

Chapter Seven

Some Implications of the Meaning of the Incarnation

Benjamin B. Warfield, writing in *The Westminster Teacher* of January, 1908, in a brief article entitled "John's First Word," states:

The fundamental purpose of the preface which John has prefixed to his Gospel is ... to account for Jesus Christ... Precisely what John ... represents Jesus as really being is God manifested in the flesh. Not God merely; though he does represent him as God, and that is the fundamental thing. Least of all, as one who was once God, but ceased to be God on becoming flesh -- even for a time only, or for some aspects only. But specifically as God manifested, fully manifested, in the flesh His purpose is to prepare his readers for the manifestations of deity which they will meet in the story of Jesus' life and teaching, to make these seem to them natural in this man, and thus to enable them to read them simply and without shock or surprise. He therefore wishes to tell them plainly at the outset that this Being of whose life on earth they are to read is no mere man, but just God manifested in the flesh He is declared plainly to be God. He is asserted to have subsisted from eternity, in some high sense identical with God, while yet in some equally true sense distinct from God. He is announced as the actual creator of all that, in distinction from him, the eternally self-existent One, has come into being. He is represented as the source of all the light and life that is in the world; and of all the restorative influences which play upon this sinful world. He is proclaimed finally as God only-begotten, who abides in the bosom of the Father, while manifesting his glory on earth. Such is the Being whom, John tells us, we must recognize that Jesus Christ to be, whose life and work on earth he is essaying to describe to us. Only by so recognizing him as God in the flesh, he tells us, can we understand the life he lived and the work he did; or can we hope to know him.¹