himself, readily deduces from it the idea that the carrying out of God's eternal counsel is entrusted to the hands of Him who of love died for our salvation; and it is almost impossible wholly to express in words the consolation and joy of this belief. Thus, then, it is the glorified Christ Himself, by whom the Father controls the outward life of each one of His people. All blessings which gladden them come to them from His hands; all calamities which try them are ordered or imposed by Him; all helps which promote the development of the spiritual life are the gift of His love. If they can indeed avail nothing without the Holy Ghost, this Spirit they receive only in living fellowship with the glorified Saviour, by whom He is constantly sent forth from the

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<sup>41</sup> Rev. v.

Father. Assured of His continual intervention, they may at the same time rely upon the continued grace of the Father, and the judgment, to which they would be ever afresh exposed, they see constantly averted by Him. How many a one is there whose spiritual life reminds of the barren fig tree, represented by the Master Himself in one of His parables! "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" must the Owner say again and again, at the sight of so much unfruitfulness. But, "let it alone yet this year," still continues to plead the heavenly vine-dresser, and turns aside the threatening axe from the ungrateful root, and goes on to do all that can be done to call forth fresh life and fruitfulness. Continually does He co-operate with His servants, and confirms their word by signs of His gracious intervention, and Himself builds up His Church upon the foundation laid by apostles and prophets. It is He who not only has given, but continues to give, also pastors and teachers, "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Yea, according to the teaching of the same apostle, who reminds us of this, He *nourishes* and *fosters* the Church, as a man upon earth his own flesh, which he cannot possibly hate, and *purifies* it, that He may present it to Himself a glorious Church, as a bride, not disfigured by spot or wrinkle.<sup>42</sup>

We could speak of more; but while completeness is from the nature of the case impossible, what has been

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<sup>42</sup> Ephes. iv. 12; v. 27, 29.

said already clearly shows that the confirming, the extending, and completing of the kingdom of God on earth stands in the most direct connection with the government of Christ in heaven. It is equally impossible to prize at anything approaching their true value the blessings of the government of Christ and the benefits of the fatherly Providence of God.

It must not, however, be thought that the kingly dominion of Christ opens such a plenteous fountain of blessing for His people alone. Inconceivably much has the whole *world* gained—even where it does not yet belong to His Church—in connection with the fact that this King has ascended the throne. As God's gracious nearness to His friends is something other and higher than His omnipresence for all His creatures, so, we admit, the blessing of Christ's government for the Church and for the world is by no means equal.<sup>43</sup> But this does not at all justify the supposition that He who is the Advocate and Leader of His believers is absolutely unconcerned with regard to unbelievers. He who was present to help Stephen in his last hour, was it not the same who arrested Saul, cast him to the ground, and transformed him into His Apostle? And this conversion is no isolated fact, to be taken entirely alone; Paul himself says, with regard to it, that for this cause he obtained mercy, that Jesus Christ might show forth in him, who was the chief of sinners, all His long-suffering,

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<sup>43</sup> [May we not speak of Christ as definitely exercising a Lordship or Headship over His Church, a Kingship over the world? Cf. *Christian Dogmatics*, pp. 623, *sqq.*]



for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting.<sup>44</sup> If we are to regard these words of the Apostle as anything more than an edifying—but wholly subjective and in great part unwarranted—application of the history of his conversion, on the part of the Apostle himself, we may legitimately conclude therefrom that Jesus Christ still continues to labour for the restoration of lost sinners, and, in doing so, to display the same grace and compassion as in the case of the subdued persecutor. But thus the word which the enemies once blasphemously spoke with regard to Him is still true to this day: "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." Thus does He still continue to be that which He called Himself here on earth—the Bread for those who hunger for things eternal, the Light for those that sit in darkness, the Shepherd who seeks the lost. "These also I must bring," thus He prophesied, even when He was on earth, of His heavenly life and work, with respect to the other sheep, "and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one flock, and one shepherd."<sup>45</sup> Can it still be doubted, after all this, whether in heaven also He hears and answers the cry of distress, in response to which He here so often afforded deliverance: "Son of David, have mercy on me"? Certainly if prayer is nothing else but a lifting up of the heart, in connection with which one *strengthens himself* by the exercise of communion with a higher world, then one can receive just as little from the

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<sup>44</sup> 1 Tim. i. 16.<sup>45</sup> John x. 16.

glorified Mediator Himself as from God His Father. But if Christ lives and works in heaven for the salvation of sinners, He assuredly hears them when they cry, and fulfils the word of ancient prophecy, that He is exalted to give *gifts* to men. Every sinner who is converted is one example the more of His continued activity—mediate, it is true, but nevertheless personal—and if the unbelieving world constantly refuses to recognise His hand therein, it is not the less undoubted that the world, too, owes infinitely more to this activity than it can ever repay. How is the face of the moral world changed; how are all things made new; how is a better order of things produced for individuals, families, societies, states, and quarters of the globe, wherever His kingdom comes! Truly we can still say that Christ in spirit passes through the land doing good, and that He makes the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the lame to walk, and the spiritually dead to live again. We shall presently speak more fully of these particulars, but enough already for the confirmation of the proposition, that the annihilation of Christ's government, if it were possible, would be, not only for the Church, but also for the world, an unparalleled calamity.

May we not, though not without a deep sense of awe, add to what has been said yet this one particular, that the life and working of the God-man in heaven is, not only for the Church and the world, but also for *Himself*, the source of an unspeakable and, if possible, ever-increasing joy and blessedness? <sup>46</sup> The absolute blessed-

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<sup>46</sup> See *Chr. Dogm.* pp. 575, 576.

ness of the unchangeable, all-sufficient God, one can scarcely conceive of as admitting of increase: with regard to the *God-man*, exalted at God's right hand, we may believe that His joy there ever reaches a higher degree of perfection. Or can the number of His subjects during eighteen centuries have increased to so many millions without His bliss also being augmented, since it is true that in the multitude of the people is the king's glory? "Father," thus He had prayed in the last night, "I will that they also whom Thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory;" and only when that prayer has been fully answered will His joy no longer admit of any limits. Thus rejoices the husbandman, when he sees the last sheaf safely housed in the garner; thus the philanthropist, when the last shipwrecked one, for whom he had ventured his life, is borne to the hospitable strand; thus the father of the family, who has prayed for all his children, when the last wanderer is brought beneath his roof. The glory and blessedness of the Head reaches its culmination when the number of the saved members is complete.<sup>47</sup>

And what conception have we, in the last place, to

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<sup>47</sup> To this truth Martensen also renders testimony, when in his *Dogmatik*, p. 365, he says, after having spoken of the constant spiritual coming of Christ in humanity:—"Since His organic relation to mankind is thus subject to rise and change, we must acknowledge even in His heavenly glory an accession and increase. Even of the Lord after His ascension to heaven it must be true that He grows and increases, not indeed in wisdom, but in favour with God and with men, in blessedness and life's fulness; a growth which only reaches its culminating-point, ἀκμή, when His Church, which

form as to the *end* of that government of Christ, so full of blessing? The end—and the angel who foretold His birth said indeed to Mary that of His kingdom there should be no end? Without doubt, so long as time endures, the rule of Christ, begun eighteen centuries ago, will see no end on earth. But on the confines of time faith expects a change, in consequence of which not God in Christ, but God immediately and directly, shall be All in all. Let us hear the great Apostle, who testifies thereof: “*Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For He hath put all things under His feet. But when He saith all things are put under Him, it is manifest that He is excepted, which did put all things under Him. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him (i.e., under the Son), that God may be all in all.*”<sup>48</sup>

When we sketch, in closing, the image of the glorified God-man in all the splendour of His future, different

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is His spiritual body, is completed, when all things are gathered under Him as under the Head.” Yet we feel, while entirely agreeing with these words, that we here approach a boundary-line at which the limitation of human thought permits of no further penetration into the sacred mystery.

<sup>48</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 24—28. Comp. *Christian Dogmatics*, p. 625, and the author's *Leerrede, de Christusregering voltooid*, in the *Woorden des Levens*, 2<sup>o</sup>. Druk, pp. 175 ff.

features of this inexhaustibly full Pauline utterance will come into particular consideration. For the present only the main thought claims our attention. The end of the government of Christ—assuredly without a special revelation we should scarcely have ventured to conjecture anything, much less positively to determine anything, respecting it. Yet, rightly regarded, the idea of such an end has nothing incredible about it. There was indeed a time when the Son of man had not yet ascended the Father's throne; it must thus also be possible that a time should come when He surrenders again the reins of government. The government of Christ is not the *final object* of God's good pleasure, but only the *means* by which to attain a higher end: where thus this latter is realised, the former can without loss be modified. *When and how* this will eventually take place we are on this point enlightened by the Apostle. Not a moment *sooner* than the subjection of all the enemies of the kingdom of God, even to the last, shall have taken place; but also not a moment later. Even while upon the throne the Son accomplishes not His own will, but that of the Father who has sent Him; and what can He thus do but deliver the kingdom again to this Father, when the commission of the Father is fulfilled? Without justice have theologians of an Arian or Socinian tendency, in earlier and later times, sought to find in this conception an argument against the Gospel doctrine of the Godhead of Christ. Of the person of the Lord regarded in itself the Apostle does not at all speak in this place; what is more, if He were no Divine person,

then the Apostle could not even say that He *shall be* subject, since, in that case, it is self-evident that He would always *have been* subject. There is here only reference to His mediatorial dominion, to the Son in the definite character of King of the kingdom of God.<sup>49</sup> So long as this dominion exists, God rules—humanly speaking—only *mediately*, by the intervention of the Son, to whom He has Himself entrusted the power. All that God does, He does through the Messiah. This dispensation will one day cease, because it has then attained its adorable end; and will be henceforth followed by an *immediate* reign of God, which has now taken its place. The Son will then also continue to do all that the Father shows Him; but no longer as King and Mediator. Without such an intervention the Father will immediately rule over all, manifest Himself to all in His condescending affection.<sup>50</sup> Thus, through the kingdom of the Messiah, everything returns again to the condition in which it was before the rise of sin and death. We need not say that He will receive to all eternity the homage due to Him as the Firstborn among many brethren, the supreme Leader (*ἀρχηγός*) of many children to glory. But He ceases to be, as before, the Mediator, through whose intervention alone the favour and love of the Father is

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<sup>49</sup> Justly does Augustine say, *De Trinitate*, i. 8, “In quantum (Christus) Deus est, nos cum Patre subjectos habet, in quantum Sacerdos, nobiscum Illi subjectus est” (rather, *erit*).

<sup>50</sup> [Then, and not earlier, will the aspiration of the Christian poet be realised:—

And see the Father face to face,  
And need no more a hiding place.]

assured to them. So far is Paul from here teaching a restoration of all things, that, on the contrary, He opens up no other prospect for the enemies than that of forced subjection "under the feet" of Christ. And just as little does He teach a resolution of all that exists into God, in connection with which view it is overlooked that, according to the Apostle's word, God will indeed be *all*, but nevertheless *in all*, whose personality thus for ever remains intact. But what the Apostle teaches us to expect at the end of the ages is a transition from the kingdom of Christ, fraught as it is with blessing, to the immediate, blessed, and intransitory kingdom of God. Such a conception surpasses, if possible, in beauty and value that of an ever-enduring reign.

In broad outlines we have thus described the *nature*, the *origin*, the *aim*, the *activity*, the *blessing*, and the *end* of our Lord's mediatorial sway. Will it be necessary, in the last place, yet expressly to show what homage He merits, who is clothed with such power? The question to which we have already addressed ourselves, which is in our day by so many replied to in the negative, whether we may also pray to the glorified Mediator as such, even as in His name we proceed directly to the Father, is answered in a peculiar manner by the Apostles and earliest believers—not by demonstration, but by acts. They *did* call upon Him, and without limitation promised and believed that whosoever else did this should be saved.<sup>51</sup> He who really sees in Christ the

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<sup>51</sup> Cf. Acts i. 24; ii. 21; vii. 59; ix. 14; Rom. x. 13; 2 Cor. xii. 8, and other places. Comp. Hasse, *l. c.* p. 200.



living and acting Lord of the Church, the God-man in heaven, will certainly not hesitate to follow in their footsteps, and further to regard the history of the development of the government of Christ with reverence and joyful hope. This history has been during past ages one of inexhaustible fulness, but the history of His dominion in the future promises yet infinitely greater things.

But who shall be accounted worthy "to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man"? He in whose heart the Christ has obtained a form,<sup>52</sup> before his eye beholds Him in the future. Thus we naturally arrive at the point of contemplating with interest the image of the God-man, as this impresses itself on the heart of all His people. The sun, whose brightness we saw reflected as in a boundless ocean, shall now beam forth to us even in a single drop of water.

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<sup>52</sup> Gal. iv. 19.

## II.

## THE GOD-MAN IN THE HEART.

AT the beginning of the second century—so ecclesiastical antiquity reports—a remarkable conversation took place between a Roman emperor and a disciple of the Apostles. Arrived at an important city of the East, the first-named had summoned the bishop of the youthful Christian Church before his tribunal. So highly was the faithful shepherd esteemed by many among the flock, that for some time they had given him the surname of *bearer of God*, Theophorus. But this singular name itself awakened, in an increasing degree, the suspicion of his numerous enemies, and even in the ears of the emperor it sounded as something strange. Already had the future martyr occupied his venerable office for about thirty years, when he was called to give an account of his most holy faith. To the question whether it was he who led others to destruction and was himself possessed by an evil spirit, he naturally was prepared with a negative answer. But to a second question, why it was that he was known as Theophorus, he hesitated not to declare that he was so called because he bore in his heart Christ the Lord. And to the renewed question of surprise, whether then he really asserted he had in his heart

Him who, years before, had been crucified under Pontius Pilate, was returned the most significant reply, "Thou sayest it; for it is written, I will dwell in them, and walk among them." That city was Antioch; that emperor, Trajan; that fearless confessor, Ignatius.

More than seventeen centuries have passed away since the trial and martyrdom of Ignatius, but even until now his confession is that of every genuine disciple of the Lord. This, indeed, is the peculiarity of the true Christian, in opposition to the servant of the world, that he bears in his heart Christ the Lord. No, the image of Christ has not disappeared without a trace from the earth; it does not stand resplendent before our eyes exclusively in the sanctuary of the New Testament history. If there still lives in many a heart the longing which once led certain Greeks to say to Philip, "Sir, we would see Jesus,"<sup>1</sup> that longing is still satisfied in another manner from that in which their ardent wish was gratified. Though it may be no artist has ever succeeded in drawing a faithful likeness of the Son of man; though the Church tradition, with regard to His outward form, is but too little trustworthy,<sup>2</sup> the world can yet clearly see who and what the Christ was. In colours not to be effaced does His image shine in the heart of all His people, and mirrors itself forth in countless forms in their life. As the Corinthian Church is somewhere termed an epistle of Christ, written by the

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<sup>1</sup> John xii. 21.

<sup>2</sup> This matter is further handled in the *Leven van Jezus*, i., p. 502, ff.

ministry of Paul, and read and known of all men,<sup>3</sup> so may the heart and life of each one of His people be called a continual revelation of His glory. This glory He discloses to our view, not only above, where He reigns at the right hand of God, but also here on earth, where He continues to live and work in millions of believing hearts. The sun, which displays its dazzling splendour in the noontide sky, reflects also its resplendent face in the clear mirror of the sea; the Christ, who in heaven is exalted above all principalities and powers, not less imprints His image on the heart of all who are born not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible. It will thus hardly call for excuse, that, in describing the God-man in His glory, we direct our glance not merely upward, but also around and within us. For where are more striking proofs to be found than here, that the Christ whom His faithful Church has worshipped these eighteen centuries is no dead Christ, but a living, working, sovereign ruler? In some respects even this part of our subject falls more easily within the grasp of our examination than that which occupied us in the previous chapter. There we had to rise to the heights of the Divine world-plan, as this is carried out by the gracious government of Christ; here we must descend into the depths of the Christian life, to discover there also the traces of the same hand which wields the sceptre of the mighty universe.

We have thus to sketch the image of Christ, as He, reigning in heaven, manifests Himself, and impresses His

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<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 1—3.

likeness in the heart of all His people. It would be a noble task, and at the same time a glorious crown of honour to the Lord, if we should attempt to do so in the light of history, which makes clearly manifest how, in the midst of the darkest ages, the God-man ceased not to live and work in and through His faithful confessors. The whole inner history of the Church, indeed, displays to us in countless lineaments the image of Christ, over which a higher voice has, as it were, pronounced the "Increase and multiply." But where should we discover a limit, if we should venture upon that vast field? True to our design, in this case also, to depict the image of Christ *as presented in Scripture*, we have only to take into our view that which shows itself to us within this field of vision. The mystery of faith, Christ *in us*, must be the object of our reverent investigation, while we inquire first as to the *nature* of the life of the glorified Saviour in the heart of His sincere disciples, and then as to the high degree of *significance* and *value* of this life.

"*I live, yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me.*"<sup>4</sup> Thus spake once a Divinely enlightened apostle of the Lord, and in all ages these his words have been looked upon as the best description of the truly Christian life. But what is really meant when it is said that Christ lives in His believers? Is it simply implied that the thought of Christ constantly fills their heart? that in all His greatness and goodness He is unceasingly present

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<sup>4</sup> Gal. ii. 20.

before the eye of their spirit? that He ever continues to form the object of their admiration and worship? Thus the departed father or mother still lives on in the heart of the grateful child; thus the teacher, in the heart of the obedient disciple; thus the philosopher, in the remembrance of the philosophic school which he has founded. But Paul manifestly intends more than this, in writing those words so full of deep meaning, "Christ liveth in me." He confesses, indeed, a Lord who not only has once lived, but who continues to live personally, and to exert a blessed influence upon all those who through faith have been brought into communion with Him. The bond of this communion he intimates in that which immediately follows: "*The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself up for me.*" But the effect of this communion of faith is this, that it is henceforth no longer the old sinful Paul who can be said to live within him; but that the personal living Christ henceforth forms the great centre of all his thinking, feeling, willing, and acting. Does he then simply wish to imply that it is the Spirit of Christ which wholly fills and penetrates him? that that mind is in him which was also in Christ Jesus? that in consequence a manifest conformity, both outward and inward, exists between the faithful disciple and the glorified Master? Who could doubt or overlook anything of all this in a man who could boldly exhort his brethren, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ"? But yet, with all this, we have not exhausted the full significance of this

the maxim of His life. The operation of the Holy Ghost *upon* the believer, and the dwelling of Christ *in* the believer, are with Paul by no means the same thing, although the latter without the former cannot, according to his teaching, even be conceived of. There is a difference, however, whether I say, "Christ lives in me," or, "The Spirit of Christ governs me." Without doubt, the glorified Christ sends forth the Holy Spirit into the hearts of His true disciples, and renews them by His Spirit after His image. But in and through the Holy Spirit He nevertheless comes *Himself*, invisibly, but really, into the heart of all His people; since, as Paul in another place so profoundly, but also so truly, expresses it, "Now the Lord is the Spirit."<sup>5</sup> Bodily He departed from the earth, spiritually He comes again, whenever He causes the breathing of the new life to be heard, and thus fulfils the words of the promise, "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."<sup>6</sup> This is the mystery of godliness, which is unfathomable indeed, but at the same time incontestable, that the same Person who lives and reigns in heaven, not only continually remembers His people, not only operates upon them with power, but *personally is* everywhere, where by faith He is acknowledged and received. That is the answering of the great prayer of His parting hour: "That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee; that they may be one in us, . . . I

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<sup>5</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 17.

<sup>6</sup> John xiv. 23.



*in them, and Thou in me.*"<sup>7</sup> No paraphrase of these sententious words can be given, which does full justice to all their depth of meaning. But this surely all must feel, that it is much too superficial to think here only of a oneness of mind and endeavour with the Lord in the heart of His people. Or is there also no other unity between the Father and the Son, than that they both will and seek the same thing? Is not the life of the Father and that of the Son so intimately conjoined, that, with all personal distinction, it must be spoken of as absolutely inseparable; and that it is equally impossible to think of the Father without the Son, as of the Son without the Father? A similar communion of life now begins between the glorified Christ and the Christian believer. He Himself is in them, as the Father is in Him; they are in Him, as He is in the Father. It is *His* life, no longer their own self-seeking and sinful one, which they now live; it is His power, not their natural weakness, which has the sway in them. In a word, the life of the Lord in His people may, with the highest justice, be termed a *personal* life.<sup>8</sup>

No one need feel surprised that we have to wrestle with our imperfect language, in order to express to any extent in words this thrice-glorious subject. For the life of the Lord in His people is, in the fullest sense of the word, a *spiritual* life, and what is spiritual cannot be otherwise than defectively expressed in earthly forms.

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<sup>7</sup> John xvii. 21, 23.

<sup>8</sup> As Augustine somewhere expresses it, "In coming forth from God, He has not left God; in returning to God, He has not left us."

Had this truth always been duly considered, the history of the Christian Church would have been less sullied with the traces of a corrupt mysticism, whose representatives apprehended literally that which is spiritually intended, and only too often began in the spirit to end in the flesh. Unquestionably there is an essential, direct, personal communion between the Lord and His people, just as little hindered on His side by distance or time as on their side by daily fresh unworthiness. This communion consists not merely in the thought, the imagination, the feeling of the Christian, but in reality. It is prepared by God, willed by Christ Himself, brought about in the believing heart by the sending forth of the Holy Ghost. But—what especially must not be overlooked—it is a *purely spiritual* relationship, equally purely spiritual, again, as the bond which from all eternity has united the Son to the Father. Nothing sensuous cleaves to it on His side, nor may tarnish it on ours. It belongs wholly to the domain, not of a sometimes sickly feeling, or of an excited imagination, but of living and personal faith. On this very account also it is impossible so to explain it to the natural man that he shall perfectly understand it, and cease from all offence at that holy of holies. Here the word of the Apostle is applicable in its full extent: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."<sup>9</sup> If even the rise and develop-

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<sup>9</sup> 1 Cor. ii, 14.

ment of the natural life is in its innermost essence a mystery which no naturalist has yet satisfactorily solved, how much less can the spiritual life be so analysed and laid bare in its constitution, genesis, and operation, that no single difficulty any longer remains ? But, foolish as it would be to deny the spirit in nature, because we discover indeed its traces, but do not fathom its laws, equal superficiality would it betray if any one should wish to deny the continuous life of the Lord in His people, just because he has not yet discovered the formula whereby the constitution and operation of this life can be expressed with perfect accuracy. Here, surely, the word addressed to Nicodemus will retain its force, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth : so is every one that is born of the Spirit."<sup>10</sup> Enough, the life of the Lord in His people is equally essential, intimate, and unmistakable, as the life of the vine in the branch which is one with it ; as the life of the head in the members which are inseparably connected with it. As from the vine to the branch, from the head to the members, so does there constantly proceed from the living Christ spirit and power to His believers, in more abundant measure, in proportion as the communion of faith on their part is more intimate and unvarying. No sensuous communion such as the fanatic dreams of, who sees Christ appearing with the signs of His bleeding wounds, and asserts that he hears His voice or feels the

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<sup>10</sup> John iii. 8.

kiss of His lips. No Pantheistic fusion, in connection with which all limits between the Divine and the human fall away, and the redeemed sees his personality vanish, while he feels his inner life as it were wholly resolved into that of Christ. Paul can constantly say, "*I live*," although with regard to his old sinful nature he can add thereto a "*no longer I*." The rights of individuality are by no means ignored in the Gospel, but, on the contrary, are emphatically maintained. A Christian Paul will display an entirely different spiritual physiognomy from a Christian Peter or John. But yet a spiritual communion of life between the Lord and His people, in which He personally influences them, and they constantly experience the influence of His presence; in which He continues to give, and they cease not to receive, out of His inexhaustible fulness; in which, in a word, a reciprocal *rapprochement* exists, on His part, of constantly renewed communication of the Spirit, sustained on their part by faith and prayer; a *rapprochement* not less direct and essential than that brought about in the material domain by the application of the law and operation of that electricity whose flash equals the lightning's speed.

No wonder, accordingly, that that which is accomplished in so spiritual a manner very soon manifests itself in an outward form. The life of the God-man in the heart of His people is, in the third place, a life *perceptible to the eye*. If any one had asked Paul for the proof of his confession, "Christ lives in me," he could have boldly referred them to his constant mode of thinking, speaking, acting. Undoubtedly even the Divinely

enlightened Apostle was so far from having reached perfection, that he himself must declare, "Not as though I had already attained." There is perhaps no more striking proof for the all-surpassing greatness of the Lord than the simple observation how far even His most advanced disciple at many a moment stands beneath Him. What, for instance, is the love of a Paul, as well for his brethren according to the flesh as for the Gentile world, compared with the matchless love of Him who gives His life for His friends, and prays for His foes?<sup>11</sup> But yet, the image of Christ in the heart of believers, *however far from perfect, is nevertheless clearly recognisable*. What a change in the heart and life of the great Apostle of the Gentiles! "Once passionate and stormy, now only courageous and steadfast; once violent, now vigorous and enterprising; once impetuous in his resistance to all that opposed him, now only persevering to the end; once wild and sullen, now only earnest; once cruel, now only strict; once a bitter zealot, now a God-fearing man; once inflexible, closed to pity and compassion, now even known by tears, which he before looked upon with indifference in others. Formerly the friend of no one, now the brother of all men; benevolent, sympathetic, compassionate, and yet never weak—ever great, in the midst of grief and anxiety manly and noble. Thus has his heart not only received another direction,

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<sup>11</sup> Let the student peruse the beautiful and still important contribution to this subject by Rau : *De Jesu Christi ingenio et indole perfectissimis, per comparationem cum ingenio et indole Pauli illustratis*.

but he is so entirely subdued and changed, that henceforth his great powers are harmoniously developed into an entirely new tone of heart, from the simplicity of which the most exalted character is born." <sup>12</sup>

The same great change, though in another form, would strike us again, if for instance we compared the Peter before the day of Pentecost with the same Peter afterwards, or were to glance at the manner in which the Lord gradually obtained a form in the heart of the beloved John. As concerns also the history of the unfolding and the manifestation of the spiritual life, the kingdom of grace displays no less diversity than the glorious kingdom of nature. But, in the midst of this diversity the higher unity nowhere denies itself, and with respect to every believer—although in a differing degree—the words of the Apostle may be repeated: "We all with unveiled face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." <sup>13</sup> One-sided and fruitless as it is to preach Christ as an example, so long as one has not acknowledged Him as the Expiator of guilt and as King, equally little must the fact be overlooked that He presented Himself to His disciples as their highest example, and that His most favoured disciple has declared, "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked." It is equally the peculiar characteristic as the sacred vocation of His people, that as He was, so also they should be in this

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<sup>12</sup> Hug.

<sup>13</sup> Or, "By the Lord the Spirit," 2 Cor. iii. 18.

present world.<sup>14</sup> It is particularly the self-denial, the obedience, the ministering love of the Christ in His humiliation, of which the following, though at an infinite distance, is the predominant joy of their heart. As He esteemed it His meat to do the will of the Father, and to finish His work, so have they a delight in the law of God after the inward man. As He humbled Himself to serve, where He might have been served, so do they desire in humility each to esteem other better than themselves. As He, when He was reviled, reviled not again, so can they in His strength bless them that curse them, and pray for them that despitefully use them. As He, in a word, as to the body was nailed to the cross, so has also their old man begun to be crucified with Him to sin and the world. All these features, and what further is inseparably connected with them, are not accidental but necessary traits in the image of Christ, not temporary but unalterable features in that likeness which impresses itself in the heart, and displays itself in the life of the Christian. In the true disciple it may be clearly seen of what mind the Master was; for what Christ has always been by nature, the Christian gradually becomes through grace. But thus also the image of Christ in the heart, *however differently modified, is ever really the same.* Without doubt there is an immense difference between the ideas, development, the whole outward and inward bent of life of countless Christians in different ages. What a distance between the Divinely inspired Apostle

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<sup>14</sup> 1 John ii. 6; iv. 17.



who sounds the depths of the Godhead, and the simple convert, brought in by the labours of our missionaries, who finds peace through the blood of the cross! But, notwithstanding this, the Christian life of all earlier and later friends of the Lord has something in common, which at once distinguishes them at the first glance from such as call themselves after Confucius or Zoroaster, after Moses or Mahomet. As the adherents of the same philosophic school among the ancients recognised each other sometimes by their phraseology, sometimes by their garb, sometimes by some other distinctive badge, so is the spiritual life of all the redeemed of the Lord most intimately related in the several members. He lives in them personally, spiritually, visibly; how could it be anything else than the essential unvarying characteristic in the likeness of Christ which presents itself to our contemplation in them? It will unquestionably repay the labour, if we direct our attention to the inner constitution of the Christian life, as it, in the main, similarly manifests itself in all those who through faith have been made one plant with the dead and risen Saviour.

The heart of man without Christ—we have often observed it in ourselves and others—is by nature just as little filled with true love to God as with pure love to one's neighbour. Rather is the mind of the flesh enmity against God, as often as His law comes into conscious opposition with the lust of our heart; and in our relation to our fellow-men we confirm in manifold ways the truth of the Apostle's description: "Hateful and hating one

another.”<sup>15</sup> But where Christ by faith comes to dwell in the soul, there a great and blessed change takes place in the hidden man of the heart. When faith has once recognised Him as its deliverer, the heart cannot but be filled with ardent love to Him who loved even us, and gave Himself up for us. This love necessarily comes into conflict with the love of sin and the world, repelling that which is of unlike nature, and attracting that which is of like nature. The heart, in which the most opposite inclinations have before contended for the mastery, is now brought under the sway of one mighty all-penetrating principle, and, as we just now saw in the case of Paul, inner harmony takes the place of the former discord. The Gospel of the cross addresses itself to that which is deepest, the innermost in man, to the *heart*, the focus of all our powers and capacities, where, so to speak, they lie as yet unseparated side by side. And where this heart is not merely touched, but really won, and filled with the glory and love of Christ, there the leaven begins *from that centre* to permeate in the most diverse directions the whole inner and outward man. There the *intellect*, hitherto equally blinded to the highest truth, as to the most urgent need of the sinner, learns to understand and prize the word of grace as never before; it learns to look upon God, man, and the world with wholly different eyes from what it did before; it distinguishes now in the spiritual domain the essence from the form, which formerly again and again deceived it; it discerns phenomena, truths, facts,

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<sup>15</sup> Rom. viii. 7; Titus iii. 3.

for which it formerly had no eye. Then is the *feeling* directed to all that is truly holy, and good, and fair; and the natural selfishness is succeeded by "bowels of compassion" for all that suffers and struggles upon earth. There the *will*, up to this time in a greater or less degree enslaved to sin and the world, is delivered from these heavy chains, and with gentle constraint is led independently and freely to choose that which is good and well-pleasing to God. Is it at all surprising that an unmistakable change now becomes visible in the whole bent of the inner and outward *life*? Formerly it was the question, What do men wish? now, What does the Lord wish that I should do? Formerly things visible occupied the first place, now things invisible occupy that place in the estimation of the Christian. From the world, to which he formerly looked up with slavish dependence, his affections are gradually withdrawn; God, whom he formerly supposed to stand towards him as a stranger or a foe, now becomes the best friend of his soul. If the companionship of those who knew and loved the Lord was formerly either a matter of indifference to him, or was perhaps secretly intolerable, now he readily gives the hand to all those with whom he has learnt to build on one foundation. The *taste*, before directed to the grosser or more refined enjoyment of the senses, is now constantly more attuned to spiritual and heavenly things. The *imagination* no longer dwells by preference on that which degrades and debases man, but rather recalls to itself the fairest scenes in the life of the God-man, or creates for itself ideals of a purity and blessed-

ness never perfectly attained here on earth. The different *gifts* and powers of the mind, with which one is endowed in distinction from others, are presented a sacrifice to the Lord, and in diverse ways made to minister to the coming of the kingdom of God upon earth. Where Christ lives in him, the ruler on the throne feels himself the servant of a higher power, and the subject is obedient, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake. There the family becomes a temple of the Holy Ghost, and the various members thereof are ever more closely united to each other by the most sacred bonds. There the father of the family becomes a priest in his own house, and the mother the guide of her children to the foot of the one Friend of children. There husband and wife are one in heart and soul, through agreement in that which is highest and holiest, and the children are brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. There the masters will command as those who know that they too have a Lord and Master in heaven; and the servants, who from love obey them, are delivered from the deadly dominion of corruption. There the man of learning makes the treasures of his science subservient to the cause of truth and the well-being of souls; there the artist devotes his talent to inspiring his contemporaries with love for all that is noble and good; there the rich man looks upon himself as the steward of an intrusted capital, and the poor becomes rich in a treasure which no moth nor rust can destroy. The extreme poles of society even can there meet each other in a common point of union, and sharply defined diversities resolve themselves insensibly

into friendly agreement. Thus the different lineaments in the image of Christ belong to each other, "as the different grapes of the vine planted by the Father in believers,"<sup>16</sup> and form together a new man, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. And all who are renewed after that image together make one communion of redeemed and, in their degree, sanctified ones, who in the domain assigned to each follow in His blessed footsteps.<sup>17</sup>

We have already begun to indicate what nevertheless, in the fourth place, has need of special proof, that the life of Christ in the heart may be spoken of as a life *which powerfully develops itself*. Not all at once is the height attained, to which we just now directed our glance; here also is it rather, as in the familiar parable, first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. If nevertheless it be asked in what way and according to what law this spiritual life arises, and grows, and is perfected; then, on the ground alike of Scripture and experience, we must at once contradict the assertion that the Christian life is nothing but the natural development of the religious germ which is found in every man. Certainly the natural capacity for bearing the image of God and of Christ is originally implanted in us, and however deeply any one may be sunken, he yet retains the

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<sup>16</sup> Origen.

<sup>17</sup> Much that is beautiful and good in connection with this subject, written from the peculiar standpoint of the Groningen school, is to be found in the treatise of W. Muurling, *Christus in den Mensch en in de Menschheid*.

capability of receiving deliverance and renewal.<sup>18</sup> This capacity, however, is entirely suppressed where sin rules over its slaves, and this capability is never developed without a special, direct—although always mediate—operation of grace from on high. The life which man receives at his birth into this world is not only *insufficient* to give him a title to the kingdom of God, it is definitely *unsuitable* to this end; that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and they that are in the flesh cannot please God. Paul is not the development of that which was already in principle (potentially) present in Saul, but rather the very opposite of this: the Christian principle of life is not the natural human one, but a principle of life truly Divine, which on account of this very fact now first corresponds to its original destination. It is—what is only too often overlooked, both on the side of modern unbelief and of rigid orthodoxy—the *preparing grace of the Father*, which in every variety of ways opens up the field of the heart for the reception of the seed of regeneration. Blessing and chastisement, voices of conscience and voices of the word, nature, and grace alike, are in turn made subservient to the preparing in the heart of a way for the King of the kingdom of God. If the work of grace has attained its end, and the sinner has *suffered himself* to be won for Christ, then it is the *constant operation of the Son*, whereby definitely the old passes away, and all things become new in the heart and life of His people. It is not Paul, who in his own strength in-

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<sup>18</sup> [A receptibility which must become, through grace, a receptivity in the man who is to attain to his original destination.]

dependently develops himself into conformity with Christ; but Christ, the ever-living and working One, who creates Paul anew after His own image and that of the Father.<sup>19</sup> Not only does the branch draw up the vital sap from the vine, but the vine pours it forth into the branch. Thus is the new life not less the Lord's *own* work in His people than, *e.g.*, the healing of the sick or the raising of the dead in the days of His flesh was the *own* work of His love. And if now we are asked, What is it, then, properly speaking, that the glorified Christ does in order to awaken, strengthen, and complete that life? the Gospel directs us to *the all-penetrating and all-conquering power of the Holy Ghost*. This Spirit, whom He continues unceasingly to send forth from the Father, convinces of sin, leads to faith, sheds abroad love in the heart, breaks the dominion of the senses, augments the zeal, the elasticity, the courage,—causes, in a word, the mustard-seed within to unfold into a mighty tree. It is true He works in no case immediately: the fanatic will have the Spirit without the word, as the rationalist will be satisfied with the word without the Spirit; but yet it is ever He Himself who works through the means. And again, Christ dwells and works in the heart not otherwise than by the Holy Ghost; but it is always He, the Lord of the Church, who *Himself* by this Spirit stands in personal communion of life with His people. Is it possible that this combined operation of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost should produce anything less than an

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<sup>19</sup> [On the image of God in man, see *Christian Dogmatics*, pp. 375, 376.]



ever-progressive development of life in the heart of the believer? Regeneration is wholly the work of grace; but where this has once been effected, there it is in a certain sense natural that the child should now become the young man,—the man, the father in Christ. If the plant has once begun to unfold itself, it successively passes through the stages of development between the first blossom and the perfect growth. Thus by degrees is formed a Christian *individuality*, a Christian character, of which the main features have ever, during so many ages, corresponded to the remarkable delineation which a Christian writer of the second century gave of the then confessors of the Christian faith:<sup>20</sup> “In the constitution of their peculiar mode of life they display something strange and unquestionably wonderful. They inhabit their own country, but as strangers. They bear their part in all things as citizens, and endure all things as aliens. Every foreign country is a fatherland to them, and every fatherland a foreign country. They marry as all others, raise up children, but do not cast them away after birth. They have a common table, but no common couch. They live in the flesh, but do not walk after the flesh. They dwell on earth, but are citizens of heaven. They obey the appointed laws, but display in their actions more virtue than the laws can prescribe. They regard all with love, and are persecuted by all. They are not known, and yet are condemned. They are put

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<sup>20</sup> See the well-known *Epistle to Diognetus*, generally bound up with the works of Justin Martyr, but also to be had in any edition of the Apostolic Fathers.

to death, and death is to them the beginning of life. They are poor, and make many rich. They are in want of all things, and they have all things in abundance. They are dishonoured, and in the dishonour glorified. They are blasphemed, and are vindicated; they are reviled, and they bless; they are spitefully entreated, and they give honour. They do good, and as evil-doers are punished. Being punished, they rejoice, as making increase in the true life. By the Jews they are warred against as foreigners, and by the Greeks they are persecuted, while their haters can give no reason for their hostility towards them. In few words, what the soul is in the body, that are Christians in the world. The soul is spread through all the members of the body, and Christians are scattered through all the cities of the world. The soul dwells indeed in the body, but is not of the body; so also Christians dwell in the world, but are not of the world. . . . The soul is enclosed in the body, but it holds the body together; so also Christians are held in the world as in a prison, but they hold the world together."

Yet one other feature, and this part also of our description is completed. The life of the God-man in the heart of His people is, finally, an *imperishable* life. Long indeed may the sinner resist the grace of God; but where this last has finally overcome the stubborn heart, bowed it down, taken possession of it, there it must necessarily at last triumph over all opposition. For a time the life of God may decline, droop, be near unto dying, under the influence of unfavourable circumstances, or of prevailing

sins ; but, where it was the true life from God, it can just as little die as the True and Faithful One Himself, since the seed of which the Christian is born again is an incorruptible (imperishable) seed. Very affecting are the warnings which the Gospel gives us, when it points to the fate of the salt which has lost its savour, now cast out and trodden under the foot of men ; to the branch which, severed from the vine, is condemned to the fire ; to the light within, which may again become darkness : and countless examples are there that—viewed from the human side—that danger is, alas ! something more than an abstract possibility. So very much may have taken place within, in the domain of the intellect, the emotions, the imagination, the conscience even, without the *will* being in reality brought into subjection unto the obedience of faith. But where this last has truly submitted itself, and has taken on it the gentle yoke of Jesus Christ—no, there it is never to be feared that the Holy Ghost will desert the temple He Himself has built ; that Christ will at last forever withdraw His light and consolation from a heart in which He has really made His abode. The faithfulness of the Lord gives us ground to hope for the contrary, and the most positive promises prove that it is impossible He should forsake the work of His own hands.<sup>21</sup> Christ in us ever passes through what is essentially the same history as the Christ passed through for us. He is born of the

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<sup>21</sup> [See the places cited in *Christian Dogmatics*, p. 664. Believers, in the sense of their unfaithfulness, will ever rest upon such words as those of 2 Tim. ii. 19. "*Sed hæc doctrina, meditatione opus habet magis quam explicatione.*"—Calvin on 2 Tim. ii. 13.]

power of the Holy Ghost, in the quiet of seclusion, not with outward show, unseen by the eye of men, yet amidst the rejoicing of heaven. Scarcely is it known that He is living, when the enmity of the world breaks forth, and seeks to kill the child Christ; but God shelters and preserves it. It grows and increases, and soon has no greater delight than to be "in the things of the Father,"<sup>22</sup> and grows up to a perfect man, "unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," in due time filled with the Holy Ghost, but also tempted of the devil. The desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, and the pride of life, combine against the disciple, as once against the Master; pharisaic self-righteousness and sadducean frivolity are the natural enemies whom he has throughout life to combat, within and around him; he blesses, and is cursed; he is defamed, and entreats. Daily must the old man tread the path of self-denial, toil, and conflict, and he who has lately accompanied his Lord on the Tabor-height of glory must presently enter with Him into the gloom of Gethsemane, and climb the hill of Calvary. "Let us also go, that we may die with Him," becomes more and more the maxim of those who follow Him as their head and leader; but, "whosoever shall lose his life for my sake," says the Lord, "shall find it." While the old man remains upon the cross, to which with Christ the believer has been bound, the new man rises again like Christ by the glory of the Father, and manifests himself ever afresh by many infallible signs, and ascends with Him to

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<sup>22</sup> Luke ii. 49, Greek text.

heaven, with Him to be glorified at the right hand of God, with Him to live, to reign, to judge. And there, exalted above all power of the world and sin, there is in him a perfect fulfilment of the words, "*As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.*"<sup>23</sup> All the living members of the body now display, in however different degree, in purity, splendour, and incorruptibility, the image of the glorified Head. Yet, even in the highest stage of the development of life, they can never soar beyond Him, but only approach unceasingly nearer to Him. "A man may become a God-like man, but never a God-man; this last Christ alone remains."<sup>24</sup>

We could not possibly observe the *nature* of the continued life of the glorified Redeemer in the heart of His people without at the same time the high *significance* and continued *value* of this part of His activity becoming already manifest. The subject, however, is of sufficient importance for us expressly to regard it a little more nearly. We close this chapter, therefore, with the threefold observation, that this continued life and operation of the Lord has the highest significance, in relation to the *Christian*, to the *world*, to *Himself*, finally, who thus manifests His glory ever anew before many an eye.

Or must not, first of all, the life and operation of the Lord in his heart be for the *Christian* himself an inestimable benefit? If it were true, as is asserted by some, that the Christ after His death exerts just as little a

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<sup>23</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 49 ; cf. 2 Pet. i. 4.

<sup>24</sup> Philip Schaff.

personal influence upon the world as do the most distinguished philosophers or messengers of God of bygone ages, we could, beyond doubt, still continue to think of Him with a deep sense of admiration, reverence, and love. The contemplation of the example of Him who, eighteen centuries ago, trod with firm step the way of faith and of obedience, would not fail to exert its reviving and strengthening influence. Even thus the Son of man remains the sublime ideal, from which the most advanced feels himself ever too far removed. But surely it will not be supposed that the recognition of these facts is in itself sufficient to call forth a truly Christian life, such as is with the greatest justice admired in the Apostles of the Lord and the most brilliant luminaries of the Church's sky in later ages. Christian life, in the sense of Paul, of John, of Christ Himself, is a life of *communion*; communion is from the nature of the case *reciprocal*, and can be realised in all its power only between two living ones, not with one who has already been ages dead. It is only through spiritual converse with a continually living and working Lord that strength and life can proceed into the soul of the Christian. Thus does the Saviour Himself present the case, in the exhortation, "*Abide in me, and I in you. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit;*"<sup>25</sup> and we may confidently maintain that hardly would the thinking on or looking up to the Christ of a long-vanished past be able to exert an animating and new-creating

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<sup>25</sup> John xv. 4, 5.

power upon His people, unless He Himself on His part unceasingly poured forth light, life, and fruitfulness into the heart, without Him dark, dead, and unfruitful. But that—according to the testimony of Scripture and experience—He is up to the present moment actually doing this, is for the Christian a source of refreshment, consolation, and constantly increasing sanctification, of which the blessing is inestimable. It is true, our justification before God by no means rests upon that which Christ works *in* us, but exclusively upon that which He has done *for* us; and we must be on our guard against building our hope for eternity, as to its ultimate ground, upon anything *within* us, since the Gospel constantly reminds us that this ground lies *without* and *above* us. We find it still necessary to repeat what we have formerly written, “*Confound* justification and sanctification, and you open a wide door to self-righteousness. *Separate* justification and sanctification, and you give *carte blanche* to unrighteousness. The true combination of the ‘for us’ and the ‘in us’ requires that the former should ever receive the greatest prominence, but also that the latter should be just as little obscured as put in the first place.” Of what avail is all that Christ has done *for* us, if He does not really through faith live *in* us? Only when His life becomes manifest in us is it evident that He has truly accomplished all for us, and has not only redeemed us from the guilt—this stands always first—but also, to an ever-growing extent, from the dominion of sin. And how priceless are the benefits attached to this constant indwelling and inworking of the living Christ, according



to His own word and that of His Apostles! "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall *live* by me."<sup>26</sup> I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.<sup>27</sup> If ye abide in me, and my words abide, in you, ye shall ask *what ye will*, and *it shall be done unto you*.<sup>28</sup> If Christ be in you, the body is indeed dead, because of sin; but the spirit is *life*, because of righteousness.<sup>29</sup> Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is *liberty*.<sup>30</sup> If any man be in Christ, he is *a new creature*,<sup>31</sup> and learns how to *comprehend*, with all the saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, to the end he may be filled unto all the fulness of God.<sup>32</sup> Yea, if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him, since Christ in us is at the same time the hope of glory.<sup>33</sup> Truly He that is in us is greater than he that is in the world;<sup>34</sup> and if we abide in Him, we shall at the same time have *confidence*, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming."<sup>35</sup> But to what purpose more? It is clear that only by the life of Christ in us is the great end of redemption—our new-creation after the image of the Divine perfections, and the blessedness inseparable therefrom—fully attained. Happy are we if we truly experience the power of His promise, "I will not leave you orphans, I come (again) unto you."<sup>36</sup>

<sup>26</sup> John vi. 57.<sup>27</sup> John x. 10.<sup>28</sup> John xv. 7.<sup>29</sup> Rom. viii. 10.<sup>30</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 17.<sup>31</sup> 2 Cor. v. 17.<sup>32</sup> Ephes. iii. 17—19.<sup>33</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 11; Coloss. i. 27.<sup>34</sup> 1 John iv. 4.<sup>35</sup> 1 John ii. 28.<sup>36</sup> John xiv. 18.

And does it not now become apparent with equal clearness that this life of the God-man in the heart of His people also redounds to the inestimable benefit of *the world*? Precisely in this way is the world on the one hand *condemned*, but also on the other hand is it *won*. Every true disciple of the Lord is, even without designing it or knowing it, an accuser, who appears against the sinful world with a grievous charge. Or how is the unsightliness of the darkness better made manifest than precisely by the brilliancy of the light? how is the pride and hardness of the world more severely condemned than by the spirit of humility and love with which the Lord inspires His believing people? In truth, the sight of every one who is renewed in heart is one of the most powerful means of which the Spirit makes use in convincing the world of sin, when it obstinately refuses to bow before a Master who forms such disciples. Hence the hatred which the world has at all times displayed towards true Christianity is, however unreasonable, still perfectly explicable. "If ye were of the world," thus said the Lord in His parting hour to His downcast disciples, "the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."<sup>37</sup> It cannot but be that he who doeth evil should hate the light, not only that shed by Christ Himself, but also that of His sincere disciple. To this extent we may speak of the life of Christ in the heart of His people as a constant judgment

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<sup>37</sup> John. xv. 19.

of God, whereby ever anew the sin of the world, which rejects His Gospel, is made manifest, and a continual separation is brought about between light and darkness.—But at the same time, precisely by means of His constant revelation is the world, on the other hand, by degrees *won* for Christ. It would be a difficult point to determine whether—to repeat once more the same name—a Paul has gained more hearts for the Lord by word and writing than by his excellent example. It is certain that, according to the Lord's own word, the mutual love and oneness of spirit in His people must be the mark whereby the world shall recognise His true disciples, and in the true disciples the gracious Master;<sup>38</sup> while history teaches how precisely the manifestation of the Christian life of His people has been at all times one of the most effectual means for bringing constantly fresh sheep to the Good Shepherd. "Behold how they love each other," cried the astonished heathen one to another, at the sight of the first believers; and levity made sport: "Their lawgiver has persuaded them that they are all brothers, and must be ready to die the one for the other." How many may have been led to the faith by a sight of the calmness and heroic courage with which the first martyrs went to the scaffold or the stake!<sup>39</sup> Is it necessary here to mention in illustration the name of the good cloister-brother who could find no more desirable place of retreat than to be "in his corner with his book,"—"in een hoeksken met

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<sup>38</sup> John xiii. 35; xvii. 21.

<sup>39</sup> Many examples of either kind will be found in Neander's *Denkwürdigkeiten aus der Geschichte des christlichen Lebens*.

een boekskén,"—where he wrote his "Imitation of Christ," not even caring to make his real name known to posterity; and yet, by his admirable work, a hundred times translated and reprinted, has served as a guide in the way of life to countless numbers? But to this one name we could add a thousand others, if we wished to show in the light of history how the Christian life of the Lord's true disciples has strengthened and extended His kingdom upon earth. Once more, to speak in the language of the *Epistle to Diognetus*, "The flesh wars against the soul, although it has suffered no injury, because it is hindered in the enjoyment of its lusts; the world, too, hates Christians, although it has suffered no injury at their hands, because they condemn its lust. The soul loves the flesh which hates it, as also its members; Christians, too, love them that hate them. . . . The soul, being scantily supplied with meat and drink, becomes better; and Christians, being daily persecuted, increase the more in number."

But it thus gradually becomes evident, in the last place, that this continued life and working of the God-man in the heart of His people continues, with regard to *Himself* also, a fact of the highest significance. If that is true which we have advanced respecting the continued activity of the Lord, we have here one of the most conclusive proofs for the Divine dignity of His *person*. For, of a Christ who *thus* lives and works, it were irrational to assert that no higher title of honour belongs to Him than that of a pure and faultless man. Or what less does He require for such an activity than

Divine omnipresence, in order to make His quickening influence felt at once in all places; Divine omniscience, in order to sound all the wants of His people; Divine wisdom, to satisfy them at the proper time and in the best manner; Divine power and all-sufficiency, to confer upon them all that in themselves is wanting? And how should He who bestows all this—mediately indeed, but still personally—deserve no higher title than that of Ideal of humanity, or Firstborn of all the creatures? One thing at least is clear as day: he who, in contradiction with the believing Church of all ages, sees in Christ *only* the man, must reject as a baseless delusion all that the New Testament and Christian experience testify as to a personal communion of life with a glorified Christ. He, on the other hand, who is conscious of such a communion of life, cannot possibly cease to reverence also as His Lord and God that Christ whom he acknowledges as the source and centre of his spiritual life. It is true we feel, at the end of our investigation, that the domain in which we are here moving is an obscure and mysterious one. But this consoles us withal, that what remains impenetrable for the thought of many, yea, of all men, does not on that account at all conflict with the highest reason; and that he who denies the doctrine of a continued operation of the Lord upon and in His believers is, on his part, absolutely unable to furnish an explanation in the least degree satisfactory of the most numerous and the most profound phenomena of the mental and spiritual life of the Christian. The peculiar constitution of the grains of wheat upon the field of the

Lord we comprehend only by the natural affinity they bear to the seed-corn which, precisely by falling into the earth and dying, has brought forth such abundant fruit, and as it were lives again in this fruit.—On the other hand, it hardly calls for proof that the constant influence of the glorified Lord upon His people is indispensable indeed to His mediatorial and kingly work, but also powerfully conducive to the end He contemplates in this work. For what would it avail that the Chief Shepherd had once given His life for the sheep, and has now been brought again from the dead, unless He constantly gave unto the sheep eternal life, and knew them, called them, preserved them, and took care that no power of earth or hell should ever pluck them from His hand, or from that of His Father? A glorified God-man, for whom the access to the heart of each of His people did not stand open, could not possibly found His kingdom on earth, and extend it to earth's remotest ends. But just because He communicates Himself to the *heart* of each one who hears His voice, does He manifest at the same time His glory in and over against the *world*, in which—this is the main thought, to the development of which a following chapter is devoted—the eye of faith sees Him come in constantly augmented splendour.

## III.

## THE GOD-MAN IN THE WORLD.

NOT for the first time do we conceive of Him, who is the central person of these meditations, in His relation to the *world*. Even when we were contemplating the Son of God before His incarnation, we fixed our attention upon His relation to the creation, and saw in this creation His own work, His glorious revelation, and the object of His continual care; while we soon arrived at the conviction that, even before the fall, He had stood in the most intimate relation to the human race—a relation modified indeed, but by no means destroyed, by sin. When, afterwards, we became witnesses of His deep humiliation, we saw the hatred of the world, which loved darkness rather than light, attain its fearful climax; but at the same time we heard the glad cry of triumph, “I have overcome the world.” His resurrection, His ascension, His kingly government at God’s right hand, impressed the seal upon this utterance; and how He, who now lives glorified in heaven, still continues to impress His holy image upon the heart of all His people, we have shown in a previous chapter. But however comparatively wide the field was, which there opened itself up to our investigation, it was yet limited to His



Church alone, and indeed definitely to those of its members in whose heart Christ has in some degree obtained a form. It is now time to extend our glance over a wider domain, and to give an answer to the question, Does there exist a continued relation between the exalted Lord and the *world*, *i.e.*, the as yet unbelieving and rebellious part of the earth's inhabitants, as well as that further creation, which we have already learnt to regard as His boundless empire? And if so, what kind of a relation is this, according to the testimony of Holy Scripture, and in harmony with the voice of history?

If it were necessary—since all relationship is in its nature reciprocal—in this place to describe the relation which the world continues to sustain towards its Divinely anointed King, it would be easy to show that the world in this respect has always continued the same, so that it is still open to the reproach of the Apostle: "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." The words that the Lord in a well-known parable places upon the lips of the citizens of the kingdom appointed to Him, "We will not have this man to reign over us," have been in no single respect retracted. The world tolerates Christ, so long as He makes His authority felt only in the domain of the hidden spiritual life, and seems to remain neutral in every other sphere. But no sooner does He demand a voice in every circle of human thinking, and speaking, and working; no sooner does He show how much He was in earnest in saying that *all* power is given to Him in heaven and earth, than a conflict is manifested, to the history of which the bold saying of

John may be transferred, that "if all should be written, the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." We do not seek in our meditations to present even in broad outline the description of this struggle; we have indeed to regard the matter, not from the side of the world, but from the side of the Lord Himself, to whom once Judas, not Iscariot, said, "Lord, how is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us, *and not unto the world?*"<sup>1</sup> Was he right, the true-hearted disciple, as regards this last limitation? or may we rather say that the Lord also constantly manifests Himself to the world, in contradistinction from His believers, in such a manner that the conception of *the God-man in the world* cannot be overlooked, if one will sketch the image of the King of the kingdom of God in His present heavenly life? The science which, in contradistinction from another view of Christianity, styles itself *the Modern*, does not hesitate in a bold tone to doubt this, and in this respect joins hands with the above-mentioned Judas. The government of Christ, this idea being conceived in the proper sense of the word, is to it a folly and an offence. "Break first of all the oppressive load," it is exclaimed,<sup>2</sup> "with which Church history is fettered, so

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<sup>1</sup> John xiv. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Sepp.—We hold fast, with the Apostles and the believing Church of all ages, to a Christ who personally lives and works, and governs, and *manifests Himself* (not merely *becomes* manifest) for ever. The whole denial of this on the part of the so-called Modern Theologians is closely connected with the denial of the *supernatural*, as an inseparable element of the Christian religion, and indeed of all religions. To what this denial *necessarily* leads, whether its repre-

soon as it must serve to become a representation of the Christocracy. History certainly affords no single ground for ascribing this care (in the preservation of the Christian Church) to the *Son* in place of the *Father*. Church history certainly furnishes a thousand evidences of the toil it has cost mankind to learn from its Saviour that it can and must go with full confidence to the throne of the Most High." Undoubtedly, we answer; but the same history at the same time confirms the truth that he that honoureth not the Son, equally little honours the Father, who hath sent Him, and through His intervention governs all things. The question as to whether the preservation and extension of the Church is to be ascribed to the Son or to the Father is a question which is to be answered not exclusively or principally from the history of the Church, but from the Gospel itself. This history taken alone gives no ground for deciding whether it was the Son or whether it was the Father; but the eternal and infallible Gospel gives us testimony concerning the continued activity of the glorified Lord in the midst of the

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sentatives wish to know it or not, is admirably expressed by C. Bois, Professor at Montauban, in his inaugural address under the title, *Du Surnaturel*: "This negation of the supernatural deprives us of our Saviour; it reduces Jesus Christ to the unworthy proportions of an enthusiast, who was himself deceived, and unintentionally deceived others; it deprives us of our Father who is in heaven; it gives us a God without power and without love, who could neither draw nigh to us, nor bring us nigh to Him; a God without holiness and without mercy, equally incapable of enjoining upon us a single duty, or of pardoning us a single fault; it renders thus all religion, *i.e.*, all personal and living union with God, illusory and impossible." On this whole subject, compare *Christian Dogmatics*, p. 620, *sqq.*

world, so unequivocal and clear, that we cannot reject it without at the same time losing the firm thread which can guide us through the labyrinth of ecclesiastical and secular history. The philosophy which decks itself in the garb of theology has no right on its own authority to speak of such a continued operation as either impossible or a matter of indifference, as against its wholly arbitrary denials we have to set the positive utterances of the Lord and His witnesses. And to the question what these teach with regard to the point under discussion, they afford us material for a threefold answer, in which, as we believe, the continued relation of the God-man to the world is satisfactorily expressed. *He comes, He blesses, He triumphs.*

I. He who is not entirely unacquainted with the language of the New Testament knows that the Lord often, but in a sense greatly varying, makes mention of His *coming*. He unquestionably refers to a *spiritual* advent, when, in His parting discourses in John, He declares that He will not leave His disciples orphans; that He will see them again, whereas the world beholds Him no more; that in conjunction with the Father He will come to His people, and make His abode with them.<sup>3</sup> But if we can say that this promise is in a certain respect fulfilled by the sending of the Holy Ghost, in and through whom the Lord has anew revealed Himself to His people, yet on the self-same occasion He spoke of His coming in a sense which cannot be explained exclusively of the

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<sup>3</sup> John xiv. 18—23.

mission of the Comforter. "When He shall have prepared for them a place, He will come again, and receive them unto Himself;"<sup>4</sup> a promise which can hardly have any other reference than to His coming in the hour of their death. And to what else than a yet more glorious personal coming of the Lord can the word in the—unquestionably genuine—appendix to the Fourth Gospel point us? "If I will that he tarry *till I come*, what is that to thee?"<sup>5</sup> In the last-named sense does this remarkable expression especially occur in the first three Gospels. Now, the Lord speaks of His coming in the destruction of the Israelitish state: think of His majestic language at His examination before the Jewish counsel. Then again, He has before His mind His coming as Judge of the world, upon the clouds of the last judgment. Often we must so combine the one and the other advent of the Son of man, that the first event is at the same time the mirror and image of the other later and decisive one. But amidst all these modifications one central idea in every case underlies this promise; the Lord is said to *come* in His kingly radiance, whenever He so manifests His glory as Head and Founder of the kingdom of God, that this glory perceptibly beams forth before the eyes of friend and foe. Of something of this kind does He think, *e.g.*, when at a memorable moment He gives to His disciples the promise, "Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be *come*,"<sup>6</sup> *i.e.*, shall have become manifest in His high dignity

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<sup>4</sup> John xiv. 3.

<sup>5</sup> John xxi. 22.

<sup>6</sup> Matt. x. 23.

before the eye of many. It is thus a constant coming of the Lord in His kingdom—a spiritual coming, too, but by no means exclusively a spiritual one—to which the Gospel points us; an increasing manifestation of His majesty and glory, which is beheld on a constantly greater scale, until at last it resolves itself into that last decisive visible return, of which we shall have to speak in the following and concluding chapter. But it is thus at once evident how far the relation of the glorified Christ to the world is from either having wholly ceased with His death or being confined exclusively to His ransomed Church. On the contrary, He continues so to work and to manifest Himself in its midst, that it becomes more and more recognised and confessed that God has made Him both Lord and Christ. He came, when amidst audible and visible signs the gifts of the Holy Ghost were poured out, and the Church established in the midst of the Jewish and the Gentile world. He came, when the flames of the city and temple lighted up the palid faces of His deadly haters, and the abomination of Messiah's murder was avenged by streams of blood. He came, when the youthful Christianity was by Constantine the Great recognised as the national religion, and the ancient heathen Rome bowed its head before the banner of the cross, and hordes of barbarians, who had come from the east and the west, arose as one man to seek Christian baptism. He came, when the footsteps of a Willibrord and a Winfrid<sup>7</sup> first sounded in the ears of our fathers;

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<sup>7</sup> The latter afterwards called Boniface. He became the first Archbishop of Mentz, and died a martyr. Both were Anglo-Saxons.

when the dark and gloomy night of the Middle Ages was succeeded by the fair day of the Reformation ; when the temple of the kingdom of God was increasingly purified from so many a sad abuse, which had made of the Father's house a house of merchandise. He comes still, where peace through the blood of His cross is proclaimed in places until now covered with darkness and the shadow of death ; when, after times of spiritual barrenness and leanness, a new spiritual life is manifested in the Church, but too much penetrated by the spirit of the world ; where a new and deeper insight is granted into the essence of the Christian revelation of salvation, and His blessed kingdom is not only farther extended without, but also ever more powerfully confirmed within. And one day He can with perfect justice be said in this sense to have come upon earth, when, according to the prophetic word, "the Lord shall be one, and His name one through all the earth."

If it is asked *in what manner* the Lord thus continually comes in the world, it becomes at once apparent that this manner is in entire conflict with the sensuous expectation of the thoughtless multitude, and infinitely different from the way in which earthly kingdoms are established and extended. He who with the Pharisees of Jesus' day takes up the question, *When* will the kingdom of God come ? and in connection with this thinks first and chiefly of outward, astonishing signs, merits still the same answer : "The kingdom of God cometh not with outward show. Neither shall they say, Lo here ! or, Lo there ! for, behold, the kingdom of God is (already)



among you.”<sup>8</sup> Not in tempest, earthquake, and fire does the Lord come in the days of the New Testament; but as it were in the still small voice. The Lord Himself compared the coming of His kingdom in the world and in the hearts of men with the operation of the leaven, which in silence permeates the lump, but ceases not till the whole mass is leavened. Out of small beginnings that kingdom constantly develops itself, like the mustard-seed, which begins with being a small grain, and ends with becoming a tree, in the branches of which the birds come and nestle. Gradually does it proceed, without gap or sudden transition; like the growth in the realm of nature, from seed-time to the time of blossom, from the time of blossom to harvest. By very different methods is the kingdom of God brought to the man, the man to the kingdom of God. For the one it is as a treasure unsought, yet eventually found: for the other as a treasure long sought and finally obtained; the parables of the treasure and the pearl present this to us in a striking manner; and an instance of the former kind we may see, *e.g.*, in Paul, of the latter in the devout centurion Cornelius. Assuredly even the manner in which it comes *in* the world clearly shows that the kingdom of Christ cannot possibly be *of* the world. Earthly kingdoms are extended with material weapons, that of Christ, on the other hand, with spiritual ones; and attempts to make the cross triumph by means of the sword—think, for instance, of the result of the crusades and of the battle-field at

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<sup>8</sup> Luke xvii. 20, 21. See *Theol. N. T.*, p. 70.

Kappel<sup>9</sup>—have been uniformly unsuccessful. Earthly kingdoms flourish the more in proportion as the sun of earthly prosperity shines upon them; this kingdom makes the more rapid progress in proportion as it has the more to contend with strife and opposition. Earthly kingdoms, in order to continue standing, need the help of powerful allies; this kingdom, although despising the help of no one, can dispense with the protection of the most powerful on earth, strong as it is under the shield of its heavenly Prince. Earthly kingdoms, after a season of rise and flourishing, see another period of stagnation, declension, dissolution approach, and as in Nebuchadnezzar's dream the feet of the image of its monarchies is of clay, even where its head seems resplendent with precious gold; this kingdom is as the stone in the same vision, which, hewn out by an unseen hand, overcomes all earthly power, and finally becomes a mountain which fills all the earth. But precisely all this confirms not only the immeasurable distance there is between that which is earthly and that which is heavenly, but also the infinite exaltedness of the kingdom of Christ above that which is mightiest and greatest upon earth. Regarded not in its own light, but in that of Holy Scripture, we may speak of the history of the Church as a constant revelation of the Lord of glory, as a source of our knowledge of His person and work, not indeed to be placed on a level with the Gospel—rather is it definitely subordinate to this last—but nevertheless of indisputable value.

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<sup>9</sup> In Switzerland. Zwingli fell there in an encounter, 11th Oct., 1531.

The stream of the ages, which have passed between the establishment of the kingdom of God and the present day, may have been polluted by a very great deal of mud, but it is still a sufficiently clear mirror wherein to contemplate the image of the God-man, in all the plenitude of His power and wisdom, love and faithfulness. It is He the Lord who *Himself*, as in the Apostolic age, adds daily such as shall be saved.<sup>10</sup> To Him, not to themselves, did the first witnesses ascribe the growth of the mother-Church; and if any one had asked them whether, then, the Master, on His departure from the earth, had not committed His task into their hands, they would as one man have returned the answer, Know ye not, that as the Father worketh hitherto, so also the Son continues to work, and that the influence of the Holy Spirit, too, may be called none the less a personal influence of the exalted Redeemer Himself? Yea, truly thus it is, although, to the no small loss in the joy and fruitfulness of faith, this is still but too little comprehended: it is the Lord who is not only the Founder, but also the Master-builder, as one day He will be the Finisher, of the building of God. There is no single soul who is turned from darkness unto light, from the power of Satan unto God, but is as with His own hand snatched from the brink of the abyss. It is not merely—and on account of the importance of the subject it can hardly be too often repeated—not merely the moral influence of the Gospel, the personal zeal of the servants, the favourable combination

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<sup>10</sup> Acts ii. 47.

of circumstances, to which the kingdom of God owes its growth ; not merely the universal government of Providence, which employs Christianity amongst other things as a means of 'lifting up our race to the purely human ideal : it is the personal government of Christ, by which the form of the world is gradually being changed. The concluding words of the Gospel of Mark, "The Lord wrought with them, and confirmed the word with signs following,"<sup>11</sup> form an epitome of the Church's history unto the present day. A Christ who is mere man could no more rule after his death than he could before that event work miracles. But the God-man of the Gospel not only reigns personally above, but also still continues to fulfil the word of His promise, "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also ; and greater than these shall he do, because I go unto the Father."<sup>12</sup> In connection with all this the question is simply whether we believe in a *man*, who was Divinely great, or in a God, who became *incarnate in human nature*. If the former is our Christ, he existed on earth, as a child of his age, once for all ; if the other view is the truth, then to Him, not less than to the Father, belong the words, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, which is, and which was, and *which is to come*, the Almighty."<sup>13</sup>

II. Wherever the Lord appeared in the days of His flesh, there He displayed the image of the Godhead, ever engaged in blessing. Can it be otherwise now that He in heaven lives to God, no more to die ? No, what Peter

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<sup>11</sup> Mark xvi. 20.<sup>12</sup> John xiv. 12.<sup>13</sup> Rev. i. 8.

once said to the Jews at Jerusalem, "that God had sent His holy servant to them, *that He might bless them*," he would at the same time be able to repeat to the whole Gentile world without the least exception. But if, according to the same Apostolic word, this blessing first of all consisted in His turning away every one of them from his iniquities,<sup>14</sup> we might even beforehand expect that the world will not *let* itself be blessed, without being previously chastened with a powerful hand. Just because the Lord will constantly be a blessing, must He not seldom begin with inflicting terrible punishment. No wonder, then, that the feature of punitive righteousness is by no means wanting to the biblical conception of the glorified Christ. Think of the words spoken of Messiah in the second Psalm, "Thou shalt break them with a sceptre of iron, Thou shalt dash them in pieces as a potter's vessel."<sup>15</sup> Think of that which is said in the word of prophecy concerning David's great descendant, "He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked."<sup>16</sup> Think of the imagery of the Baptist, that Christ shall arise with His fan in His hand, throughly to purge His floor, and to burn the chaff with unquenchable fire.<sup>17</sup> Or is all this only poetic imagery, without deeper significance? only Old Testament one-sidedness, above which, from a Gospel standpoint, one certainly rises? But the Lord Himself and His Apostles spoke with regard to this in no other spirit than Israel's ancient

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<sup>14</sup> Acts iii. 26.<sup>15</sup> Ps. ii. 9.<sup>16</sup> Isa. xi. 4.<sup>17</sup> Matt. iii. 12.

prophets. He declares that He came into the world for judgment,<sup>18</sup> *i.e.*, to bring about a continual separation between children of the light and children of darkness, and to make manifest the character of each as such; which saying will not surely be restricted in its application to His brief earthly manifestation. The close of the parables of the great net and the tares among the wheat foretells the terrible woe of those who make an external profession of His name, without confessing Him from the heart. The lot of Sodom and Gomorrha, of Tyre and Sidon, is represented as tolerable, compared with the condition of those who, as Capernaum, Chorazin, and Bethsaida, heard without repentance His voice of love. And what testimony is borne by His earnest threatenings to some of the churches of Asia Minor, Ephesus, Sardis, Laodicea, for example?<sup>19</sup> What testifies so many a prophetic vision of John, with regard to the wrath of the Lamb upon those who ignore His greatness, and condemn His witnesses? What do we read as between the lines of so many an apostolical exhortation, warning, encouragement, in the recounting of which we should hardly come to an end? It is manifest that even before the end of this dispensation the unbelieving world has to find in the glorified Christ, not only a Deliverer, but also a Judge. And that His threats are more than empty sounds testify so many pages in the history of the Church and the world, written as it were with blood and tears; the judgments upon so many an unfaithful

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<sup>18</sup> John ix. 39.

<sup>19</sup> Rev. ii., iii.

and apostate Church, fulfilled in the course of the ages; the visitations brought upon so many a nation which refused to its Divinely appointed King the homage of obedience. There is unquestionably a difference between the ancient Theocracy which extended only over a single nation, and the Christocracy which extends over all nations; and it ill becomes us, in the case of definite disasters which overtake particular persons or nations, to wish to trace a direct connection with particular sins. But yet, still less would we overlook the word *retribution*, which stands written as in letters of fire before the eye of faith; or deny that God will not allow any with impunity to make a mock of the honour of His Anointed. "Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed;"<sup>20</sup> that old word of God to Eli is at the same time the maxim with which the glorified Son of God has ascended the throne of the universe. And, however many thousand times misused, we can well understand the familiar words of the poet: the world's history, the world's judgment, can even in this connection repeat, The history of the Church is at the same time the judgment of the community.

But—and this is the Gospel side of the thought, which otherwise, however well-founded, makes us involuntarily shudder—this punitive justice of the glorified King of the world is, so long as the time of grace endures, only the reverse side of His inexhaustibly plenteous compassion; no end in itself, but a means for the

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<sup>20</sup> 1 Sam. ii. 30.



attainment of a higher end. As opposed to the righteousness which cuts down its foes, shines resplendent the long-suffering which spares them as long as possible, and which justifies the Lord in repeating, with regard to thousands, His words of old, "I gave them time, that they might repent."<sup>21</sup> And what is even this long-suffering compared with the grace which He constantly glorifies in sinners; with the blessedness which He ceases not, even on this side of the grave, to confer upon all who come unto Him? Let any one once read through the Acts of the Apostles from this point of view, and see what a blessed change takes place in the heart, in the house, in society, where the Christ "coming, preaches peace to those which were afar off, and to those that were nigh." The one night, of which Luke gives an account, as the moment at which the Lord called His Apostles to bring the first glad tidings to Europe,<sup>22</sup> was decisive as to the moral regeneration of our quarter of the globe, and through this also of other quarters. Those who in our day thanklessly reject the blessing brought to them by Christ, would, perhaps, for their healing, require no other argument than—if it were possible—to make their abode just for a little time in the age of barbarism and violence, which, without the influence of Christian civilisation, would unquestionably have continued still. The government of Christ, what blessing does it bring into *the family*! Has not woman through its influence become, instead of a chattel, a person, a joint-

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<sup>21</sup> Rev. ii. 21.<sup>22</sup> Acts xvi. 9, 10.

heir of everlasting life? has not the Christian education of children very manifest advantages over the training (*pædagogia*) of the most cultivated nations of antiquity? has not slavery, even where, to the shame of Christianity, it still continues, been tempered by the operation of the Gospel? and was not the destination of the Christian family to become a little *church* in the house,<sup>23</sup> a temple of the Holy Ghost, a thing unknown to the Greeks and Romans twenty centuries ago? What blessings for *society*! Has not the civil legislation under the salutary atmosphere created by the Gospel taken gigantic steps in the way of progress, and produced a Christian care for the poor, the orphan, the sick, of which heathen antiquity had not even the faintest conception? does not public opinion operate more justly, fairly, powerfully, in proportion as it is the more penetrated by a Christian spirit? and—we are, of course, not speaking of fanatics and hypocrites—will not the true Christian, who sets his affections on the things of heaven, at the same time be the best citizen of the earthly fatherland? What blessings for *science*! Has not Christianity unchained the spirit in bringing mankind to full maturity, and raising him to a clearer consciousness of himself and his heavenly destination? Has not philosophy seen an inexhaustible material for its research, yea, an entirely new world, opened to it in the mysteries of the kingdom of God? Has not eloquence taken a higher flight than ever among the ancients, where the Holy Ghost with His Pentecostal fire had unchained

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. Rom. xvi. 5; Col. iv. 15; Philem. 2.

the tongues, had flashed through the hearts? Has not the full light of truth first risen upon the world from the time that Christian faith has held forth its torch to the students of truth? What blessings for *art*! The influence of the principle awakened and called forth by Christ upon sculpture, painting, and architecture; upon music, poetry, and literature, in the widest sense of the term—volumes have been written on this point, and the subject is yet far from exhausted. Truly, the thought of all this, and so much more that we might also touch upon, would be in itself astonishing, although we saw in it nothing but the after-vibration from the impulse which the word and appearing of Christ ages ago gave to mankind to its own development. But how much more surprising, and at the same time how much more comprehensible, does it become when, under the guidance of Scripture, “which cannot be broken,” we see in it the manifestation of a continued salutary activity of the exalted Lord of the Church! He, He Himself it is, who in every domain brings forth by the power of His Holy Spirit light out of darkness, life out of death. How superficial, then, is the judgment of those who even in our day assert that man must first become civilised and enlightened before he can receive the word of atonement! The history of missions has proved by a multitude of examples that true civilisation does not precede, but follow the word and Spirit of the Lord; that not man produces the Christian, but, on the contrary, the Christian first produces the true man. And just as little reflection is shown when any would take it up as a reproach against this King,

that the word of the kingdom has hitherto produced so relatively little fruit. Or does it prove anything against the vigour of the seed that it cannot take root where it has no depth of earth, or where it falls among thistles? Does not that which is noblest, alike in the kingdom of nature and of grace, grow most slowly? Are not the greater part of the fruits of the Spirit of such nature that they become manifest only for a comparatively few, or are brought out in the solitary chamber, in the gloomy school of affliction, upon the bed of sickness and death? Must not, in connection with the good the Gospel has accomplished, also be enumerated the evil that is arrested by it, even without our knowledge, in many a domain? And does it indeed become us to form a conclusive judgment as to the value and effect of the leaven, so long as the three measures of meal, with which a careful hand has mingled it, have not been wholly leavened? No, after what has been said, that cannot be doubted. However far off may still seem the golden age of peace promised under the sceptre of this King to a groaning humanity, its preludes are—at least here and there—seen in ever greater number. And he whose heart is set upon the true well-being of mankind can desire nothing with greater ardour, seek nothing with greater energy, than that the kingdom of Christ may come; for in Him alone does the word of prophecy receive its fulfilment, “This man shall be peace.”<sup>24</sup>

III. Or will this happy day never dawn? This doubt leads us naturally to the third and last proposition which

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<sup>24</sup> Micah v. 4.

we unfold in this chapter. The God-man in the world—He does not merely come, He does not merely bless, but also, in the third place, *He triumphs*.

In all ages a varying answer has been returned to the question, as to whether Christianity is simply one of the links in the chain of the religious development of our race, destined sooner or later to be succeeded by another link ; or whether it is indeed the best, the highest, and on that account also the last religion, which may be called the religion of humanity. Volumes have been filled on what is called the *perfectibility* of Christianity, and even the most thoughtless observer notices in our day the question of doubt, addressed to the Christ of the Gospel, "Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" What is more, the old Gospel is publicly declared to be in conflict with the supposed infallible results of the modern view of the world, and is accordingly, with Voltarian mockery, in the name of common sense exposed to the contempt of all rationally thinking persons. If we are asked whether *we* see a chance of victoriously combating these foes, so long as one occupies the standpoint of those who will see in Christ nothing but the perfect man, the greatest son of nature, we do not hesitate for a single moment to return to this question a negative answer. "In that case we must content ourselves," to use the language of an acute theologian of the present day, "with granting to Jesus Christ an honourable place among the estimable teachers of religion and morality, whose labours have had a beneficial effect upon their contemporaries and posterity. We may render justice to His character and

plans, and acknowledge that doctrine and life were with Him in harmony." But farther than this one surely cannot advance by this road. The possibility exists that some day another man shall be born of men, who shall perfectly develop himself normally and morally; and be no longer under the influence of Jewish prejudices, but, placed at the level of the intellectual and moral development of later ages, will perhaps better deserve in every respect to become *our* model of perfection than the lowly Rabbi of Nazareth. The homage which is meanwhile rendered to Him for the present becomes the adoration of our own religious ideal, which—so far as we can judge from the imperfect historic accounts—seems to be realised in Him; the deification, in reality, of human nature in and through oneself; the fulfilling of the word of the serpent of paradise, "Ye shall be as God," in diametrical opposition to the Gospel, which proclaims to us how God became like man. In so far as there can here be still any talk of the *triumph* of the Gospel, one has to think of the triumph of a genuine *human refinement*, which is called forth by the preaching of the Gospel, but in connection with the perfect development of which this Gospel also, with its multitude of legends and myths, must fall away as something superfluous and absurd. The doctrine of Christianity will wholly perish, or be resolved into the utterances of the so-called sanctified reason; and the end of all is, that man no longer believes in anything but himself, if he can really be said to *believe* at all.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> [It is not easy to find a more severely sarcastic description of

At entirely different conclusions do we arrive, as upon solid historical grounds we behold in Christianity the fruit of a supernatural revelation of God, and in Jesus Christ the God-man, who personally lives and reigns at the Father's right hand. From this standpoint it becomes not only absolutely reasonable to expect the final triumph of Him and His cause, but also—rightly regarded—impossible in the long run to doubt it. Since, however, this faith, especially in our day, is so often rudely shaken, it will not be out of place that we close our present examination with the mention of the main grounds on which it rests.

*The word of Scripture announces the future complete triumph of the kingdom of Christ.* Yet once more we review in spirit the long series of prophetic and apostolic utterances concerning the person and work of the Lord, to which we have already successively listened. We shall not repeat them here : we content ourselves with a few brief references. The promise given in paradise, which predicts the irretrievable overthrow of the kingdom of darkness ; the promise to Abraham, of the blessing for all nations of the earth ; the description in Isaiah of a golden age, sprung from the universal diffusion of the knowledge of God in the days of the Messiah ; the prophecy of Joel, touching the gracious and plenteous communication of the Spirit ; the promise of the Saviour Himself, that the gates of hell shall not be stronger than His Church ; the indication that the Gospel of the

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the Modern tendency than is contained in the above few lines ; but its severity arises only from its conformity with perfect justice.]



kingdom must be preached to all nations ere the end of the world can come ; the teaching of Paul concerning the fate that ultimately awaits Antichrist, the man of sin ; the whole Revelation of John, which presents to us, in the most majestic description, the conflict, but also the triumph, of the kingdom of God unto the end of the ages—are not these sufficiently decisive of the question except perhaps for those who merit the reproach of the Lord, “Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God.” The assertion has been made, it is true, that the Founder Himself has proclaimed the perfectibility of His religion, in His directing His disciples to the Holy Ghost, who first should teach them to understand the truth, since He had at that time still many things to say, which they were not able to bear.<sup>26</sup> With an appeal to these words Gnosticism and Manichæism came forth even in the earliest ages of the Church, and, later, Mahomet arose still further to fill up what was lacking in the Christian revelation ; and with the same pretext do not a few in our own day seek to maintain the right of Christian reason to raise itself above the Lord’s own word, by which His believing Church of every age has felt itself bound. But it is then altogether overlooked that, according to the same promise, the Spirit *shall not speak of Himself*, but shall confine His teaching to that of Jesus ; and that on this account the Lord’s own word must remain the necessary and unalterable *corrective* for every view which recommends itself as religious

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<sup>26</sup> John xvi. 12, 13.

and Christian. And now this, the Lord's *own* word, confirmed and explained by that of prophet and apostle is the solid ground on which we build our faith in the enduring character and the future triumph of the Christian Church. In a *subjective* sense, indeed, we, too, can speak of the perfecting and perfectibility of Christianity, in so far, namely, as our insight into Christian truth can become ever deeper, and our Christian life ever more developed. This Paul also had in view, when he pointed to the destination of the Church, to come "unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."<sup>27</sup> But *objective* perfectibility of Christianity, in the sense that that which was spoken by the Lord and His apostles, as truth, should now be seen to be prejudice or error, and that man may be brought so far forward by Christ Himself that he could at length dispense with Christ also—*this* we cannot admit without openly abandoning our faith in Him as God's highest revelation, and the glorified King of the kingdom of God. Maintaining with the apostolic writer, that God has spoken to us in these last days by the Son,<sup>28</sup> we hold that word not only as true and intransitory, but also as God's highest and last word to humanity. And spite of all that might cause our faith in the triumph of our Lord to waver, we say to our anxious soul. It is written, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ephes. iv. 13.<sup>28</sup> Heb. i. 1.<sup>29</sup> Matt. xxiv. 35.

Yet more. *History affords us the most striking instances of this triumph.* We shall at once recal to mind the end of the conflict waged by Julian the Apostate against the Christianity despised by him. Struck with a deadly arrow, he sank down upon the field of battle, the words of powerless despair and rage upon his lips, "Thou hast conquered, O Galilean! Thou hast conquered, Galilean!" Never did a word fall from human lips which had so deep a symbolic-prophetic significance. Thus must all powers yield the palm, which set themselves in opposition to the Christ, and they have in reality already countless times displayed their powerlessness. The progress of the glorified Christ through the world, what may it be termed but one continued triumphal procession? and who shall count all the monuments that tell of the humiliation of His haters? Unquestionably Christianity has been rooted up in some places where it was before established; in the East the cross yielded to the crescent, and the light which irradiates Europe went down over great part of Asia. But had not the glorified One Himself predicted to more than one degenerate church that He would move the candlestick out of its place? and do we not, on the other hand, see His Church preserved even in regions and periods when such a preservation seemed almost incredible? The imperishableness of Christianity in a certain definite place is nowhere promised, and on that account also not to be looked for. But the triumph of the truth, even over the most violent opposition, and the maintaining of the Church on earth, even where its annihilation seemed

inevitable—one must be wilfully blind who would seriously call this in question. What has become of the combined power of Judaism and Heathendom, which opposed the youthful kingdom of God? What of the unrelaxing endeavours prolonged until now on the part of unbelief and superstition, to make a wreck of the cause of the Lord? “*Ecrasez l’infâme*,” cried the French Encyclopædists to each other, in reference to the Crucified One, and the shame with which they sought to cover His name falls back upon themselves. As waves against an immoveable rock dashed the ranks of the heaven-storming Titans upon the spiritual temple of God, and roared, and seethed, and—broke against it. Know you the legend of the seven sleepers at Ephesus in the days of the Emperor Decius, how these courageous youths, being shut up in a dark cave, and having the prospect of death before them, calmly lay down to sleep, and being awakened by a miracle almost two hundred years later, could hardly believe their own eyes when they found the world around them, which they had left a heathen world, now suddenly Christianised? The surprise which the fable represents them as feeling at the sight of the new-created Ephesus is nothing compared with that which would take possession of all the enemies of the kingdom of God of past ages, if they, awakening out of their sleep of death, could cast a glance once more around them. Through all the clouds which cover the history of the Church during the last centuries we hear the triumphal chariot of the King of kings rolling on; and if *His* cause is not God’s cause, we know not what

has ever deserved this name. For He has triumphed over the most mighty foes, and at the same time with the simplest weapons. What, compared with this, is the triumph of Islam, obtained sword in hand, and in alliance with the lusts of the flesh and the desire of the eye? For him who regards the history of the world in any other than a superficial manner, it is evident that the greatest events are perceptibly controlled with a view to the great end of Christ's government, just as, *e.g.*, the command for enrolment of the Emperor Augustus must take effect precisely at that time and in that manner, in order that a poor couple might be brought up to the city of David, and so fulfil the prophetic Scripture that the Christ should be born there. And now we have been entirely silent as to the victories which Christ has obtained in secret, in the little world of many a human heart. He who has only been able to learn something of this in connection with his own joyful experience,<sup>30</sup> will regard it as altogether inconceivable that a sun so bright and glorious as this should ever set for the world.

For certainly, in the last place, *the nature of the case, and the condition of the present time, presents nothing which should compel us to give up as unreasonable our belief in the eventual triumph of the kingdom of Christ.* No doubt we still see, as in the days of the Lord, many go back from following Jesus. It is asserted in ever louder tone, that mankind can attain—if it has not

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<sup>30</sup> See on this point the admirable remarks of Pressensé, *Early Years of Christianity*, pp. 346, ff.

already attained—a height at which it has outgrown the necessity for the word and Spirit of Christ, which has beneficially conducted the race while in a lower stage. But it is overlooked that the spiritual wants of the man and the sinner remain unchangeably the same, even though they are not at all times acknowledged with equal distinctness; and that the *fallen* man—if only the fact of *sin* were comprehended—is just as little able now as eighteen centuries ago to restore himself to fellowship with God, or to renew himself after God's image. Progress in the material domain, however marvellous in itself, and in many respects beneficial, proves nothing against the continued necessity for Christianity as a supernatural positive revelation of salvation, so long as it has not first been proved that the wings of reason have now sufficiently unfolded themselves to raise man to the supernatural domain, without his being threatened with the fate of Icarus. The everywhere prevalent Idealism of our day may ignore the value of the *facts* of Christian revelation<sup>31</sup>—truly we have little to thank some theolo-

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<sup>31</sup> Listen to the prophecy of the most talented leader of the modern scepticism, E. Renan, in his *Etudes d'Hist. Relig.*, p. 215. "In the Christ of the Gospels Himself a part will die; that is to say, the local and national form, the Jew, the Galilean; but a part will remain, and that is the great teacher of morals, the persecuted Just One, the One who said to men, You are sons of the same heavenly Father. The thaumaturge and the prophet will die, the man and the sage will remain, or rather eternal beauty will live for ever in this sublime name, as in all those whom humanity has chosen to recal in them what it is, and to become ravished with its own image. This is the living God, the one whom we must adore." It will be seen that from this standpoint no other continuing and

gians if the faith of the Church has not been shaken to its very foundation—yet he who looks to any extent further is ever anew convinced that these facts are altogether indispensable for the acknowledgment and appreciation of the Gospel, and can only expect that this indispensableness will be ever more and more acknowledged and confirmed. Only let no one deceive himself as to the real nature of the assaults which, even in our day, are made upon historic Christianity from different sides. They are impetuous indeed, but by no means new, and the deep impression which many an opposition makes is to be set down in great part to a want of acquaintance with the history of the assailing and defence of Christianity. The weapons are brought to a keener edge, and are wielded with greater ability than before; but *the armoury is exhausted*, and the very violence with which the power of unbelief rages is the token that it sees its time is short. The question is simply whether we shall render unreserved homage to this or the other philosophy of Christianity which claims to be the only true conception of it, and thus recognise the supremacy of reason in a domain in which its incompetence has been made manifest; or whether we shall unreservedly recognise the Gospel itself, with all its uncomprehended mysteries, as a power of God unto salvation to every one that believes. *It is not the unbelievers, but precisely the believers, who are in advance of their age.* We look for a reconciliation

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victory of Christianity is to be looked for than that which may be ascribed to what may happen to be *rational* and *moral* in the religions of Brahma, Buddha, or Mahomet.



between the so-called Modern view and the utterances of Christian faith by no means from one's so far as possible *rationalising* with the latter, and divesting oneself of all that is to a certain extent offensive and strange; but, on the contrary, from the undisguised proclamation of the *offence* of the Lord's cross and the crown, a proclamation addressed in the first place to the heart and conscience. We are still waiting for the first proof that such a proclamation would find no response; that such a faith would be too weak for overcoming the world. On the contrary, the more the misery of the present age in its disseverance from Christ becomes manifest, the more it is seen that the rejection of Christianity as a Divine revelation leads, to be consistent, to the abandonment of *all* religion, and that it is impossible in the long run to break with religion and yet to remain faithful to the demands of *morality*—the more all this becomes apparent, we say, the more will the number of those be on the increase, who, wearied with vain seeking and dreaming, will turn to the Christ with the question, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

And where this is done, there extends the kingdom of *grace*, intrusted to Him, even as the kingdom of *nature* is already assigned to Him without any limitation.<sup>32</sup> How, in

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<sup>32</sup> He who will seek to penetrate, more deeply than the limits of our design permit, into the relation of Christ after His exaltation to the whole animate and inanimate nature, may consult the interesting remarks of Martensen, *Dogmatik*, p. 369, in development of the thought that the Glorified One is constantly occupied in making the universe "a living organically increasing temple of Christ."

the midst of both, the kingdom of His *glory* comes in the consummation of the ages, we have to see in the following chapter. For the present it remains our boast, with regard to His relation to the world: He comes, He blesses, He triumphs.

## IV.

## THE GOD-MAN IN THE FUTURE.

IN distinguished poets and philosophers of heathen antiquity we meet with the idea of a golden age of happiness, in which heaven itself seemed to have come down to earth. Then men lived together as a family of brothers and sisters, free from sufferings and cares; no cry of pain was heard, and the earth brought forth spontaneously to its joyous inhabitants a plentiful harvest of the choicest gifts. But as a morning cloud, thus do they represent the course of the history, vanished those blissful days, and the more rapidly in proportion as our race wandered farther from its origin. The golden age was succeeded by an age of silver, the silver by one of brass and iron, and only a faint reminiscence has remained of a time which can never return. With regard to the future, men might sometimes flatter themselves with better expectations, yet there was no ground whatever for expecting a solution of the world-problem which should be in every respect satisfactory. To Christianity alone, precious fruit of an extraordinary revelation from above, was it given to return a decisive answer to the question, "What shall be the end of these things?" In reality the Gospel has done this, in a manner which is for faith

perfectly satisfactory, for hope gladdening, for the life inexhaustibly fruitful in consolation and sanctification. What Tholuck once said of Israel, that, as no other nation of antiquity, it was a people of *expectation*, is true also with respect to the Church of the Lord in the days of the New Covenant. The Christian's life of faith has its foundation in the facts of the past, its strength in continual communion with the glorified Lord, but its prospect in a future revealed by God, though in part still concealed. Of this future, too, is the God-man the centre, as He is the Lord of time, the Father of eternity.<sup>1</sup> How, then, should we consider our task complete, to present as far as possible in a clear light the image of Christ according to the Scripture, so long as we have not spoken of the glory He shall display in the approaching end of the ages?

A more exalted subject, it will be felt, is hardly conceivable than that, the treatment of which must crown our labour. For all that the Gospel tells us of the pre-mundane glory of the Son, and of the majesty of His earthly appearing, is but little in comparison with that which it proclaims to us of His glory in the day of the future. But how difficult, at the same time, to enter upon a field in which, more than in any other, one is only too easily lost in arbitrary conjectures, and is so soon inclined to decide that which Scripture has left undecided; to calculate that which it indicates as one day to be effected, or to doubt that which does not in every

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<sup>1</sup> Isaiah ix. 6.

respect harmonise with the views and utterances of the present view of the world. We cannot be surprised that the inner discrepancy between the modern theological philosophy and the prophetic and apostolical Scriptures should perhaps on no single point come forth so clearly and apparently so irreconcilably as precisely in reference to the doctrine of *the last things* (Eschatology). Here especially are the terms, Jewish conception, oriental garb, poetic imagery, accommodation to the narrow ideas of the age, etc., the order of the day, and the doctrine of the consummation of the ages is ordinarily regarded as a moderately insignificant appendix to the philosophicodogmatic system. In Scripture, on the contrary, it is distinctly presented in the foreground, and for the believer it attains with every year and every century increased significance, so that what for a time seems to be an appendix becomes eventually the main question. In this case, too, time must prove who is unconditionally right, God, who by His word leads us to expect that which reason could not aforehand conjecture, or man, who most willingly clings to the supposition that all things will remain as they have been from the beginning, allowance being made for the gradual progress effected by the extension of enlightenment and civilisation. For our part, we had rather seem to be wrong with the prophets and apostles than, *e.g.*, with H. Lang<sup>2</sup> and others, to be right in the estimation of ourselves and our friends, and here also humbly submit our own under-

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<sup>2</sup> A leading representative of the "Modern" School in German Switzerland.

standing to that word which abideth for ever. We regard it as impossible *before* the day of fulfilment to determine with infallible certainty what in the promises of Scripture concerning the things of the future is *mere* imagery, and what is *more* than imagery. But the more do we esteem it our solemn duty to add nothing to, and also to take nothing from, that which is here told us concerning the secrets of the coming age. Here, as elsewhere, a reverent believing is the only way to an infallible knowing.

We could very easily swell this last chapter to the compass of a volume, if we would collect, explain, combine, and defend against manifold opposition all that the Scripture leads us to expect with regard to the day of the future. But we may not overlook the fact that we have not so much to do here with the lot which awaits every man after death, or with the close of the world's history in general, as definitely with the manifestation of Christ which faith looks for in the future, and this last again exclusively as contemplated in the light of Holy Scripture. Many a question, therefore, of a high degree of significance for Eschatology, needs not to be treated of, or at least, not treated of at large, in connection with Christology. Our task admits of no room for speculations as to the life of the spirit-world, or the joys of the future state. The question is simply, What will Christ do to complete the work of the redemption of our race? in other words, at what point ends the (mediatorial) history of Him, "whose goings forth have been from of old, from the days of eternity"? And, in replying to this

question, we may now content ourselves with a brief summary and elucidation of those texts of Scripture by which the answer is determined.<sup>3</sup> Our course is thus partly simplified, partly confined within definite limits.

*The final advent of Christ* is the great axis round which our contemplation moves. *The infallible pre-ludes, the matchless events, the decisive consequences* of this advent, claim successively our attention.

When the disciples, shortly before the death of the Lord, addressed to Him the inquiry, "Tell us, when shall these things be?" they added in one breath, "And what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?"<sup>4</sup> They thus clearly show their expectation of a simultaneous manifestation of the Lord in His glory and the close of the present dispensation, and desire to be instructed as to the preludes which should warn them of the immediate proximity of this great day. And the Lord, who ever disapproves of the questionings of vain curiosity, so little censures this their inquiry, that, on the contrary, He enters into a detailed answer, which is afterwards partly elucidated, partly further developed in the Apostolic Epistles. Yea, He had Himself reproved the Pharisees because they had no eye for the signs of the times in the spiritual domain, while they were very well able to distinguish them in the natural;<sup>5</sup> and regards it

<sup>3</sup> The principal texts throwing light on this subject have been examined by the author in his *Life of Jesus* and his *Christol. N. T.*; compare also what is said in his *Commentary on the Pastoral Epp.* (Lange's Series), at the beginning of 1 Tim. iv. and 2 Tim. iii.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. xxiv. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Matt. xvi. 1—4.



as of great importance that the disciples, by an attentive observation of that which took place around them, should so much the more learn to watch for the great day of decision. If we combine all that the Gospel makes known to us with regard to the last preludes of His glorious advent, we arrive at the following conception, in its nature partly gladdening, partly disquieting.

In the first place, *a general proclamation of the Gospel among all nations* must precede the coming of the Son of man. "This Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come."<sup>6</sup> That all nations must also *as nations* have *accepted* this Gospel, and have been brought into the outward Church, before the Lord comes in glory, is by no means taught in these words. The opposite seems rather to become manifest from the addition "*for a witness*," which points not indistinctly to hostile resistance.<sup>7</sup> But all nations must surely have first heard of the Gospel; to all the preaching of the glad tidings must have been brought, with whatever result. No one who is afterwards condemned must be able to say that he has heard absolutely nothing of these things. How this command was fulfilled on a comparatively wide scale very soon after the death of the Lord is well known. Paul could, in his day, already say that the sound of the Gospel messengers had gone forth through all the earth, and that the Gospel had been preached to every creature under heaven, even as it was to its first confessors.<sup>8</sup> Yet he expects only in

<sup>6</sup> Matt. xxiv. 14; Mark xiii. 10.      <sup>7</sup> Cf. Matt. viii. 4; Luke ix. 5.

<sup>8</sup> Rom. x. 18; Col. i. 6, 23.

the future a day in which the fulness of the Gentiles shall be brought in, and all Israel shall be saved.<sup>9</sup> Here, too, we must nevertheless take care not to misunderstand him. The expressions employed by him would seem to refer not to the individuals, but to the masses : not the bringing in of every Gentile or Jew then living, but of the full number of the Gentile nations determined by God, and at the same time of Israel as a nation, these his words seem to us to promise, and this indeed in such wise that the former in the order of time precedes the latter. When and how these things will take place he leaves wholly undetermined ; and upon the question whether this bringing in of Israel is to be expected *before* or only *after* their restoration to the land of their fathers, to which the prophets point forward, he has preserved silence. However this may be, before "the great and dreadful day of the Lord" appears, the Gospel must thus be everywhere preached, and the full predetermined number of Gentiles be brought in ; while then Israel also will be led to the believing recognition of the highest blessing.

In opposition to all this light, however, there rises a gloomy shadow. *Increasing seduction and enmity* is spoken of by the Lord as a *second* prelude of His coming. "Take heed that no man deceive you," He exclaims to His disciples, and begins to speak of false Messiahs who would work great wonders and signs, so that, if it were possible, they would deceive the very elect.<sup>10</sup> It is well

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<sup>9</sup> Rom. xi. 25, 26.

<sup>10</sup> Matt. xxiv. 4, 5, 23, 24.

known how many deceivers of the people arose among the Jews both before and after the destruction of Jerusalem. But in this fact the meaning of the prediction is by no means exhausted. Paul, too, during the last years and months of his life, writing to Timothy, who was set over a Church of Gentile Christians, had led him to expect in the last times false teachers of every kind, who had departed from the faith, preaching a wisdom such as seemed good to them, and demanding a form of devotion according to their own will;<sup>11</sup> and even in one of his first epistles—the second to the Thessalonians—he declares that the day of the Lord shall not come, until the Man of Sin, the Son of Perdition, with his mad pride and his seductive influence, has first been manifested.<sup>12</sup> He thinks of no other than him whom John calls the *Anti-christ*, whom as to the beginning of his power John saw already appearing in the world, but afterwards saw threaten more terribly, and of whom the sign was, that he denied the Father and the Son.<sup>13</sup> If we add to what is here said, that which is spoken in the Second Epistle of Peter and the Epistle of Jude, concerning the false prophets and teachers who must still precede the coming of the Lord, it will not be difficult to combine all these different traits into one great saddening whole. On the ground of all this it is to be expected that the history of the world will not close before the power of evil has been made manifest, and has, as it were, concentrated itself in one terrible, proud, seductive Personality, of whom all the

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<sup>11</sup> 1 Tim. iv., 2 Tim. iii.

<sup>12</sup> 2 Thess ii.

<sup>13</sup> 1 John ii. 18, *sqq.*, and specially Rev. xiii.

most hideous monsters whose names stain the page of the world's history were only the precursors and types. Under a higher permission he will have so great an appearance of truth and right on his side, that it will be almost impossible not to be drawn away by him, as accordingly most actually are drawn away. Already we see the astonishing advances of the human mind in the domain of natural science applied as weapons in order *to war against* the truth;<sup>14</sup> why should they not one day be employed more immediately as the allies of error, in *mimicking* as well as possible the miraculous facts of the Divine revelation? However it may be, in consequence of this seduction the corruption in the moral world will increase in a degree till then unknown. "Men," says Paul,<sup>15</sup> "shall be lovers of their own selves, lovers of money, boasters, haughty, evil speakers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, incontinent, cruel, without love to the good; betrayers, headlong, puffed up, loving their lusts rather than loving God, having an outward form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof." Since the Apostle was too well acquainted with men not to know that almost all these features are to be met with more or less in the natural man of all ages of the world, he must have looked forward to a terrible development of all these sins towards "the last days;" a growth and increase of the tares not less astonishing than the multi-

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<sup>14</sup> *E.g.*, in the criticism of unbelief with regard to the Biblical accounts of miracles.

<sup>15</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 2-5.

plying and increase of the wheat. This presentation of the Apostle is in diametrical opposition to the idea generally prevalent, that, in consequence of increasing civilisation and refinement, the human race as a whole will become constantly more amiable and better. We must repeat it: no universally better days, but more grievous times, are, according to Scripture, to be expected *before* the coming of the Lord; "because iniquity (lawlessness) shall abound," says the Lord Himself, "the love of many shall wax cold."<sup>16</sup> He, therefore, who has already seen much misery, may not on that account say that he has ground to hope for better times, but, on the contrary, must remember the words, "All these things are the beginning of sorrows." Every evil spirit which has been for a time expelled, presently returns with seven others: every temporary lull bodes only a fresh and fiercer outbreak of the storm, until at length the storms of the last night of the world shall have for ever passed away.

Where sin rises higher and higher, how shall not misery also be increased? As a *third* prelude of the final advent of the Lord, we make mention of *manifold suffering and distress*. The Lord speaks of dread calamities in the midst of the *world*. Wars and rumours of wars; a rising of one people and kingdom against another; famines and pestilences and earthquakes in divers places:<sup>17</sup> it is true, no single period of our history can be named to which these things remained wholly

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<sup>16</sup> Matt xxiv. 12.

<sup>17</sup> Matt. xxiv. 6, 7.

strange. But they have been wont specially to characterise those periods in which new developments of the kingdom of God became manifest : at all times, as in the prophecy of Joel, the gracious outpourings of the Holy Spirit have been accompanied with terrible judgments of the world, which on the one hand have proclaimed God's holy displeasure against sin, and on the other have called forth a felt need for the Gospel of peace. Such calamities are (once more in direct contradiction with that which is asserted in our day by the friends of peace in the political domain !) to be expected in ever-increasing measure, in proportion as the course of the world's history approaches its close.—In addition to these things arise persecution, shocks, purifications, for the *Church* of the Lord. Hate, oppression, delivering up, martyrdom among all nations, the Master predicts for His first disciples ; and the Revelation of John shows how little this fate is to be looked for in the case of these first witnesses of the truth alone ;<sup>18</sup> a fate rendered yet more bitter by the divided state of believers, which alienates from each other kindred spirits and hearts. The idea of some, that a very flourishing, peaceful state of the Church is to be expected on earth *before* the return of the Lord, would in vain seek support and countenance in the word of the Lord and His first witnesses. It is just as little an entirely Christianised state as a powerful triumphant state Church which is to be looked for in this dispensation. On the contrary, the unchristian state will

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<sup>18</sup> Matt. xxiv. 9 ; cf. Rev. xi.

rather raise itself to a God-hating world-power, and the believing Church become like the widow in the parable, who for a while fruitlessly entreats the unjust judge for justice against her adversary. As the circle returns to its point of departure, so will her history before the return of the Lord end, as it began, with a period of persecution.<sup>19</sup> Even though so much of that which the Apocalypse predicts is set down to the account of eastern imagery, there remains still more than enough to make us think with deep emotion of the height of enmity which the spirit of the world will display against the Spirit of God, in proportion as the influence of this latter makes itself more powerfully felt.—And now, there are added to all this, disquieting phenomena *in the realm of nature*. Following in the traces of the old prophets who were led by His Spirit, the Lord predicts terrible signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, while the powers of heaven are shaken.<sup>20</sup> He speaks of a

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<sup>19</sup> On this point we are entirely one with Auberlen, when he writes, “If the Church has thus the antichristian state and the antichristian culture against her, she will be in a still worse position than in the first ages, when she was mocked by Greek philosophy, and persecuted by the Roman world-power. In this last time of tribulation all false worldly Christianity will be judged. The Church of the Lord must come down from every human height, and renounce every human support. When, however, she has been fully purified and humbled, when she has learnt, in the recognition of her own powerlessness, to cast herself solely upon her heavenly Lord, and out of deep distress to cry, ‘Come, Lord Jesus,’ then is she ripe for receiving the Bridegroom, as is the world for judgment.”—*Die biblische Lehre vom Reiche Gottes*, u. s. w., Address at Barmen, 1859, p. 16.

<sup>20</sup> Matt. xxiv. 29.



peculiar roaring of the sea and the waves, accompanied with great anxiety and despondency of heart in the nations: and who has ever read the prophetic book of the New Testament without there also, with shuddering, seeing described the judgments of God, which may reveal themselves in the visible creation? <sup>21</sup>

For the mere natural understanding these things are an offence and a folly. He who regards all nature as a vast organic living body, developed of and by itself, and governed by no other power than that inherent in it, cannot possibly suppose that any phenomena or changes present themselves in its domain, which stand connected with the manifestation of the kingdom of God. But reason, where it refuses to recognise the possibility of this last, has just as little right on its side as where it denies the direct intervention of God in the creation of the world, an incarnation of God in Christ, or the possibility of the Gospel miracles. We shall afterwards return to this point. For the present only the observation that we thus find not the slightest reason—ay, that we deem it arbitrariness itself—to interpret all these utterances in an *allegorical* manner; <sup>22</sup> so that the darkened stars denote fallen princes, or the sea the world of Gentile nations, etc. Where in the world is the slightest proof that the Lord and His Apostles wished to be thus understood?

But we return to the foretokens of the day of the

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<sup>21</sup> Luke xxi. 25; cf. Rev. vi., xvi., and other chapters.

<sup>22</sup> As, e. g., Hengstenberg, in his *Exposition of the Revelation of John*.

Lord's coming. He who should suppose that so much misery would work out a universal transformation and renewal of the face of the moral world, would be too soon delighting himself with a fair expectation. Assuredly all these Divine judgments will not fail of a sanctified effect on single individuals; but, as a whole, Scripture teaches us, on the other hand, to regard *indifference and obduracy* as the prevalent characteristics of the last days. The Lord Himself compares them with the age of Noah and Lot, and shows us in His parable how not only the foolish virgins, but also the wise ones, wax drowsy while the bridegroom tarries.<sup>23</sup> Peter prophesies that in the last days scoffers shall come, who shall walk after their own lusts, and shall shamelessly ask, Where is the promise of His coming? since certainly no perceptible change takes place in the course of things.<sup>24</sup> And John expressly mentions that the terrible judgments of God lead the inhabitants of the earth, who are smitten by them, to a despairing blasphemy against God, but not to that repentance unto conversion, which needeth not to be repented of.<sup>25</sup> It seems as though the blind of self-deception would be most closely bound around the eyes of the bulk of mankind, when they are on the point of being most terribly opened. This, however, easily harmonises with that which the Lord elsewhere testifies as to the anguish and uncertainty of many hearts when those things *begin* to take place which precede His last coming.<sup>26</sup> Do we not know, although as yet only in a

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<sup>23</sup> Luke xvii. 26—29; Matt. xxv. 5.

<sup>25</sup> Rev. xvi. 9, 11.

<sup>24</sup> 2 Pet. iii. 3.

<sup>26</sup> Luke xxi. 25.

comparatively small degree, even in our time, that feeling of restless desire, one knows not for what; of tension, of trembling at the thought of all kinds of tempests which we see suddenly arise upon the political horizon, and then again for a while disappear, without, however, the prevailing earthly-mindedness receiving a check therefrom, much less a true conversion of the multitude being brought about? Where enmity against God and His Anointed still endures, His judgments call forth no amendment, but rather increased bitterness. The friends of the Lord may, on the other hand, according to His word, lift up their heads when these things begin to happen, and see that their redemption is nigh. The tenderness of the branches of the fig tree, from which immediately the leaves burst forth, prophesies of the near approach of summer.<sup>27</sup>

The Gospel consequently affords no ground whatever for the supposition that the coming of the Lord, heralded on an ever greater scale by all these preludes, is still removed by an immeasurable *distance* from us. On the contrary, the Lord and His Apostles always start with the idea that the last day is not only at hand, but has already actually begun. "Little children, it is the last hour,"<sup>28</sup> cries a venerable Apostle to us; and one of his brethren teaches us to attribute to God's long-suffering alone that the time of grace is prolonged.<sup>29</sup> He who regards with any degree of attention the course of affairs will hardly be able to deny that the premonitory signs

<sup>27</sup> Luke xxi. 28—31.

<sup>28</sup> ἐσχάτη ὥρα ἐστὶ, 1 John ii. 18.

<sup>29</sup> 2 Pet. iii. 9.

before mentioned are already present in their beginning, though not yet in their full manifestation, and that the wheel of the world's history turns round before our eyes with ever more restless and swifter revolution. Does it not often seem as though nothing will any longer cohere, hold together, and endure; as though one thing constantly pushes aside and replaces another thing, one person another person; as though everywhere on the field of the world the white patches are becoming visible which betoken the approaching day of harvest? Even the consideration of all that must in our opinion first take place, ere the last page of the (earthly) history of our race can be written, must lead us to reckon upon no very great time longer. For God a thousand years are as one day; but there come days also in the history of the kingdom of God which exert greater influence than previous years or ages. Such was the age of Constantine, of Charlemagne, of the Reformation, in which the tree made a vigorous shoot, and the apparent standstill of long periods is suddenly recovered and more than recovered. Thus perhaps will it also be in proportion as the day of the present things more rapidly speeds to its end. Ordinarily God works slowly and in silence in the beginning and progress, but surprisingly and rapidly at the completion and eventual unfolding of His eternal purposes. "Behold, I come as a thief," says the Lord: "blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Rev. xvi. 15. Compare a work of H. Karsten, which will well

There is indeed good reason for this earnest admonition, since—by however many premonitory signs proclaimed—the coming of the Lord will at last be a *wholly unexpected* one. It is remarkable how the figure of the thief in the night, employed by the Master Himself, constantly and more than any other recurs in the teaching of His Apostles. It is moreover admirably adapted to characterise the suddenness of an event by which the course and condition of things here below is altogether changed.

With profound wisdom has the Lord kept secret, not only from the unbelieving world, but also from His disciples, the day and hour of His last advent. If that period were accurately known beforehand, there could no longer be any thought of the free enjoyment of life, nor of the due fulfilment of the life's task, nor of a worthy preparation for life's end. The very uncertainty before which we tremble is pre-eminently conducive to the life of faith, of activity, and of patient longing. We cannot, on that account, suppose that any of the calculations made even in our own day, specially by English theologians, to discover, with the help of certain *data* of the Apocalypse, the secret of the actual period of the Lord's coming, will lead to the desired result; we doubt even whether it is in the spirit of the Lord to *wish* to know the year, the month, and the day of His appearing again. Here, too, the saying of the wise man is applicable, "It is the glory of God to conceal a matter," as is the assertion of One who is greater than Solomon, "In such an hour as ye

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repay reading, *Die letzten Dinge*, Hamburg 1861; and the literature mentioned in *Christian Dogmatics*, p. 778.

think not the Son of man cometh.”<sup>31</sup> By whatever foretokens proclaimed as near at hand, the great Day will at last appear suddenly and unlooked for. The Lord leads us to expect a day which shall begin like all others, but shall not end like all others; on which men shall awake, never again to fall asleep; on which they shall repair to their labour, but shall be unexpectedly arrested in this labour by the appearing of the Judge. On the field, in bed, at the handmill, the then inhabitant of the earth is overtaken by this great day,<sup>32</sup> and visible in heaven before the eyes of all has appeared, after so many other premonitory signs, the sign of the Son of man. But let us listen to the Lord Himself,<sup>33</sup> without going on to lose ourselves in vain conjectures, or summing up the opinions of others. “Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And he shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

These words lead us by a natural transition to the *second* part of our examination, the *unparalleled events* which—prepared for by all these premonitory signs—accompany the return of the Lord. This *personal return* itself here necessarily first of all claims our reverent attention.

Hardly is there a single idea which in all the Apostolic

<sup>31</sup> Prov. xxv. 2; Matt. xxiv. 44.

<sup>32</sup> Luke xvii. 34—36.

<sup>33</sup> Matt xxiv. 30, 31. Comp. Van Oosterzee's *Leven van Jezus*, iii. p. 116.

Epistles without exception is so forcibly presented in the foreground as that of the Lord's return, or manifestation in glory. Clearly do His first witnesses show that they regard the promises of the Master in His farewell hour as by no means already fulfilled in the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, and the first triumph won before their eyes by His cause in the Jewish and heathen world. They unanimously expect one fact, preceded by terrible events in the world's history—a personal appearing of the Messiah, by which an end is for ever put to the present dispensation, the last reproach rolled away from His name, and an entirely new order of things brought in. The solemn *Maran-atha* forms the keynote in all their exhortations, consolations, warnings. And thus their expectation is to no extent the fruit of a chimerical idea, born of the longing desire of love. In the hour of the Lord's ascension the angel had said to them that He should so come *in like manner as they had seen Him ascend to heaven*; and notably did they already build their hope of a personal, visible, majestic coming again of the Lord on the clouds of heaven upon this promise, as indeed this saying of the angel's cannot possibly be understood in any other sense. What is more, the Lord Himself called forth and fostered in them this expectation by so many of His own words, spoken especially during the last days of His life. He compared Himself to a nobleman, who journeys to a distant land, to receive for himself a kingdom, *and then to return*.<sup>34</sup> He thus led

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<sup>34</sup> Luke xix. 12.



them to regard the period after His departure as a short and uncertain *interval*, which must be spent in watching, working and winning for Him, the eye fixed upon the approaching day of account. He employed the boldest imagery of Israel's prophets in describing to them the glory of His coming, and presently took His departure from earth as one who is by no means bidding a final farewell to it.

In truth, whoever reads without prejudice the utterances of the Lord and His Apostles on this point, and allows them to mean what, according to the laws of a sound exegesis, they must mean, will no longer entertain any doubt as to whether they lead us to expect a *second* coming of the Son of man, in many respects the very opposite of His first appearing in humiliation, but resembling it at least to this extent, that it is a coming not merely as to the spirit, but also (a second time) as to the body. We comprehend how much this expectation has that is offensive to the one-sided spiritualism of the present day; we do not venture to attempt an answer to all the questions which it seems almost to force to the lips. But that what has been said is really the teaching of the Gospel; that those who deny it contradict not us, but the word of God, we believe we have already sufficiently proved. We repeat it, human reason has, *à priori*, equally little ground for speaking of such a miraculous fact as inconceivable, as for denying the possibility of a direct intervention of God at creation, or of a personal incarnation of the Son of God as the foundation of redemption. Much that, according to our own view,

we should speak of as conceivable or worthy of God, either does not happen at all, or not as we had supposed; much that seemed to us in the highest degree improbable, will be seen in the issue to be no less certain. It is true, the universal expectation of the Apostolic Age with regard to a *speedy* return of the Lord was not fulfilled in this form—more than once have we acknowledged this, and explained ourselves as to the manner in which this fact must be judged of, without detriment to the Apostolic authority, rightly understood;<sup>35</sup> but the contents and ground of this expectation itself remain entirely unaffected thereby. For the more closely listening ear, the Lord has not left wanting hints that His return would not take place so soon as some perhaps expected, and that events must still precede, for the accomplishment of which years and perhaps ages would be necessary.<sup>36</sup> And if, as we have elsewhere sought to show, the Apocalypse is the work of the advanced age of the bosom-Apostle, the *last* writing of the New Testament, composed after the destruction of Jerusalem,<sup>37</sup> it certainly merits attention that precisely there the hope of an eventual return of the Lord in outwardly visible glory is expressed with so much warmth by the writer of the fourth, the peculiarly spiritual Gospel.

And what can there be that is, rightly regarded, improbable in the supposition that He who was once offered to bear the sins of many shall appear a second

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<sup>35</sup> See, e.g., *Christol. des N. V.*, pp. 289, 290.

<sup>36</sup> Matt. xxiv. 7, 14, 48; xxv. 5, 19; and other places.

<sup>37</sup> For the evidence see *Christol. des N. V.*, pp. 365—369.

time without sin, to them that wait for Him, unto salvation?<sup>38</sup> The relation once brought about between the God-man and the earth is so far from being destroyed by His departure, that, on the contrary—as we have already seen—He continues to stand in direct personal relationship to it. Spiritually He continues to work here; but why should not in this case, as in all others, the “embodiment in outward form” be “the end of the ways of God,”<sup>39</sup> and He who now discloses for the heavenly world His full glory, be able yet one day to display that glory upon an earth which was the scene of His deepest humiliation? Only one of *three* conceptions can be formed by any one after a rational reflection as to the course and end of the world’s history. Either that of *Materialism*, which believes everything to have originated in matter, and asserts that the earth, as it has had its time of youth and of bloom, is gradually approaching its old age; so that finally the duration of human life will become ever shorter, the race itself ever feebler, the worn-out clock-work of the world ever more irregular, until eventually the last surviving human beings are condemned to die their own lonely death. Or that of *Spiritualism*, which speaks of an ever-enduring progress of mankind upon what is called by this school the path of our *development*. From this standpoint the highest ideal of the future is that civil and political freedom should be ever more and more emancipated from all oppressive shackles;

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<sup>38</sup> Heb. ix. 28.

<sup>39</sup> “Leiblichkeit ist das Ende der Wege Gottes.”

that the iron network of railways and telegraph wires should become ever more and more complete, be ever more easily and abundantly employed in the service of mankind; that poverty should be diminished, wealth more equally distributed, the earth, in a word, ever more and more subjected to man. The Republican still dreams, after so many futile attempts, of a commonwealth in which the boast of liberty, equality, fraternity ceases to be a great lie; the one-sided Protestant dreams of the future conversion of the world to the principles, possibly also to the ecclesiastical forms, of Protestantism; the strict Ultramontane, of a Papal chair in which every pope is followed in regular succession by another—the thirtieth by the thirty-first, thirty-second, and thirty-third. The tacit presupposition in all this is that all will remain substantially as it is, though becoming gradually more perfect and better; the line of civilisation is, it is asserted, ever on the advance, in a zigzag direction; and he who witnesses a few abominations, such as those of our day, quiets himself with the confidence that he is placed for the moment on the temporarily retrogressive line, which will be presently exchanged again for a more advancing one. Do you feel with us that the first theory is gloomy in the extreme, while the second supposition is unsatisfactory, narrow, and monotonous? Then the only resource left to us is to betake ourselves to the third, the Biblical-prophetic conception of the return of the Lord. We have the choice between the wisdom of men, who have no other programme for the future of the world's history than that of an ever con-

tinued advance—a *progressio in infinitum*—and the wisdom of God, which here calls forth in us the expectation of a decisive *catastrophe* as the final and turning-point of the world's history. Before this last is rejected, let it be duly considered that reason on this point also is unqualified, in its own light, we do not say to conjecture, but definitely to determine anything, and that the history of our race proves that essentially new epochs have ordinarily been introduced, not merely in the way of a quietly progressive course of development, but also of unexpected, all-pervading shocks. We men are desirous, from the very constitution of our nature, of building upon the ruins of every old or desolated Jerusalem a new one; God, according to the teaching of Scripture, causes the New Jerusalem to descend to earth from heaven. And what more worthy termination of the present economy can the intellect, the feeling, or the imagination conceive of, than the coming again of Him who is not only the centre, but also the end and aim, of the world's history?

Thus shall the earth yet once more hail Him in His kingly glory, whom it has here contemplated in His servant form upon the cross. When, how, where—who will presume to determine before the event what in the prophetic word is nothing more than splendid imagery, and what the expression of a literal reality? If we must give the preference to one place on earth, our thoughts cannot but turn to the land of promise, whither, according to the voice of Old Testament prophecy, Israel shall yet once more return in the last of the days. The pre-

servation and guidance of the people of Israel up to the present moment is at least a fact sufficiently remarkable to justify the supposition that this people has still in the future a grand destination to fulfil; and we confess that the opinion of those who look only for an individual conversion of the Jews, accompanied with a constant resolving of their nationality into that of the nations of Christendom, seems to us as little in harmony with the remarkable vicissitudes through which this chosen people has hitherto passed, as with the prospects opened up by the prophets. We cannot possibly suppose that the magnificent predictions at the close of an Isaiah or a Zechariah are to be regarded as already fulfilled in the poor restoration of Israel to its land at the close of the Babylonian exile. On the contrary, we are impelled by the obedience of faith in the written word of God, to hope, with regard to this people, for a future, which shall correspond with its brilliant past, and make amends for its sorrowful present. Even the manifold difficulties which for the present may be adduced from a political and social standpoint against this hope do not disturb us above measure. They are of a passing nature; and if God *has really* promised that He will yet again have compassion upon His ancient people, the way in which He will prepare for and bring about Israel's restoration we may confidently leave to Him. We are naturally also led to this expectation in order to the realisation, among other things, of the ideal depicted by Ezekiel, in his last chapters, of that time of blessing, without, however, our attempting to raise the veil which still covers

the fulfilment. That the national pride of those "beloved for the fathers' sake" has often plumed itself in a very unbecoming manner upon this prospect; that many an earthly expectation and computation has been founded upon the last chapters of the Apocalypse; that fanaticism and ambition have justified themselves in countless enormities by an appeal to this hope, must be equally acknowledged as deplored. But even the observation of the most melancholy abuse of a revealed truth may not lead us to its arbitrary denial. And he who attentively peruses the utterances of prophet and apostle with regard thereto, will very soon be convinced with us that such abuse is in no degree legitimated by this word itself, but has, on the contrary, arisen from a misunderstanding, whether unintentional or designed.

Simultaneously with this return of the Lord in glory takes place *the first resurrection*. As we have already repeatedly seen, Scripture by no means teaches a resurrection—although it certainly does a continued existence—immediately after death, but a resurrection only at the last and visible coming of Christ. Yet this also takes place not simultaneously for all, but is distinguished into a first and second. Already in the teaching of the Lord Himself we seem to discover traces of this distinction. Thus is it, *e.g.*, when He speaks of a resurrection of the *just*,<sup>40</sup> and with evident preference speaks of those "who shall be accounted worthy to attain to that world-age, and the resurrection *from* the dead," to whom He further

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<sup>40</sup> Luke xiv. 14.



promises a blessedness like that of the angels.<sup>41</sup> A nearer revelation, however, on the part of the Spirit is granted to Paul, when he assures the Thessalonians that those who are fallen asleep through Jesus shall rise *first*; while the living believers, changed in one moment of time, shall be caught up into the air, to meet the Lord coming upon the clouds, in order—so we complement his presentation<sup>42</sup>—straightway to come with Him, and to share His glory on the earth. Christ is with him the firstfruits of the resurrection; afterwards rise they that are Christ's at His coming; after that yet a last conflict, only later followed by the entire destruction of the last enemy, death.<sup>43</sup> To the question, who these are whom the distinction of this *first* resurrection awaits, John gives us the answer that it is definitely such witnesses of the Lord as, eminent for their faith and devotion, have sealed their faithful testimony with their life; in a word, have attained such a high degree of Christian advancement, that they may be esteemed worthy above others to share not only in the blessedness (salvation), but also in the glory, of their King.<sup>44</sup> They thus at the coming of the Lord have precedence over others who have fallen

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<sup>41</sup> Luke xx. 35, 36.

<sup>42</sup> 1 Thess. iv. 14—17; further handled in the *Christol. des N. V.*, p. 296.

<sup>43</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 23—26. For an examination of this text see *Christol. des N. V.*, p. 305.

<sup>44</sup> Rev. xx. 4. The same distinction is made by the author in the *Christian Dogmatics*, p. 792, in accordance with 1 Cor. xv. 41, 42 (cf. Phil. iii. 11). All *faithful* Christians would seem to be included under the terms of 1 Thess. iv. 16; 1 Cor. xv. 23. Comp. *Theology of the New Testament*, pp. 335, 336, of English translation.

asleep, both believers and unbelievers (who yet continue in the state of the dead), and may thus be compared in one respect with those dead who were raised at the death and resurrection of the Saviour, with regard to whom Matthew alone has given us some mysterious hints<sup>45</sup>—first-fruits with Him of the full harvest of the resurrection. As they have in more than ordinary measure suffered with Christ, they are also above others glorified with Him here upon earth.<sup>46</sup> Resplendent at the head of their ranks stands perhaps the Apostle host, to whom the Lord gave the promise that in the regeneration or renewal of all things they should sit with Him upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.<sup>47</sup> With them the saints, the believers, who, according to Paul's word, will judge the world, and even angels—of course fallen ones<sup>48</sup>—the martyrs, whose holy impatience for the hour of the full triumph of their cause is tempered by the word, "that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled."<sup>49</sup> Such dead rise; but "the rest of the dead lived not again," writes the apostle-prophet, "*until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.*"<sup>50</sup>

It thus becomes apparent that a sharing in the dominion of the Lord at His coming is by no means granted

<sup>45</sup> Matt. xxvii. 52, 53.

<sup>46</sup> [2 Tim. ii. 12.]

<sup>47</sup> Matt. xix. 28.

<sup>48</sup> 1 Cor. vi. 2, 3. [The "reigning in life," of Rom. v. 17 (cf. viii. 17) *also*, though not exclusively, refers to this period of triumph.]

<sup>49</sup> Rev. vi. 10, 11.

<sup>50</sup> Rev. xx. 5.

to men in this body of flesh and blood, who even with genuine faith in Him are defiled with manifold weakness, and liable to make varied misuse of their power and influence; but to those raised from the dead, who now, clothed with a spiritual and incorruptible body, reflect in their measure the brightness of their living Head. From this indeed it follows that the Chiliasm of the Anabaptists, *e.g.*, is wanting in all exegetical foundation; since in their days there was neither a personal return of the Christ nor a single dead person raised and exalted to a partnership in His dominion. Every attempt, *before* the consummation of the ages, to *create* a state of things such as is here indicated will necessarily degenerate into a miserable caricature of Scripture; until eventually it pleases the Lord of the Church in His own way to cause the new order of things to *arise*. On that account both various Church Fathers and Church Confessions of the Reformation were right in their zealous opposition to the Jewish reveries (*Judaica somnia*) of a Millennial kingdom, as that term was understood in their day. There is, however, a more spiritual view of the matter, which does not incur this charge of being after the mind of the flesh; and certainly we are not the first who have asserted that it belongs to the task of the present and subsequent times to seek to penetrate more deeply into the Biblical doctrine of the last things, than was given to the Church Fathers and Reformers, or was necessary in their day. The comparison we have already made<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> *Christologie des N. V.*, pp. 434—444. .

between the Millennial period in the life of the Church and the forty days between the resurrection and ascension of the Lord appears to us, after prolonged reflection, in all respects a just one. If we compare thus the condition of the Church *after* and *before* this personal coming of the Lord, she can then rejoice in a prosperity and splendour which in every respect displays the very opposite of the humiliation and oppression such as, before the coming of the heavenly Bridegroom, were more than ever her portion. Her outward form of manifestation is henceforth no longer in conflict with her glorious inner nature. The kingdom of Christ has then in beginning obtained its triumph over the hostile world-powers, and diffuses around it in ever wider circles its peace and its joy. It is now perhaps the time of the conversion of heathen nations in the mass, the time when whole multitudes shall, in the words of Isaiah, call to each other, "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord. . . . He will teach us His ways, and we will walk in His paths." Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.<sup>52</sup> A God-governed state is beheld on earth, of which the earlier Theocracy was the prophetic image, and the later hierarchy in many respects the deformed caricature. It is a time of transition: Satan is bound, without being entirely destroyed; the power of evil is not extirpated, yet so curbed that for the present it can offer no more opposition to the kingdom of light; the resurrection is begun, but not yet completed; the judgment, as given by

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<sup>52</sup> Isaiah ii. 2—4.

the Father to the Son, so also is given by the Son to His ministers and the sharers of His throne, but not yet fully accomplished. Because sin is not yet wholly annihilated, death also still prevails, except over those who are sharers of the first resurrection. It is a time of visible approach on the part of heaven to earth, of earth to heaven, of a wondrous twilight, in which the former night is passed away, without, however—as compared with that which takes place afterwards—the full unclouded day being yet come. Over the world, as it will be at that day, we see, as it were, shed a transparent cloud, in which we only half distinguish objects, but one which at any moment may be rolled away. In this cloud we see immortal forms passing before us,<sup>53</sup> behind it we discover the glorified Head of the Church, whose glory is more than ever before reflected in His glorified members. In His Church prevails now a knowledge, a love, a life, as compared with which the present is seen to be only infantile and fragmentary. No hammer-stroke of contention is heard; no sword or spear is seen—they are beaten into sickles and spades. The dominion of the material, under which we now sigh, is succeeded by a dominion of the spirit, which extends itself further and further, and makes of the daily life a daily worship.<sup>54</sup> In a word, “the whole earth rests,” as once Isaiah sang, after the fall of a mighty tyrant,<sup>55</sup> and the golden age is come, described by him in such beauteous colours in his *eleventh* chapter. Now perhaps is brought about, at least in its beginning, that

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<sup>53</sup> [Cf. Luke xx. 36.]<sup>54</sup> Zech. xiv. 20, 21.<sup>55</sup> Isa. xiv. 7.

glorification of nature, that deliverance of the sighing creation, for which Paul leads us to hope.<sup>56</sup> As this has shared in the consequences of Adam's fall, so does it begin also to share in the blessing-fraught new creation of Adam's descendant; by degrees—for why should we not think here too of an organic development—there arises perfect harmony between the creation and the creature regenerate after God's image. "The earth, which now wears her work-day garb, then puts on her Easter and Pentecostal attire." How could she remain burdened with the old curse, when her Creator and Lord, now no longer in the form of a servant, treads her ransomed soil?

Nothing is easier than to place at almost every line of this imperfect sketch a note of interrogation, to which we could offer either no satisfactory reply, or but a partial one. But, then, it is not *our* wisdom which we are proclaiming with respect to the things of the future, but only that which—as we believe—has been revealed with regard thereto in the word of truth. It lies in the nature of the case that, so long as that which is perfect is not yet come, we can only stammer as children of these things. But these children's accents deserve to be answered with something better than bold and arbitrary denials—unless it should be shown us, *either* that Scripture does not teach these things, *or else* that the objectors have, apart from and beyond Scripture, another source of knowledge as to what the future shall bring

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<sup>56</sup> Rom. viii. 19—23. Cf. *Christol. des N. V.*, pp. 309—311.

forth. The central idea at least, to which all may be traced back, a glorious Church-state upon earth, has in itself something extremely attractive; and very improbable is it, on the other hand, as witness the experience of eighteen centuries, that the ideal of the Christian Church will ever be fully realised here below, so long as the Lord has not yet returned. The desire for a better order of things will be constantly more deeply felt, in proportion as the boundless confusion and progressive dissolution increases in so many ecclesiastical bodies, and has already more than once expressed itself in a touching manner. How affecting, for instance, the complaint of a Luther: "There is no more help or counsel upon earth, except in the last day; I hope, too, that it will not be much longer before it comes." And elsewhere: "I hope that the Gospel will become so despised that the last day cannot be far off, not over a hundred years. God's word will again wax less and fall off, and great darknesses will come for want of true and faithful ministers of the word. Then will the whole world run wild and sensual, and live in all security without reflecting. Then shall the voice come and sound, 'Behold, the Bridegroom cometh;'<sup>57</sup> for God will not be able longer to endure it." Again

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<sup>57</sup> Very justly is it also observed by Chantepie de la Saussaye, "The mechanical view of the Millennial kingdom is a sickly Jewish notion; not so the ethical, the Millennial kingdom conceived of as the completion of the political and churchly history of mankind." A similar presentation of the matter is found in Martensen, in the work before referred to, when he writes, "It lies in the nature of Christianity that it is not only the suffering and struggling power in the world, but also the world-subduing and world-ruling power.



and again is this hope temporarily disappointed, and hope deferred maketh the heart sick. But a hope resting upon that which God has promised draws from every temporary frustration fresh power for firmer and more joyful expectancy: the longer the Lord delays, the more certain that He is at length coming, and the more certain also that Sabbath of rest with Him, of which every Sabbath year and year of Jubilee in Israel was the type and shadow. May it be that for humanity, precisely after *six* thousand years of labour and toil, the seventh thousand should see dawn the age of bliss? We determine nothing with regard to this; but we think, in connection with this whole prospect, of the word of a seer in Israel: "It shall come to pass in that day, that there shall not be the precious light nor the thick darkness. But it shall be a unique day, which shall be known to

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This conception of the world-wide sway of Christianity, so far as this can express itself within these temporal conditions, it is which finds its expression in the Millennial kingdom. After great conflicts, after times full of confusion, in which the evil has manifested a fearful power, we look for a period in which the highest earthly ideal of Christianity will have been attained. . . . In this period we place also the planting in of Israel and the entering in of the fulness of the Gentiles." So Karsten, as above, p. 269, "That which ceases by the binding of Satan is the cohesive power of evil, by which it has been able to become an historical and motive principle in the development and in the life of nations, by which it has proved itself a ruling power on earth. Instead of that now comes in the development and power of the glorified Church of God." He who desires to enter more deeply into this question may consult the thoughtful hints of Lange, (*Positive Dogmatik*, ii. p. 1275,) who has also drawn attention to the *Ahnungen* of this part of the Christian expectation in the heathen world.

the Lord, not day nor night; *and it shall come to pass at the time of the evening, that it shall be light.*"<sup>58</sup>

Enough, of this blessed kingdom of God upon earth a restored and glorified Jerusalem shall, according to the language of Scripture, be the fair and radiant centre. "It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established at the head of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and to it shall all nations flow."<sup>59</sup> In the midst of all the agitation and troubles of the nations Israel still remains; and the word of the Lord, "This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled," receives its literal accomplishment.<sup>60</sup> The children of Israel, after long having been scattered and humiliated, shall come in the last of the days to seek the Lord their God, and David their king.<sup>61</sup> Is it asked whether we must conceive of the national conversion of Israel as *preceding* the coming again of the Lord, or as immediately *following* it? When we combine the hints of the prophets with regard thereto, we seem to be led to the thought that the return of the Jews to their country will precede indeed the coming of the Lord, but that, strictly speaking, their turning to the Lord will take place only after their return. When Israel believes, it shall again recognise its Messiah, and then also see Him in His glory. "Upon the house of David," says the Lord, "and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, will I pour out the Spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me

<sup>58</sup> Zech. xiv. 6, 7, Dutch version.

<sup>59</sup> Isaiah ii. 2.

<sup>60</sup> Matt. xxiv. 34.

<sup>61</sup> Hosea iii. 5.

whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for an only son.”<sup>62</sup> Comparison of the last chapters of Zechariah with those of the Apocalypse appears necessary here to find the answer to many an urgent question. This comparison shows us that Jerusalem, at the end of the thousand years, will again become the scene of a *last bloody conflict*. The power of evil, which has been restrained, but not entirely extirpated, is under higher permission once more set free, and now develops itself to a height which causes one to shudder. Mighty nations advance from the ends of the earth to venture upon the conflict against the city of God; in countless numbers they come up; but when all seems to be lost, suddenly it is seen that all is won. The victory is perfectly gained this time after a short conflict; for the last time Jerusalem is trodden down of the Gentiles, *until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled*.<sup>63</sup> Personally the Lord appears on the Mount of Olives, to put an end to the conflict; the scene of His ascension becomes also that of the revelation of His full kingly glory.<sup>64</sup> And when, with the Millennial kingdom, *time* is ended for the earth and for the Church of the Lord, events and revolutions take place, which—more than any of those hitherto mentioned—belong to the domain of *eternity*.

We determine equally little whether or not the number *a thousand* is to be taken in a literal sense,<sup>65</sup> as we shall

<sup>62</sup> Zech. xii. 10; cf. Rev. i. 7.   ▪  Luke xxi. 24.   <sup>64</sup> Zech. xiv. 4.

<sup>63</sup> [“Not an arithmetical, but a symbolic number.” (*Christian Dogmatics*,) p. 799. “Time in its relation to eternity, and transition into the same.” A certain state of completion and Sabbath-

wearily ourselves in conjecturing the names of the last hostile nations whom Ezekiel and John have designated as *Gog* and *Magog*.<sup>66</sup> We fear that one proceeds farther than is allowed, when one makes the mysteries of the future objects of arithmetical or geographical combinations. Rather do we inquire, in conclusion, as to the *decisive consequences* of this coming, of which we have thus far looked at the infallible foretokens and the unparalleled events. We have approached that point at which the revelation of the God-man in glory has for the eye of faith attained its resplendent termination. Only now, after the last conflict and triumph of the kingdom of Christ, takes place the second, absolutely *universal resurrection*, the hour when, according to Jesus' own word, "all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, to the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment."<sup>67</sup> We understand very well how the difficulty of forming any clear conception of so stupendous a fact has induced not a few here to think of a resurrection of the spiritually dead, others to declare the passage to be spurious, and others again to conjecture that the Lord is here expressing Himself in a figurative manner, or accommodates Himself to the erroneous ideas of His contemporaries. If the Christ was really the Son of God, the King of truth, it is nothing but reasonable that we should accept His

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rest of the Church is indicated by this number of perfection =  $10 \times 10 \times 10$ . Cf. Heb. iv. 9.]

<sup>66</sup> Ezek. xxxviii., xxxix.; Rev. xx. 8.

<sup>67</sup> John v. 28, 29.

testimony, even when He unveils to us the mysteries of the future; and if His teaching with regard thereto really harmonises with the ideas of His people, these last are by that very fact stamped as in the main perfectly well-founded and true. The conception most prevalent, of a salvation perfected immediately after death, in a heaven not seldom drawn in the colours of the poet, is in contradiction with the constant teaching of the Lord and His Apostles. According to this teaching, the resurrection takes place not immediately after death, but is to be looked for at the consummation of the ages, in the coming of Christ, simultaneously with the last judgment, the resurrection, namely, *both of just and unjust*.<sup>68</sup> Without doubt the departed still continues to live as to the spirit; he retains his personality, his consciousness, the memory of his past life. He is consoled after sufferings endured, is, being released,<sup>69</sup> with Christ, in infinitely closer communion than here, and constantly unfolds that spiritual life of which the germ was ripening in him here. But for the world of spirits, not less than for the present economy, the coming of Christ remains the great turning-point to which the expectation of all is directed; and only when Christ is manifested, who is our life, will His people be manifested with Him in glory.<sup>70</sup> Even the fallen spirits of the abyss have not yet reached the climax of their long-deserved misery, but are reserved unto the

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<sup>68</sup> Acts xxiv. 15. [Cf. Rom. ii. 6—16.]

<sup>69</sup> Allusion to the Dutch version of Phil. i. 23. For the doctrine of continued consciousness after death, see *Christian Dogmatics*, p. 780.

<sup>70</sup> Col. iii. 4.

judgment of the great day, in everlasting chains of darkness.<sup>71</sup> First must the day of grace be ended for the whole world; first, the long week of toil for humanity have been closed with the Sabbath-rest of the Millennial kingdom; first, the last conflict have been decided, of which we have just spoken; and *now* also, but now first, is the last enemy destroyed.<sup>72</sup> Now alike the experience of death and the law of mortality ceases; the sea gives up its dead which are in it; death and the grave, the dead which are in them.<sup>73</sup> The seed sown by God, to ripen in silence against the day of harvest, is now come to full maturity. At the sound of the voice of the Archangel, which is everywhere heard and obeyed,<sup>74</sup> the dead forsake their graves.<sup>75</sup> The departed spirit is now again united to a body, in its essence the same as that once laid aside, but now furnished with wholly different properties, and adapted to a new order of things. That of the departed believer is now spiritual, immortal, glorious, conformed to that of God's exalted Son; that of the unbelievers and impenitent, in harmony with their inner condition of soul, and with the fearful lot that awaits them. Those still alive upon the earth when the trumpet of resurrection sounds are without dying changed, and in one instant of time, by the omnipotence of God, adapted to that future state in which they are henceforth to spend eternity. All eyes are now turned to Him who is on the point of determining the everlasting weal or woe of all, and are fixed, whether with despairing terror or with

<sup>71</sup> Jude 6.<sup>72</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 25, 26.<sup>73</sup> Rev. xx. 13.<sup>74</sup> 1 Thess. iv. 16.<sup>75</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 52.

joyful expectation, upon the great resplendent throne of the Judge. Now first does it become fully apparent, before the eyes of heaven and earth, with what right He once termed Himself the Resurrection and the Life; since not only spiritual but also natural life is restored in His domain, and for death there is no longer any place found.

But now also is it the hour of the *last Universal Judgment*. Once more we repeat, it is not the doctrine of future things in itself, but that concerning the person and work of the Lord, that we are treating of in this place. We do not therefore feel called to return an answer to all the questions which the Christian expectation of salvation has so often called forth on this point also. Enough, according to the unvarying teaching of Holy Scripture, the lot of every man is, immediately after death, decided in a preliminary manner, and for the man himself; but the irrevocable final decision, the manifestation of each one's everlasting lot before all the inhabitants of the earth, is to be expected only at the end of the ages. We have now to do with the kingdom of God as one whole, in which as such the blessedness even of individuals cannot be made perfect before all offences are put away, all enigmas solved. That universal judgment of the world is now committed to the Son of God by the Father.<sup>76</sup> He is *capable* of holding it, because He has Himself as man been tempted in all points, and therefore personally is acquainted with every one's wants and circumstances; He has the *right* and the

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<sup>76</sup> John v. 22, 27.



power thereto, because He is the glorified King of the kingdom of God, possessed of Divine omniscience, holiness, justice, might, and majesty. *Before Him shall be gathered all the nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats.*<sup>77</sup> The compass of this judgment thus extends to all who have ever lived on earth. The world is judged in righteousness, by the Man whom God has ordained thereto.<sup>78</sup> The believer comes too, not indeed into the condemnation, but yet into the judgment, now to be made manifest<sup>79</sup> as a faithful disciple of Christ, and to be crowned with glory and joy. The *majesty* of that judgment surpasses all power of description. *All the holy angels, ten thousand times ten thousand, have appeared with the Son of man, and the visible heavens and earth flee away before the radiance of His face. "The books are opened: and another book is opened, which is the book of life: and the dead are judged out of those things which are written in the books, according to their works."*<sup>80</sup> The *standard* of that judgment is love, in the fruits of which the life of saving faith has been made apparent, from the absence of which the want of that only condition of everlasting salvation is manifested.

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<sup>77</sup> Matt. xxv. 31—46. The grounds on which these words are understood of the final judgment are given in the *Jaarbb.*, 1851, pp. 723—726.

<sup>78</sup> Acts xvii. 31.

<sup>79</sup> Rom. xiv. 10; 2 Cor. v. 10. [But does not this take place with those who are partakers of the first resurrection, *before* the manifestation of Col. iii. 4?]

<sup>80</sup> Rev. xx. 11, 12.

To all nations and individuals the Gospel has now been brought, but not all have alike received it. Those who have welcomed with love the heralds of salvation, who have consoled the sorrowful brethren of the Lord, fed His hungry members, clothed His naked ones, and in all this have shown the obedience of their faith towards the King of God's kingdom, inherit now the kingdom already prepared for them from before the foundation of the world. Those, on the other hand, who have not loved the brother, and thereby have shown that they here continued to refuse to listen to the quickening voice of the Lord, and to pass from death unto life, are consigned to the everlasting fire, originally prepared—not for them, but for the devil and his angels. Thus there now takes place before the eyes of all a terrible revelation, a righteous retribution, a decisive separation; and in all that an appearing of the glory of the God-man before the eye of heaven and earth, such as the astonished Universe never before saw. The *issue* is that, after the sentence here passed, or the acquittal here pronounced, no single appeal to a higher tribunal remains possible: "The righteous shall go away into everlasting life, the wicked into everlasting punishment."

Now also is come the period of *the renewing of all things, and the consummation of the blessedness of all the redeemed*. The earth, in which all graves have surrendered their occupants, and all the raised ones have been judged, has to this extent attained its destination, that only by an entirely new creation can it be fitted henceforth to serve as the dwelling-place of the blessed.

As it was once purified through water, so is it now by fire; and the saying is fulfilled which is written: "The elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up."<sup>81</sup> However difficult it is to form for oneself a satisfactory idea of the nature, cause, and circumstances of this destruction of the present economy, it is nevertheless equally arbitrary to declare it *à priori* absolutely inconceivable. If the world has not always existed, there is nothing absurd in the expectation that it will one day cease to exist. If the material of which it is composed is not indivisible or necessarily existent, neither can it be indestructible. Everything around us proclaims constant alternation; all that is material is subject to change, is in its innermost essence transitory. And if, as naturalists assert, this present earth is a structure raised upon the ruins of a previous world, nothing prevents our supposing that earth in its turn will give place to another order of things. What has already once taken place in the perishing of the former world may be regarded as the guarantee of the possibility and pledge for the certainty of this last decisive change. Not only the apostles of the New Covenant, but also the prophets of the Old, have manifestly pointed to this; and the Lord has confirmed the utterances of both with His irrefragable authority.<sup>82</sup> Yea, even in heathen poets and philosophers, we meet with traces in abundance of the idea of a destruction of the world, accompanied with terrible

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<sup>81</sup> 2 Peter iii. 10.

<sup>82</sup> See *e.g.*, Ps. cii. 25—27; Isa. lxx. 17, 18; Matt. xxiv. 29, *sqq.*

shocks, but followed by a new and fairer creation.<sup>83</sup> The elements out of which it can be brought about are present, hitherto only pent up and hindered in their operation by the will of Omnipotence. That such a command should one day be given can be spoken of as absolutely impossible only by him who recognises in the creation no free act of an Almighty Creator, but thinks only of an unceasing transposition and development of an eternally present matter.

*But, according to His promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.*<sup>84</sup> God destroys nothing, except in order to restore it in enhanced lustre and beauty ; and, as from the seed-corn arises the stalk, from the winter the spring, from the chrysalis the butterfly, so shall arise from the ashes of a departed world a new and fair one, a creation destined for glorified beings, of which it shall be said—with higher right, if possible, than once of the old earth—"God saw that it was very good." It is a one-sided spiritualism which can conceive of no perfectly consummated blessedness save in a heaven distant as far as possible from this earth. Infinitely more acceptable and more worthy of God is the Biblical conception that this earth, too, which, through sin, laden with the curse, has been made the scene of grace, has as well as other worlds a peculiar destination to accomplish in the realisation of God's adorable plan ; and that the gulf shall entirely cease to be, which at present exists between heaven and earth. As we discover at the

<sup>83</sup> See, amongst others, Lange, work before mentioned, ii. p. 1229.

<sup>84</sup> 2 Peter iii. 13.

beginning of our history a much closer communion between heaven and earth than in later times, so will it also be in the end. The golden circle at the close bends round to the point of its beginning. Heaven has descended to earth, earth ends with becoming, in the fullest sense of the word, a heaven. Now first is the blessedness of the redeemed wholly consummated, because every discord in the song of creation and of redemption is hushed ; but now also has the glory of the Head of the Church attained its point of culmination. We venture on no description of that which no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and which has entered into no heart of man. But if we inquire, mindful of the great centre of our contemplation, as to that which the Christ shall *then* continue and be seen to be for all His people, it cannot be difficult to give in broad outline an answer to this question. In what sense the government of Christ, properly so called, can be said to come to an end we have already seen in another place.<sup>85</sup> But, this notwithstanding, there continues to exist, to all eternity, as intimate and blessed a communion between Him and all the redeemed as between the firstborn of a highly privileged family and his younger brothers. Well might Paul declare that He comes to be *glorified* in all His saints, and to be *admired* in all them that believed.<sup>86</sup> He Himself has already earlier assured us that He will not only reward, but also on His part in turn will *serve*, those servants whom He at His coming shall find watching.<sup>87</sup> Thus, then, is His heavenly life, even to the most distant

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<sup>85</sup> See above, p. 379, ff.    <sup>86</sup> 2 Thess. i. 10.    <sup>87</sup> Luke xii. 37.

future, devoted to the blessed labour of ministering love. Here there certainly exists between Him and the new purified Church a relation of love, as between the *Bridegroom* and the bride who longs for Him. As such a bride, adorned for her husband, John saw the New Jerusalem descend out of heaven, and heard in the note of rejoicing the resounding strains, "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready."<sup>88</sup> And as this relationship is thus intimate and inviolable, so is it at the same time exceedingly beneficial, in accordance again with another significant figure. If God, the Almighty, Himself is the temple of the future city of God, the Lamb is its *lamp*, its light, the medium, thus, through whom each one of the inhabitants constantly receives his knowledge, his holiness, his blessedness. For all this is indicated under the figure of light, according to Biblical usage; and it would seem we may legitimately deduce from it that the Father will present Himself to the contemplation and enjoyment of believers, even in the heavenly state, not immediately, but *in and through the Son*. Such an idea, at least, is entirely in harmony with the Divine dispensations, so far as we are acquainted with them, and with the place occupied by the Son as the centre of the whole plan of salvation formed on the part of the Father.<sup>89</sup> Thus we cannot feel surprise that the Lamb is spoken of again as *Shepherd*, as

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<sup>88</sup> Rev. xix. 7; xxi. 2.

<sup>89</sup> [Here, too, as ever with Paul, Christ is represented as the centre of the Divine *grace*. Van Oosterzee on 2 Tim. i. 9.]

*Guide* of the redeemed to the living fountains of waters,<sup>90</sup> and that He elsewhere promises to hold the *supper* with His people, who have heard the voice of His love, and have opened the door of their heart to Him.<sup>91</sup> If we combine all these representations, the image of a glory and blessedness, as well of the Lord as of His people, in inseparable union, stands before our eye in a gladdening splendour, in connection with which our sight indeed is overpowered, but our heart feels the full value of the Gospel of hope.

The question alone now remains, Will this blessedness, according to the doctrine of the Gospel, at last—though it may be after a multitude of ages—at last become the portion of absolutely all sinners, of all God's creatures without exception? Or must the dualism of light and darkness remain the final word on the part of the Christian view of the world? But why should we now employ many words in repeating that which we have already more than once advanced with regard to this question? We believe we have convincingly shown that neither the teaching of the Lord nor the word of His Apostles justifies the expectation of a restoration of all things in the above sense; but rather affords ground for believing the very opposite.<sup>92</sup> It is not the question

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<sup>90</sup> Rev. vii. 17.

<sup>91</sup> Rev. iii. 20.

<sup>92</sup> [In the *Christologie des N.V.* Cf. *Christian Dogmatics*, pp. 438, 808. Acts iii. 21 (cf. i. 6) refers to nothing else than the establishment of the Millennial kingdom, by which the Divine world-plan is accomplished in its beginning. Not the most distant allusion can be found there to a view which would resolve the history of the kingdom of God into a mere process of nature.]



what conception is most acceptable to our own intellect, most attractive to our feelings, most agreeable to our imagination. We admit all the attractiveness, we had almost said all the fascinating character, of an expectation which, if it should be fulfilled, would solve many an enigma in the government of the world. But we believe that it belongs to the obedience of faith here also to grant to God's written word the last and highest voice ; and that we must further leave to His own wisdom and love to justify His counsel, and to vindicate His acts from the very slightest appearance of arbitrariness. If we were here left to the light of our own reason, perhaps the idea of an ultimate annihilation of the wicked, who surely in themselves, apart from communion with God, possess no incorruptible life, would commend itself to us above all other suppositions. But, once more, the written word is for us, in this respect also, too powerful ; and however little we are inclined to set arbitrary limits to the boundless compassion of God, it would be a cruel compassion on our part, if we should on our own authority flatter a soul with a hope which in eternity should be seen to be delusive.<sup>93</sup> In opposition to the *hints* which it is supposed

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<sup>93</sup> Let the reader think over the powerful language of Adolphe Monod in this respect, in the first volume of his *Sermons* (Paris, 1856), pp. 366—376, where we see nothing to modify, and the excellent paper of Lange, *Die Reise nach dem Lande seiner Wahl*. To these add Sartorius, *Die Lehre von der heiligen Liebe*, iii. 2 (Stuttg., 1856), p. 267. "The levity of our time and world has a very great horror of the antithesis of an everlasting punishment, because it is too serious and terrible. It has therefore, even in the apprentice years of *Aufklärung* (enlightenment), already boldly declared, with puerile arrogance, that 'hell is no longer,' and the

are to be found in Scripture in favour of this hope stand a greater number of unequivocal *utterances*, which teach the opposite; and we are under obligation to *explain the former in the light of the latter, and not the converse*. The idea of a harmony in which the last discordant note of sin and misery is reduced to silence is indescribably beautiful; but *our* idea of harmony must not necessarily serve as a standard for the plan of *the Godhead*. It must suffice us that, without any exception, every knee shall, whether voluntarily or by compulsion, bow in the name of Jesus, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth, and every tongue shall—in however different a manner—confess Him Lord, to the glory of God the Father. The last questions that remain, how such an endless misery of the lost can be reconciled with the grace of the Lord, and shall be no obstacle to the

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devil and his angels belong to the land of fable, where men are unconcerned about him, and make him the object *only* of poetic play, whilst he all the while treacherously assails them. That the truths of faith about the devil and hell are unacceptable to the natural unsanctified man is in itself a criterion of their sacred Scriptural truth. All objections or pretexts against them have their foundation in the weakness and laxness of the self-conceited mind, which will not *allow* them to be true, because they press on it. Therefore, in a cowardly spirit, sin is toned down to a mere weakness of the heart, or, in gross materialism, is made a consequence of the sensuous material; and one then indulges in sensational emotion about the good Father in the starry heavens above, who will surely not so severely and so long punish such weaknesses and dark sides of His imperfect and naughty children, but will, as soon as possible, make them all happy. The less the unmanly modern moralism will hear of the terrors of eternity, the more decisively must we speak thereof, in accordance with Scripture, and ever anew testify to this undisciplined generation that there is a hell, a burning hell."

perfect blessedness of His people—these, and so many others, will first receive their satisfactory solution before the throne of God and of the Lamb. *Not to wish to know everything, which, once for all, has not been clearly revealed to us, forms part of the Christian self-denial in the hallowed domain of faith.*

But thus, then, is the history of the God-man in glory, more deeply regarded, an *endless* history. It has no limit in the future, even as it had no point of commencement in the past. He was, and is, and remains, the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End; and we—we stand in this Present, as on a narrow neck of land between two oceans, that of a Past without beginning, and that of a Future in which our vision is lost. Or rather, we do not remain standing, we kneel down and worship; for it is with us in spirit as with John:<sup>94</sup>

*“And every creature which is in the heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and upon the sea, and the things that are in them, heard I all saying, Unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, AND UNTO THE LAMB, be the blessing, and the honour, and the glory, and the might, for ever and ever.”*

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<sup>94</sup> Rev. v. 13.

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