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Two Oxford Teachers on the Incarnation.

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CHRIST CHURCH, Oxford, has contributed many invaluable aids to modern theology. Few are more valuable at the present time than the work of her late canon, the regius professor of Pastoral Theology in the University of Oxford, Robert Campbell Moberly. The present dean of Christ Church follows in his steps. But there is an interesting difference between the two men as writers. Canon Moberly possessed what has been described by Professor Sanday as 'a deductive mind.' He disclaimed great erudition. He had received remarkably the gift of insight. Intensity and depth of emotion breathe through all his words, and you are conscious of this even in the midst of a profound argument. Dean Strong is essentially 'intellectual.' He gives us, in his *Manual of Theology*, the most recent Oxford statement of Christianity as a reasoned philosophy in the light of modern scientific discoveries and modern thought. But his words are without intensity or vividness, and he travels on without passion or insight from conclusion to conclusion.

Yet it is interesting and significant to mark how entirely identical these two teachers are at least in one important respect. Each asserts the absolute supremacy of the Incarnation in relation to all Christian thought. 'The mighty fact of the Incarnation,' writes Canon Moberly, 'so absolutely dominates the entire revelation of the New Testament and characterizes and shapes all its thought and language that it is comparatively rarely that we can in the New Testament stand aside, so to speak, in thought or even in phrase from that one dominating conception' (*Atonement and Personality*, p. 185). 'As Natural Theology starts from the facts of experience in nature and the moral life,' writes Dean Strong, 'so Christian Theology starts from the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. As Natural Theology results in an idea of God in Nature, real but bare and somewhat conjectural in character, so Christian Theology, in virtue of its new start and wider scope, ends in an idea of God which is more certain, more definite, and more coherent' (*Manual of Theology*, p. 2). The Incarnation is thus presented by both men as the starting-point of all Christian Theology, as the point round which all the revealed knowledge of God in its every aspect in relation to Nature, Man, Redemption, and the future of the Church wholly turn. It gathers up into itself all the partial revelations which precede it. It focusses them on itself, just as all the lenses in a certain powerful lighthouse pass their accumulated light on to the central lens which disperses it. It draws back upon itself all the revelations which spring out of it, and they must make their return to this one central fact in order to find their full, final, adequate interpretation there.

What can be the character of a proof adequate for a fact so tremendous? The proof is to be found in historical evidence, but the mind to receive that evidence must not be a blank. It must, says Dean Strong, use the fact it seeks to establish as both premiss and conclusion. Taking the fact as St. John does, it must analyse it and trace its full significance, and then endeavour to show the coherence of it with our previous knowledge of God and the rest of man's knowledge.[1] For the fact of the Incarnation, if true, underlies all nature, all life, all experience, and so cannot be eliminated from the discussion for a moment. In order to come to the right conclusion about it, the mind must have a sense of the unity and

[1] Cf. Forrest, *Christ of History and of Experience*: 'St. John's Gospel views the beginning of Jesus' ministry in the light of the end.'

purpose of all history. It must have a sense of proportion. 'The past and the present must be regarded as constituting one whole, or history becomes meaningless.' And then it is that we see the strength of the proof for the Incarnation. 'It centres round the Resurrection of our blessed Lord, and the Resurrection differs from other historic facts in being a living fact present still in the Church and in the hearts of believers. It is not a mere event in history, but a present and operative force among men' (Strong, p. 89). In the same spirit Forrest, in his valuable book, *The Christ of History and of Experience*, remarks that 'the verification of Christianity is exceptional, for its historic fact is not an isolated event or saying, but a Personality, and a Personality of unparalleled type' (p. 314).

But, in spite of evidence which appears to Christian minds so convincing, the question has been asked, Is not such a fact as the Incarnation *à priori* impossible? In other words, Is not God bound by the order of the world which He has made? The strength of the negative answer lies, says Dean Strong, in the fact that the physical world is utilized and managed by spiritual forces, and that the notion of end or purpose is necessary to the rational interpretation of the world. The order of Nature is, therefore, a moral rather than a merely physical order. It demands something higher than itself. Thus the Incarnation becomes the true and necessary consummation of the natural order. For, though it is true that God cannot change His purpose, it is not true that He cannot purpose a change. And we have no right to be sure that physical uniformity exhausts the purpose of God (Strong, p. 67). There is much more to be known about Him than the order of Nature could possibly reveal. Hence we have miracles. In them, 'God, retaining unchanged His purpose of self-revelation, adapts the physical order to it in a way which, from the point of view of that physical order, is strange and startling, but, from the point of view of the will of God and of that wider view of nature which covers all, His self-manifestations through the world, they are natural enough' (Strong, p. 68).

The Incarnation, thus regarded, 'is in organic continuity with the progress of the world.' 'There is no violent, unnatural breach with the past.' 'It fulfils, it does not destroy.' It fits in with the idea, expressed in Evolution, of advance from the simple to the more complex, till human life and society, morality and religion, emerge at the end. Even looking at evolution from the standpoint of purely physical order, the Incarnation is necessary to remedy failure at a particular point. For 'the whole is a gradually intensifying manifestation of Himself by God,' and the climax is not reached in man, but in

> That God which ever lives and loves,
> One God, One Law, One Element,
> And one far-off divine event
> To which the whole creation moves.

On the other hand, if we look at the purely moral conception of Nature, 'by which Nature is regarded as a great appeal to man, a great manifestation of purpose and love,' here, again, the Incarnation of Christ is a climax; it gathers up into itself all that has gone before and explains the early stages of the process (Strong, p. 72). 'Grant that the purpose of God is to reveal Himself to man, and then the gathering together the broken lights into the Person of the Light of the World involves no spasmodic change of will, no sudden veering of purpose, but only alters, and alters for good, the views men might have entertained before' (p. 72). If, then, the Incarnation thus fulfils the natural order and the natural aspirations of man, there is no *à priori* impossibility about it. It may be accepted upon historic evidence.

The truth of the Incarnation gives us insight into the Being of God at the same time that it throws light upon the destiny of man. It is indeed only through this fact that we can approach the truth of the Holy Trinity at all. 'The Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity represents the effect of the Incarnation on the doctrine of the true God. If the Incarnation in the Christian sense be true, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is true also' (Strong, p. 136). For, without the revelation contained in it, all speculation upon God may become anthropomorphic. The most philosophic theory of His nature may be as anthropomorphic as the most crude. Though the late Herbert Spencer made merry over mediæval representations of the Holy Trinity, yet 'it may be doubted whether his Infinite, Eternal, and Unknowable Power is less anthropomorphic.' The conception of *time* as applied to God is our greatest danger. But, as the truth of the Incarnation consists in the eternal generation of the Son before all time, His entry

into time is no longer an essential feature of His being.

Again, we think of each Divine Person as He is unfolded to us in and through the Incarnation. When we think of God the Son it is not as the uncreated Word; it is as the Word made flesh tabernacling among us, as the Life become the Light of men. Thus, through the Incarnation, the Person of God the Word is revealed to men. And it is the same with God the Holy Spirit. 'It is,' writes Canon Moberly (*Atonement and Personality*, p. 181), 'as sequel and consummation of the accomplished completeness of the Incarnation that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit begins to be unveiled to man's thought at all; as sequel, because the manifestation of the Holy Ghost must follow, and could not precede, the Incarnate Life of God; as consummation, because the significance and work of Incarnation and Atonement would be, after all, without the presence of the Holy Ghost (that is, the presence of God as Spirit within Man's central self), incomplete.' Thus the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is revealed to us in connexion with, and in terms of, the Incarnation. Not that for a moment we believe that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost have not an eternal distinctness as Three Persons in One God *apart* from that fact, but that only *through* the Incarnation can their being be truly brought home to us. And thus we come, at least dimly, to realize how Personality can be realized in a glorious sense far beyond all those thoughts of limitation and exclusion which we associate with human personality; how there may be Three Persons in One supreme, glorious fulness of Personality; how God as Spirit, as Light, as Love can be eternally self-sufficient in a Divine Fellowship, of perfect mutuality, which has no lack of subject and object and relation, and yet find in the law of His being a motive for the creation of the world, that man may share His glories. And we can see also how through all the ages God has been entering through the Word into Nature, how 'that which hath been made is life in Him' (St. John 1^3, marg. R.V.); how all nature in all its developments has been instinct with the presence of a God immanent yet transcendent; how the final manifestation of God the Word in human flesh has been 'from the ages of the ages' the final cause of Creation, the splendid destiny reserved, even apart from the Fall, for man, the great climax towards which all its natural evolutions as well as its supernatural crises have been tending.

But as a matter of fact, as the old Sarum collect has it, man is 'bowed down under the yoke of the ancient bondage of sin' and 'cast down by the guilt of his own deeds.' And it is when we view the Incarnation in the shadow of the Fall that it means most to us. For that Fall is a historic fact, affirmed by all Scripture, and not by one narrative only, and confirmed by the deepest facts of man's nature. The present form of that narrative may possibly in its scenery be allegorical, may even have sprung in some respects from Babylonian legend. But it is still the historic account of man's collapse. Even the form which the Temptation is represented as taking has nothing incredible or impossible about it (Strong, p. 243). Bishop Westcott once wrote that there is no view of human nature so hopeless as that which denies the Fall. Holy Scripture is borne out by man's own instincts when it denies that evil is necessary and teaches us to regard it as an avoidable tragedy for which man himself is responsible. 'Conscience convicts,' says Dean Strong, 'not of mistake, not of inevitable delusion, but . . . of sin.' Original sin is the affirmation of the fact, to which science is bearing an ever fuller testimony, of the power of heredity and the solidarity of the whole human race.

Sin came and man died. Christ came and man lived again. 'The evidence of the Bible is certain and clear (1) upon the necessity of a breach in the old connexion—in the sinful succession of mankind; (2) and also in the fact that this breach actually took place' (Strong, p. 270). 'The Word of God eternally generated and of one substance with the Father, for us men and for our salvation came down from Heaven and was made man.' Being more than man He could take on all human nature. This humanity of God is more and more the thought upon which the faith and hopes of men are converging. (See Van Dyke's *Gospel for an Age of Doubt*, c. iv.) And this is the claim which Christ makes to the faith and love of men. 'It is not because He is the best of men that humanity bows before Him as the Son of God, but just because, being the best of men, He is also something more, and can do for it what none other can. His transcendence of human experience alike in His life, death, and resurrection in one way isolates Him from us. But it is this very transcendence

which is the condition of our finally reaching His blessedness. Christianity is not an idealism; it is an achievement' (Forrest, *Christ of History and of Experience*).

The Incarnate One entered thus into our whole human nature. He became man, archetypal, universal, representative man, free from all particularities and peculiarities of race or age or station. 'Man of the substance of His mother, born in the world,' gathering up into Himself all the characteristics of our common humanity, ideally and perfectly man, in perfect fellowship with the Father, in perfect sympathy with fallen man. He thus 'recapitulated humanity' (Strong, p. 276). Thus, only thus, could He reveal the present degradation, the future possibilities, the everlasting destiny of human nature. Thus, only thus, could He atone for sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And this He did when, upon the Cross, He dealt with *Sin*, offering what man could not offer, the perfect penitence of the sinless One, thus restoring man's will into harmony with that of His Father; when, again, on the Cross He dealt with *Guilt*, demonstrating the righteousness of God in punishing sin and thus securing the sinner's forgiveness which he himself could not secure; when, on the Cross again, He dealt with *Sanctification*, through the outpoured Blood ('wherein is the life'), releasing the life which is the secret of man's cleansing and man's renewal, bringing home to us the gift of the Spirit whereby man is awakened to his true possibilities. For, though 'Pentecost could not be without Calvary,' and 'Calvary is the possibility of Pentecost,' yet 'Pentecost is the realization, in human spirits, of Calvary' (*Atonement and Personality*, p. 152).

Recent Biblical and Oriental Archaeology.

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Who was Balaam?

Balaam is a puzzling figure. He comes before us under different aspects which are not very easy to harmonize. He is (1) a diviner from Pethor, who, like the Aramæans, Bethuel and Laban, serves Yahweh of Israel; (2) an ally, apparently, of the Midianites in Moab in their contest with the Israelites (Nu 31^{8}), who is identified with the diviner in Jos 13^{22}; and (3) the first king of Edom, who fixed his capital at Dinhabah (Gn 36^{32}).

His name has been compared with that of Balummê, the father of the Canaanite Sum-Hadad, who is mentioned in the Tel el-Amarna tablets (Winckler, II. 18). Winckler would identify Balummê with Pâlûma, who is described by the Egyptian king as living in the land of the Amorites, north of Palestine. Pâlûma, however, whose name should rather be read Pâlûwa, is the Amorite Pâluya referred to in another letter (Winckler, 47. 9). Balummê may be non-Semitic, since we find Pastummê with a similar termination among the Alasiyan names given in the Tel el-Amarna correspondence (Winckler, 26. 21), and the same termination is found in Hittite names. It is quite possible that Balaam, abbreviated into Bela on the analogy of Milcom and Moloch, may have been an attempt to give the foreign name a Semitic appearance.

Balaam, the diviner, came from Pethor, which was a Hittite city at the confluence of the Euphrates and Sajur. It is described as being 'by the river of the land of the children of Ammo,' the Ammi of the Tel el-Amarna tablets, which is also mentioned in two of the Hittite inscriptions of Hamath. It was one of the Hittite conquests of which the Tel el-Amarna letters contain a record. Now in The Expository Times for March I have pointed out that in the Tel el-Amarna age the leaders of Hittite *condottieri* carved out principalities for themselves, like the Normans in the Middle Ages, not only in Syria but in Southern Palestine as well. Is it not possible, therefore, that Balaam, the son of Beor, was one of these Hittite chieftains who made his way into Edom, and there founded a kingdom? When the Exodus took place, the Edomites were still governed by native *alûphîm* or 'dukes' (Ex 15^{15}); when the Israelites were preparing to invade Canaan, Edom had passed under the rule of a king (Nu 20^{14}). That the first king of Edom