

THE TRINITY AND THE INCARNATION

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The Trinity and the Incarnation by Richard A. Armstrong

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RICHARD A. ARMSTRONG

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THE INCARNATION**

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BY

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BOSTON
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1904



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THE TRINITY AND THE INCARNATION.

INTRODUCTORY.

MOST of those who profess and call themselves Christians, both in this country and in the rest of the world, are in the habit of saying that Jesus Christ is God. This is the current opinion; it is taught by the Church; it is laid down in the Creeds. But if you come to examine the average Englishman, you will find that he holds this opinion in rather a vague and loose sort of way. He has not thought out exactly what he means by it, nor considered just what it involves. If you asked him whether God is our Heavenly Father, he would almost certainly answer 'Yes.' If you then asked,

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'Well, then, is Jesus Christ our Heavenly Father?' he would certainly say 'No.' But if you went on, 'Are there, then, two Gods?' he would entirely repudiate the suggestion. So that he carries about with him in his mind these four propositions :—(1.) 'Jesus Christ is God'; (2.) 'God is our Heavenly Father'; (3.) 'Jesus Christ is not our Heavenly Father'; (4.) 'There are not two Gods.' Yet he has never considered how to reconcile these four separate opinions of his together; it probably has not occurred to him that they are inconsistent with one another. His teachers have various methods of harmonising the four opinions, all four of which have been taught to him by them—methods satisfactory or unsatisfactory. But the average Englishman has not troubled himself with the matter.

Broadly speaking, we may lay it down that his teachers try to harmonise the four opinions by what is known as *The Doctrine of the Incarnation*. That doctrine is held in a vast number of different forms; but in some form or other it is advanced as the solution of the difficulty in which we find

ourselves with the four opinions which we are taught that we ought to hold all together concerning Jesus Christ and God and our Heavenly Father. And in its widest form the Doctrine of the Incarnation is this : that God was in Jesus Christ, so that Jesus Christ, though remaining Man, was also God. This does not seem to some of us to smooth away the difficulty ; and we still incline to think that the four propositions we have spoken of as held by the average Englishman are mutually incompatible. But this, or something like this, is put forward by the theologians of the ordinary type as the explanation.

Perhaps if we could look inside the mind of the ordinary Christian, we should find that the reason that he is not practically troubled by the apparent incompatibility of the four propositions is that he never actively thinks them all at the same moment,—that when he is thinking of Jesus Christ as being God, he is not at the moment thinking of God as our Heavenly Father, and that when he is thinking of God as being our Heavenly Father, he is