

'The story goes that a deputation of the usual adherents of Northfield Conference waited on Mr. Moody and urged him not to allow Drummond to speak. Mr. Moody asked a day to think over the matter; and when the deputation returned, informed them that he had laid it before the Lord,

and the Lord had shown him that Drummond was a better man than himself; so he was to go on.' But Drummond came to Northfield, and the word which he wrote after he left is, 'At Northfield I felt a good deal out of it, and many fell upon me and rent me. It was not a happy time.'

## The Incarnation and the Inner Life.

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ONLY too commonly the Incarnation is regarded as a doctrine which faith must accept, but which, except in its issues and results, has no immediate connexion with the tenor of daily life. It has been felt, even by serious thinkers, to offer but little on which the soul can meditatively rest in relation to the movements and developments of the inner life. It is, and it remains to many a good Christian, simply a holy mystery, a vital article of belief, but not a truth, like its sequel the Redemption, which seems to quicken every thanksgiving, and to give warmth to every utterance of prayer.

And yet it is plain enough from the text that to confess the Incarnation, in all its blessed fulness and reality of meaning, is to afford a proof of being a very son of God, and a recipient in fullest measure of the inworking power of the Spirit.

'Every spirit which confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.' Let us then, under the hallowing influence of this momentous declaration, at once humbly endeavour to realize the Incarnation, and strive to make our hearts feel it to be, as it is, one of the two great spiritual powers that, in faithful hearts, are ever felt in all the varied movements of the inner life. The power of the Incarnation and what an apostle speaks of as the power of the Lord's Resurrection are the two great powers ever working, either latently or patently, in the deeper depths of the believing heart.

But how shall we best realize this power and its manifestations? Perhaps thus. By keeping in the foreground of our thoughts two simple

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questions, and from the answers we give to them arriving at what this power of the Incarnation is that we are seeking to bring home to our souls.

I. The first and fundamental question is obviously this: Who is He of whose Incarnation we are speaking? The immediate and instinctively given answer that each one of us would return would probably be the one word, God. True, most true, most blessedly true, but yet not the suggestive and instructive answer which the apostle who wrote the words on which we are meditating has enabled us to make. What St. John, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, plainly reveals to us is this, that He who was Incarnate was He who was in the beginning, ever with God, and Himself God. And the name that he gives to Him is the Word; that studiously chosen term being designed to include all those higher approximations to the belief in the eternal sonship of our Lord which are to be traced in the Old Testament, and which, when St. John wrote his Gospel, were finding a more and more defined place in the higher and holier teachings of Jewish theology. To the cultivated Jew of Ephesus or Alexandria the one word *Logos*, imperfectly rendered in our language by *Word*, awakened thoughts that, probably in many and many a case, prepared the way for the reception of the gospel message, and for the soul-saving conviction that He who in bygone days had spoken by the prophets was now speaking by His Son. And not to the Jew only did that mysteriously chosen term bear its awakening and life-giving thoughts. How it discloses to each one of us, as the apostle

defines more closely all that he designed to convey to us by his use of the term, that our dear Lord and Master was in the world from the beginning, that He was the light of the world when its foundations were laid, and that through Him Divine life streamed forth into every realm of creation.

Nay, more, we seem permitted to believe that when man was called into being through the love of God on the earth which was prepared for him, the Word, the Eternal Son, was, so to speak, the mediating actor between the Father and the first human pair, even before sin and disobedience had cast them forth from the paradise of their primal innocence. It is not a wild thought that has been often entertained by many a holy and devout thinker, that, so close has ever been the bond between the Word and the children of His hand, that even if man had not sinned, the Son would still have vouchsafed to take upon Him man's nature, that He might Himself lead the creature of His hand to the highest stage of conceivable perfection.

In a word, we are not constrained to believe that the crowning manifestation of Divine love, the Incarnation of the Eternal Son, was brought about by, and resulted from, the circumstances of man's disobedience. The form under which the Incarnation actually took place, the lowliness and humility of its circumstances, may have been, as it were, necessitated by man's lost estate and fallen condition, but the Incarnation in itself, every deeper thought seems to tell us, must have resulted from the infinite love of the Creator for the creatures of His hand. With such thoughts in our hearts, with what impressiveness and solemnity do the opening words of St. John's Gospel fall on our ears: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.'

II. But we may now pass onward to the second of the two questions to which, as I said, we will attempt to give an answer in this sermon. The answer to the first question, simple and almost unnecessary as the question may have seemed to be, has led us into some deep, but, as I hope, not unprofitable thoughts. It has led us to feel that the union of man with our Mediator, and (after the Fall) our Saviour and our Redeemer, has ever existed since man has been called into being; and that the Incarnation even in its present form is a

manifestation not merely of a pitying love for a fallen race, but of a love which called our race into existence, and has loved it from all time, and will love it even to the end.

Such thoughts seem to bring the holy mystery of this day home to our very inmost souls. The love of the Word for each one of us, for each member of the human family, is a love that verily passes all understanding.

But why, we may now ask as our second question, why was this love manifested in a form so startling in its lowliness as that which is revealed to us in the gospel narrative? Could not the Word have become flesh—could not the Incarnation have been a true and real entry into our humanity and a veritable assumption of our nature without the humble birth, the slow, silent years of growth, and the gradual increase of wisdom and experience? Though such questions *will* arise in the soul, there is a kind of presumption in entertaining them, and, to some extent, in endeavouring to answer them. This, however, may with all reverence be said, that, had it been otherwise, the conviction that the Son of God had verily and truly taken our nature upon Him would never have been felt with completeness and fulness in the human heart. The earliest, perhaps, of all the heresies that showed itself in the Church, the persuasion that our Lord had a body merely in appearance, disclose plainly to us a tendency in the ever-doubting heart of man which never could have been resisted had not the Eternal Son in His infinite mercy and compassion vouchsafed to be born as we are born, and to pass through all the stages of human growth and development.

Verily, when we are striving, as we now are striving, to bring home to the soul all the plenitudes of blessings that are vouchsafed to us in our inner life by the Incarnation of the Eternal Son, this blessing must ever stand in the foreground, that the associated circumstances go far to confirm the truth and reality of the event. So far, indeed, that it may be fairly said that doubt in the reality of our dear Lord's assumption of our nature can never be entertained with any show of reason, unless we reject altogether the written word of the gospel.

But though this we may humbly presume to be the primary purpose of the form and manner in which the Word vouchsafed to become flesh, and to dwell as He did dwell among the children of

men, yet this was not by any means the only purpose of that mystery of humility on which we are now meditating. Does not the Incarnation with all its attendant circumstances bring home to us the vital truth that if such was the form and manner of the Lord's assumption of our humanity, communion with Him here and hereafter must be a blessed reality on which the loving and believing soul may rely with the most unchanging confidence?

If the dear Lord while here on earth verily did live in blessed union and communion with His chosen ones, as some of that holy number tell us plainly that He did live—if the Incarnation bore with it that boundless blessing to disciples and apostles, what is there to lead us to doubt that to those that love Him and pray for His abiding presence with them, the Incarnation bears the self-same privilege and blessing now, changed only as to manifestation and visibility, but not as to power and reality? There are times when we are permitted to feel this with a mysterious vividness. In hours of deep sorrow, when all earthly consolation is, and is felt to be, powerless and unavailing, are there not some at least who can remember a consciousness of a presence, a presence of consolation and sympathy, so vivid, that there could be One and One only of whom that presence was a revealing,—our loving, pitying, and Incarnate Lord? These

things are not illusions. They are results of the mystery of the Incarnation, verifications of that eternal truth that our Creator is also our sympathizing High Priest, touched with the feeling of our infirmities, because He knows those infirmities in their inmost nature, not simply by virtue of His omniscience, but by the experiences of a sinless humanity.

These are serious yet comforting thoughts. They seem to help us to feel that our dear Lord's Incarnation is not merely a holy mystery which faith must apprehend, but that it carries to the soul convictions of the personal love of Christ toward each fellow-man which make it, what it seems now becoming more and more to us all, the, so to speak, practical doctrine of our own mysteriously moving and eventful times. The Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man are the two great truths which, year by year, modern religious thought seems more distinctly apprehending and realizing; and that each of these great principles rests upon, as its basis, the Incarnation, may be regarded as an almost self-evident truth. The revelation of God as our Father was made to us through the Son of His love. Our revelation of the Brotherhood of man can only come through the beloved One, who made Himself our Elder Brother that He might die for us, and make us His brethren and His own for evermore.

## Recent Biblical Archaeology.

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### The New Babylonian Version of the Story of the Deluge.

AMONG the cuneiform tablets recently discovered in Babylonia, Dr. Scheil has found a fragment which contains a new version of the story of the Deluge, which he has published in the *Recueil de Travaux relatifs à la Philologie et à l'Archéologie égyptiennes et assyriennes*, xx. pp. 55-59. Out of the 439 lines which it originally contained only a few broken ones are preserved, but its importance lies in its antiquity. It was written by the scribe Ellit-Â in the reign of Ammi-zadoq, the fourth

successor of Khammurabi or Ammurapi, the Amraphel of Genesis, and it therefore belongs to the age of Abraham.

The interest which this gives to it makes me believe that the following translation of its mutilated lines will not be unacceptable to the readers of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES. I have assumed that Dr. Scheil's copy is correct: he is a good copyist, and has had exceptional opportunities for mastering the difficulties of the early Babylonian script.

Of the first column little is left except the ends of the lines:—

1. 'He went not . . . many years.
2. . . . (the deeds) of mankind thou knowest (?).