

ON THE NATURE OF CHRIST

BY Dr. THOMAS'S DAUGHTER.

NEW YORK, U.S.A, *February 22nd*, 1867.

DEAR BROTHER ROBERTS.—The story of your recent encounter with “Dowieism” has been read by several in this city with great interest, because of the light you have thrown upon the fortunes of the truth of God among some of its professed friends, and the fate it is likely to meet with at their hands. The truth in these latter days has, in many places, fallen in among a class of professed friends, like those of whom you have spoken, who seek to make a smoother path and a broader way, wherein to journey to the heavenly city, than that which is already marked out. The progress of truth in the first centuries, after the days of the Apostles, was also accompanied by a “falling away” from the purity of doctrine and practice delivered by them, It came very gradually, little by little; but when men once begin to step aside from the form of sound doctrine, they will continue to wax worse and worse, until they are found identified with a state of apostacy corresponding to the Laodiceans of early times, thus putting themselves in a position to be spued out of the Spirit’s mouth at his appearing in his kingdom. In him they will not find a champion to lead them on to glory and honour, as was the case in the days of Constantine, the first so-called Christian emperor. They will have to give place to their more humble and *truth-loving* brethren.

We rejoice to know, however, that the truth in its purity is gaining ground on this, as well as the other side of the great waters.

There are, at this time, some interesting points of doctrine in process of discussion among some in different places, and we do earnestly hope that all parties engaged therein will be enlightened in the end, and that no cause of strife may arise therefrom. I wish, in this letter, to mention and enlarge a little upon one of these points. It is about the nature and constitution of Jesus Christ. Some parties affirm that he did not possess the Divine nature in any respect; that he was constitutionally a sinner, like any other son of Adam; that when a child he was no more than any other child, and when arrived at years of maturity the Deity saw that his character was good and suitable for his purpose, therefore he made use of him, and filled him with the holy Spirit at his baptism. Others affirm that he was constitutionally righteous and *incapable* of sinning, and devoid of the propensities inherent in our nature. Now, evidently the truth of the matter is not wholly on either position according to the Scriptures. That Jesus was constitutionally good and righteous there can be no doubt, but, that he was *incapable* of sinning we do not believe. If this were so, there would have been no virtue or merit in withstanding temptation; consequently, the temptation, as recorded in the New Testament, would have been a useless performance. We learn from the testimony that Jesus was created by the Father out of the substance of his mother Mary, at the time appointed by Jehovah—according as it is written—“When the fulness of time was come, he was made of a woman,” and the angel Gabriel appeared unto the Virgin Mary and told her the manner of its fulfilment—

that the “Holy Spirit should come upon her, and the power of the Highest should overshadow her,” and, “That Holy Thing that should be born of her should be called the *Son of God*.” Now we know that, as a general thing, all children partake of the nature, constitution, and character of BOTH their parents. No child is ever wholly, and entirely, and in all respects like *one parent only*, and we are not warranted in making an exception to this law in the case of the Son of God. From his mother, he derived all the faculties, propensities, and instincts which belong to the nature of the first Adam—as it is written—“He took upon himself the nature of the seed of Abraham,” that sin might be condemned in the nature which had sinned; and also, that he might be able to sympathise with *our* infirmities, and to “succour those who are tempted,” “forasmuch, as he also was compassed with infirmity.” This was the “body prepared” for a habitation of the Spirit in all fulness—as it is written—“A body hast thou prepared for me,” “Lo! I come to do thy will, O God.” Now we understand what was the nature of the *medium* of manifestation, but what was that which was *manifested*? Was it merely the natural manifestations of a natural man? By no means. It is written, “He shall be called Immanuel,” that is, being interpreted, “*God with us*.” This was God manifested in the flesh, for the first time. It could not be affirmed of any other man that ever existed, before or since, that he was God manifested in the flesh, although the Spirit of God has operated through other media, both in word and sign. He is called the “only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” Some might ask, how was the Deity manifested? We answer, in the *character* of the Son and his *mental attributes*.

The Apostle John says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,” and, “the *Word became flesh* and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.” The *Word* of God is the wisdom of God; the thoughts or intelligence of Deity. This word of wisdom is personified in the Proverbs of Solomon, thus,—“I, wisdom, dwell with prudence and find out knowledge of witty inventions,” with many other similar passages. Jesus Christ was the wisdom of God embodied in the flesh—“the express image of his person” or character, because it was ordained that in him should dwell the *fulness of the Godhead bodily*, so that it became essential that he should not only receive the Spirit, without measure, at his baptism, for the purpose of preaching the Gospel and working miracles, but, that he should also have power within himself to become *perfect in all virtue*; that he might be found without transgression and without fault from his infancy and childhood; that he might be the Lamb without spot or blemish. So, from the Deity, his Father, he inherited wisdom, thought, intelligence, elevation, and purity of character. Being aware of his divine origin and mission at twelve years of age, and perhaps before, he was able to discuss matters pertaining to the law with men of years and education—professed doctors of divinity. Thus we see that he displayed, even in the years of childhood, wisdom and knowledge inherited from his heavenly Father. “Being the Son of God he thought it not robbery to be equal with God,” as all children are, in a certain sense, equal with their parents. The *natural illustrates the spiritual*.

In studying human character we find that the inward thoughts, judgment, or intelligence is something different and distinct from the desires, affections, and propensities; all these are right and good in their proper sphere, when directed and circumscribed within certain limits prescribed by the law of God. If the judgment is clear

and well regulated and controlled by the word of God, it will entirely subjugate the desires and affections, and only allow them a certain limited scope. This, however, is a state of mind never completely attained to by us who are born after the flesh by the will of man. Jesus being the word, thought, or intelligence of his Father, consequently, the will of the flesh was far more subjugated and subdued, and he was not liable to be led away by excited impulses and perverted desires. The desires of his nature were in a *natural state*, such as those with which the first Adam was endowed at his creation. Some of the first Adam's descendants, however, have so nourished and cultivated those propensities (which in their simplicity are good enough), that they have become perverted and altogether *unnatural*.

In the consideration of this or any other subject of Bible doctrine, we should seek to harmonize all the passages bearing upon any particular point; and not accept some and reject others, which (to our limited comprehension) seems to convey opposition of meaning; when in reality there is no contradiction, but a beautiful harmony when rightly put together.

E.J.L.

THE NATURE OF CHRIST.—AN UNKNOWN CORRECTION SUPPLIED

Brother Tait, of Edinburgh, having applied to the Editor for information as to the nature of the objection made to Proposition XX. of the *Declaration*, by the writer of "A FAREWELL TOUR IN AMERICA" (see letter last month), the Editor, in compliance with an alternative request in the same letter, sent it to Dr. Thomas (then lecturing at Nottingham), who, from having had the company of the said writer during the tour in question, might be presumed to know all about it. The Doctor has written the following reply:—

Alexandra Park, Nottingham, July 17th, 1869.

DEAR BRO. ROBERTS.—I do not know what correction brother Donaldson and Harper proposed to brother Bingley, not being present at their conversation. The objection to Proposition XX. turns upon the phrase "Jesus *Christ*," and the notion that "Christ," whose spirit was in the prophets, "had no existence before the birth of Jesus, except as a purpose," &c." This confounds all distinction between Deity and flesh. Deity is "very God." *Christ*, the Word, who "in the beginning laid the foundations of the earth," therefore pre-existed before the birth of "the body prepared" of the substance of Mary, and which lay dead in the tomb. That body named Jesus, had no existence until developed by the Christ-Power. *Federally*, indeed, it pre-existed in the loins of Abraham and in Adam, as Levi was in Abraham, and we in Adam, before birth; but not otherwise.

The pre-existent Christ, or Deity, was not the less Deity because he veiled himself in flesh, in our “sinful flesh,” or “sin’s flesh,” and styled himself JESUS, or *he who shall be Saviour*. The cause of all current confusion of ideas upon this “great mystery,” is men working out their conclusions as the Jews did of old: their sole rule of interpretation is *the flesh*.—“Ye judge after the flesh,” which the Christ-Spirit saith “profits nothing.” They see nothing but *the flesh* in Jesus Christ, on the one hand; and nothing but an immaculate or spotless flesh, on the other. Both these belligerent parties are wrong. They are contending knights viewing opposite sides of the shield. If one side of the shield be black, and the other side white, what is the colour of the shield? Jesus Christ in the day of his weakness, had two sides—the one, DEITY; the other, MAN—the *Eternal Christ-Power veiled in, and manifested through the flesh created from the ground; which flesh had wantonly transgressed the Divine Law, the penalty of which sent it back into the dust from whence it came*. This is Jesus Christ the true Deity, whom to know is life eternal. This flesh which inhabited Paradise, like all the beasts. “very good” of its sort, is styled “sin” and “sin’s flesh,” because it sinned or transgressed the Eden law. Our flesh is the same as Adam’s before he sinned, only *the worse for wear*: for Paul says that we sinned in him, and he was sinless before he sinned; and we were as much in his loins when he was sinless, as in the act of sinning. His flesh undefiled by sin is constitutionally the same as the flesh of his posterity defiled legally thereby. The Christ-Deity veiled himself in the Adamic nature defiled by sin, in order that he might condemn sin to death in the nature which, though created “very good,” had legally defiled itself by transgression of the Eden law. This purpose would have been defeated if he had veiled himself in a clean nature. To say that the Man, Jesus, was *corporeally* clean, or pure, holy, spotless, and undefiled, is in effect to say that he was not “made of a woman;” for Scripture teaches, that nothing born of woman can possibly be clean: but it is credibly testified that he was “born of a woman;” he must therefore necessarily have been born *corporeally unclean*. Hence, it is written of him in Psalm 51:5, “I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.” He therefore prays, “Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” This prayer has been answered, and he has been “Washed thoroughly from his (corporeal) iniquity, and cleansed from his sin;” so that *now* he has a *clean nature*, which is spirit and divine—“the Lord the Spirit”—once dead as to flesh, but now alive as Spirit for evermore.—(Rev. 1:18.) “This is,” as Paul saith, “a great mystery,” which those who are “wise and prudent” as opposed to “babes and sucklings,” out of whose mouth the Deity hath ordained and perfected praise, are not able to understand. I would propose that all your readers consent to stop *disputing* about “the nature and pre-existence of Christ” for the next twelve months, and apply themselves to the study of the subject as revealed in Moses and the prophets, and by Jesus, John, Peter, and Paul, in the spirit of little children. There is too much *cacoethes scribendi et loquendi* by “the unlearned and the unstable” for the interests of the truth and themselves. They “wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction,” and develop by their logomachy only that which is altogether evil and embarrassing. If they would be more zealous for the enlightenment of their neighbours in the first principles of the gospel; and less captious and disputations among themselves, I am sure that they would lay up for themselves in store a better foundation against the time to come, and be more likely to layhold on eternal life.

The seats in the People's Hall are nearly all occupied at our week-night meetings, and crowded on Sunday night. The attention is exemplary. The last two lectures I treated of the immortality revealed in the Bible, as opposed to the Egyptian invention of the immortality of the soul. Several "ministers" present; but they doubtless departed uncomforted by what they heard.—Faithfully yours,

JOHN THOMAS.