

The process has now resolved itself very much into a wrangle of metaphysicians. The council of Chalcedon settled the question finally in the formula which prevailed through all the following centuries, passed quite unchallenged through the Reformation, and still holds the field as the orthodox statement, though I suppose very few indeed ever dream of disturbing the ancient dust that buries it. It is the doctrine of the two distinct natures in the one person—the two distinct natures “conjoined without confusion and without change, but also without rending and without separation.” The one nature is not affected by the other, there is no intermingling of the two streams: each remains complete in itself, unchanged by the other; and yet the two form an organic and indivisible unity. That is to say: after each is elaborately isolated into a state of abstract incommunicable separation from the other, the two are again by mere authoritative fiat declared to be organically one. It has always been easier to state this doctrine than to understand it. It had the merit of insisting equally, however unintelligibly, on the two aspects of the person of Jesus, which it chooses to call natures, the divine and the human, and the unfortunate but inevitable consequence of making Christendom practically ignore the human side altogether. The man Jesus was, if one may say so without irreverence, elevated into a dignified superannuation, banished into the infinite remoteness of an abstract Godhead which could not possibly come into any contact with human beings at all. Instead of being the Mediator between God and Man, the Christ required Mediators between man and himself, the Virgin Mother and the Saints, and finally the priests, the Bishops, and the Pope, as well as the whole elaborate machinery of sacramental magic. The Captain of our Salvation, who had learned sympathy through suffering, the first-born among many brethren who by his own obedience had become the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him, was nothing more than a mere categorical imperative, chiefly on its