

The History of Opinions Relating to Jesus Christ*

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THE INTRODUCTION

The *unity of God* is a doctrine on which the greatest stress is laid in the whole system of revelation. To guard this most important article was the principal object of the Jewish religion: and, notwithstanding the proneness of the Jews to idolatry, at length it fully answered its purpose in reclaiming them, and in impressing the minds of many persons of other nations in favor of the same fundamental truth.

The Jews were taught by their prophets to expect a Messiah, who was to be descended from the tribe of Judah, and the family of David — a person in whom themselves and all the nations of the earth should be blessed; but none of their prophets gave them an idea of any other than a man like themselves in that illustrious character, and no other did they ever expect, or do they expect to this day.

Jesus Christ, whose history answers to the description given of the Messiah by the prophets, made no other pretensions; referring all his extraordinary power to God, his Father, who, he expressly says, spake and acted by him, and who raised him from the dead: and it is most evident that the apostles, and all those who conversed with our Lord before and after his resurrection, considered him in no other light than simply as “a man approved of God, by wonders and signs which God did by him” (Acts 2:22).

* Excerpted from *A History of the Corruptions of Christianity* (Birmingham, England, 1782), 1-16.

Not only do we find no trace of so prodigious a change in the ideas which the apostles entertained concerning Christ, as from that of *a man like themselves* (which it must be acknowledged were the first that they entertained) to that of *the most high God*, or one who was in any sense their *maker* or *preserver*, but when their minds were most fully enlightened, after the descent of the Holy Spirit, and to the latest period of their ministry, they continued to speak of him in the same style; even when it is evident they must have intended to speak of him in a manner suited to his state of greatest exaltation and glory. Peter uses the simple language above quoted, of *a man approved of God*, immediately after the descent of the Spirit: and the apostle Paul, giving what may be called the Christian creed, says, "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus," (1 Tim. 2:5). He does not say the *God*, the *God-man*, or the *super-angelic being*, but simply *the man* Christ Jesus; and nothing can be alleged from the New Testament in favor of any higher nature of Christ, except a few passages interpreted without any regard to the context, or the modes of speech and opinions of the times in which the books were written, and in such a manner, in other respects, as would authorize our proving any doctrine whatever from them.

From this plain doctrine of the Scriptures, a doctrine so consonant to reason and the ancient prophecies, Christians have at length come to believe what they do not pretend to have any conception of, and than which it is not possible to frame a more express contradiction. For, while they consider Christ as the supreme, eternal God, the maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible, they moreover acknowledge the Father and the Holy Spirit to be equally *God* in the same exalted sense, all three equal in power and glory, and yet all three constituting no more than one God.

To a person the least interested in the inquiry, it must appear an object of curiosity to trace by what means, and by what steps, so great a change has taken place, and what circumstances in the history of other opinions, and of the world, proved favorable to the successive changes. An opinion, and especially an opinion adopted by great numbers of mankind, is to be considered as any other *fact in history*, for it cannot be produced without an *adequate cause*, and is therefore a proper object of philosophical inquiry. In this case I think it not difficult to find causes abundantly adequate to the purpose, and it is happily in our power to trace almost every step by which the changes have been successively brought about.

If the interest that mankind have generally taken in anything will at all contribute to interest us in the inquiry concerning it, this history cannot fail

to be highly interesting. For, perhaps, in no business whatever have the minds of men been more agitated, and, *speculative* as the nature of the thing is, in few cases has the peace of society been so much disturbed. To this very day, of such importance is the subject considered by thousands and tens of thousands that they cannot write or speak of it without the greatest zeal, and without treating their opponents with the greatest rancor. If good sense and humanity did not interpose to mitigate the rigor of law, thousands would be sacrificed to the cause of orthodoxy on this single article; and the greatest number of sufferers would probably be in this very country, on account of the greater freedom of inquiry which prevails here, in consequence of which we entertain and profess the greatest diversity of opinions.

The various steps in this interesting history it is now my business to point out, and I wish that all my readers may attend me with as much coolness and impartiality as I trust I shall myself preserve through the whole of this investigation.¹

SECTION I.

OF THE OPINION OF THE ANCIENT JEWISH AND GENTILE CHURCHES

That the ancient Jewish church must have held the opinion that Christ was simply a *man*, and not either *God Almighty*, or a *super-angelic being*, may be concluded from its being the clear doctrine of the Scripture, and from the apostles having taught no other; but there is sufficient evidence of the same thing from ecclesiastical history. It is unfortunate, indeed, that there are now extant so few remains of any of the writers who immediately succeeded the

¹ The following anecdote respecting the *History* will show that the *spirit* of the *Synod of Dort* had survived two centuries. "This book was burnt by the hands of the common hangman in the city of Dort, province of Holland, anno 1785: a piece of intelligence communicated by me to Dr. Priestley in the hotel where I lodged in Birmingham, in a conversation I had the pleasure of having with that extraordinary man, a few weeks after that event. Having asked me with much earnestness how he would be received in Holland, were he to appear there, I told him I did not exactly know how they might treat the original, but that he himself might be able to determine that point when I had told him that he had been burnt in effigy at Dort, a few weeks before I left Holland — a person's writings being often viewed as a picture of his mind, the burning of his *Corruptions* might be easily considered as burning *himself* in *effigy*. He deplored our ignorance and blindness. A greater philanthropist I never met with." *Note* by the Rev. Thomas Peirson, D.D., senior minister of the established English church in the city of Amsterdam. *Bibliotheca Peirsoniana*, 211.

This was not the first attempt to confute the author's opinions by the argument of *fire*. "In 1782, previous to the sale by auction of the Abbé Needham's library at *Bruxelles*, the licensers, as usual, went to burn the prohibited books. They destroyed 'Cudworth's Intellectual System,' *Priestley's Hartley*, a New Testament, and many others; but 'Christianity as old as the Creation' escaped the flames." *Mon. Mag.* xxxiv. 521.

apostles, and especially that we have only a few inconsiderable fragments of Hegesippus, a Jewish Christian who wrote the history of the church in continuation of the *Acts of the Apostles*, and who traveled to Rome about the year 160; but it is not difficult to collect evidence in support of my assertion.

The members of the Jewish church were, in general, in very low circumstances, which may account for their having few persons of learning among them; on which account they were much despised by the richer and more learned gentile Christians, especially after the destruction of Jerusalem, before which event all the Christians in Judea (warned by our Savior's prophecies concerning the desolation of that country) had retired to the northeast of the sea of Galilee. They were likewise despised by the Gentiles for their bigoted adherence to the law of Moses, to the rite of circumcision, and other ceremonies of their ancient religion. And on all these accounts they probably got the name of *Ebionites*, which signifies *poor* and *mean*, in the same manner as many of the early reformers from Popery got the name of *Beghards*, and other appellations of a similar nature. The fate of these ancient Jewish Christians was, indeed, peculiarly hard. For, besides the neglect of the gentile Christians, they were, as Epiphanius informs us, held in the greatest abhorrence by the Jews from whom they had separated, and who cursed them in a solemn manner three times, whenever they met for a public worship.²

In general these ancient Jewish Christians retained the appellation of Nazarenes, and it may be inferred from Origen, Epiphanius, and Eusebius, that the Nazarenes and Ebionites were the same people, and held the same tenets, though some of them supposed that Christ was the son of Joseph as well as of Mary, while others of them held that he had no natural father, but had a miraculous birth.³ Epiphanius, in his account of the Nazarenes (and the Jewish Christians never went by any other name) makes no mention of any of them believing the divinity of Christ, in any sense of the word.

It is particularly remarkable that Hegesippus, in giving an account of the heresies of his time, though he mentions the Carpocratians, Valentinians, and others who were generally termed Gnostics (and who held that Christ had a pre-existence, and was man only in appearance), not only makes no mention of this supposed heresy of the Nazarenes or Ebionites, but says that, in his travels to Rome, where he spent some time with Anicetus, and visited the bishops of other sees, he found that they all held the same doctrine that was

² Epiphanius Opera, 1682. (Haer. 29) I. 124.

³ *Ibid.* 123, 125.

taught in the law, by the prophets, and by our Lord.⁴ What could this be but the proper Unitarian doctrine held by the Jews, and which he himself had been taught?

That Eusebius doth not expressly say what this faith was is no wonder, considering his prejudice against the Unitarians of his own time. He speaks of the Ebionites as persons whom a malignant demon had brought into his power;⁵ and though he speaks of them as holding that Jesus was the son of Joseph as well as of Mary, he speaks with no less virulence of the opinion of those of his time who believed the miraculous conception, calling their heresy *madness*. Valesius, the translator of Eusebius, was of opinion that the history of Hegesippus was neglected and lost by the ancients, on account of the errors it contained, and these errors could be no other than the Unitarian doctrine. It is possible also that it might be less esteemed on account of the very plain, unadorned style in which all the ancients say it was written.

Almost all the ancient writers who speak of what they call the heresies of the two first centuries say that they were of *two kinds*; the first were those that thought that Christ “was man in appearance only,” and the other that he was “no more than a man.”⁶ Tertullian calls the former *Docetae*, and the latter *Ebionites*. Austin, speaking of the same two sects, says that the former believed Christ to be God, but denied that he was man, whereas the latter believed him to be man, but denied that he was God. Of this latter opinion Austin owns that he himself was, till he became acquainted with the writings of Plato, which in his time were translated into Latin, and in which he learned the doctrine of the *Logos*.

Now that this second heresy, as the later writers called it, was really no heresy at all, but the plain simple truth of the gospel, may be clearly inferred from the apostle John taking no notice at all of it, though he censures the former, who believed Christ to be man only in appearance, in the severest manner. And that this was the only heresy that gave him any alarm is evident from his first epistle, 4:2, 3, where he says that “every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh [by which he must have meant *is truly a man*] is of God.” On the other hand, he says, “every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God, and this is that spirit of Antichrist, whereof you have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world.” For this was the first corruption of the Christian

⁴ Eusebii Hist. 1720, L. iv. C. xxii. 181, 182.

⁵ *Ibid.* L. iii. C. xxvii. 121.

⁶ Lardner’s Hist. of Heretics, 17. Works, IX. 234, 235.

religion by the maxims of Heathen philosophy, and which proceeded afterwards, till Christianity was brought to a state little better than Paganism.

That Christian writers afterwards should imagine that this apostle alluded to the Unitarian heresy, or that of the Ebionites, in the introduction to his gospel, is not to be wondered at; as nothing is more common than for men to interpret the writings of others according to their own previous ideas and conceptions of things. On the contrary, it seems very evident that, in that introduction, the apostle alludes to the very same system of opinions which he had censured in his epistle, the fundamental principle of which was that, not the Supreme Being Himself, but an emanation from Him, to which they gave the name of *Logos*, and which they supposed to be the Christ, inhabited the body of Jesus, and was the maker of all things; whereas he there affirms, that the *Logos* by which all things were made, was not a being distinct from God, but God Himself, that is, an attribute of God, or the divine power and wisdom. We shall see that the Unitarians of the third century charged the orthodox with introducing a new and strange interpretation of the word *logos*.⁷

That very system, indeed, which made Christ to have been the *eternal reason*, or *Logos* of the Father, did not, probably, exist in the time of the apostle John, but was introduced from the principles of Platonism afterwards. But the Valentinians, who were only a branch of the Gnostics, made great use of the same term, not only denominating by it one of the aeons in the system described by Irenaeus, but also one of them that was endowed by all the other aeons with some extraordinary gift, to which person they gave the name of *Jesus, Savior, Christ* and *Logos*.⁸

The word *logos* was also frequently used by them as synonymous to *aeon*, in general, or an intelligence that sprung, mediately or immediately, from the divine essence.⁹ It is, therefore, almost certain that the apostle John had frequently heard this term made use of, in some erroneous representations of the system of Christianity that were current in his time, and therefore he might choose to introduce the same term in its proper sense, as an *attribute of the Deity*, or *God Himself*, and not a distinct being that sprung from Him. And this writer is not to be blamed if, afterwards, that very attribute was personified in a different manner, and not as a figure of speech, and

⁷ See *Beausobre* "Histoire Critique de Manichée et du Manichéisme," I. 540. "Les Nœtiens reprochoient aux Orthodoxes, d'*introduire* un langage étrange et nouveau, en appellant le Verbe, Fils de Dieu." L. iii. Ch. vi. Sect. xi.

⁸ *Irenaei Opera*, 1702. L. i. Sect. iv. 14.

⁹ *Beausobre*, I. 571. L. iii. Ch. ix. Sect. iii.

consequently his language was made to convey a very different meaning from that which he affixed to it.

Athanasius himself was so far from denying that the primitive Jewish church was properly Unitarian, maintaining the simple humanity and not the divinity of Christ, that he endeavors to account for it by saying that “all the Jews were so firmly persuaded that their Messiah was to be nothing more than a man like themselves that the apostles were obliged to use great caution in divulging the doctrine of the proper divinity of Christ.”¹⁰ But what the apostles did not teach, I think we should be cautious how we believe. The apostles were never backward to combat other Jewish prejudices, and certainly would have opposed this opinion of theirs, if it had been an error. For if it had been an error at all, it must be allowed to have been an error of the greatest consequence.

Could it rouse the indignation of the apostle John so much as to call those *Antichrist*, who held that *Christ was not come in the flesh*, or was not truly man; and would he have passed uncensured those who denied the divinity of his Lord and Master, if he himself had thought him to be true and very God, his Maker as well as his Redeemer? We may therefore safely conclude that an opinion allowed to have prevailed in his time, and maintained by all the Jewish Christians afterwards, was what he himself and the other apostles had taught them, and therefore that it is the very truth; and consequently that the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, or of his being any more than a man, is an innovation, in whatever manner it may have been introduced.

Had the apostles explained themselves distinctly and fully, as its importance, if it had been true, required, on the subject of the *proper divinity of Christ*, as a person equal to the Father, it can never be imagined that the whole Jewish church, or any considerable part of it, should so very soon have adopted the opinion of his being a *mere man*.¹¹ To add to the dignity of their Master was natural, but to take from it, and especially to degrade him from being *God*, to being *man*, must have been very unnatural. To make the Jews abandon the opinion of the divinity of Christ in the most qualified sense of the word, must at least have been as difficult as we find it to be to induce others to give up the same opinion at this day; and there can be no question of their having, for some time, believed what the apostles taught on that, as well as on other subjects.

¹⁰ *De Sententia Dionysii*, Athanasii Opera. 1630. I. 553-4.

¹¹ [By “mere man,” Priestley always means a man approved of God, inspired and miraculously endowed by God, yet nothing more than a man.]

Of the same opinion with the Nazarenes or Ebionites among the Jews were those among the Gentiles whom Epiphanius called *Alogi*, from their not receiving, as he says, the account that John gives of the *Logos*, and the writings of that apostle in general. But Lardner, with great probability, supposes, “there never was any such heresy”¹² as that of the *Alogi*, or rather that those to whom Epiphanius gave that name were unjustly charged by him with rejecting the writings of the apostle John, since no other person before him makes any mention of such a thing, and he produces nothing but mere hearsay in support of it. It is very possible, however, that he might give such an account of them, in consequence of their explaining the *Logos* in the introduction of John’s gospel in a manner different from him and others, who in that age had appropriated to themselves the name of orthodox.

Equally absurd is the conjecture of Epiphanius that those persons and others like them were those that the apostle John meant by *Antichrist*.¹³ It is a much more natural inference that, since this writer allows these Unitarians to have been contemporary with the apostles, and that they had no peculiar appellation till he himself gave them this of *Alogi* (and which he is very desirous that other writers would adopt after him¹⁴), that they had not been deemed heretical in early times, but held the opinion of the ancient Gentile church, as the Nazarenes did that of the Jewish church; and that, notwithstanding the introduction and gradual prevalence of the opposite doctrine, they were suffered to pass uncensured and consequently without a name, till the smallness of their numbers made them particularly noticed.

It is remarkable, however, that those who held the simple doctrine of the humanity of Christ, without asserting that Joseph was his natural father, were not reckoned heretics by Irenaeus, who wrote a large work on the subject of heresies; and even those who held *that* opinion are mentioned with respect by Justin Martyr, who wrote some years before him, and who, indeed, is the first writer extant, of the gentile Christians, after the age of the apostles. And it cannot be supposed that he would have treated them with so much respect, if their doctrine had not been very generally received, and on that account less obnoxious than it grew to be afterwards. He expresses their opinion concerning Christ by saying that they made him to be a *mere man* (ψιλὸς ἄνθρωπος), and by this term Irenaeus, and all the ancients, even later than

¹² Hist. of Heretics, 446. Works, IX. 516. Lardner’s words are “My own opinion . . . is that this is a fictitious heresy, and that there never were any Christians who rejected St. John’s Gospel and First Epistle, and yet received . . . the other books of the New Testament.”

¹³ *Haer.* 51, Sect. iii. Opera, 1. 424.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 423.

Eusebius, meant a *man descended from man*, and this phraseology is frequently opposed to the doctrine of the miraculous conception of Jesus, and not to that of his divinity. It is not therefore to be inferred that because some of the ancient writers condemn the one, they meant to pass any censure upon the other.

The manner in which Justin Martyr speaks of those Unitarians who believed Christ to be the son of Joseph is very remarkable, and shows that though they even denied the miraculous conception, they were far from being reckoned heretics in his time, as they were by Irenaeus afterwards. He says, “there are some of our profession who acknowledge him” (Jesus) “to be the Christ, yet maintain that he was a man born of man. I do not agree with them, nor should I be prevailed upon by ever so many who hold that opinion; because we are taught by Christ himself not to receive our doctrine from men, but from what was taught by the holy prophets and by himself.”¹⁵

This language has all the appearance of an *apology* for an opinion contrary to the general and prevailing one, as that of the humanity of Christ (at least with the belief of the miraculous conception) probably was in his time. This writer even speaks of his own opinion of the pre-existence of Christ (and he is the first that we certainly know to have maintained it, on the principles on which it was generally received afterwards) as a doubtful one, and by no means a necessary article of Christian faith. “Jesus,” says he, “may still be the Christ of God, though I should not be able to prove his pre-existence as the Son of God who made all things. For though I should not prove that he had pre-existed, it will be right to say that, in this respect only, I have been deceived, and not to deny that he is the Christ, if he appears to be a man born of men, and to have become Christ by election.”¹⁶ This is not the language of a man very confident of his opinion, and who had the sanction of the majority along with him.

The reply of Trypho the Jew, with whom the dialogue he is writing is supposed to be held, is also remarkable, showing in what light the Jews will always consider any doctrine which makes Christ to be more than a man. He says, “They who think that Jesus was a man, and, being chosen of God, was anointed Christ, appear to me to advance a more profitable opinion than yours. For all of us expect that Christ will be born a man from men (ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ἄνθρώπων), and that Elias will come to anoint him. If he therefore be Christ, he must by all means be a man born of man.”¹⁷

¹⁵ *Dial.* Edit. Thirlby, 234-5.

¹⁶ *Dial.* Edit. Thirlby, 233-4.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 235.

It is well known, and mentioned by Eusebius, that the Unitarians in the primitive church always pretended to be the oldest Christians, that the apostles themselves had taught their doctrine, and that it generally prevailed till the time of Zephyrinus, bishop of Rome, but that from that time it was corrupted;¹⁸ and as these Unitarians are called *Idiotae* (common and ignorant people) by Tertullian, it is more natural to look for ancient opinions among them than among the learned who are more apt to innovate. With such manifest unfairness does Eusebius, or a more ancient writer whose sentiments he adopts, treat the Unitarians, as to say that Theodotus, who appeared about the year 190, and who was condemned by Victor the predecessor of Zephyrinus, was the first who held that our Savior was a mere man;¹⁹ when in refuting their pretensions to antiquity, he goes no farther than to Irenaeus, Justin Martyr and Clemens; in whose second and spurious epistle only it is to be found, and the *ancient hymns*, not now extant, but in which, being poetical compositions, divinity was probably ascribed to him, in some figurative and qualified sense; though Eusebius in his own writings alone might have found a refutation of his assertion. Epiphanius, speaking of the same Theodotus, says that his heresy was a branch (*ἀποσπασμα*) of that of the *Alogi*, which sufficiently implies that they existed before him.²⁰

The *Alogi*, therefore, appear to have been the earliest gentile Christians, and Dr. Berriman supposes them to have been a branch of the Ebionites.²¹ In fact, they must have been the same among the Gentiles that the Ebionites were among the Jews. And it is remarkable that, as the children of Israel retained the worship of the one true God all the time of Joshua, and of those of his contemporaries who outlived him; so the generality of Christians retained the same faith, believing the strict unity of God, and the proper humanity of Christ, all the time of the apostles and of those who conversed with them, but began to depart from that doctrine presently afterwards; and the defection advanced so fast, that in about one century more, the original doctrine was generally reprobated and deemed heretical. The manner in which this corruption of the ancient doctrine was introduced, I must now proceed to explain.

¹⁸ Hist. L. v. C. xxviii. 252.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Haer.* 54, Opera, 1. 462.

²¹ "An Historical Account of the Trinitarian Controversy," 1725, 82.

SECTION II.

OF THE FIRST STEP THAT WAS MADE TOWARDS THE DEIFICATION OF CHRIST, BY THE PERSONIFICATION OF THE LOGOS

As the greatest things often take their rise from the smallest beginnings, so the worst things sometimes proceed from good intentions. This was certainly the case with respect to the origin of Christian Idolatry. All the early heresies arose from men who wished well to the gospel, and who meant to recommend it to the Heathens, and especially to philosophers among them, whose prejudices they found great difficulty in conquering. Now we learn from the writings of the apostles themselves, as well as from the testimony of later writers, that the circumstance at which mankind in general, and especially the more philosophical part of them, stumbled the most, was the doctrine of a *crucified Savior*. They could not submit to become the disciples of a man who had been exposed upon a cross, like the vilest malefactor. Of this objection to Christianity we find traces in all the early writers, who wrote in defense of the gospel against the unbelievers of their age, to the time of Lactantius; and probably it may be found much later. He says, "I know that many fly from the truth out of their abhorrence of the cross."²² We, who only learn from *history* that crucifixion was a kind of death to which slaves and the vilest of malefactors were exposed, can but very imperfectly enter into their prejudices, so as to feel what they must have done with respect to it. The idea of a man executed at Tyburn, without anything to distinguish him from other malefactors, is but an approach to the case of our Savior.

The apostle Paul speaks of the crucifixion of Christ as the great obstacle to the reception of the gospel in his time; and yet, with true magnanimity, he does not go about to palliate the matter, but says to the Corinthians (some of the politest people among the Greeks, and fond of their philosophy) that *he was determined to know nothing among them* but "Jesus Christ and him crucified"; for though this circumstance was "unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness," it was to others "the power of God and the wisdom of God" 1 Cor. 1:23, 24. For this circumstance at which they cavilled was that in which the wisdom of God was most conspicuous; the death and resurrection of a man, in all respects like themselves, being better calculated to give other men an assurance of their own resurrection than that of any super-angelic being, the laws of whose nature they might think to be

²² Lactantii *Epitome* (Divinarum Institutionum), 1718. C. li. 143. "Scio equidem multos, dum abhorrent nomen crucis, refugere a veritate." Opera, 1748, II. 38.

very different from those of their own. But, “since by man *came* death, so by man *came* also the resurrection of the dead” (1 Cor. 15:21).

Later Christians, however, and especially those who were themselves attached to the principles of either the Oriental or the Greek philosophy, unhappily took another method of removing this obstacle; and instead of explaining the wisdom of the divine dispensations in the appointment of a man, a person *in all respects like unto his brethren*, for the redemption of *men*, and of his dying in the most public and indisputable manner, as a foundation for the clearest proof of a real resurrection, and also of a painful and ignominious death, as an example to his followers who might be exposed to the same, &c, &c, they began to raise the dignity of the *person* of Christ, that it might appear less disgraceful to be ranked amongst his disciples. To make this the easier to them, two things chiefly contributed; the first was the received method of interpreting the Scriptures among the learned Jews, and the second was the philosophical opinions of the heathen world, which had then begun to infect the Jews themselves.

It has been observed that after the translation of the Old Testament into Greek, which was done probably in the time of Ptolemy Philadelphus, King of Egypt, in consequence of which the Jewish religion became better known to the Greeks, and especially to the philosophers of Alexandria, the more learned of the Jews had recourse to an allegorical method of interpreting what they found to be most objected to in their sacred writings; and by this means pretended to find in the books of Moses, and the prophets, all the great principles of the Greek philosophy, and especially that of Plato, which at that time was most in vogue. In this method of interpreting Scripture, Philo, a learned Jew of Alexandria, far excelled all who had gone before him; but the Christians of that city, who were themselves deeply tinctured with the principles of the same philosophy, especially Clemens Alexandrinus and Origen, who both believed the pre-existence of souls, and the other distinguishing tenets of Platonism, soon followed his steps in the interpretation of both the Old and the New Testament.²³

One method of allegorizing, which took its rise in the East, was the personification of things without life, of which we have many beautiful examples in the books of Scripture, as of *wisdom* by Solomon, of *the dead* by Ezekiel, and of *sin* and *death* by the apostle Paul. Another mode of allegorizing was finding out resemblances in things that bore some relation to each other, and then representing them as *types* and *antitypes* to each

²³ “Le Platonisme dévoilé, ou Essai touchant le verbe Platonicien.” 1700, 145.

other. The apostle Paul, especially if he be the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, has strained very much, by the force of imagination, to reconcile the Jews to the Christian religion, by pointing out the *analogies* which he imagined the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish religion bore to something in Christianity. Clemens Romanus, but more especially Barnabas, pushed this method of allegorizing still farther. But the fathers who followed them, by employing both the methods, and mixing their own philosophy with Christianity, at length converted an innocent allegory into what was little better than Pagan idolatry.

It had long been the received doctrine of the East, and had gradually spread into the western parts of the world, that besides the supreme divine mind, which had existed without cause from all eternity, there were other intelligences, of a less perfect nature, which had been produced by way of *emanation* from the great original mind, and that other intelligences, less and less perfect, had, in like manner, proceeded from them: in short, that all spirits, whether demons or the souls of men, were of this divine origin. It was supposed by some of them that even *matter* itself, which they considered as the source of all evil, had, in this intermediate manner, derived its existence from the Deity, though others supposed matter to have been eternal and self-existent. For it was a maxim with them all that “nothing could be created out of nothing.” In this manner they thought they could best account for the origin of evil, without supposing it to be the immediate production of a good being, which the original divine mind was always supposed by them to be.

In order to exalt their idea of Jesus Christ, it being then a received opinion among the philosophers that all souls had pre-existed, they conceived his soul not to have been that of a common man (which was generally supposed to have been the production of inferior beings), but a principal *emanation* from the divine mind itself, and that an intelligence of so high a rank either animated the body of Jesus from the beginning, or entered into him at his baptism. There was, however, a great diversity of opinion on this subject; and, indeed, there was room enough for it in a system which was not founded on any observation but was the mere creature of fancy. But all these philosophizing Christians had the same general object, which was to make the religion of Christ more reputable by adding to the dignity of our Lord’s person.

Thus, according to Lardner, *Cerinthus*, one of the first of these philosophizing Christians “taught one Supreme God, but that the world was not made by him, but by angels”; that Jesus “was a man born of Joseph and Mary, and that at his baptism, the Holy Ghost, or the Christ, descended upon him”; that

Jesus “died and rose again, but that the Christ was impassible.”²⁴ On the other hand, Marcion held that Christ was not born at all, but that “the son of God took the exterior form of a man, and appeared as a man; and without being born, or gradually growing up to the full stature of a man, he showed himself at once in Galilee, as a man grown.”²⁵ All the heretics, however, of this class, whose philosophy was more properly that of the East, thought it was unworthy of so exalted a person as the proper *Christ* to be truly a man, and most of them thought he had no real flesh, but only the appearance of it, and what was incapable of feeling pain, &c.

These opinions the apostles, and especially John, had heard of, and he rejected them, as we have seen, with the greatest indignation. However, this did not put a stop to the evil, those philosophizing Christians either having ingenuity enough to evade those censures, by pretending these were not their opinions, but others somewhat different from theirs, that properly fell under them, or new opinions really different from them (but derived in fact from the same source, and having the same evil tendency) rising up in the place of them; for they were all calculated to give more dignity, as they imagined, to the person of their master. The most remarkable change in these opinions was that, whereas the earliest of these philosophizing Christians supposed, in general, that the world was made by some superior intelligence of no benevolent nature, and that the Jewish religion was prescribed by the same being, or one very much resembling him, and that Christ was sent to rectify the imperfections of both systems; those who succeeded them, and whose success at length gave them the title of orthodox, corrupted the genuine Christian principles no less, by supposing that Christ was the being who, under God, was himself the maker of the world, and the medium of all the divine communications to man, and therefore the author of the Jewish religion.

As Plato had traveled into the East, it is probable that he there learned the doctrine of divine emanations, and got his ideas of the origin of this visible system. But he sometimes expresses himself so temperately on the subject that he seems to have only allegorized what is true with respect to it; speaking of the divine mind as having existed from eternity, but having within itself *ideas* or *archetypes* of whatever was to exist without it, and saying that the immediate seat of these ideas, or the intelligence which he styled *Logos*, was that from which the visible creation immediately sprung. However, it was to

²⁴ Hist. of Heretics, 150. Works, IX. 325.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 227. Works, IX. 378-9.

this principle in the divine mind, or this being derived from it, that Plato, according to Lactantius, gave the name of *a second God*, saying, “the Lord and maker of the universe, whom we justly call God, made a second God, visible and sensible.”²⁶

By this means, however, it was that this *Logos*, originally an *attribute* of the divine mind itself, came to be represented, first by the philosophers, and then by philosophizing Christians, as an *intelligent principle* or *being*, distinct from God, though an emanation from Him. This doctrine was but too convenient for those who wished to recommend the religion of Christ. Accordingly, they immediately fixed upon this *Logos* as the intelligence which either animated the body of Christ, or which was in some inexplicable manner united to his soul; and by the help of the allegorical method of interpreting the Scriptures, to which they had been sufficiently accustomed, they easily found authorities there for their opinions.

Thus, since we read in the book of Psalms that *by the word of the Lord* (which, in the translation of the Seventy, is the *Logos*) *the heavens were made, &c.* they concluded that this *Logos* was Christ, and therefore that, under God, he was the maker of the world. They also applied to him what Solomon says of *wisdom*, as having been *in the beginning with God*, and employed by him in making the world, in the book of Proverbs. But there is one particular passage in the book of Psalms in which they imagined that the origin of the *Logos*, by way of emanation from the divine mind, is most clearly expressed, which is what we render, *My heart is inditing a good matter*, Psalm 45:1, this *matter* being *Logos* in the Seventy, and the verb ἐρευνῶμενος *throwing out*. Nothing can appear to us more ungrounded than this supposition, and yet we find it in all the writers who treat of the divinity of Christ for several centuries, in ecclesiastical history. After this we cannot wonder at their being at no loss for proofs of their doctrine in any part of Scripture.

But Philo, the Jew, went before the Christians in the personification of the *Logos*, and in this mode of interpreting what is said of it in the Old Testament. For he calls this divine word *a second God*, and sometimes attributes the creation of the world to this second God, thinking it below the majesty of the great God Himself. He also calls this personified attribute of God His *πρωτόγονος*, or His *first-born*, and the *image of God*. He also says that he is neither unbegotten, like God, nor begotten, as we are, but the middle

²⁶ *Epitome*, C. xlii. 106. “Dominus et factor universorum, quem Deum vocari existimavimus, secundum fecit Deum, visibilem et sensibilem.” Opera, II. 30.

between the two extremes.²⁷ We also find that the Chaldee paraphrasts of the Old Testament often render *the word of God* as if it was a being, distinct from God, or some angel who bore the name of God, and acted by deputation from him. So, however, it has been interpreted, though with them it might be no more than an idiom of speech.

The Christian philosophers having once got the idea that the *Logos* might be interpreted of Christ proceeded to explain what John says of the *Logos*, in the introduction of his gospel, to mean the same person, in direct opposition to what he really meant, which was that the *Logos*, by which all things were made, was not a being, distinct from God, but God Himself, being His attribute, His wisdom and power, dwelling in Christ, speaking and acting by him. Accordingly we find some of the earlier Unitarians charging those who were called orthodox with an innovation in their interpretation of the term *Logos*. "But thou wilt tell me something strange, in saying that the *Logos* is the Son." *Hippolytus contra Noetum*, quoted by Beausobre.²⁸

We find nothing like *divinity* ascribed to Christ before Justin Martyr, who, from being a philosopher, became a Christian, but always retained the peculiar habit of his former profession: As to Clemens Romanus, who was contemporary with the apostles, when he is speaking in the highest terms concerning Christ, he only calls him *the sceptre of the majesty of God*.²⁹ Whether Justin Martyr was the very first who started the notion of the pre-existence of Christ, and of his super-angelic or divine nature, is not certain, but we are not able to trace it any higher. We find it, indeed, briefly mentioned in the *Shepherd of Hermas*, but though this is supposed by some to be the Hermas mentioned by Paul, and to have been written towards the end of the first century, others suppose this to be the work of one Hermes, brother of Pius, Bishop of Rome, and to have been written about the year 141, or perhaps later; and as this work contains such a pretension to visions and revelations as I cannot but think unworthy of the Hermas mentioned by Paul, I cannot help being of this opinion. He says, "having seen an old rock and a new gate, they represent the son of God, who was more ancient than any creature, so as to be present with the Father at the creation, *ad condendam creaturam*."³⁰ The book was written in Greek, but we have only a Latin version of it.

²⁷ See "Le Platonisme dévoilé, Ch. X. 98-107; and Le Clerc's Comment on the Introduction to the First Chapter of John.

²⁸ *Histoire*, l. 540. l. iii. Ch. vi. Sect. xi.

²⁹ *Epistle*, Sect. xvi.

³⁰ *Hermae Pastor*, l. iii. Sim. ix. Sect. xii. 115. Wake's *Gen. Epist.* Ed. 4. 320.

Justin Martyr being a philosopher, and writing an apology for Christianity to a philosophical Roman emperor, would naturally wish to represent it in what would appear to him and other philosophers, the most favorable light; and this disposition appears by several circumstances. Thus he represents virtuous men, in all preceding ages, as being in a certain sense *Christians*; and apologizing for calling Christ the *son of God*, he says that “this cannot be new to them who speak of Jupiter as having sons, and especially of Mercury, as his interpreter, and the instructor of all men (λόγον τὸν ἑρμηνεύτικον καὶ πάντων διδάσκαλον).”³¹ On the same subject he says, “If Christ be a mere man, yet he deserves to be called the Son of God, on account of his wisdom, and the Heathens called God (i.e. Jupiter) the father of gods and men; and if, in an extraordinary manner, he be the *Logos* of God, this is common with those who call Mercury the *Logos* that declares the will of God (λόγον τὸν παρὰ Θεοῦ ἀγγελτικόν).”³²

With this disposition to make his religion appear in the most respectable light to the Heathens, and having himself professed the doctrine of Plato, can it be thought extraordinary that he eagerly caught at the doctrine of the *Logos*, which he found ready formed to his hands in the works of Philo, and that he introduced it into the Christian system; that Irenaeus, who was also educated among the philosophers, about the same time, did the same thing; or that others, who were themselves sufficiently pre-disposed to act the same part, should follow their example?

That the doctrine of the separate divinity of Christ was at first nothing more than a personification of a divine attribute, or of that wisdom and power by which God made the world, is evident from the manner in which the earliest writers who treat of the subject mention it. Justin Martyr, who was the first who undertook to prove that Christ was the medium of the divine dispensations in the Old Testament, as that “he was the person sometimes called an *Angel*, and sometimes *God* and *Lord*, and that he was the *man* who sometimes appeared to Abraham and Jacob, and he that spake to Moses from the fiery bush,”³³ does it, as we have seen above, with a considerable degree of diffidence; saying that “if he should not be able to prove his pre-existence, it would not therefore follow that he was not the Christ.” And as new opinions do not readily lay firm hold on the mind, forms of expression adapted to preceding opinions will now and then occur; and as good sense will, in all

³¹ *Apol.* 1. Ed. Thirlby, 31.

³² *Ibid.* 33.

³³ *Dial.* Edit. Thirlby, 264.

cases, often get the better of imagination, we sometimes find these early writers drop the personification of the *Logos*, and speak of it as the mere attribute of God.

Thus Theophilus, who was contemporary with Justin, though a later writer, says that when God said *let us make man*, He spake to nothing but His own *logos*, or wisdom;³⁴ and, according to Origen, Christ was the eternal reason or wisdom of God. He says that “by the second God, we mean only a virtue” (or perhaps power) “which comprehends all other virtues, or a reason which comprehends all other reasons, and that this reason (λόγος) is particularly attached to the soul of Christ.”³⁵ Also, explaining John 1:3, he says, “God can do nothing without reason (παρὰ λόγον), i.e. without himself” (παρ’ ἑαυτόν).³⁶

Athenagoras, who wrote in the second century, calls Christ the first production (γέννημα) of the Father; but says he was not always actually produced (γενόμενον), for that from the beginning God, being an eternal mind, had reason (λόγος) in Himself, being from eternity rational (λόγικος).³⁷

Tatian, who was also his contemporary, gives us a fuller account of this matter. He says, “when he (that is, God) pleased, the word (*logos*) flowed from his simple essence; and this word not being produced in vain, became the first-begotten work of his spirit. This we know to be the origin of the word: but it was produced by *division*, not by *separation*, for that which is divided (μέρισθεν) does not diminish that from which it derives its power. For, as many torches may be lighted from one, and yet the light of the first torch is not diminished, so the word (*logos*) proceeding from the power of the Father does not leave the Father void of *logos*. Also, if I speak and you hear me, I am not void of speech (*logos*) on account of my speech (*logos*) going to you.”³⁸

If Irenaeus had this idea of the generation of the *Logos*, as no doubt he had, it is no wonder that he speaks of it as a thing of so wonderful a nature. “If any one,” says he, “asks us, how is the Son produced from the Father, we tell him that whether it be called *generation*, *nuncupation*, or *adapertion*, or by whatever other name this ineffable generation be called, no one knows it; neither Valentinus, nor Marcion, nor Saturninus, nor Basilides, nor Angels,

³⁴ Ad *Autolyeum*, 1684, L. ii. 114.

³⁵ Origen contra Celsum. 1677, L. v. 259.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 247.

³⁷ Athenagorae Opera, 1635, Apol. 83.

³⁸ Oratio contra Graecos, at the end of Justin’s Works, 1686, 145.

nor Archangels, nor Principalities, nor Powers; but only the Father who begat, and the Son who is begotten.”³⁹

Tertullian, whose orthodoxy in this respect was never questioned, does not seem, however, to have any difficulty in conceiving how this business was, but writes in such a manner as if he had been let into the whole secret; and we see in him the wretched expedients to which the orthodox of that age had recourse, in order to convert a mere *attribute* into a *real person*. For it must be understood that when the doctrine of the divinity of Christ was first started, it was not pretended, except by Irenaeus in the passage above quoted (who was writing against persons who pretended to more knowledge of this mysterious business than himself), that there was anything *unintelligible* in it, or that could not be explained. Everything, indeed, in that age, was called a *mystery* that was reputed *sacred*, and the knowledge of which was confined to a few; but the idea of *unintelligible*, or *inexplicable*, was not then affixed to the word *mystery*. The heathen mysteries, from which the Christians borrowed the term, were things perfectly well known and understood by those who were *initiated*, though concealed from the vulgar.

“Before all things,” says this writer, “God was alone; but not absolutely alone, for he had with him his own *reason*, since God is a rational being. This reason the Greeks called *Logos*, which word we now render *Sermo*. And that you may more easily understand this from yourself, consider that you, who are made in the image of God, and are a reasonable being, have reason within yourself. When you silently consider with yourself, it is by means of reason that you do it.”⁴⁰

Upon this stating of the case, it was natural to object that the reason of a man can never be converted into a *substance*, so as to constitute a thinking being, distinct from the man himself. But, he says, that though this is the case with respect to man, yet nothing can proceed from God but what is substantial. “You will say,” says he, “but what is *speech* besides a *word* or *sound*, something unsubstantial and incorporeal? But I say that nothing unsubstantial and incorporeal can proceed from God, because it does not proceed from

³⁹ L. ii. C. xxviii. 176.

⁴⁰ “Ante omnia, Deus erat solus . . . Ceterum ne tunc quidem solus; babebat, enim, secum, rationem suam . . . Rationalis etiam Deus . . . Hanc Graeci Λογον dicunt, quo vocabulo etiam *Sermonem* appellamus. Idque, quo facilius intelligas ex teipso ante recognosce ut ex imagine et similitudine Dei, quam habeas et tu in temetipso rationem, qui es animal rationale . . . Vide quum tacitus tecum ipse congrederis, ratione hoc ipsum agi intra te, &c. *Adv. Praxeam*, C. v. 502-3. Tertulliani Opera, 1675.

what is itself unsubstantial; nor can that want substance, which proceeds from so great a substance.”⁴¹

Having in this manner (lame enough to be sure) got over the great difficulty of the conversion of a mere *attribute* into a *substance*, and a thinking substance too, this writer proceeds to ascertain the time when this conversion took place; and he, together with all the early Fathers, says that it was at the very instant of the creation. “Then,” says he, “did this speech assume its *form* and *dress*, its *sound* and *voice*, when God said, *Let there be light*. This is the perfect nativity of the *word*, when it *proceeded from God*. From this time making him equal to himself” (by which phrase, however, we are only to understand *like* himself) “from which procession he became his son, his first-born, and only begotten, before all things.”⁴²

This method of explaining the origin of the personality of the *Logos* continued to the council of Nice, and even afterwards. For Lactantius, who was tutor to the son of Constantine, gives us the same account of this business, with some little variation, teaching us to distinguish the Son of God from the angels, whom he likewise conceived to be emanations from the divine mind. “How,” says he, “did he beget him? (that is Christ). The Sacred Scriptures inform us that the Son of God is the *sermo* or *ratio* (the speech or reason) of God, also that the other angels are the breath of God, *spiritus Dei*. But *sermo* (speech) is breath emitted, together with a *voice*, expressive of something; and because *speech* and *breathing* proceed from different parts, there is a great difference between the Son of God and the other angels. For they are mere *silent breathings* (*spiritus taciti*), because they were created not to teach the knowledge of God, but for *service* (*administrandum*). But he being also a *breathing* (*spiritus*), yet proceeding from the mouth of God with a voice and sound, is the *word*; for this reason, because he was to be a teacher of the knowledge of God,” &c.⁴³ He therefore calls him *spiritus vocalis*. Then, in order to account for our breathings not producing similar

⁴¹ Quid est enim, dices, *sermo* nisi *vox*, et *sonus oris* . . . vacuum nescio quid, et inane, et incorporale? Atego nihil dico de Deo inane et vacuum prodire potuisse, ut non de inani et vacuo prolatum, nec carere substantia, quod de tanta substantia processit, &c. *Ibid* C. vii. 503-4.

⁴² Tunc . . . ipse *sermo* speciem et ornatum suum sumit, sonum et vocem, quum dicit Deus *fiat lux*. Haec est nativitas perfecta sermonis, dum ex Deo procedit . . . Exinde eum parem sibi faciens, de quo procedendo filius factus est *primogenitus*, ut ante omnia genitus, et unigenitus, ut solus Deo genitus. *Ibid*. 503.

⁴³ Lactantii Opera, 1560. Inst. L. iv. Sect. viii. 370-1. “Primum nec sciri a quoquam possunt, nec enarrari, opera divina: sed tamen sanctae literae docent, in quibus cautum est, illum Dei filium, Dei esse sermonem, sive etiam rationem; itemque caeteros angelos Dei *spiritus* esse. Nam *sermo* est *spiritus* cum voce aliquid significante prolatus. Sed

spirits, he says that “our breathings are *dissoluble*, because we are mortal, but the breathings of God are permanent; they live and feel, because he is immortal, the giver of sense and life.”⁴⁴

All the early Fathers speak of Christ as not having existed always, except as reason exists in man, viz. an attribute of the Deity; and for this reason they speak of the Father as not having been a Father always, but only from the time that He made the world. “Before anything was made,” says Theophilus, “God had the *logos* for his council; being his *vous* or φρόνησις (reason or understanding); but when he proceeded to produce what he had determined upon, he then emitted the *logos*, the first-born of every creature, not emptying himself of *logos* (reason), but λόγον γέννησας (begetting reason), and always conversing with his own *logos*”⁴⁵ (reason).

Justin Martyr also gives the same explanation of the emission of the *logos* from God, without depriving Himself of reason, and he illustrates it by what we observe in ourselves. For “in uttering any word,” he says, “we beget a word (*logos*), not taking anything from ourselves, so as to be lessened by it, but as we see one fire produced from another.”⁴⁶

Clemens Alexandrinus calls the Father alone *without beginning* (ἀναρχος) and immediately after he characterizes the Son as the *beginning*, and the *first-fruits* of things (ἀρχὴν καὶ ἀπαρχὴν τῶν ὄντων) from whom we must learn the Father of all, the most ancient and beneficent of beings.⁴⁷ Tertullian expressly says that God was not always a father or a judge, since he could not be a father before he had a son, nor a judge before sin; and there was a time when both *sin* and the *son* (which made God to be a *judge* and a *father*) were not.”⁴⁸

This language was held at the time of the council of Nice, for Lactantius says, “God, before he undertook the making of the world, produced a holy and

tamen quoniam spiritus et sermo diversis partibus proferuntur, siquidem spiritus naribus, ore sermo procedit, magna inter hunc Dei filium et caeteros angelos differentia est. Illi enim ex Deo taciti spiritus exierunt; quia non ad doctrinam Dei tradendam, sed ad ministerium creabantur. Ille vero cum sit et ipse spiritus, tamen cum voce ac sono ex Dei ore processit, sicut verbum, ea scilicet ratione, quia voce ejus ad populum fuerat usus; id est, quod ille magister futurus esset doctrinae Dei et coelestis arcani ad homines perferendi: quod ipsum primo locutus est, ut per eum ad nos loqueretur, et ille vocem Dei ae voluntatem nobis revelaret.” Opera, I. 289.

⁴⁴ Lactantii Opera, 1660. Inst. L. iv. Sect. viii. 370-1. “Nostri spiritus dissolubiles sunt, quia mortales sumus. Dei autem spiritus et vivunt et manent et sentiunt; quia ipse immortalis est et sensus et vitae dator. Opera, I. 290

⁴⁵ Ad Autolyeum, L. ii. 129.

⁴⁶ Dial. Edit. Thirlby, 266, 267.

⁴⁷ Strom. L. vii. Opera, 700.

⁴⁸ Ad Hermogenem, C. iii. 234. Paris, 1675.

incorruptible spirit, which he might call his *Son*; and afterwards he by him created innumerable spirits, whom he calls *angels*.⁴⁹ The church, says Hilary, “knows one unbegotten God, and one only begotten Son of God. It acknowledges the Father to be [eternal and] without origin, and it acknowledges the origin of the Son from eternity, not himself without beginning, but from him who is without beginning (*ab initia bili*).”⁵⁰ It is not impossible that Hilary might have an idea of the eternal generation of the Son, though the fathers before the council of Nice had no such idea. For the Platonists in general thought that the creation was from eternity; there never having been any time which the Divine Being did not act. But, in general, by the phrase *from eternity*, and *before all time*, &c, the ancient Christian writers seem to have meant any period before the creation of the world.

Consistently with this representation, but very inconsistently with the modern doctrine of the Trinity, the fathers supposed the Son of God to have been begotten *voluntarily*, so that it depended upon the Father Himself whether He would have a son or not. “I will produce you another testimony from the Scriptures,” says Justin Martyr, “that in the beginning, before all the creatures, God begat from himself a certain reasonable power (*δύναμιν λόγια κην*) who by the spirit is sometimes called *the glory of God*, sometimes *God*, sometimes the *Lord* and *Logos*, because he is subservient to his Father’s will, and was begotten at his Father’s pleasure.”⁵¹

Novatian says, “God the Father is therefore the maker and creator of all things, who alone hath no origin, invisible, immense, immortal, and eternal, the one God, to whose greatness and majesty nothing can be compared, from whom, when he himself pleased, the word (*sermo*) was born.”⁵² Eusebius, quoted by Dr. Clarke, says, “The light does not shine forth by the will of the luminous body, but by a necessary property of its nature. But the Son, by the intention and will of the Father, received his subsistence so as to be the image of the Father. For by his will did God become (*βουλήθεις*) the Father of his Son.”⁵³

The Fathers of the council of Sirmium say, “If any one says that the Son was begotten not by the will of the Father, let him be anathema. For the Father

⁴⁹ Inst. L. iv. C. vi. 364. “Deus igitur machinator constitutorque rerum . . . antequam praeclarum hoc opus mundi adoriretur, sanctum et incorruptibilem spiritum genuit, quem Filium nuncuparet. Et quam vis alios postea innumerales per ipsum creavisset, quos angelos dicimus,” &c. Opera, I. 284.

⁵⁰ De Trinitate, L. iv.

⁵¹ *Dial.* Ed. Thirlby, 266.

⁵² De Trinitate, C. x. 31.

⁵³ Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity, Ed. 3, 281.

did not beget the Son by a physical necessity of nature, without the operation of his will, but he at once willed, and begat the Son, and produced him from himself, without time, and without suffering any diminution himself.”⁵⁴ Hilary mentions his approbation of this sentiment, but we shall see that Austin corrects him for it. A strong passage in favor of the voluntary production of the Son of God may also be seen quoted from Gregory Nyssen, by Dr. Clarke, in the place above referred to.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*