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A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

ARTICLE II.

DR. WATTS'S THEORY OF CHRIST'S PRE-EXISTENT
HUMAN NATURE.

BY REV. HENRY L. KENDALL, ANDOVER, MASS.

To the student of New England theology it will ever be an interesting work to seek some acquaintance with those men whose writings contributed either to the matter or the form of the literature of that theology. It is often easy to trace among certain of the old English divines, a similarity to the thought, and modes of thought, and that same kind of logical suggestiveness which characterizes the New England writers. Among the very foremost of these men, who may thus be called the English fathers of American Christian thought, stands Dr. Watts. His prose works formed a large part of the thorough and critical studies of President Edwards. Indeed, one cannot read a chapter of these writings without perceiving at once that here was one of the great sources of that vigor of style, closeness of reasoning, and that glowing eloquence of reasoning, that "logic on fire," which so distinguishes the great theologian.

Comparatively few are aware of the high place which these writings once held, and the immense influence they exerted; and we must still accord to their author the title of "great," for the decline of this influence is not because of any modern discovery of subtle sophistry in thought, or of unsubstantiality in the bases of thought, but it is due to certain other causes, which, in their inevitable workings, have dug the grave of the offsprings of many a great man's thoughts. We may hint a few of them.

Some of the truths contained in these works were those important ones that are needed everywhere and at all times, and thus the law of universal use has caused them to be

reproduced in later writings, and thus, in America especially, in the abundance of the new, the old has passed away. Especially does this law obtain in respect to the controversial portions of his works. The fate of these has been like that of all controversial writings, which, when the interest of debate which gave birth to and sustained them has passed away, have always given place to the same truth in new relations, and in forms more attractive, because more in accord with the advances of philosophy, and better adapted to modern discussion.

Again, with Watts the reputation of the poet has obscured that of the theologian. It is a curious law of the human mind which exalts a man in its opinion to a degree measured by that one of his excellences of which it has the most vivid idea, and then lets every other quality, however good it be, go for naught. From the day that Milton's *Paradise Lost* became known to the world, his prose works became forever a dead thing in literature. So it has been that, since there is scarce a pulpit in English-speaking lands from which Watts's hymns have not been read many times, men have been content that, full honor being paid him here, the rest should pass unnoticed. Thus the prose works of Dr. Watts have long since ceased to be read. One may search through scores and scores of ministers' libraries and not find a single copy, and few men realize the large excellence of that wonderful man, who, while he was the great fountain-head of emotional truth to the masses, was at the same time a fountain-head of religious thought to the greatest minds of a later age.

Another reason for the decline, is this: One detects in the theological writings of Dr. Watts a mingling of the poetical with the logical element. Not only does it add a glow to the style and language, but it also sometimes performs functions of an originative faculty. There are some peculiar theories pertaining to the mysteries of Christianity, the first suggestions of which one could easily fancy had their birth in this part of the author's nature. Perhaps this, also, may serve to explain why some parts of these works were disparaged in the

eyes of the early American divines, and why they failed to receive a more hearty acceptance from them. The sinewy New England theology would have for the foundation stone of its new structure, nothing but the solid granite of reason. It looked askance at any idea which had its origin from that other quarter, and asked, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" But whatever may be said of the poetic origin of these theories, there certainly is no lack in the keenness and purity of the logic by which they are developed and maintained.

Among the more important of these theories may be classed the subject of the present Article, which is not intended to be a discussion of its merits, but to be a statement, so far as its limits will allow, of Dr. Watts's own view of the nature of this theory, and of the reasons which he presents in its behalf, as these appear in two of his treatises on the subject, the principal one of which is entitled, *The Glory of the God-Man Revealed*. It is, therefore, to be distinctly understood that the writer is not putting forth his own views at all. He is for the time putting himself in the place of Dr. Watts, and, though not in the language of that author, thinking his thoughts, and presenting them in the order and style which he would have employed had he written on this subject in modern times.

The theory is this, that the human nature of Christ was not coëval with his entrance into this world, but was pre-existent, having been created by God at some indefinitely remote period in the ages before the world began. Therefore the incarnation, in its literal sense alone, expresses all the change that took place at Christ's birth from the Virgin Mary. At that time the soul of Christ, already existent, and already united with the Deity, took on itself a real and proper body.

Thus the theory leaves untouched the question as to the actual time when Christ, as a man, began to exist. It may have been at, or just before, the creation of the world, or before the creation of the angels, so that he might be literally

“the first born of every creature;” or, Christ may have been eternally existent, created, like the decrees of God, from the eternal will of the Father. Nor does the theory presume to relate in any manner to those metaphysical questions as to the mode of the connection of this human soul with the Divine nature; but whatever the nature of this connection was, whether a concentricity of spiritual essence, or simply some mysterious union, it took place not at the incarnation, but at the moment of the creation of Christ's human soul, and it continued thus; and at the incarnation the united God and man's soul clothed itself in a fleshly body. Therefore, whatever was true of Christ's relations to God while on earth was true before in heaven.

To the theory, as thus limited, there can be no possible objection on the ground of its contrariety to orthodoxy. It does not stand in the way of any of the received doctrines of the church. The doctrine of the Trinity is in no way modified by it. Nothing which any of the different theories of the atonement demands as essential to it, and nothing which is even conjectured to be essential, is done away with by this theory. Moreover, there is nothing in this theory which requires any change in the feelings of the humblest Christian towards Christ. In no way does it make Christ a less sympathizing friend; in no way does it lessen the depth of his love for him, or prevent the closeness of union between Christ and himself. Christ is just as truly a human being; he may be conceived of as clearly as before, and the realization of the personal actuality is no less distinct than before.

Dr. Watts is by no means the only one who has held this theory. There are many celebrated English divines who, before the time of our author, both held, and vigorously maintained, these views. Among these we may notice the following: Dr. Henry More, in *The Mystery of Godliness*; Dr. Edward Fowler, Bishop of Gloucester; Robert Fleming, in his *Christology*; Joseph Hussey, in his *Glory-man*; Francis Gastrell, D.D., Bishop of Chester; Dr. Knight, in his controversy with Dr. Clark; Dr. Thomas Bennet, in his *Trinity* in

Unity; Dr. Thomas Burnet, of the Charter House; also Dr. Burnet, Rector of Westkington; and Dr. Knight, in his *Primitive Christianity Vindicated*. These are all names celebrated in the records of Christian theology, and they serve to show that this doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ is by no means the mere outgrowth of the fancy and speculations of a single man.

The theory presents itself in its best light when viewed as a hypothesis; not, therefore, so much demanding belief as being proved, but rather recommending itself on the grounds of the good it will accomplish if it be received, and its validity acknowledged. It does not, however, on this account, play a less important part in systematic theology, especially in the refutation of error; for it may do the work of hypotheses in general, which, though they accomplish nothing by positive creation of thought, yet they go pioneering through the matter, removing obstacles and difficulties which may be in the way of positive advances. While resting upon foundations apparently as light and unstable as the air, they have the mysterious power of resisting and nullifying the force of the most fatal objections that can be brought against the truth. They absorb objections, they disintegrate them, they annihilate them. Their mode of warfare may be compared to that of a certain island people who, to resist the attack of ships of war upon their town, made barricades by hanging up before it, on square frames, detached layers of silk cloth, so that the enemy's balls striking them were spent and made harmless by the sheer force of the yielding of these slight things. So a hypothesis can bring the strongest objection to a nonentity, and make it accomplish nothing by giving it nothing to do.

As a hypothesis then, this theory recommends itself on the ground of certain numerous and important advantages. When applied to scripture representations of Christ and his mission on earth, it removes a large class of difficulties encountered in the language and style of the Bible.

First may be noticed some logical incongruities in certain passages relating to the intercourse between Christ and the

Father. Such, for instance, are these: "God so loved the world that he *gave* his only-begotten Son," etc.; "Christ glorified not himself, but he that said unto him, thou art my Son," etc.; "I will give thee for a light to the Gentiles, to open blind eyes"; "I will hold thy hand"; "Then said I, Lo I come, I delight to do thy will, O God." In short, these passages, taken with others, suggest a scene in heaven wherein the great plan of redemption is laid; a *contract* in which there is a promise on the Father's part to support and uphold the Son in his hard task, and a promise on the Son's part to enter upon the work and perform it faithfully in accordance with the Father's will.

These passages suggest a classification, viz. of those relating to the *distinction* between Father and Son. According to all the theories of orthodox divines this distinction is not such a one as can ever assume a definite form to finite minds; it is wholly unreducible to any analogy in finite things. Least of all, then, is it a distinction of personalities. To say that the Father is one intellect and one will, and that the Son is another entirely distinct and complete intellect and will, would be to open the way for a never-ending train of errors in the human conceptions of Divinity. Yet in these passages, and in all others of the class which these represent, there is a clear implication of two distinct persons, in the strict and proper sense of the term.¹ What shall we do then? Here God is represented as actually holding conversation with some being. Now who is this being? It cannot be the Divine Son, for it is impossible to conceive the Divine and Infinite Father holding converse with or expressing ideas to the Divine and Infinite Son, who is himself, in all the essentials of his nature. In what manner is the difficulty settled by the orthodox divines? Of course all literalness must be at once rejected. *Figure* of style is the ground of explanations.

¹ "He [Dr. Bennet] takes it for a certain truth that our Lord Jesus had two intelligent natures in him united to his body; otherwise, if there be but one, he has proved that that cannot be the self-existent God, but pre-existent soul."—Review of Dr. Bennet's Trinity in Unity.

Some say this is a vivid portrayal of the action going on in the mind of God, of that which we might call the consideration of God; thus it is God holding converse with himself. But this is a very vague and unsatisfactory explanation and robs the passages of the value which their place and prominence seem to indicate as belonging to them. Intimating as these passages do that they involve an important element in the plan of redemption, they are yet devoid of sturdy significance if this interpretation be true. And if it were true, the idea thus obtained would be in marked contrast to the clearness and vividness of the language.¹

But others say God is speaking *anticipatorily*—speaking to the Christ who is to be, and making present the things of the future. “To an infinite mind,” say they, “whose laws of thought are unconditioned by time, this is an appropriate operation. It is the same to God to speak to and listen to a Christ in his decrees and ever before his eyes, as to the Christ of the future, who to God would be none the more real and none the more actually existent.” But if this were true, it would appear, when we consider the strength of the first impressions of their literalness derived from the vividness of style, and especially when we consider their logical relations, and the interdependence of these and other parts of the re-

¹ “That the soul of the Messiah was in being before he took upon him our flesh, the most easy and natural translation of 1 John iv. 2, etc. (properly translated, this passage would be), ‘He that confesses that Jesus is the Messiah come into the flesh, or into a terrestrial body, is of God,’ which implies that he was before he came into it, which is the doctrine of the Jews, and expressed so exactly according to their sense that themselves could not have uttered it more naturally and significantly, and therefore might they say it is unnatural and violent to put any other meaning upon it. . . . When speaking of his ascension, which was local, he (Christ) mentions also his descension, which it is most natural to understand in the same sense: ‘No man hath ascended up into heaven but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man, which is in heaven,’ i.e. whose mind and conversation is there, though his personal and visible presence be here on earth. To all which you may add, ‘What if you shall see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before?’” After quoting many passages like this, he says, “It had been very easy for the Fathers to have pleaded for the pre-existence and descent of the soul of the Messiah from heaven into an earthly body, from those passages of scripture which we have quoted.” — Dr. More’s *Mystery of Godliness*, p. 23.

demptive plan, it would appear to be the stretching of a trope which would be little short of a catachresis.

If, now, we return to the question, we ask, who is this second person—this other and distinct being to whom God speaks, and from whom he receives an answer? That it cannot be the Son in his divine nature alone is clearly evident, for that, as we have already seen, would contradict the essential ideas of all those opinions which are held as orthodox. Nor, on the commonly received theory of the birth of Christ, can it be the Son in his human nature, for no such human nature was then existent. Therefore no plain and clear ideas can be presented in accordance with the common scheme of doctrine. “I grant,” says Watts, “that, by the figure of communication of properties, what is true of one nature may be attributed to the whole person, or sometimes to the other nature, yet that which is not true concerning either nature of Christ separated, nor concerning the two natures united, cannot be attributed to him at all.”¹

If, now, at this juncture, we find a theory which, uncontaminated by any taint of heresy,—nowhere crossing either the teachings or intimations of scripture, but rather supported by certain suggestions of the same,—at the same time answers the question simply, directly, and satisfactorily, is it not philosophical to accept it? The theory of the pre-existing human soul of Christ does this. We have a being not himself infinite, yet so united to an infinite being as to be capable of receiving the high honors and of maintaining the great dignity of his exalted position as a party to this glorious conference with the Deity, and yet a different person, having a different intellect and will, which intellect could be enlightened, and which will could be persuaded, by the ideas put forth in this lofty converse. Historically considered, the other explanations have been such as to invite this to their stead. They have ever been unsatisfactory, because but half apprehended by the mind. They have been too metaphysical, and, though logically possible, yet their rhetorical unaptness

¹ Questions concerning the Son of God.—Question 3d, p. 449.

has been felt from time to time, and thus the question has been kept an open one. Therefore, though silencing, and perhaps convincing, they have carried with them no weight of conviction.

But if some think that they can hold the common theory of the Trinity, and yet conceive such a nature in the divine distinctions as will admit of a kind of intercourse which might be figured by a conversation, there is another difficulty appearing in these passages, which will still cling to any form in which this principle of interpretation may be applied.

In many of these passages there is implied in this second person *inferiority*. He is represented as obeying the will of the Father, as making his plans subordinate to those of the Father, and thus, in doing what he does, he is not actuated by motives proceeding forth from out his own independent nature, but from the will of another. Thus there is inferiority and insufficiency in himself, and a contingency of action, all of which cannot be reconciled with the conception of the Infinite, Self-existent, and Self-sufficient Divinity. If this being, then, was not the second person of the Trinity, in his divine nature, who was he? We can resort again to figure, and say it was the second person, and the inferiority was in his office, and not in his nature; or else it was God anticipating the human Christ yet to be created. But how simple and easy the explanation, if we suppose that the human Christ was there, and, united to the divine second person, was receiving these commands, was yielding his will to the Father's, and was promising that when the time should come he would set forth to fulfil the divine commission, and devote himself to the saving of a lost and ruined world.

But again, these passages imply in this second person *mutability*. He is represented as changing his place of abode. He is now with the Father; but he is soon going to separate himself from him. He is now in heaven, but he is shortly to leave heaven, and come down to earth and dwell there. This difficulty is even less easy to remove than the other, by means of the various afore-mentioned hypotheses. In what

sense can the Divine Son be said to be with the Father at one time, and not with him at another? How can he who is all in all, and who filleth all things, be said to be on earth at one time more than another, and how can it be possible that the Infinite God should at any time be out of heaven? But he is represented as *losing* something by thus changing his place of existence. He loses the pleasures of heaven, and the glories which in heaven were given him. But how can an infinite, unchangeable being suffer loss? What is there which he could not always know, and thus from this knowledge receive always the same blissful emotions? When could the angels of heaven, and for what reason could they, see any less in the unchanging God to praise and glorify? But if we believe that Christ was there, and his human soul was separated from the Father, that he came down from out of heaven to earth, and thus, for the time, held a lower place, then the language is clear, the ideas are simple, and the passages become again a part of the teachings of scripture.¹

As has been said before, this, like the others, may be explained by certain ingenuities of interpretation, which modify themselves according to the needs of each particular, but taken all together, with their numerous phases of difficulty and shades of incongruity, that theory which in a word explains them all must certainly be sufficient to satisfy a mind which, laying aside the prejudices arising from the fact of its novelty, is willing to discern its simplicity, its harmlessness, and its fitness of application. Indeed, it is easy to apprehend that it is its novelty which would be the latent cause of the greatest objections to it in the minds of men; for it is no new mystery of Biblical fact; the essential idea contained in it is

¹ "Does he [Dr. Bennet] not tell us that the *Man* Christ Jesus was the first-born of all the creation, (1) because his soul was created before all other creatures; (2) because he is now in possession of the *jus primogeniti* which the divine nature is incapable of receiving, being the governor of all created beings, and God's vicegerent, and that the whole creation is at his command? These things, he says, 'must, or fairly may, be understood of his human nature only,' with many more such high characters of the man or human soul of Christ."—Review of Dr. Bennet's *Trinity in Unity*.

not an addition to the Biblical statement; it requires no greater degree of faith to believe it; it is not outside of the commonly received views of the Christian church. All hold that Christ was born, that the scripture says that his soul was created, but the common belief that he was created at the birth of his body, is not founded on anything in scripture. It is only the *time when* this event took place that is in question, and this, on either side, can be but the result of conjecture.

This objection, then, is one of prejudice only, and one which calm reason should lay aside when it sees anything of merit in the theory itself. But men will be tempted to say of it what the steerer on a canal-boat said when he was asked why they did not put the helm in the bow of the boat, so that it would be easier to see the course. "If that plan had been good for anything," replied he, "somebody would have thought of it before;" a plausible answer it is true, but one which applied as a principle in scientific research would have made sad work with the world's progress.

The arguments contained in the preceding may be thus briefly summed up. The scriptures tell us that that soul was created. The scriptures speak of Christ as existing in heaven before his incarnation, and before the creation of the world; but they speak of him as an inferior being, and so possessed of finite attributes as to lead us to reject the idea that the Deity alone is referred to; therefore the most natural thing for the mind to do is to believe that Christ, in his human nature, is here spoken of, which is a theory so clearly within the bounds of probability, that no one can object to it, and so natural that, had it been held by the early church, no one would ever have thought of questioning it. Indeed, so clear are the biblical representations on this point, that in early times Arianism was resorted to in order to get rid of the plain consequences of these teachings. It founded itself upon these passages; and said that Christ was in heaven a superior being, super-angelic in his nature, and at the incarnation this being became the historical Christ, or was in some

way united to the human being who was known by that name. Now all in Arianism that is philosophical, as being the logical outgrowth of biblical thought, is a proof of the theory of the pre-existent human soul of Christ ; for certainly it is far from philosophical to suppose and needlessly multiply strange and sporadic existences, and unique and unheard of forms of being. Therefore the other alternative remains, viz. to suppose the real human nature of our Christ to be the one referred to in all these passages.

Indeed, by holding this theory, great advantage is gained in controversy over the Arians and Socinians ; for we thereby disarm them of all that class of objections to the Divinity of Christ which are founded on those passages that seem to be unworthy and debasing representations of the Deity ; for we thus suppose a union of being who in himself answers to all the ascriptions both of the infinite and finite attributes.¹

Another advantage of this theory, and another way in which it recommends itself to acceptance, is that, when applied to scripture, it adds a depth and fulness of meaning, or rather allows to remain that depth and fulness of meaning which the simple language seems to possess, but of which any other interpretation than this entirely robs it. The application of this theory elevates biblical language, and makes many passages which are otherwise, some contradictory, some obscure, some tame, gifted with a pregnancy of suggestive ideas, and teeming with rich thought. This it does in several ways.

¹ It is to be regretted that here the author did not take up and answer an objection which might easily be urged against this last argument, viz. that in admitting the theory that the human nature of Christ was something more than an earth-born man, we are forced to relinquish several of the proofs of his Divinity ; for many of those attributes and actions recorded of Christ in the Bible, which were too lofty to be referred to a mere man, and were therefore proofs of the Divinity, can, according to this theory, without difficulty be referred to this super-angelic being, the pre-existent Christ. Dr. Watts would probably have been forced to admit this objection, in part ; and he might have answered it, in part, by showing that the advantages in the Arian controversy, which have been already mentioned, were more than these disadvantages — which he could easily have done.

1. It adds *beauty* to these passages.

There are many portions of scripture which, interpreted by this principle, not only reveal an attractive symmetry, but clothe themselves in a new and rich lustre, which transforms them from the dead letter of mysteries to beautiful and glowing realities. Such passages are these: In Gen. i. 27 we are told that humanity was created in the image of God: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." It has always been a question as to how much this passage really contains. Of what kind, and to what extent, was the likeness of Divinity in man? And so difficult of comprehension was the idea, and so objectionable did every definite and detailed form of comparison appear to many, that they have denied that the passage had any meaning which could be grasped by finite minds. At best, this passage and all those which quote it or refer to it throughout the whole Bible are darkly indefinite; they are abstruse, and can claim a place only in the metaphysics of scripture. But, if we believe that the human being Christ was there and then existent, and that it was he, in his union with the Godhead, that spoke those remarkable words, how beautifully suggestive is the thought! How appropriate that this wonderful being, created according to the divine, and therefore perfect plan,—that this wonderful being, created away back in the ante-mundane ages, literally the "first born of every creature," through all these ages contemplated by the Divinity with approval, the perfect, living, continuous expression and manifestation of God's ideal and of his creative skill,—how appropriate that, when a race of beings was to be formed, this wondrous being should be the chosen model; that in all respects they should be like him; his immortality their immortality, his intellect their intellect; that that marvellous complex of powers, of reasoning, of sensibilities, of emotions and feelings, and all those things which made him what he was, should be reproduced, all in all in man; and thus, stamped with this type of known and tried perfection, man should be that wonderful being, a soul.

How beautifully does this thought suggest why Christ was the one chosen to be the guide and ruler of this race! How plainly do we see why Christ was the one to come down to earth to bear the sins of the race, and in himself to be the substitute of those whose primal glory of being had been lost. Viewed in this light, how beautifully appropriate is his title "the Second Adam." Is not a simple supposition which thus clothes the skeleton of an attenuated metaphysical conjecture with the flesh and blood of a reality worthy of the acceptance which it claims?

Again, those passages which represent God as evincing the feelings of men, — as when he is said to grieve, repent, and be angry, to come from heaven to earth, to walk among men, to talk to them, — we call all these figures of speech, and confess a letting down of language and thought in order to accommodate to the weaknesses and deficiencies of finite comprehension. But we give beauty to this language, if we suppose it was indeed a man who did all this, that we are thus able to trace our Christ through all these ages back of his earthly history, and see the same actions, thoughts, and feelings which he displayed to the later Jews even then characterizing him, and themselves recognizable to the human consciousness as the characteristics of a human nature. What a plain instance of association would it be to recognize through this similarity of principle that wonderful character of Old Testament mystery in him who said, "Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites." Dr. Owen, in his *Meditation on the Glory of Christ*, says: "It had been absurd to bring in God under perpetual anthropopathies, as grieving, repenting, being angry, well-pleased, and the like, were it not but that the Divine Person intended was to take on him a nature wherein such affections do dwell."¹

There is one more class of passages which it will be well to mention, as displaying remarkable beauty when interpreted according to this. They are those wherein Jehovah is called the King of Israel. He is there represented as taking

¹ Quoted by Watts in *Glory of God-man Revealed*, p. 616.

upon himself the political government of this peculiar people ; and we learn why the Messiah had also that title given him, "the King of the Jews," when we consider the pre-existent soul of the Messiah personally united to the Divine nature. It is clearly evident that Jehovah was King of the Jews in their peculiarly narrow and local limitation, for the Jews are reproved by Samuel for desiring another king besides God. He is often called, in the Psalms and the prophets, the Redeemer of Jacob and their King, the Holy One of Israel and his King ;¹ and, what seems still stronger, several of the Old Testament passages referring to the kingship of Jehovah are quoted by the writers of the New Testament as if they had referred specifically to Christ. Now, what a grandly beautiful thought, if we can believe that this pre-existent human being was delegated by God to take upon himself the rule and guidance of his chosen people ; that his special work through the ages should be to care for and protect and guide and safely lead that particular nation of which he himself was by-and-by to be one, and by his special influence and by his frequent personal presence to prepare them for his own advent among them whom he was coming to redeem. If, as every one believes, Christ was created for the special purpose of the atonement, and the Jewish nation was chosen and fitted for the first and direct reception and carrying out of this great plan, what a charm of appropriateness that his existence previous to this event should still be with them and for them, thus fitting each to each in anticipation of the future. In this we find a "just and meritorious foundation laid for his exaltation to a greater and more extensive kingdom, even to be raised to the government of all churches and all nations. He was King of the Jews for many ages before he came in the flesh, and when he rose from the dead he became 'King of the Gentiles and Lord of all things in heaven and earth,' as a reward for his sufferings."

The probability of this idea is farther suggested by those mysterious passages in the Bible, which seem to intimate that

¹ *Glory of God-man Displayed*, p. 619.

the different nations were under the direct control of individual inferior beings—the intervening agency of good and evil angels. Indeed, many commentators hold that the Bible teaches that the heathen nations were judicially abandoned of God to the bondage and slavery of infernal jurisdiction. The heathen nations are said to sacrifice to devils, and to choose devils for their gods; Beelzebub is known as the god of Ekron, and he is called the “prince of the devils.” Those princes of the power of the air, to whom Paul says the heathen nations were in bondage, are the ones known by the different names given by the heathen to their idol-gods. Satan is called the god of this world, and the prince of this world. What, otherwise, can be the meaning of the passage in Daniel, where the princes of Persia and Greece are evil angels opposed to the good angels who spoke to Daniel? And when we see that the good angel Michael helped Gabriel who was fighting with those evil princes who would prevent his coming to aid the Jews in captivity, may we not suppose that this was even he, the Christ of God, the King of his own chosen people, doing battle with the prince of darkness in behalf of the nation whom he lived for and whom he loved? All this is but a suggested thought, it cannot found itself upon incontrovertible proof; but this much is true that could we believe that Christ thus did live, and that he thus did guard and guide his people, then those mysterious passages would, like the many others, be full of beauty.

2. It adds *dignity* to these passages.

Especially is this true in reference to the Old Testament theophanies. One reading these descriptions of the appearances of Jehovah to the patriarchs and prophets, is always hampered in his understanding of them, by the incongruities of the events in the narrative as connected with the acts of the Deity. The insignificance of the occasions on which he appeared to men, his familiarity with men and their familiarity with him, the appropriations of finite conditions and contingencies, all seem to be inconsistent with the conception of those things that are worthy of Divinity; they appear to

be undignified, and they shock the taste when thought of as taken part in by the Infinite, Unchangeable God. In the description of the young men thrown into the flames, does there not seem a lack of fitness that the Great, Eternal Divinity himself should come down and walk back and forth with them in the fiery furnace? In the description of the angel which God was to send before the Israelites in the wilderness, how strangely inappropriate is the language, if we apply it to God, "Behold I send my messenger before thee to keep thee in the way, etc., Obey his voice, provoke him not, for he will not pardon your transgressions, for my name is in him." Here is a messenger, one holding an inferior office and doing a subordinate work, and yet that it is God there can be no doubt, for he can pardon sins,—which God alone can do. How much better to refer that to the human soul of Christ, united with God, and doing the work of God's messenger to his people.

In other passages this inconsistency with dignity is even more apparent. Does it not seem more congruous that a human soul should actuate that human body which ate and drank with Abraham under a tree, and should actuate those human limbs when a man wrestled with Jacob? Is it not beneath the grandeur, decency, and dignity of the Supreme Majesty of heaven to supply the place of such a human soul for the purposes or actions of animal nature; and that the great and Eternal God himself, in an immediate manner, should converse in so human and familiar a way as this angel did with several of the patriarchs? That the glorious and Almighty Godhead should itself animate a visible body to visit Abraham, and tarry with him some hours under a tree, while his wife made cakes and dressed the flesh of a calf for God to eat? That the Eternal God animating a body should eat of the calf, which was dressed with milk and butter? Doth this suit with the supreme glory and dignity of Eternal Godhead and pure Divinity? Doth it not seem more agreeable that God should do all this through the intervention of a human soul, appearing in a visible shape,

than that the infinite majesty of God should immediately abase itself in such a manner? ¹

3. It adds *intensity*.

By this theory the meaning of many passages which refer to Christ and his relations to God is greatly intensified. It is an old principle which holds in the interpretation of scripture, that that sense of it which puts the most into a passage, which makes the passage strongest and most weighty, has, in so far as it does this, an evidence of its truth. In all those places of scripture where the self-denial and humiliation of Christ are spoken of we find this to be true. All these passages have a meaning, it is true, if applied to our Saviour when on earth. It is true that during this life on earth he did suffer much; he did forego many of the pleasures and all the luxuries of life; he did suffer many things that were shameful when done even to a common man; he did endure very many things which were hard to endure, and the language of the Bible on this subject is not too strong to express those sufferings and deprivations which were so great even when compared with the lot of ordinary men; but oh, how manifold greater is the depth of meaning in every single word of scripture, if it be true that Christ was suffering all these after having come down from his home in heaven! To realize the degree of this humiliation, contrast the two beings and their two conditions — Christ in heaven and Christ on earth. See him in heaven, his dwelling place, in the bosom of the Father: there he was sheltered from all that could do him harm; there he was far beyond the reach of all that was rude and distasteful to his refined sensibilities; nothing could come then to mar the harmony of the parts of his perfected being, or disturb the serenity of his blissful existence. There he had legions of angels to serve him at his beckoning; there he had the great armies of heaven to do his bidding; there the glorious hosts of heaven sang his praises; there he was united to God, sharing his glory and honor and majesty. Look at him now on earth: he walks among men; he is not

¹ *Glory of God-man Displayed*, p. 596.

distinguished from them ; he is as a worm of the dust ; he is despised by his fellows ; he is forsaken by them ; he is left alone to bear the poverty and weariness of an outcast from mankind ; to bear the jeers and the scornings of the proud and the selfish and the sinful. Loaded down with sorrows ; overborne with anguish ; forsaken of men and abandoned of God, he dies on the scaffold, a sacrifice to public justice and a name of contempt to the people. Think of that mighty intellect, trained and enlightened by ages upon ages of experience and knowledge ; a life which was lived in the continuous brightness and effulgence of the Father's presence ; think of that glorious intellect, itself one with God, thrilled by the consciousness of the divinity in it ; think of it leaving heaven, submitting to be dwarfed into the mind of an infant, its sight darkened, its mighty powers dwindled to that ; think of it taking to itself the weak brain of an infant, clothing itself in its puny limbs, and uttering its wants in a feeble cry. Truly this was humiliation indeed. And yet, is not this scene of his birth the key-note of the whole life of the man who began it in the manger of a stable and ended it in the sepulchre of a stranger ? See this glorious King of the nations laying aside his crown, and, ignored by his own subjects, living among the poorest of them, undergoing hardships, hunger, thirst, weariness, and want. See that being to whom those wonderful words were spoken, that to him was given to have life in himself, even as the Father hath life in himself, who was, therefore, subject to no law but the law of his own glorious nature ; see him not only put under the law of God, but under that law as made for sinners, with penalties and hard threatenings, and brought under the very curse of that law. Mark him as he pursues his course through life, walking through the path laid out for him, that path ever thickening with trouble and danger as he proceeds along it, foes gathering nearer and nearer on the borders of that path, and that path leading straight to the cross. Mark him as he suffers in his afflicted soul the great horror while he views the approach of those final agonies, till the sweat drops

from off him to the ground, as it were great drops of blood. See him, to whom untold myriads of angels were wont to bow down, stripped of his garments, arrayed in the mocking purple, blindfolded, buffeted, spit upon, then bending under the load of the ponderous cross, then nailed upon it, hanging there in agony, his ear assailed by the derisive shouts of the rabble, and the curses flung in his teeth by the tortured thieves hanging by his side, till with that dreadful cry, "My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me," he dies; and the dead body is pierced by the spear of the Roman soldiery, and stark and cold it is given away to its burial. Truly this was humiliation, this was self-sacrifice. But when we contemplate him in heaven, foreknowing all the sorrows and all the woes of this life, that he should still choose it, and willingly decide to enter upon it, then we realize for the first time the extent and fulness of meaning in the Bible language which tells us of it.

But there is a certain class of passages which seem from their style and diction to be intense expressions of thought, yet unless interpreted by this theory, are, when closely studied, not only seen to be without depth of meaning, but even appear objectionable in some of their aspects. It is of those which refer to the plan of redemption as laid in heaven before the creation of the world. They speak of the request on the part of the Father, and the promise to fulfill that request on the part of the Son. They speak also of the exceeding great love of the Father to the Son, and that of the Son to the Father. But how hard it is to conceive of a love to a being who was divine only, and thus was the same consciousness and will as the Father. What kind of love, therefore, was that which grieved at the parting from him of one who, by his very nature, could not in any true sense part from him? How vague and indefinite, and hence how practically useless to us, are all such ideas of love. The same is true of the love of the Son to the Father. But when we come to consider the love of the Son to the world, as displayed in his yielding his consent to suffer, we come to much greater difficulties; for, in

the first place, how was any such display possible? Who was it that gave his consent in this great contract in heaven? Was it the Divine Son? But the Divine part of the God-man was not the part that suffered, for it is impossible that Divinity should suffer, or in any way or by any means depart from its perfect and infinite bliss. Was it then the human part of Christ? But there was at that time no human part, and it could only promise in a figurative way — by prolepsis; and what an evil it is here to be obliged to contemplate this in so uncertain a way, and, worse than all, how unfortunate to be obliged to feel that all this vivid and glowing description of the appeal and the response, was but the decree of God, that the man whom he should by-and-by create, was destined to suffer these things. For, after all, the being who really did suffer, and on whom alone the great weight of woe did fall, was not there to give his consent to it. Where, then, was room for the manifestation of great and condescending love, in doing that which he never consented to do, but only entered into a kind of passive obedience when he at last discovered what his destiny was? Indeed, these objections are so manifest and so unconsciously influential upon the minds of men, that it is a noteworthy fact that almost all the eminent preachers, yielding to these inevitable impressions which the scripture language has made upon them, have, in their descriptions of Christ, employed the very language which they would have employed had they believed that Christ, in his human nature, had lived in heaven before his incarnation. There are innumerable instances of this in published sermons, where Christ is spoken of as talking with the Father, arranging plans according to his future purposes, described as a human being, with the thoughts and feelings and longing desires of a human being, with a love of happiness and a dread of impending misery, of leaving the protection of God, and going alone and unprotected to the work before him. In representing all this, these writers usually describe it in such language as can never agree to his divine nature in any propriety of speech, but only to the pre-existent soul of Christ?

and it is evident that the scripture itself leads them plainly into such a representation of things, as that, while they are explaining the transcendent degree of the love of God and Christ to sinners, according to scripture, they are led by the force of the truth into such expressions as are indeed hardly consistent with their own pronounced opinions.¹

Indeed, the scripture language seems to have originated among the Jews the idea that the Messiah was a human soul living in heaven. The Targums allude to it, and in several of the other old books of the Jews are the records of tra-

¹ This fact in the writings of these divines our author regards a very important proof of the doctrine. He has quoted the following from the sermons of John Flavel, as showing how plainly they teach what the natural biblical impressions are. In describing the glorious condition of the non-incarnate Son he says: "He was never pinched with poverty and wants while he continued in the bosom of that Father, as he was afterwards. Ah, blessed Jesus! thou needest not to have wanted a place for thy head, hadst thou not left that bosom for my sake." "He was in the bosom of the Father, and had the most intimate, close, and sweet delight and love from the Father. How unspeakable is it that he should deprive himself of it, to put himself, as it were, out of heaven into hell."

He then draws these inferences: "I. What an astonishing act of love for the Father to give the delight, the darling of his soul, for poor sinners. Never did any child lie so close to a parent's heart as Christ did to his Father's, and yet he willingly parts with him to death, a cursed death, for the worst of sinners. II. Adore, and be forever astonished at the love of Jesus Christ to poor sinners that ever he should consent to leave such a bosom, and the ineffable delights that are there, for such poor worms as we."

Again, in speaking of the covenant of redemption: "Consider the persons transacting and dealing with each other in this covenant. They are God the Father and God the Son; the former as creditor, the latter as surety. The Father stands upon satisfaction; the Son engages to give it. Consider the quality of this transaction. It was federal, or in the nature of a covenant. It was by mutual engagements and stipulations; each person undertaking to perform his part to our recovery. Consider the articles to which they both agree. God the Father promises to invest him with a threefold office, viz. Prophet, Priest, and King. In like manner, Christ restipulates, and gives his engagement to the Father that he will be content to be made flesh, to divest himself of his glory, and to come under the obedience and the maledictions of the law, and not to refuse any, not even the hardest, sufferings it should please the Father to inflict on him. . . . These articles were by both parties performed punctually and precisely. . . . This compact between the Father and the Son bears date from eternity, before the world was made, while as yet we had no existence. . . . God the Father and God the Son do mutually rely and trust to one another in the business of our redemption."

ditions relating to this idea. True it is that these books show by their contents that the ancient Jews were possessed of all sorts of vague and fanciful ideas and of absurd and visionary beliefs, so that their opinions on questions of this kind are of little weight. Still, the fact is a valuable one, as showing what view the unconscious influence of biblical language gave rise to in their minds.¹

There is evidence, also, that among the early church Fathers the same tendency wrought effect in some of their minds, and that they held an idea similar to this. Origen seems to imply this belief, when he says: "Perhaps the soul of the Son in its perfection was in God and his fulness, and, coming out thence when he was sent by the Father, took a body of man." And again, remarking upon the words of John the Baptist, "After me cometh a man which is preferred before me, for he was before me," he says this was spoken of Christ "that we may learn that the man (or manhood) also of the Son of God, mixed with his divinity, had a prior subsistence to his birth of the Virgin."²

Further, the degree of acceptance which this theory has obtained in modern times is thus spoken of by Bishop Fowler, in his "Mystery of Godliness:—" "It has been embraced by many of our greatest divines, as valuable men as our church

¹ Here is a passage from "Peskite," an eminent book of the Jews: "After God had created the world, he put his hand upon the throne of his glory, and brought out the soul of the Messiah, with all his attendants, and said unto him: 'Wilt thou heal and redeem my sons, after six thousand years?' He answered: 'I am willing so to do.' Again, therefore, God said unto him: 'And art thou willing to suffer chastisements for the purging away their iniquities?' and the soul of the Messiah answered: 'I will suffer them, and that with all my heart.'" Dr. Burnet says: "The Jews, and some among the Christian Fathers, have determined that the soul of the Messiah had an existence before the incarnation, and before the very origin of the Jewish nation; before the law and through the whole economy of the law and the prophets." In another old book, held in much esteem by the ancient Jews, called the "Midrash Conen," it is written: "In the fifth house sits the Messiah, Son of David; and Elias, of blessed memory, said to this Messiah: 'Bear the stroke and judgment of the Lord, which he inflicts on thee for the sin of Israel, as it is written by Isaiah, "He was wounded for our transgressions, etc."'"

² Quoted by Watts, in "Glory of God-man Revealed," p. 646.

can boast of, though most of them have been too sparing in owning it, for fear, I suppose, of having their orthodoxy questioned.”¹

But this theory does more than elevate scripture language ; it adds *grandeur* to the character of Christ. It is another well-known principle of biblical interpretation, that we ought to choose those meanings which will in a rational way “aggrandize the glory and dignity of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom we can never have too high an esteem, so long as we keep within the bounds of scripture.” What new ideas are given us of the glory of the character of the incarnate Christ, if we conceive him to be the cultured and experienced intellect of a dweller in heaven, dwarfed, it is true, for a little in the mind and body of an infant, yet soon developing itself, and struggling forth from its narrow bounds into the full grandeur of its pristine strength, full rounded and enlarged as it had been by its ages upon ages of a life in heaven, in the presence of Divinity and in inseparable union with him ; at twelve years of age arguing with the learned doctors and scribes ; later in life astonishing the lawyers and scholars, who said : Whence hath this man these things, having never learned his letters ? No wonder that this heaven-born soul should awe men in his presence, and cause them to cry out, “Never man spake like this man.” Think of this glorious being, taught of God, the angels for his companions, who was present at the creation of the world, who was familiar with the handiwork of God ! How appropriate that

¹ Dr. Fowler further says : “ There is no Christian doctrine more clearly delivered than this, and even immediately by our Saviour himself, and often repeated by him ; and there is not more plain and undeniable evidence for any one article of faith than there is for this doctrine. And this is the sense in which the disciples of our Lord most certainly understood his declaration.” Our author hesitates to be so bold as this ; but declares himself as heartily endorsing the following : “ Our Saviour never said a syllable which so much as seems to contradict the plain, natural, literal sense of the words by which he chose to express this doctrine ; and it is worthy of our observation, that there is no one text in the Bible, that I know of, whose plain and natural sense so much as seems to thwart the plain sense of those scriptures which I have adduced to support it ; and what controverted point is there in religion of which we can say the like ? ” — Quoted by Watts in *Glory of God-man Revealed*, p. 647.

he whose mind surpassed the united wisdom of the whole world should take upon him the task of atoning for the sins of the whole world! He was able to do it; he had the worth of being necessary to do it, for he was "worth ten thousand of us," as the people said to David. And, humble Christian, do not dread this exaltation of your Saviour, nor fear that he will be any less dear, or dwell any less near to you; for, although he is this wonderful being, he is still a human being. What if his heart is so large? It can love you with a larger love. What though his powers are so mighty, and his wisdom so far-reaching? He is your kingly friend, but he is none the less your friend. He did come down from heaven, but now on earth he draws none the less nearer to you. He knows your heart; he who was present when the skilful workmanship fashioned its delicate parts, shall not he know when those parts are broken? Shall not his quickened ear all the sooner hear the discord — the harsh jarring of its broken strings? All the majesty and power and greatness of your friend does but increase the worth of his friendship. And what if he did live in heaven thousands of years before he came to earth to be your friend, was he not even then your friend, and was he not even then preparing for you those blessed mansions in the heavens? Truly, he is worthy of the best gifts of your love, and of your life-long devotion to his service.

Lastly, this theory gives *perspicuity* to the scriptures. It does for them what Julius Müller claims for the theory contained in his Christian Doctrine of Sin — it makes them *anschaulich*. The words of scripture have a meaning, and this meaning is discovered at the first approach.¹ Plain, simple, and clear are the qualities of the language; and is not this in accordance with our *a priori* conception of what

¹ "He [Christ] being, happily, before the generation of men and the peopling of the earth, the Messiah elect, as I may so speak. United also with the Logos, and resplendent with celestial glory and beauty amongst the angels of heaven, this hypothesis will give a very easy and natural sense to sundry places of the New Testament that otherwise seem very obscure." — Dr. More's *Mystery of Godliness*.

the Bible should be? Should we not expect that a revelation from God to his people would be such as to be intelligible to his people—that the term “love” in the Bible should mean just what it means when men use it—that when promises are made in scripture, they should be such in their nature and relations as when one man makes a promise to another? This unforced, straightforward significance of language is in happy contrast with the strained meaning of words and phrases, the figures of prolepsis, and the uncertain strength of terms which have not only always mystified the comprehension, and baffled all attempts of the mind to grasp them, but have given grounds for unceasing controversies and for innumerable objections from the Arians and Socinians. These could find throughout the Bible contradictory ideas, impossible combinations, and difficulties of many kinds, to which it was impossible to give any satisfactory answer. But this one simple supposition (which is not opposed, but rather suggested, by scripture) does away with all this; it unravels every tangle of incongruities, by making a being glorious enough through its union with God to answer to the highest description of greatness and excellence, yet so far inferior to the Deity as to avoid any inference which would follow as inconsistent with a proper conception of Deity and degrading to it.

Does not this clearness of scripture language, and this ready entrance of it into the understanding, tend to strengthen the belief of the Christian in the Bible? For when a thought sits in a clear light in the mind, the belief of it is far easier than when it is only half seen and half realized. Faith is always stronger in proportion as it has a hold upon the reason. We cannot believe what we do not know; no more can we believe, with our whole heart, what we only half understand. Indeed, viewed in this relation, this theory, as a hypothesis, has a value wholly independent of any positive evidence, whether that evidence amounts to a proof, or only brings the idea into the realm of probability. Touching the matter of the Trinity, we may say that its philosophy has

ever been open to the attacks of many and serious objections from the Arians and Socinians. It says that there is but one God, and yet that there are distinctions in the Godhead. But the objector to the Trinity demands: "Tell us what kind of distinctions those are which admit of conversation between them, of separating the one from the other, of inferiority, and yet are numerically and identically the same consciousness and will." If orthodoxy declines to answer this, and is content to acknowledge it a mystery, the Socinian will not leave it thus, but says: "Tell me, then, how it is possible, in the nature of the case, that there should be such distinctions having these contrary qualities." He claims, therefore, that it is more than a mystery, it is a contradiction. If to meet this difficulty we make the first attempt at an explanation, by defining these distinctions, we fall into greater trouble, for every term we use has its figure misinterpreted, and false ideas and narrow conceptions are the consequence, and the final result is inevitably one of two things: either the denial of any distinctions, whatever, or else strict, philosophical dualism. But when we say that *perhaps* the soul of Christ was in heaven, then, immediately we have that necessary second being, with whom is the conversation, from whom is the separation, and in whom resides the inferiority. Thus the explanation of the Trinity may remain wholly untouched. The distinctions or moments of the Godhead we may affirm, and refer to scripture authority. We may admit frankly that it is a mystery, an unfathomable mystery, and there the matter may rest; for by introducing this as a hypothesis we have done that which has placed the doctrine of the Trinity beyond the reach of all attacks on the ground of self contradiction or any other objection. In this case we need not attempt to support the hypothesis by argument, we need not say, even, that it has a great degree of probability. When met by the objector there is one answer which is sufficient for all his objections, viz. "You do not know but that Christ in his humanity was there."¹

¹ It will be very natural here to ask whether the Bible language concerning

Such, then, are some of the advantages of this theory, on the ground of which it presents its claims to acceptance. There are, however, some considerations which, at a casual view, seem to render the theory objectionable, but they are none of them weighty and are easily removed. The following are some of them :

“ Christ is spoken of in the Bible as a man ; but this glorious being with such extensive powers is something above a human soul — it is far above angels ; therefore, even if it be united to a human body, it will not be a man.” To this it may be replied that a man is a finite being, possessing the qualities of a person, i.e. intellect, sensibilities, and will, and which is so constituted as to be able to perform its normal functions through the agency of a human body. With such a definition in view, it is not a difference in degree, but only one in kind that can make him other than a man. The power of the human soul of Christ may be exalted above that of any man on earth, but this in no sense destroys his humanity, for the greatest intellect on earth is no more truly a man than is an idiot. So Christ may still be a human soul, though his excellence far transcend that of the souls of all other men.

It may be answered, again, that the Bible represents the present powers of Christ's human nature to be far above that of men and angels, so that were there any real difficulties in the former case, these difficulties would remain in this. Furthermore we believe that the souls of all Christians will

the Holy Spirit, his office, and his acts, is not open to the same objections which our author claims as existing in these passages when interpreted according to the common theories of Christology. There can be no doubt that this difficulty really exists, and it is to be wondered at that it did not occur to the writers who hold this theory. Indeed, it is more than probable that it did present itself to some of them ; in which case they would have seen no objection to supposing that the Third Person of the Trinity united himself to some inferior being, — some angel or archangel, — and through his agency performed the works recorded of him in scripture. Such a supposition is not unphilosophical, and it would have for its support the same arguments as our author's theory of Christ. At least, it is logically possible, and thus far has all that is needful to make it serve, in the capacity of a hypothesis, for the defence of the doctrine of the Trinity by removing the various objections.

go on through eternity, increasing in power, and attaining to degrees of excellence much beyond our present power of conception. We must remember, also, that Christ, when on earth, manifested powers as great as those which this theory claims for him; we, therefore, do not know how or when to limit the capacities of human nature, when that nature is freed from its earthly body.

Again, it may be said, "It is difficult to see how this glorious being could lose all his powers of mind, its vast treasury of ideas, and extensive thought, and become only the minute intellect of an infant." This difficulty is solved by a reference to that acknowledged mystery of the connection between mind and body, by which the mind is limited in the manifestation of its powers according to the kind of body, or the condition of the body, in which it dwells. It is a well-known fact, that though the mind be never so rich in the possession of great and varied excellences, yet they may entirely fail to appear when the organs of the body are not in their normal condition. The greatest scholars have been known to lose through disease the use of their minds, and apparently become idiots; and yet when they recovered from this disease, the mind again put forth its powers in all their former splendor. Therefore, it is easily conceivable how the glorious soul of Christ could become dormant, and lose itself and forget its former powers, and when it did begin to assert itself, how it would be constantly baffled by the confusion of the inevitable commingling of its own ideas with the crude and imperfect emanations of an infant's brain. This explanation seems to be suggested by the scripture accounts of his childhood and youth, which show that he attained the power of his mind much more rapidly than ordinary children do.¹

¹ Our author illustrates this in the following beautiful simile: "Suppose an organist of exquisite skill in music should have all the pipes of his instrument filled with mud; he could neither excite with his hand nor receive with his ear any of those rich varieties of sound which belong to the organ, until, by degrees, the bellows and organ were cleansed; and thus, by degrees, he would form and hear broken pieces of tunes, until, the muddy obstacle being quite removed, the grateful harmony will be recovered, and the former skill of the organist appear."

Again, it is objected that the Bible teaches that Christ was exalted to heaven and to heavenly powers, after his resurrection, as a reward for his obedience and suffering; but if this was only a restoration of his former powers, it was no true and proper reward. To this it may be replied, that Christ's condition in heaven after his resurrection differed from that before his incarnation, inasmuch as that now he has a human body, and his soul, dwelling in that body, has all the additional sources of happiness and enjoyment which come through the bodily senses. This addition may be much greater than we suspect, for we are not able to estimate the sources of happiness which a glorified body may contain. The joy of the saints in heaven is not to be perfected till they receive their resurrection bodies, and so, in a larger sense, was this probably true of Christ.

Lastly, it may be urged, "Could this doctrine be true, and yet the disciples know nothing of it during his lifetime on earth?"

The answer to this is, that being Jews they may have held the ancient Jewish idea already alluded to, viz. that the soul of the Messiah was created at the beginning of the world. Or, as many suppose, they held the view that all human souls were pre-existent, then in either case we should not have expected them to give prominence to this fact concerning Christ.

But again, during the lifetime of Christ, the disciples were ignorant of many other important facts concerning their Lord. Some have attempted to show, and that too with a great deal of plausibility, that during the lifetime of Christ the disciples were not even aware of his Divinity. But, as has been already intimated, some of the later and more thoughtful writers, like Paul and John, seem to express a belief in his pre-existence.¹

¹ It may be urged, again, that the Bible makes the impression that Christ at the incarnation *became a man*. Our author could easily reply to this, by saying that (1) he did become a man by entering into the *condition* of all other men. 'This soul was in heaven before; now it became a man, by living where men live, suffering what men suffer, being subject to the circumstances which con-

This, then, is the theory, and these are the excellences by virtue of which it claims acceptance. The whole may be briefly summed up thus. The supposition that Christ, as a human soul, lived in heaven previous to his incarnation, is one which is perfectly harmless in its nature, is nowhere contradicted in the scriptures, and one against which no valid objection can be brought. While on the one hand it is thus free from objections, it on the other hand rids many passages in the word of God from important logical difficulties. But besides removing from them that which rendered them prejudicial to the reason, it adds dignity to them, and thus makes their representations consistent with proper ideas and conceptions of the Deity. Moreover it gives new beauty to these passages, thus rendering the word of God attractive to the human mind. It also greatly intensifies their meaning, thus making more impressive the message from God to men, and causing it to take greater effect upon their hearts and lives. It not only does not militate against a single doctrine of Christianity, but it helps to defend them and set them in a better light, by removing many of the objections brought against them. Besides this, it makes the Bible clear and perspicuous to all classes of its readers. By it the language is made plain, simple, and straightforward, so that the words which God speaks to men are the language of humanity. And lastly, it adds grandeur to the character of Christ, and thus magnifies the atonement, that greatest of motive-powers to holiness and happiness in men.

A theory, therefore, which combines all these great excellences, fortifying Christianity, giving to us new conceptions of the glory of God ; a theory which enhances in our eyes the value of salvation, by ennobling the worth of that life which purchased it ; a theory which dignifies the whole history of mankind, by making God in man an actual actor in its transactions ; a theory which opens anew the word of

trolled all other men, etc. (2) He became a man, in that he took upon him *flesh*. He was the soul of man before ; but now he became a man in a more tangible sense ; he became both body and soul a man.

God, running like a thread of golden light through its dark passages, illuminating their dim proportions, revealing their beauty, and causing them to stand out in clear and well-defined outlines; if a theory, such as this, can be found, surely it deserves not to be rejected simply because it was not hitherto a tenet of orthodoxy.

ARTICLE III.

MISQUOTATION OF SCRIPTURE.

BY REV. A. C. THOMPSON, D.D., BOSTON, MASS.

WHEN Martin Luther had finished his translation of the Bible, he begged, in his preface, that all people would let it remain as it was. They might set about making another as soon as they pleased; but he protested against alterations of his. "Let this continue mine," says the Reformer, "for now-a-days there is no end of mending and bettering." He had the same literary right in that labor which he had in his other translated productions and in his original writings. Whatever the merits of the translation, he was entitled to have its integrity maintained against careless, as well as intentional, modifications. The same is true, of course, in regard to all similar products of the pen. Expurgated editions of the classics, and translations with offensive passages omitted may be expedient—the fact being avowed; but when professed citations are made from any book, sacred or secular, there is a moral obligation that they should be given with exactness. If reasonable pains are not taken to verify the language, a dereliction of duty is justly chargeable. No other volume in Protestant lands is so widely diffused, so easy of access, so much read, and so often quoted as the Bible. In regard to no other, then, is inaccuracy of quotation less excusable, while no other is more generally abused.

The inaccuracies now to be considered are, for the most