

ARTICLE VII.

TWO HISTORIES OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE.

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[*Concluded from page 185.*]

WE paused in our review of Thomasius' and Harnack's Histories of Doctrine with the close of the fundamental part of Harnack's work, and the beginning of his description of the formation of the system of doctrine in the church. We resume at this point, and attempt to trace the development of the system as Harnack describes it.

In closing the previous article we gave expression to the hope that we might find the remaining portion of the work "less marked by great faults, and more fruitful in valuable suggestions." We hoped, in particular, that the history might assume less of a destructive character, less that of a controversial tract, and more that of the objective history. And we expected, if this should be the case, that Professor Harnack's great familiarity with his theme, and extraordinary mastery of its details, would enable him to render essential service in interpreting the yet dark periods of the distant past. These expectations are to a certain extent met. In the purely descriptive parts, where details are to be presented, and where the question is simply whether the historian has sufficient knowledge of the subject under discussion rightly to understand the writers whom he is perusing, and where discrimination in weighing single elements of the development and faithfulness in reproducing them before the reader, as well as power of clear statement, are the main qualifications for the work, Harnack's success is great, and the service that he has rendered to the discipline eminent. But in those portions where the points of transition are to be brought to the reader's notice, and where the history is to be interpreted, and its worth, conformity to its origin, and value as a means of instruction to future generations are to be estimated,—in short, in the grander reaches of the historian's task, the old phenomena reappear, and the same perversion and misrepresentation of the course of events, of which we have repeatedly complained, disfigure the result. Professor Harnack's effort has been, as he remarks in the preface of the second volume, "to set forth the theme in a form which must be read in connection; for a work upon the History of Doctrine which is used only as a book of reference, has failed of its highest purpose." This book, on account of its novel opinions, and its rush and vivacity of style, will at first be read as its author wishes; but, unless we are greatly mistaken, it will finally

be laid aside and relegated to the precise use which the writer deprecates, that of a book of reference, prized indeed for its minute investigations, a trusted guide in regions where the dogmatic prejudices of its author have not marred it, but in its "highest purpose" thoroughly distrusted and unused.

We shall not pause long upon these less successful parts of the work. Enough to quote such illustrations as shall justify the criticism and put the reader on his guard. An instance in point occurs as soon as the Apologists are touched. We have noted the difficulty which Harnack has had from the beginning in explaining the origin of the doctrine of the Logos. The difficulty has not been surmounted when he comes to the same doctrine in these writers. He says correctly that they are not influenced by the idea which is the ground of the view of Philo,—to interpose a being between God and his Universe for the sake of separating him from defiling matter,—but he goes on to say also that they are not all determined by their view of the person of Jesus Christ, and seems to treat the topic in a way to suggest, or perhaps state, that the course of thought with them all was the following: (1) The idea of God which had been derived from their theory of the universe contained the element of personality, but also that of the plenitude of all spiritual potencies. Hence a formula was needed which should embrace both the supermundane and immutable character of God on the one hand, and on the other the plenitude of the creative spiritual potencies. These must be combined by the same formula in a unity. Thus originates the concept of the Logos, which must be regarded as distinct from God from the moment when the realization of the creative potencies is conceived of as beginning. "The Logos is the hypostasis of the effective force of reason, which on the one hand preserves the unity and unchangeability of God in spite of the realization of the potencies which abide in him, and on the other hand make this same realization possible." (2) So in reference to Revelation, it is impossible to think of the Fulness of all Being as speaking, revealing. This demands a divine Word, which is the Logos, who is thus not only the creating reason of God, but also the revealing Word.

Now, we submit that it is more philosophical to interpret the other Apologists from their teacher and model Justin as a starting-point than *vice versa*. As Justin and Tertullian do, according to Harnack, "manifest a specific interest in the Incarnation," and indeed make the historical personage of Jesus Christ the centre of their thoughts and reasonings, it is sufficient to say that the explanation of the Logos doctrine must be sought in this fact, and in the forms of language which the apostle John used in his Gospel. We do not forget, while we do not accept, Harnack's rejection of the historical nature and apostolicity of this Gospel. After the idea of a Logos is once gained from the Gospel, the admission of such philosophical ideas as to the realization of the powers of God as are above sketched, is intelligible, and hence the true historical method, having accepted the evidence for the authenticity of the Gospel first, would then explain the more abstruse thought from the simpler, and not the opposite. Harnack himself sees

“dependence on the old Christian tradition in the fact that the Apologists name the Logos expressly ‘the Son of God.’” It were better to give this element greater prominence, and thus do away with this long, labored, and unsatisfactory deduction of what is perfectly plain to an ordinary mind.

We select for a second example the treatment, partly correct, and partly marked by the erroneous style of discussion which we are reviewing, of the christological controversy in the time of Cyril. After a review of the Antiochian school, which is helpful in a high degree, Harnack comes to the Alexandrian school. It follows in the line of the older efforts of church writers, like Irenæus, Athanasius, and the Cappadocians, and is governed by the soteriological interest, to make redemption one which shall be appropriate to men as they are. Now, as Harnack thinks, a real incarnation is possible only upon the basis of the ideas of Apollinaris, by whom the human $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ was replaced by the Logos. But this would not suit the ideas of the Alexandrians. The Christian must have a constant and strong feeling of the *mystery* of the subject. Hence Cyril occupies himself with controversy with the Antiochians, and only rarely attempts a positive definition of the doctrine himself, and then only to fall into Apollinarianism. The distinguishing marks of Cyril’s christology are these: he “expressly rejects the view that there is an individual man in Christ, although he ascribes to him all the elements of humanity.” Everything depends for Cyril’s doctrine on the actuality of such a human nature, else human nature as such cannot be redeemed, and yet this human nature must after the incarnation be one with the Logos. But this, with every view which does not take the ground that Christ was an individual man, is monophysitism. Cyril, it is true, does not mean to be a monophysite, and insists on “perfect humanity, unconfounded natures,” but these speculations which deal with “substances, as if there were no living personalities in the case, are after all nothing.” “The logical contradiction involved is fundamentally no more difficult to get along with than the whole method of procedure. Both together constitute the great mystery of the faith.” The process of thought demanded finally that a formula should be obtained which should define the faith and protect it against Apollinarianism more completely than the phrase “perfect humanity” had done. “The contradictions must be strengthened still more, so that not only the *concrete* union of the two natures should be a mystery, but even the *concept* of the union should contain a *contradictio in adjecto*, and become a mystery.”

Now, this is not a denial or perversion of the facts, as the other cases we have considered were, but it is an interpretation of ideas by a man who is hostile to them, and therefore fails to perceive their full meaning. One would think that even a man entirely outside Christianity would see that so great a body of men as the church could not be held for so many centuries in the belief of a real logical contradiction. There must be beneath the imperfect phraseology some self-consistent idea which holds men, if the phraseology is so imperfect. But Harnack is so out of sympathy with the course of the Christian history that he cannot see anything but contradiction, or worse, even a play

with words without meaning, in the struggles of the great thinkers of the ages to put thoughts too profound for ready comprehension into a satisfactory form of expression. His criticism of Thomasius may be turned against himself. He says: "Thomasius in his presentation of the christology of Cyril finds only difficulties, not contradictions." Of himself it might be said: Harnack unduly presses forms of verbal expression,—"*treibt Consequenzmacherei*,"—sees logical contradictions instead of considering ideas and seeking to get at the meaning of the fathers. His criticisms remind one of the standard objection of American Unitarians to the Trinity, that it is a contradiction of the fundamental laws of mathematics.

With these general criticisms, we turn now to the pleasanter task of reviewing Harnack's development of the history. The remaining portion of the first volume is occupied with completing the history of the *rise* of ecclesiastical dogma by adding to the history of the rise of the church as a system that of the rise of the doctrinal ideas themselves which were gradually formed in the church, and which constituted the basis of the subsequent development. The Apologists are the first group of men to fall under the historian's notice, and are discussed under the conception that their historical position required that they should regard Christianity as a philosophy, and attempt to justify it in the eyes of the philosophic world about them as the highest wisdom and the absolute truth. The demand in the heathen world for a system of certainty founded upon a revelation naturally defined the Apologists' problem, and suggested the lines of their reflection. And hence we find, as the result of their efforts, the establishment of a system in which a monotheistic cosmology, a system of morals, and the doctrine of revelation are the chief elements. In general they teach that "Christianity is a philosophy because it appeals to the intellect, because it gives a satisfying and intelligible answer to the questions which have concerned all true philosophy; but it is not a philosophy, it is properly the exact reverse of a philosophy, so far as it is derived from revelation, that is, has a supernatural, divine origin upon which alone the truth and the certainty of its doctrines rest." A full statement of the doctrinal teachings of each of the Apologists follows, in which a multitude of details are so presented that it is easy to get light upon almost any point that may suggest itself to the independent student of these authors.

The next stage of the history is given by those writers who, in opposition to the efforts of the Gnostics to supply a philosophic explanation of Christianity, began the ecclesiastical and theological explanation of the Rule of Faith within the church itself. These are, of course, Irenæus and his compeers, Tertullian, Hippolytus, etc. It is Harnack's merit to have done here what he has in many other places, and thereby made a great advance on Thomasius, viz., to have considered the period before him as a whole, brought into the range of his treatment all the various accessible writers, and reduced, so far as possible, the theological thought of the age to a characteristic system, and thus marked off distinctly the stage of progress to which it had come. To be sure, with him it is a state of "secularization," or what not, to which

the church has come; but it may nevertheless be to the more objective historian, progress towards a fuller apprehension of the contents of the divine revelation. Thus we find here, what we missed in Thomasius, a summary of the system of Irenæus, and such hints as to the doctrines of other "anti-gnostic" fathers as the unsystematic character of their remains will allow. Irenæus, says Harnack, kept in mind constantly, as his fundamental thought, the conception of the identity of the Creator of the world with the highest God, and was guided in the development of his system by the conviction that Christianity is a realistic redemption, and that this is brought to pass solely through the coming of Christ. From this view of redemption comes the theory of recapitulation, which in its turn suggests the most important features of the system. Redemption is the deification (*Vergottung*) of human nature by the bestowment upon it of immortality. In explanation of this view Irenæus is led to put the question as to the cause of the incarnation, and, in fact, to give it a central place in his consideration. The old Logos-doctrine now gives way to the doctrine of Christ as God become man. The answer to the question is briefly: Man is created capable of immortality; he is destined for it; but he is subject to death. He can be crowned with immortality only when the possessor of this unites himself with human nature and thus adopts it. Hence the incarnation. In this Christ "recapitulates" or repeats in the higher and ideal form, all that Adam was, or was designed to be, and thus sets forth the ideal of humanity, and thus brings man back to this ideal. It is a recapitulation because God the Creator, and God the Redeemer are identical, and God now effects that which it was his plan from the beginning to effect, but which sin had interfered to prevent. When, now, under the influence of this idea, Irenæus comes to treat of the Logos, he does not identify him with the idea of the world, or the reason of God, etc., etc., but begins with the Jesus Christ who is both God and man. He does not treat of the inter-trinitarian relations; but on the other hand he calls the pre-existent Logos "Son of God." The Son is the revelation of the Father, and there is no distinction of being between them. In connection with these ideas Irenæus develops his christology, which is his great historical service, and which remains, says Harnack, in the church now just as he left it. Over against the Gnostic who made a distinction between Jesus and Christ, Irenæus maintains, with as much earnestness as he does the doctrine of the Creator, that the "Son of God was made Son of man." It is his problem to show (1) that Jesus Christ is really the Word of God, *i.e.*, God; (2) that this Word really became man; and (3) that the incarnate word is an inseparable unity. Irenæus conceives the unity of the human and divine as so intimate that he does not always stop to distinguish between what the man knows, and what God knows; but when it seems as if a merely ideal humanity would be thus introduced, Irenæus is ready to let this intimate unity sink out of sight, as for example in the temptations. There is, says Harnack, a tendency in Irenæus to put the two natures merely side by side, without a true union, and this, he thinks, shows that the doctrine of the two natures

was the *catholic* way of explaining the *filius dei filius hominis factus* which the Gnostics explained by their distinction between Jesus and Christ!

We have lingered so long over this presentation of Irenæus' doctrine, because it is a good illustration of the best features of Harnack's work. The comprehensiveness, the minuteness of detailed study, the historical instinct, keenness of analysis, and mastery of details which form the best characteristics of the work, are all excellently displayed here. We hasten on to a more rapid sketch of the following portions.

Upon these beginnings of Irenæus come in the next stage, the introduction of the idea of a *system* of doctrine and the first attempts at the formation of the same by Clement and Origen. After a section tracing the history of the different schools of thought in the church, Harnack proceeds to set forth the system of Origen in the same excellent manner as he has previously set forth that of Irenæus. The last step in describing the rise of the dogmatic system can now be taken in the discussion of the successful introduction, as Harnack calls it, of the Logos-Christology into the church. This is effected through the exclusion of dynamistic and modalistic Monarchianism, the discussion as to which forms the theme of the last one hundred pages of the first volume. Methodius is regarded as closing this epoch by the attempt to unite in one system the theology of Irenæus and that of Origen. The different churches also begin to introduce into the Rule of Faith the formulæ of speculative theology.

Thus the history of the *rise* of the dogmatic system is completed. The second volume is occupied with the first book of the *development* of the dogma. After a chapter upon "historical orientation," the fundamental conception of salvation and the system of doctrine in outline are treated. The positive history begins with the doctrine of the Scriptures, tradition, and the church. The three divisions of the subject are then made, natural theology, the doctrine of redemption in the person of the God-man, the cultus. We shall confine our review to the second of these heads.

In the Greek conception of theology, natural theology held the chief place. Nothing would have been sufficient to bring it down from this pre-eminence except an historical fact of so great magnitude that it could not be ignored. Such a one was found in the incarnation. This could be considered, however, only in connection with some point of the natural system, and the most appropriate one was that fact which seemed the more irrational the higher the worth which was laid upon man, viz., death. The sad condition of man led to the doctrine of redemption, and the consideration of this led to the same question which Anselm subsequently asked, *Cur Deus Homo?*—a question which Athanasius attempted to answer in a youthful work concerning the incarnation of the Logos. The principal element of his answer, says Harnack, is that the Logos must assume a human body to restore humanity from the condition of death to that of immortality,—the realistic idea. Hereby the completion of humanity is effected, which consists in restoration and the communication of the divine nature to man. It was consequently a question of supreme importance for Athanasius, what the nature

of this divinity was, and what the kind of connection existing between it and man. Hence the Trinitarian controversy.

We pass over many detailed discussions, such as that of the theory of redemption of Gregory of Nyssa, and come directly to the trinitarian controversy. This began with Lucian of Antioch, the Arius before Arius. The history proceeds to Arius himself, and the general course of the events from his appearance to the Council is well described. Before the Council itself, summaries and criticisms of the doctrines both of Arius and Athanasius are given which are marvels of their kind. They are written with great clearness, fulness, and impartial correctness, although with that of Athanasius Harnack does not pretend to have much sympathy. At one point, after a brilliant defence of the position that Athanasius taught the numerical unity of the Father and Son, he says: "The twofoldness is only a relative one —if one may write the nonsense—: the twofoldness of archetype and image." And here, about one of the most fundamental of all the doctrines of theology, the most important and valuable collection of detailed investigations, embodied in the briefest possible notes, have been gathered by the unparalleled industry of the author.

The view of Arius given by Harnack does not differ essentially from that of Thomasius, nor indeed, with the abundant materials before us, can there be much doubt as to what Arius believed and taught. Harnack then passes over to the orthodox party before the Council of Nice as represented in the writings of Bishop Alexander. This writer does not seem to him to have risen above "confused thoughts and formulæ," but he gives to Athanasius the full tribute of his admiration. Yet Athanasius' greatness does not consist so much in the objective value of his theological utterances as in his general conception of the problem, and in his personality. "The entire faith, all for which Athanasius staked his life, is contained in the one sentence: God became man" ("*in die Menschheit eingegangen*," elsewhere "*Mensch geworden*"). Both Arius and Athanasius have advanced a great way beyond previous church teachers in that they have established the difference which exists between the Creator and the creature. Origen had indeed made a difference between the Creator and the material creation, but gave to the Logos an intermediate and ambiguous position. In distinction from all previous teachers, Arius, and Athanasius also, declares that God needs no intermediate being. He creates directly. This is, according to Harnack, a separating of the idea of the divine which appeared in Jesus Christ from the cosmological ideas with which it had been involved up to this time. The divine Son, Jesus Christ, is no longer the "principle of the universe," but the "principle of salvation." As to this, some exceptions may be made in favor of Justin Martyr and the other Church Fathers, who do not seem to be guided so exclusively by the cosmological idea as Harnack thinks.

We may make a few quotations from the criticism which Harnack makes upon Arius and Athanasius. He says: "We are first to get clearly before us the common elements of the doctrine of these two teachers. Religion and doctrine subsist in the most intimate connection according to the con-

ception of both, and indeed, formally considered, the doctrine is the same in both, that is, the fundamental ideas are the same. The doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ....forms the common basis. Both are interested in maintaining the unity of God, and the strict distinction of Creator from creature. Finally, both seek to establish their doctrine from the Scriptures, and both claim for themselves the tradition of the church. Both are convinced that the Scriptures, and not tradition, are to have the decisive authority....But the theology of Arius consists of two entirely distinct portions: First, he has a Christ who gradually becomes God....*i. e.*, he teaches Adoptionism. And secondly, he connects with this a metaphysical system which is derived entirely from cosmology, and has nothing whatever to do with christology....As cosmologist, he is a strict monotheist, as theologian a polytheist....The doctrine of Origen is not the foundation of his system, and that which it has in common with the orthodox system is not its characteristic, but a secondary element. It is derived from the doctrine of Paul of Samosata.... It is a new doctrine in the church....It is really Hellenism....Only the old names have been retained....It is full of inner difficulties and contradictions which Athanasius has discovered, and as to which he is almost everywhere in the right.... Arius and his friends do not give the impression that they are concerned in their theology with establishing communion with God. Their doctrine of Christ has, in fact, nothing to do with this question.... Whoever allows religion to evaporate in cosmology and in the veneration of an heroic teacher, however high he may put him.... is according to his religious sentiments a Hellenist.... Had the Arian doctrine gained the victory, it would probably have entirely ruined Christianity, *i. e.*, resolved it into cosmology and ethics and destroyed religion in the religion."

Passing now to Athanasius, Harnack says: "Nothing can better illustrate the perverse state of the problem as conceived in the Arian controversy (!) than the plain fact that the man who preserved the character of Christianity as a religion of living communion with God, had destroyed in his christology nearly every trace of the historical Jesus of Nazareth.... Christ for us is the divinity: in the Son we have the Father.... This idea is not new, for it was never wanting in the church. The fourth Gospel, Ignatius, Irenæus, etc., prove this. [How can Harnack maintain his position as to this whole doctrine, so often illustrated, in the face of this confessed fact?] But so clearly conceived, in such confidence of victory, so strongly and simply expressed, it never was since the days in which the fourth Gospel was written.... The faith which Athanasius represented was strongly maintained, and saved the Christian church." Yet Harnack has other things to say: "When Athanasius expressed his belief in the essential unity of the ultimate Godhead with that which appeared in Christ, he fell into an abyss of contradictions.... The Father is himself perfect, and sufficient unto himself; yet, although Father and Son are one essence (in the sense of a single nature), the Father is 'The God,' also the

principle and root of the Son. *Quot verba, tot scandala!* What contains a complete contradiction cannot be correct. . . . It consumed two generations to bring the church to recognize in the perfect contradiction the holy privilege of revelation."

We thus close our hasty review of this great work. Marred as it is by one fundamental error and by many lesser defects which will greatly impair its usefulness, it is nevertheless in its plan, and in the thoroughness and boldness of its execution a great, and in many particulars a valuable work. It is the antithesis of Thomasius in many respects, and though in some of these it falls far below that, in others it rises above it. The model History of Doctrine needs to combine the excellences and avoid the defects of both of these works. It needs to have the devout faith, the Christian spirit, the churchly sympathies of Thomasius, and the comprehensive range of Harnack. It must know with the former what is important, vital, in the line of progress, and helpful in the solution of the problems of the church, and with the latter, where more detailed studies in the philosophy of the times or among insignificant writers will cast illustrative light upon the great actors in the drama. It must preserve the clearness of the former in tracing the history through the tangled mass of details; but it must have the sense of the unity and distinctness of each period in itself which marks the latter. It must recognize the teaching of the Holy Spirit with the former; it must also see that the men who wrote in the ancient church were men in fact, and seek the explanation of their course in the same conditions which govern men to-day, as does the latter. Thus orthodox teachers must profit in this case as they always should, from the services of those who stand in a certain sense without the pale of historical Christianity, and must combine excellences of every sort in their attempts to set forth the truth of God after whatever manner. When a History of Doctrine shall be written with the spirit of Thomasius and after the general method of Harnack, a very great, decisive, and permanent advance in this department of theological science will have been made.