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"The Entrance of THY WORDS Giveth Light"

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Editor: A. McDONALD REDWOOD

Lord's saints. He secures all heavenly blessings for us, and His power and ministry give us the joy of experiencing them.

CHRIST UNIQUE

BY DR. JAMES H. BROOKES

Those who do not bow without doubting and without reasoning, to the Word of God, are always perplexed about the person of Christ. In the early church it was the source of constant and sharp dispute. The Ebionites denied His deity. The Gnostics denied His humanity. The Appollinarians held that He had a true body, but not a rational spirit or mind, His divinity taking the place of human intelligence. The Nestorians affirmed that He had two persons, as well as two natures, or a two-fold personality. The Eutychians, on the other hand, taught that He had but one nature, the human being merged into the divine.

But it was the Arian controversy that became the fiercest, the hottest, the hardest to die, and the most disastrous. It rent the church asunder, and often led to scenes of violence and blood. The conflict ranged around the difference between similar and same, *homoiusion* and *homoousion*. Arius believed, no doubt very sincerely, that Christ is the highest of all creatures, the Divine Logos, through whom all things were made, but not equal with God, and not God in the true and proper meaning of the word. It speaks much for the conscience and intelligence of the first Christians, and for their loyalty to the Lord Jesus, that this distinction did not and could not satisfy them.

Accordingly the Council of Nice was called, A.D. 325, to settle definitely the vexed question. It was a council composed of the most distinguished divines of the day, as Dean Stanley has shown in his interesting history, men covered with the scars of suffering for the Master, and thoroughly earnest in their purpose to maintain His honour at all hazards. After long and careful deliberation they adopted a Creed which, as slightly amended, A.D. 381, is as follows: "We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by Whom all things were made; Who, for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man."

Such ever since has been the Creed of all who have any right to be called a part of the Christian Church. The Roman Catholic Church has never wavered in its adherence to this Creed, and the same truth was embodied in the various confessions that were framed during the period of the Reformation. For example, the confession of faith, adopted by the Westminster Assembly of Divines, A.D. 1643-9, expresses the view of every denomination and sect called into being by the revived study of God's Word, and may stand for all others.

"The Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance, and equal with the Father, did, when the fulness of time was come, take upon Him man's nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin; being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, of her substance. So that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion. Which person is very God and very man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator between God and Man," chap. 7. So in answer to questions 21 and 22 of the Shorter Catechism: "The only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, Who being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was, and continueth to be, God and Man, in two distinct natures, and one person forever. . . . Christ the Son of God became man, by taking to Himself a true body and a reasonable soul, being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, yet without sin."

These statements of doctrine that have come down to us from former centuries accord precisely with the teachings of God's Word, and they present Christ as the most unique Being in the universe. Before Him there was none like Him, neither after Him. Yet there is something analogous in the life of each individual, enabling the simplest to understand that however great the mystery surrounding His person, it is not incredible. Man is composed of two distinct and dissimilar elements, mind and matter, soul and body. Sometimes the first is prominently in view, as when we say, "he thinks"; sometimes the second, as when we say, "he rests"; sometimes both are included, as when we say, "he writes". But we use the word "he" indiscriminately, whether we refer to a mental action, or to a physical, or to the two combined.

So it is with the writers of our Lord's wonderful history. Sometimes it is His divine nature that is mentioned exclusively, as when it is said, "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God" (Phil. 2:6). Sometimes it is His human nature, as when we are told that "Jesus, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well" (John 4:6). Sometimes both natures are clearly brought before us as when we read, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). But He did this, He did that, He did the other, whether the allusion is to His divine or human nature, or to the two together: and a little attention to the language employed, or to the context, would enable the reader to determine at once the purpose of the writer, and to avoid the confusion into which so many have fallen by the seeming contradictions of the four Evangelists who record the sayings and actions of Christ.

His Humanity

In the first place they relate things concerning Him, which can be affirmed only of a man. "Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea," Matt. 2:1. "And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him. . . . And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature" (Luke 2:40, 52). "He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow" (Mark 4:38). "On the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, He was hungry" (Mark 11:12). "Being in an agony, He prayed more earnestly; and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:44). Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged Him. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on His head. . . . Jesus saith, "I thirst". . . . He said, "It is finished; and He bowed His head and gave up the ghost" (John 19). If nothing more than such testimony as this had been given, no one would have dreamed that He was more than a man.

His Pre-Existence

But in the second place, the same witness, and He Himself, testified to His pre-existence. "John bare witness of Him, and cried, saying, This was He of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me for He was before me" (John 1:15). "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven" (John 3:13). "He that cometh from above

is above all" (John 3:31). "The bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. . . . I am that bread of life. . . . What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where He was before?" (John 6:33, 48, 62). "I am not alone, but I and the Father which sent me . . . Before Abraham was I AM" (John 8:16, 58).

Names of God Applied to Jesus

In the third place, they do not hesitate to apply to Him the names of God. "She shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call His name JESUS (Jehovah the Saviour). . . . Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel; which being interpreted is, God with us" (Mal. 1:21, 23). "The Word was God" (John 1:1). "Thomas said unto Him, My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). "Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever" (Rom. 9:5). "Great is the mystery of Godliness: God was manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16). "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ" (Tit. 2:13). "Unto the Son God saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever" (Heb. 1:8). "We are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life" (1 John 5:20). "And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" (Rev. 19:16).

(To be concluded in next issue)

MILLENNIAL CONDITIONS AS REVEALED IN ZECHARIAH

- i. Universal Authority ch. xiv. 9.
- ii. International Security ch. ii. 4. xiv. 11.
- iii. Commercial Prosperity ch. i. 17.
- iv. Physical Longevity ch. viii. 4.
- v. Moral Purity ch. xiv. 20 and 21.
- vi. Ecclesiastical Unity ch. xiv. 9 and 16.
- vii. Spiritual Activity ch. iv. 6.

DOUGLAS W. BREALEY.