

the beginning has ever guarded as an essential of the Christian belief, and second in importance only to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity itself.

The right faith then is, "that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man; God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the world; and man of the substance of his mother, born in the world; perfect God, and perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting; equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, and inferior to the Father, as touching His manhood." Such is the Catholic faith on the doctrine of the Incarnation, as handed down to us by the Church.

"The Word was made flesh:" how we know not. But this we know, that "herein was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him." The Word, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, who from all eternity had co-existed with the Father, stooped to take upon Him the nature of man, that through His perfect obedience He might restore to our fallen race all the blessings, both of this life and the next, which our first parents by transgression had forfeited; and by the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit to create us again, after that image of God in which Adam was originally formed, in righteousness and true holiness. In a word, He took our nature upon Him (1) that in that nature He might pay the penalty for the sins of all mankind; and (2) that He might raise us to a participation of the divine nature.

When Adam by disobedience fell, our nature fell with him. All mankind partook of the stain which our first parent brought upon his race. and all mankind needed some signal regeneration ere the image of God could be restored to it. The promise was in mercy first given to Adam, "that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head," that is, that one should be born of woman who should vanquish the power of Satan, though in the conflict He Himself the Son of Man, should suffer. This great mystery of the coming Incarnation, as we are now able to see, runs like a vein through the whole of the Scriptures, explaining to us the types and cere-

monics and sacrifices of the old religion, and the voice of prophecy which heralded the approach of the Messiah, at one time speaking of His humiliation, at another of His glory. Messiah was to be the seed of the woman: yet had "His goings forth been from of old, from everlasting." He was to "come forth out of the stem of Jesse," yet was He to "grow up as a root out of the dry ground, despised and rejected of men." He was to be "God with us;" yet was He to be "a worm and no man." These things, as also that question which our Lord put to the Pharisees, "If David call Christ Lord, how is He then His son?" only find their true solution in the mystery of the Incarnation, when of the substance of the Blessed Virgin, by the influence of the Holy Spirit, was born the Man Christ Jesus; and when that sinless manhood, so begotten, was taken into union with the Godhead.

As has already been said, one object of the Incarnation was, that our Lord in that human nature which He then assumed might pay the penalty for the sins of mankind. Of this we shall hope to speak at the proper season. One other object was, that He might thus raise us to a participation of the *divine* nature. Let us, in conclusion, offer a few words upon this subject.

The seeds of death were in the nature of every one, and though the Son of God had offered the great atonement for sin, yet our own fallen nature would have destroyed us, unless that nature itself were sanctified. There was need, therefore, of a fountain of purity and holiness to cure the poison of sin in the souls of all mankind. And this need was perfectly fulfilled in the Incarnation of the Son of God, who, being divine and all-holy, took into union with His holy Godhead that nature which He was to heal and save, according to the Holy Scripture, which says, "forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same;" and on the other hand St. Peter tells us that *in Christ* we are "made partakers of the Divine nature," thus through the Incarnation of our Lord, hallowing what is fallen; making the mortal immortal; the outcast from God, one *with* God.

The Son of God came down from heaven, and was made man, to save us from the *power* of sin. He took our