The Philosophical Aspects of the Doctrine of Divine Incarnation

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THE PHILOSOPHICAL ASPECTS OF THE DOCTRINE OF DIVINE INCARNATION.

THE idea of a God incarnate, that is to say, of a divine being who becomes man, assuming not the human form only as a mere apparition might, but condescending to be born and inherit human flesh and blood, is not peculiar to Christianity; but is I believe widespread in other religions also, notably in those of India. I shall however, confine the scope of this essay to an inquiry into the history and development of the Christian belief alone. For this is, after all, that which interests and most closely touches ourselves. A preponderance of educated people in Europe and America believe that Jesus of Nazareth was God as well as man. But no one seriously believes in the Indian tales of divine incarnations. These might be curious as illustrating a stray feature here or there of the fabric of beliefs built up by Christian thinkers and witnesses, but are otherwise worthless save to the students of anthropology.

I confine myself, therefore, to the Christian idea and belief. And what is this? First as to the name. In the Latin fathers the word used is *Incarnatio*, which implies that the Word became *Flesh*, as John says in his Gospel. But the Greek fathers, Athanasius for instance, used a slightly different term, *ἐνανθρώπησις*, which has never passed into our idiom. This term signifies that the Word became man and dwelt among us, according to the other half of John's statement.

Secondly, as to the content of the idea expressed in this twofold manner in the eastern and western halves of the Christian world. I do not know that a better exposition of the meaning of the belief can be given than that which we have in Athanasius: *περὶ τῆς ἐνανθρωπήσεως τοῦ λόγου καὶ τῆς διὰ σώματος πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἐπιφανείας αὐτοῦ*, "about the

becoming man of the Word and about the manifestation of him to us by means of body." Of this treatise I will quote a few lines (Migne *Patrol. Gr.*, § 17, xxv. 125):

"For let us not suppose that the Word was shut up and enclosed in the body (of Jesus). Nor was it in a body in such wise that it was not elsewhere as well. Still less did it move that body, but leave the universe empty of its energy and providence. On the contrary, strange as it may seem, being the Word, he (*i.e.* Jesus) was not contained in anything, but rather himself contained all things. Just as the Word being in the whole of creation, is an essence outside the whole, yet is in all things through his Powers, controlling and ordering all things, enfolding with his providence all in all, and making alive each and all at once, comprehending the whole world, yet not comprehended therein, but existing in his entirety and always in his Father alone: so also the Word being in his human body, and himself making it alive as you would suppose, made alive the whole world at the same time; and continued to be in all things and outside the whole. And although he was recognised from his body through its works, yet he did not cease to be manifest at the same time in the energy and activity of the universe. Now the soul has the faculty of seeing by means of its reasonings even what is outside its own body; not however of acting (or energising) outside its own body, or of moving by its presence things away from it. At least a man has never been known to move and alter the position of bodies afar off simply by reflection on them in his mind. Nor because a man should sit in his own house and reason concerning the heavenly bodies, would he therefore be already moving the sun and turning round the heaven. But he only sees them move and become, without being able to bring about all that.

"The Word of God however, did not exist in the man in this way. For he was not bound up with his body, but rather himself held and governed that body; so that he was in it and in all things both at once, and was outside reality,

and was at rest in the Father alone. And herein lay the miracle, that he was living with us as a man, and at the same time as Word was vivifying all things, and as Son was with the Father. Wherefore he himself suffered nothing when the Virgin bore him, nor was polluted because he was in a body. Nay, rather he hallowed his body."

This extract I think fairly represents the combination in one real person, Jesus of Nazareth, of merely human characteristics along with the superhuman and divine prerogatives of creating and sustaining the material universe, his own body included.

Now we have to ask where did such an idea as this come from, and what was its history, if it had one?

But first I must be allowed to separate the two elements in it. There is the particular human element in it, the historical man, Jesus, of whom, however, in the above extract we get no details. Secondly, there is the universal and metaphysical conception of a Word of God, who made and controls the world, but is also capable of manifesting himself in human form and of intervening in the affairs of men.

We all know that the conception of a Messiahship was much older than Christianity. It was an idea which held the minds of the Jews for centuries before the advent of Jesus, and had received various fillings, more or less spiritual, according to the class of aspirants whose national hope was summed up in the name. Christianity was originally merely the faith of those Jews who recognised in Jesus the Messiah or Christ that was to be; and the earliest Christian books, like the Gospels, and Acts, and the bulk of the writings of Justin Martyr, were composed with the aim of proving that Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies appropriated to the Messiah, and that therefore he was the Messiah.

Now the idea of a Divine Word was shaped and elaborated long before Jesus was born, no less than that of the Messiahship, and so equally admits of being separated from the

historical man Jesus, and of being examined apart. Moreover, it is on the whole a distinctly philosophical conception, and so merits the attention of the Aristotelian Society.

In the works of Philo, an Alexandrine Jew who was born about B.C. 20, and died about A.D. 43, or ten years after the crucifixion, we are fortunate in having inherited a mass of writings, prior to, and so independent of, Christianity, of which the Logos is the constant theme. They are an almost inexhaustible mine of information about how the Jews, especially the Greek Jews, conceived of the Logos or Word of God in a pre-Christian age. In the Pœmandres, ascribed to the mythical Hermes Trismegistus, we have also a pagan work written under Jewish influence, dealing largely with the same topic. The date of this book cannot be precisely fixed, but it was certainly not written under Christian influence; and the resemblance of its tone and thought to much of Philo is so great that we cannot doubt but that it is the work of a kindred and contemporary, but pagan, school of Alexandrine thinkers. Both Philo's works and the Pœmandres have been preserved to us by the Christian Church; whose early writers, like Lactantius at the end of the third century, boldly claimed Hermes as a Christian writer. Philo's works, not being anonymous, could not so easily be claimed as Christian; and accordingly the early Christian fathers merely borrowed wholesale his words and thoughts, while they suppressed his name. Sometimes, however, they pretended that he was really a Christian in Jewish disguise, and termed him a follower of the Apostles.

The following are the leading thoughts of the Pœmandres or Shepherd of men.

The Father of all things, God, is *Nous*. He is life and light; neither male nor female, but both at once. He is the Archetypal idea that pre-exists of infinite beginning.

He brought forth by Logos another *nous* that is creative This latter is God of fire and of spirit, out of which he created seven controllers, as they may be called, that sur-

round in circles the sensible world; and their control is called Fate.

This Logos and the creative *Nous* are of one substance, and are therefore united. So united, the creative *Nous* turns round its own creatures in a cycle of movement never ending and fresh-beginning.

The holy, luminous Logos issuing from *Nous*, which is God the Father, is Son of God. That which in each of us sees and hears, is the Logos of the Lord. The union of this Logos and of *Nous*, the divine Father, is Life.

Here we seem to have a gradation of three divine beings: *α.* Supreme *Nous*, which is God the Father. *β.* The holy and luminous Logos, which is Son of God. *γ.* The creative *Nous*. It is the two latter, whose respective functions in the work of creation are somewhat obscurely indicated, which are one and consubstantial.

The word ὁμοουσία, here used for consubstantiality, reappears at the time of the Council of Nice in a sense not quite the same, but yet akin to that in which Hermes used it. As against the Arians, who said that the Word was only of like substance (ὁμοιούσιος) with God the Father, the Nicene fathers decided that he was ὁμοούσιος, of the same substance.

We must next give a brief outline of Philo's doctrine of the Logos.

God the Father is an inscrutable being, that can only apprehend himself; and cannot possibly be the object of another's contemplation. We can only know *that* he is; not *what* he is. For he is without quality (ἄποιος), and we cannot predicate any attributes of him at all. No category is good enough for him. We do not even know his true name. In a sense we cannot even say that he is one; for he is not a first in relation to whom there can be a second. For all number is younger than the universe, but he is older than the universe, of which he is creator. Philo shrinks even from predicating goodness of God, because he is above the good, even as he is more

ancient than the monad and purer than the One. His favourite appellation for God is therefore the true Being, τὸ ὄντως ὄν. He, of course, took his philosophical language from the early Greek schools, especially the Eleatic. But in so insisting on the unconditionedness of God he was also protesting against the anthropomorphism not only of the Greeks, but of the Hebrew Scriptures as well.

Needless to say, Philo never for long sustains himself in this *Ding-an-sich* conception of God. He has to connect with God the sensible universe and man; and in the Logos or Word and Reason of God he found ready to hand an intermediary agency to connect the changeless and eternal pure Being with the world which becomes.

The initial step in his doctrine of the Creation of the World is a negation of his agnostic attitude, and is borrowed from Plato. It is this. God is self-sufficing, therefore he did not cause the universe to be because he wanted it, but because he is good and desired to extend and communicate, to externalise (if I may use the word) his own inherent goodness.

The next step is also borrowed from Plato's Timaeus, wherein we read (p. 28) that the world's artificer being good, looked to the changeless and eternal, and not to a created pattern in creating the world. This eternal and changeless archetype of the sensible world is a being separable from the Father, with a life of its own, and is itself divine. As the original of the universe it comprises in itself all intelligible beings, just as its copy, the world, comprises in itself us and all other visible creatures. I think so much may be said of Plato's archetypal world, without entering into the many obscurities of his reasoning.

According to Philo, God, in creating the world, looked to a similar eternal pattern. He prefigured in the calm depths of his reason, in all its details, the world which was to be. This divine plan or prefigurement of all things material Philo calls the intelligible universe, Cosmos

Noetos. Of it the material universe is the copy, including just as many sensible kinds as the pattern does intelligible kinds.

Thus the foundation of Philo's speculation is that idle distinction between two orders of being, an ideal and real, of which one is a mere double of the other, which was the keynote of New Platonism, and still haunts our schools of philosophy. One or the other order is a mere mirage.

This ideal or intelligible Cosmos, says Philo, is not in space or time, for these only arise out of and along with the material world. It exists in the consciousness of the all-wise God, as an idea of ideas, ἰδέα ἰδεῶν. It is no other than the Logos or thought of God as already engaged in the work of creating. The meaning of the phrase ἰδέα ἰδεῶν used of the Logos is this. God as pure being cannot enter into relations with indefinite and turbid matter (*De Sacrif.* 13, p. 261). So he employed bodiless powers, properly called ideas (ἰδέαι), in order that each kind of reality should acquire its befitting form. The same transparent device is used to account for evil and reconcile it with omnipotence. The tendency to evil in the rational or self-conscious soul is due to the fact that God left the arrangement of this part to subordinate powers.[1]

Out of the ideas or immaterial agencies the *Cosmos noetos*, itself immaterial, is constructed, an invisible counterpart of the visible world.[2] As the all in all of these unseen powers, which he also often calls λόγοι (words), ψυχαὶ (souls), and angels, the supreme word or Logos is the idea of ideas.

Another favourite way of speaking with Philo is to say that[3] the true or absolute Being has in himself two supreme and primal powers, viz., goodness and authority. In his goodness he created all things, in his power he governs the things so created. The Logos or Word is the union in him of these two aspects or powers. For by reason of and

[1] *De Conf. Ling.*, 35, p. 432. [2] *Ibid.*, 34, p. 431.
[3] *De Cherub.*, 9, p. 143.

through his Logos God is both ruler and good. As pure being, God is called the Father. As creative goodness, he is called God. As ruling creation by his providence, he is called Lord. The Logos is sometimes represented also as not the mere union in the Father of goodness and authority, but as above and between these two, and so identical with the Supreme Being. This threefold Godhead Philo more than once calls a trinity in unity and unity in trinity.[1] But the unity of God is declared to be a higher truth than his trinity. The former is apprehended in the ecstasy of the great mysteries by the thoroughly purged soul. The threefold aspect of the one God is apprehended in the lesser mysteries, and is but a provisional standpoint correlative with a certain weakness of spiritual vision on the part of the faithful.

There is a difference between Philo's Trinity and the Christian, in that in his the Logos comprises, as it were, both the second and the third person. Both Trinities agree in putting the Father first, and then his only son, the Logos, who is also God. Perhaps the functions ascribed in Christian theology to the third person, the Holy Spirit, are not the same as the ἐξουσία, rule or authority, in virtue of which the Supreme Being, according to Philo. is called Lord, κύριος. Still there is this resemblance, that the Son in leaving the world leaves the control of all things to the Holy Spirit. We must also not forget that the clear distinction between the Word and the Holy Spirit is late in Christian theology, and that the early fathers, like Justin, confuse them.

The real distinction between Philo's Trinity and the Christian Trinity is that Christians are taught to regard the latter as a step in advance, a truth newly revealed in Christianity; whereas Philo looks on it as an elementary grade of belief, to be surmounted as soon as the soul is truly purified. With him to *see* God as one, is a higher thing than to see him as three.

[1] *Qu. in Gen.*, iv. 2, pp. 242, 251; *De Abr.*, 24, p. 19.

The question whether Philo regarded the Logos, 1, as a person, 2, as divine, is of interest for the historian of dogma. A general examination of the numerous passages in which he writes about the Logos, leaves no doubt on the mind that he did both.

That the Logos was a person is clear, from the quasi-humanity which Philo ascribes to him. The Logos is the archetypal man and pattern of humanity, whom God made in his own image (Gen. i. 26), to be distinguished from the man who was afterwards formed out of the dust of the ground (Gen. ii. 7). The latter, the earthy man, γηινός, is only a copy of the former, who is the heavenly Adam. This spiritual Adam, who is God's word, is relatively without matter, ἀϋλώτερος, of a purer and finer consistency than the earthy Adam,[1] is pure reason without passions καθαρὸς νοῦς. The earthy man has quality, is an object of sense (αἰσθητός), is composite of soul and body. But the heavenly man made in God's image is as it were an idea, or a kind, or a seal, palpable to reason only, without body, neither male nor female, incorruptible in his nature.[2] He is the man of God, ἄνθρωπος θεοῦ. He remained with God, whereas the earthy Adam was expelled from the Garden.

Such are the human lineaments of the Logos or Word of God, and the devotion and reverence manifested by Philo for this ideal man proves more clearly than anything else that he believed in his personality and will. "To his most ancient word[3] hath the Father who begat all things given this singular privilege, of standing on the borderland and separating that which has come to be from its maker. But the same Word is intercessor[4] for mortality that ever frets and pines for the imperishable, is envoy of the sovereign to the subject. And in this privilege so bestowed, the Word finds his glory, and expressly tells of the same when he says, 'And I stood betwixt the Lord

[1] Cp. Paul ad Cor. I. xv. 47.
[2] *De Mundi Op.*, 46, 1-32.
[3] *Q. R. D. H.*, 42, p. 541.
[4] Cp. Paul ad Tim. I. ii. 5.

and you.' For he is neither unbegotten as if he were God, nor yet begotten as are ye, but is in the mean between these two extremes." Here we are reminded of the "Son of God, begotten not made," of the creeds.

The Word is "the Eldest Son of the Father, the first-born, oldest of the angels, the archangel under many names";[1] he is both identical with the σοφία or wisdom of God, and her son, begotten of her by God the Father. He is the shadow of God, and second God, δεύτερος θεός.[2]

"Our true high priest," he says elsewhere,[3] "is no mere man, but the divine Word, who is free from all sin, not voluntary only, but involuntary as well."

Such words imply a personal conception of the Word. Yet, more so, such words as the following, written as a commentary on Deut. xiv. 1: "Ye are sons of the Lord God." "Even[4] though no one hitherto has proved worthy to be called Son of God, yet may each of us strive to wear the garb of and array ourselves like the first-born Word, the eldest of the angels. . . Though we have not yet become fit to be considered Sons of God, yet we may become sons of his eternal image, of the most holy Word."

Such devout feeling as Philo clearly entertained for the Word makes it clear that he regarded him as no mere abstraction but as a personal will. He even calls him the Paraclete or advocate.[5] "The priest who sacrifices to the Father of the universe must employ as his advocate his Son, who hath perfect virtue, in order to win remission of sins and a supply of God's most bounteous blessings." So John in his Gospel, by implication, calls Christ the Paraclete.

And as we have seen, the Word[6] is himself the "high priest of God, and ministers, not only in the more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, of the universe, but in the

[1] *Leg. Alleg.*, III. 61, p. 121; *De Conf. Ling.* 28, p. 427; *De Agric.* 12, p. 308; Fragment ap. Euseb. *Pr. Ev.*, vii. 13, p. 625.

[2] *Leg. Alleg.*, I. 19, p. 106. [3] *De Prof.*, I. 562.

[4] *De Conf. Ling.*, 1, 427. [5] *Vita Mos.* 14, 2, 156.

[6] *De Somn.*, 1, 653, 22; cp. Hebr. ix. 11.

temple of the rational soul (λογικὴ ψυχή). Of this divine high priest, the Jewish high priest offering up his country's prayers and sacrifices is the sensible image."

But the Word,[1] besides abiding with the Father, rules the universe and holds all things together in a bond of peace and love. In one striking passage he is even identified with the sensible Cosmos, which he created and watches over; the *natura naturata* being here spoken of as if it were the *natura naturans*, the sensible manifestation as if it were the invisible agency. The κόσμος αἰσθητός is therefore called the only well-loved Son of God.[2] Elsewhere the Cosmos is called the seamless raiment of the divine Word (*De Prof.* 20, I. 562).

But the particular mission of the divine Word as ideal man is to mankind; and accordingly, beside his rôle of mediator and intercessor, he abides in the purified soul, and is father of all good counsels. In this sense we must interpret the many passages where the Word is called the bread of the soul,[3] the true manna which came down from heaven, never-failing like the dew, and encircling and refreshing the entire earth. His language in such passages is like that of John vi. 51: "I am the living bread, which came down out of heaven: if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever." Elsewhere,[4] Philo entreats us "to draw nigh unto the Word, for in him we win a vision, with the purified and quickened eye of the soul, of God himself. And this vision is the food of the soul, is the true source of immortality." So St. John (Evang. xiv. 6, 9), wrote afterwards: "I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by me. . . He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father."

And just as John says (Ev. vi. 33), "He that believeth on me shall never thirst," so Philo[5] pronounces the Word to be the "Cup-bearer of God, the herald of peace, the

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[1] *Qu. in Exod.* II., § 118.
[2] *De Strict.* 1, 361.
[3] *E.g.*, *Leg. Alleg.* 1, 120.
[4] *Qu. in Exod.* ii. 39.
[5] *De Somn.*, 27, I., 683.

truly great high-priest, who takes from God the cups of grace and blessing, and extends them to us in turn. And the full libation of peace which he so pours out is himself, and we drink him, the Word, pure and unmixed, and are drunk with him."

Philo declares[1] that it is by an economy, and, in order to bring the dullards of sense to repentance through fear and to a better mind, that the Scriptures represent God, not indeed as a particular individual, yet as a man with face and hands and feet, mouth and voice, feelings of anger and wrath, even with weapons; and as going in and coming forth, and moving up and down among men. Such representations are for the carnally-minded, who cannot conceive of God as an immaterial and incorporeal spirit.

But though Philo shrank from the more extreme anthropomorphism of his contemporaries, he did not restrict the ministrations of the Word to mystic visitations of souls freed from the body, in the course of which, he says, "God reveals himself as he is, conversing as a friend with friends." The Word, he declares, does actually intervene as an angel in the form of man in human affairs. Thus it was the Word which called to Adam in the Garden; Abraham entertained the Word unawares, and the three men who appeared to him were holy and divine natures, a triple *φαντασία* of the God who is "a Three in One." So it was the Word which appeared to Jacob, to Moses in the burning bush. The pillar of cloud and fire was the Word made manifest. In these cases and in many similar ones the Word became an angel of human form, without any loss of or prejudice to its own divinity (*οὐ μεταβαλών*). Philo makes[2] the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah a text from which to preach his belief "That God descends and visits our earthly system, in order to help the virtuous and provide them with a refuge, and at the same time to send destruction on his enemies."

Sometimes Philo explains the same incident, *e.g.*, the visit

[1] *De Somn.*, I., 655.

[2] *De Somn.*, I., 633.

of the three strangers to Abraham, at one moment as a visit of angels, at the next as a manifestation or *epiphany* of the Word; and he wavers between the two views. It was, he says, a miracle for immaterial spirits to assume the human form and appearance; and to create in Abraham the φαντασία of being hungry, when they hunger not; and of eating and drinking, when they neither eat nor drink.

This is as near as Philo comes to the idea of an ἐνανθρώπησις of the Word. He says, indeed, that it would be easier for God to become man, than for man to become God; but in these words he wishes to imply that either alternative is unheard of and impossible. The notion of an *Incarnation*, of the Word becoming flesh, would doubtless have shocked him as profane, as it has ever shocked the Jewish and truly monotheistic mind.

But it must be owned that the cleavage in the monotheistic idea, which afterwards reached such an acute form in the age of Athanasius, had already begun in Philo and his school. Between man and the supreme unknowable God there is interposed a second being, himself divine and, in a unique manner, Son of God. This being is mediator between man and God, is the ideal of humanity, free from sin, whom men are in their conduct to imitate. Standing half-way between the eternal and the perishable, he reveals the Father to us, and as our true high-priest intercedes with him for our sins.

This is the side of the Logos doctrine which best accords with a human personality, and it was probably because of these quasi-human elements of the conception that the Logos-ship was in the first instance attributed to an historical person, Jesus of Nazareth. This man had already been hailed by his followers as the Messiah, and, no doubt, himself laid claim to be that Messiah. But the Messiahship was, after all, a human dignity only; for the Christ was, according to current Jewish ideas, to be a man of men, and not in any way divine or on an equality with God.

It is no time now to inquire why, or how, or when, Jesus was first recognised, not only as Jewish Messiah, but as the Word of God—a much wider, more universal and less Jewishly national conception than that of Messiah. It may be that the mere force of his personality, as it sufficed to convince Jews who looked for the Messiah, that he was whom they sought, so also sufficed to persuade the Greek Jews, in whom the Messianic aspirations were faint, but in whom the faith in the Logos was strong and vivid, that he was the realisation in flesh and blood of their ideal high-priest and mediator.

But a difficulty occurs here to the mind. The epiphanies of the Logos among men were true epiphanies, *i.e.*, had an apparitional character. The human forms in which and through which the Word visited and spoke to the Israelites of old were not made of flesh and blood, and neither ate nor drank, except in semblance. How then could the life of Jesus, a man of flesh and blood, who came eating and drinking, be assimilated to this activity of the Logos?

I believe myself that more than one intellectual tendency of the age facilitated this result, which to our mind to-day seems so impossible. There was first a wide-spread belief which, as we know from Philo, penetrated into Jewish Greek circles, that the soul pre-existed before birth, and that a man born in one age may be re-born in another. Strictly Hebrew believers thought that Elijah was thus to reappear on earth and precede the Messiah, and by the time of Justin Martyr (140 A.D.), Christians argued that John the Baptist was no other than Elijah, born a second time. The popular mind in Syria and Asia was also thoroughly persuaded that men could rise from the dead and live again. Thus an impostor could persuade thousands that he was Nero risen again, and the first idea of Herod when he heard of Jesus was that he was John the Baptist risen from the dead. Thus the notion of men, not merely human nor quite divine, living among men a life half real and half phantasmal, must have been a very familiar one

in the first century, just as mediums and mahatmas are becoming a familiar reality in some modern circles.

Here I have touched upon one class of conditions, or analogies, which may have helped people to recognise in Jesus the Logos. But what more than anything else made the transition in belief both possible and easy was the resurrection of Jesus. His multitudinous apparitions, spectre-like in their suddenness, not only to the Twelve, but to five hundred persons at once, must have led those who heard of them, and who heard the Gospel of the Resurrection preached by Paul and others, to believe that the whole manner of the appearance and activity of Jesus was exceptional and superhuman, like that of the Logos in its epiphanies of old. The very application to Jesus of the word "epiphany," which Philo uses of the apparitions of the Logos, is a proof of this. Nor must we forget that, although Philo shrank from attributing to the Logos and to God hands and feet, mouth and voice, feelings of anger, and comings in and goings forth, yet the mass of his contemporaries did so, as he himself declares. As for the Gentiles, to whom the Gospel rapidly spread, they were familiar from childhood with the idea of gods disguising themselves as men, and walking about the world avenging wrong and rewarding virtue. Philo himself more than once passes an encomium on such beliefs, and quotes[1] with approval Homer's lines about the gods likening themselves to men. Paul the apostle, in his enthusiasm for the risen and apparitional Jesus, knew little, and cared to know less, about the real man Jesus. Hence he boasted[2] that he neither received his Gospel from men who knew Jesus, nor was taught it, but acquired it by direct revelation. He therefore conferred not with flesh and blood, *i.e.*, with the Apostles at Jerusalem, who had known Jesus "in the flesh," but retired to the desert of Arabia, in order to excogitate his Gospel.[3] As Dr. Martineau puts it: "In Paul's love for Christ there was nothing retrospective—no

[1] *De Somn.* I. 655. [2] Gal. i. 12. [3] Gal. ii. 6.

personal image, no memory of moving incidents and startling words, no regret even that he had missed all contact with such a sacred life."

It was, then, the human aspects of the Logos-ship that first led the Hellenised followers of Jesus to invest him with that dignity, and the exclusive stress laid on the Resurrection helped the process. But the identification, once begun, tended also to its own completion. The Word, besides his human aspects, under which, taken apart, he bore some resemblance to the ideal wise man of the Stoics, was also eternal, divine, God and Lord, creator and sustainer of the entire world. If Jesus was the Word, then he had to be all this as well. With the investiture, therefore, of Jesus with the Logos-ship, began Christian theology; the whole history of which is that of the gradual superimposition on the primitive Messianic belief in Jesus of the more abstract and universal conception. The eternal and pre-existent Word ever more and more usurps the place of the historical man, Jesus. Now, the balance of speculation sways in the direction of his humanity; now, in that of his being God. For a long time it was ill-kept, and in Arius and his party the humanist view made a last stand. But after his fall in the fourth century, abstractions and logomachy gained a final victory. The Logos scheme, as it can be deduced from Philo's works, is the basis of the Nicene Creed. Chrysostom fondly imagined his creed to be a final victory of Jesus over Greek thought, and so exclaimed, *σεσίγηκεν ὁ πολλὰ ληρήσας Πλάτων.*[1] Yet immediately behind his Nicene shibboleth stood Philo, and behind Philo stood the contemned Greek philosopher. It was really Plato who had triumphed over Jesus, and Plato on the least fruitful side of his speculation.

I have noticed that already in Paul the apparitional and risen Jesus is beginning to drive into the background the real man of flesh and blood. This process of turning Jesus into a phantom both aided and was aided by the ascription

[1] *Comm. in Acta Apostol.*

to him of the Logos-ship. The Logos, in its epiphanies, neither ate nor drank, still less was it corruptible flesh. Rather it was, to use Philo's description, an ὄψις θειοτέρα ἢ κατ' ἀνθρωπίνην φύσιν—a vision too divine to be human in its nature (2, 436). Therefore, when the convert of Antioch or Ephesus heard that the Logos had been manifested in Judæa in Jesus, he rushed to the conclusion that Jesus was not of flesh and blood, but a mere φάσμα; that he did not really suffer and die, but only pretended to; that his whole life before his crucifixion was not less apparitional in its nature than his life after his resurrection.

This Docetism, as it was called, was the earliest of Christian heresies, and the very words of the prelude of John's Gospel, "The Word was made flesh," are a challenge to those who held it. Equally so are the passages in John's Epistles[1] anathematising as anti-Christ those who denied that Jesus Christ was come in the flesh. The letters of Ignatius teem with denunciations of it, and reveal to us what we should expect, namely, that it was peculiarly the heresy of Jewish Christians. All the second century fathers denounce it in turn.

Nor did this heresy fail to tincture even orthodox opinion. The verses of Luke, xxii. 43, 44, were cut out of most orthodox copies of the Gospels, for how could Jesus, the power and glory of God, need an angel to fortify his courage, or how could he be in agony and sweat blood? These verses were afterwards the stronghold of the Arians, but were repudiated by Athanasius and his school. Even an orthodox Church like the Armenian believes that Jesus was not liable to evacuations, and that he did not digest his food. For digestion is a sort of corruption, and his body was incorruptible from the womb. Athanasius believed that the body of Jesus was exempt from sickness, from weakness of all kinds, especially natural decay, and the common lot of death. This he held was the reason why Jesus died on the cross, that is by violence. In the

[1] 1 John iv. 3; 2 John 7.

course of nature he could never have died at all. All such opinions are semi-Docetic, an encroachment of the Divine, but phantasmal, Logos-substance on the flesh-and-blood humanity of Jesus.

To the same class of influence must be ascribed the miraculous birth of Jesus, a belief which though it may have first originated in the same way as the exactly similar but much more ancient belief about Plato, was yet in its development and dogmatic definition controlled by and adjusted to the belief that he was the Logos. Philo had written[1] that the Word had parents incorruptible and most pure: for his sire, God, the father of all things; for his mother, Sophia, by whom all things came into being. Now Sophia was also, according to Philo's myth, eternally a virgin, although the mother of the Logos. This philosophic myth of Alexandria probably lies behind the story of the miraculous birth.

And in the subsequent developments of the belief the Logos influence is equally marked. Plutarch says that the Egyptians saw in the cat, which was popularly supposed to be impregnated through the ears, a symbol of the generation of the Word or Logos, which is also conceived through the ears. Hence the early fathers believed that the Virgin Mary conceived through her ears. Philo had said[2] that the Father sows his intelligible rays (*ἀκτῖνας νοητάς*) into the God-loving souls of women who, filled with desire not of mortal, but of immortal offspring, and anxious to live with Sophia, have vowed themselves to perpetual virginity. Such souls bring forth without intercourse with human husbands, *ἄνευ ἐπιμιξίας*. In conformity with the above, the early fathers[3] held that Jesus the Word, was generated of the Soul of the Virgin, which was midway between her flesh and God. "Her *soul* came between, and in the secret citadel of the rational spirit, received the Word of God." In early Eastern pictures of the Annunciation, golden rays fall from heaven and enter into the Virgin's soul through her ears.

[1] *De Prof.*, 20, p. 562. [2] *D. V.C.* [3] Rufinus, *Ad Symbol.*

And it harmonises well with this view, that in the very primitive Gospel according to the Hebrews, Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit, not of Mary, as his mother. The Holy Spirit is another name for the wisdom, Sophia or Episteme, of God. In the lectionaries of the West, there has ever been assigned to the feast of the Virgin Mary, the lesson from Prov. viii. 22 about Sophia, which begins:—"The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways." Philo long before had based on the same lesson his philosophic myth that the Word was born of the ever-virgin Sophia and of God.

Some heretics, however, refused to admit that Jesus had been born at all. So Marcion cut out of Luke the chapters in which the birth of Christ is narrated; and Mark's Gospel plunges at once *in medias res*, altogether ignoring the earthly birth and parentage of Jesus.

The recognition, however, of Jesus as the Logos, if, on the one hand, it caused a heresy which nearly engulfed the nascent Church, on the other hand provided Christianity with a systematic theology which it could not have had otherwise. The Gospel of John is the earliest Christian document in which the view is formulated, and must have been written partly to supply a history of Jesus' ministry written from the new point of view, partly to check the Docetic view of Jesus already current. The conception of Jesus as the Logos, so clearly formulated in the proem, is somewhat unequally sustained in the rest of the book; still it seems to underlie such language as is used of or put into the mouth of Jesus, iii. 13; iii. 18; iii. 31; iii. 35, 36; iv. 14; v. 17-22; v. 26, 27; v. 36, 37; v. 40; vi. 27; vi. 31-35; vi. 38-41; vi. 46-51; vi. 57, 58; vi. 62; viii. 12; viii 19; viii. 42; viii. 58; x. 17, 18; x. 30; x. 33; x. 36; xi. 25; xii. 45; xiv. 6-10; xiv. 16; xv. 24; xvi. 15; xvi. 27, 28; xvii. 3-5; xvii. 11; xvii. 24; xx. 28. Some of these passages no doubt are equally compatible with the Messianic faith in Jesus, which the writer of the Gospel clearly had along with his more Hellenistic apprehension of him as the Logos. Some

of them might also be set down as mere pietism and reverence for a great teacher, who speaking with authority [1] and not as the Scribes, himself claimed to be a heaven-sent prophet and Messiah. But after making all deductions, there remain a considerable number of passages in this Gospel, as compared with the Synoptics, in writing which the author evidently wished to bring it home to his readers that Jesus was the Word. He must also have addressed an audience as familiar with the notion of the Word as ordinary Jews were with the notion of the Messiah. For he nowhere explains to his readers what it meant, or how they were to understand it; but plunges curtly into the matter with the declaration, firstly, that the Word was God and Creator, and, secondly, that the Word thus divine was made flesh and dwelt among us in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Nor do we hear anything of the creative activity of the Word except in chap. i. verses 3 and 10. The rest of the Gospel is chiefly aimed to show how the Logos incarnate revealed God the Father to mankind. This was also a main function of Philo's Logos; but Philo, with more liberality of mind and greater width of horizon, realised that the Word is always, and has always been, revealing God to man, not only in the sensible world, but in the hearts of Jew and Gentile alike. That the Logos should restrict the period of his revelation to the three years' ministry of a single Rabbi, however august, would have seemed to Philo an unwarrantable limitation of the activity and goodness thereof.

Recent orthodox critics have minimised as much as they can the connection between the Alexandrine doctrine of the Logos, as Philo presents it, and the Johannean; and have argued that John derived his conception from a Palestinian form of the belief in the Logos. Yet the traces of a similar doctrine held in Palestine are faint, and the Targums in which they occur are not, like Philo's works, demonstrably prior to Christianity. These critics therefore appear to me

[1] Matt. vii. 29.

to turn aside from a beaten track where one's footing is clear, in order to grope along dubious and obscure byways.

One result, and an important one, of the identification of Jesus with the Logos was to separate the latter from God the Father, and hypostatise him more definitely than Philo had done. For in the individual man Jesus the Word was brought down to earth and severed from the Godhead in a way palpable to man's senses. In being thus brought down to earth and humanised, the Word or Divine Son also tended to be subordinated to the Father. Thus some ante-Nicene writers barely recognised the pre-existence of the Son before he was born of the Virgin Mary; others overlooked his co-eternity with the Father, which was nearly the same error. Others, again, forgot his equality and sameness of substance with the Father. All these were test-conditions of orthodoxy in the Nicene age; and the Logos doctrine as presented in Philo fulfils them all so easily as it does, because in him the pattern is, as it were, still laid up in Heaven, is still an ideal and so far abstract. No attempt has yet been made to adjust it to a concrete human personality.

Hence it is that few or none of the ante-Nicene writers were orthodox, and Petavius, the learned Jesuit, wrote a large folio to demonstrate that there were no thoroughly orthodox fathers at all before the beginning of the fourth century, when the Nicene Council ascertained and fixed for ever the true dogmatic scheme. The creed then formulated, so far as touches the bare Logos-aspect of Jesus Christ, is one which may with a little industry be collected from Philo's works; and this proves conclusively that the Alexandrine conception was really regulative of the whole subsequent course of religious speculation.

I have remarked that Athanasius himself could hardly maintain the Philonean Logos scheme in its integrity without trembling on the verge of Docetism; and doubtless the Docetic heretics of the first and second century were as sound in regard to the consubstantiality and pre-existence of the Word as they were unsound in regard to its real incar-

nation. It is a tribute to their strength that ἐνανθρώπησις ever remained the Greek word for the ἐπιδημία or sojourning of the Word on earth, whereas *incarnatio* is a Latin word for which the Greeks had no exact equivalent. The term ἐνανθρώπησις is no less compatible with a Docetic than with an orthodox view of that sojourning.

Such a see-saw of views was of course really due to this, that in Jesus Christ, God and man, the human and divine, were, after all, but mechanically juxtaposed. Neither the one nor the other aspect was properly thought out; so that there was no real synthesis, and one or the other was continually being obscured. The Nicene and the Athanasian Creeds were brave attempts to balance these unstable elements, and so far as mere phrases can go, succeeded in doing so. For the Catholic Church instinctively set itself to hold all parties together as much as it could. Thus a reader of the Synoptics might set most store by the flesh and blood reality of Jesus; but he must not deny his divine aspect as the pre-existent and eternal Word. A reader of John might value most this same divine aspect; but must be careful, in doing so, not to evaporate the human body of Jesus into a phantom. Your respect for the individuality of Jesus was very well so long as it only led you to affirm that the Word was a person (πρόσωπον) distinct from the Father. But you became a heretic if you went farther and regarded the Word as not co-eternal and consubstantial, or as in any other respect inferior to God the Father. But you might also go too far in this direction; and affirm that since Jesus Christ was one with the Father, therefore the Father also suffered and died on the cross. But if you did, you became a Patri-passianist and an object of anathema.

Nothing is more admirable than the comprehensive firmness with which the Church held together in one creed all these antagonistic and ill-assorted schools, or rather tendencies of thought; giving to each a clause in the whole, but checking it by anathema the moment it ventured to kick over the traces. For no one of these opposing lines

of thought could be consistently held or carried out to its logical result without extruding some other equally necessary element of the scheme. It was exactly as if we should first excommunicate all who declared space to be infinite, and then all who declared it to be finite, and should end by erecting a comprehensive dogma that space is finite and infinite both at once.

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