

THE DIVINITY OF MAN *VERSUS* THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST.

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THE Divinity of our Lord is a subject of perennial and paramount importance for all Christians. At the present moment the attention of many has been concentrated upon this fact, for unless it be a fact, it is a false dogma. It is urged that "a restatement of Christian Christology is obligatory" (p. 199)¹ owing to the weakness and inadequacy of the Chalcedonian formula, which Bishop Temple described as "a confession of the bankruptcy of Greek patristic Theology" (!), to satisfy modern ideas. It is also maintained that it is the duty of Churchmen of the present day to complete or carry forward the work of Greek Christian philosophers which had been arrested by the advance of the barbarians in the fifth century. The question to be settled is, Who is capable of doing justice to this subject or theme? Is this task to be entrusted to those who have shown very strong prejudices and put forward equally strong presuppositions regarding it? Will the Church commit it to those who start with the two assumptions of "a perfectly human and non-miraculous Christ" (p. 197), Whose "Deity is to be seen in His perfect Humanity" (p. 196), the Kinship of God and Man—a third assumption—being based upon a passage in *Genesis* by a Modernist! The Gospel of the Divinity of man is based upon *Genesis* i. 26, "God and man are akin. This thought should not seem strange to those who have read in *Genesis* that man is created in the image of God" (p. 196). Surely it is inconsistent on the part of those who hold that this portion of *Genesis* was the uninspired work of post-exilic priestly scribes (P) to use it in support of their Gospel of the Divinity of man, and to demur to our employing the prelude of the Gospel of St. John in support of our Lord's Divinity. It is quite plain to see that demands are being

¹ References to *The Modern Churchman*, Sept., 1921.

pressed forward on behalf of "the new learning," which includes Biblical criticism and psychology, which cannot possibly be conceded without altering or weakening the foundations of the faith; and also that assumptions are being made which cannot possibly be proved. The fourth Gospel is regarded as a work of surpassing merit, but is set aside as absolutely valueless as evidence or indication of fact or of our Lord's teaching. Devout writers are even prepared to make large concessions to the extreme critical school on this as well as on other subjects, and refrain from referring to the claims of Christ in that Gospel, which maintains with no uncertain voice the Pre-existence, Sinlessness and Godhead of Jesus the Word of God—"My Lord and my God" (xxi. 28). In consequence of this outspoken attitude of this evangelist many who approach the subject with the assumptions that Christ was not Divine, and that no man who had seen Him could regard Him as such, discount the evidential value of his work. "Many," not "all," for Principal Drummond, the well-known Unitarian, whose apologia of the Ethics of Christ against the indecent and absurd attack of Rev. R. Roberts in the *Hibbert Journal* (1909) is the finest essay in *Jesus or Christ*, which is in some ways the foundation of the lectures under consideration, maintained in *The Character and Authorship of the Fourth Gospel* the traditional view. The same position is held in the present writer's *Fresh Study of the Fourth Gospel* (S.P.C.K.), which puts forward an argument based upon its organic unity against the partitionists, and one based upon the development of its thought and action against those who deny it "orderly progress."

It is to be emphasized that in addition to the writer of this Gospel, St. Paul in his epistles and the writers of the Synoptic Gospels had an intense belief in the Divinity of our Lord. They did not regard that Divinity as a debatable subject; or as something that others shared or might share, though perhaps not to the same extent. We do not possess all the evidence that carried that conviction into their souls. Dean Rashdall puts forward in the very forefront of his paper the statement that "Jesus did not claim Divinity for Himself." So "the doctrine of our Lord's Divinity must not be taken to express His own theory about Himself" (279). But surely this is to base arguments upon silence—a very weak foundation. Our Lord's silence—if we grant it—upon this point would not prove anything, least of all that He was

not Divine. He had His work and His mission and the needs of man, and particularly of His own people, always before Him. He was more concerned, therefore, with revealing the Father's character and love and will—as other writers admitted—which He had known as His pre-existent Son, and with inducing men to do that will, and to enter into the Father's Kingdom, than with asserting His claims to Divinity. But He urged other claims which involve it, claims to lead, possess, attract and judge men, and to know and reveal the Father, Who had given such authority to Him.

Here we may remark that the fourth Gospel is pre-eminently the Gospel of this very Fatherhood to which speakers at the Conference attached so great importance. It is also clear that the authority alone with which our Lord spoke and taught—apart from His wonderful life and works—and His emphatic claim, as the Son of Man, to be the final judge of the nations (Matthew xxv.)—a claim accepted and reiterated by St. Paul in 1 and 2 Thessalonians and elsewhere—and His description of His coming or *parousia* described in Matthew xxiv., Luke xvii., Mark xiii., impressed His faithful followers with the sense of His Divinity, while His Resurrection—to say nothing of the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost—confirmed the doubters. It is equally clear that St. Paul, who rejoiced in the fact that he had been converted from a persecutor of Christians to a persecuted Christian, held a most exalted view of the Divinity of his Lord, and did not regard it as something which might in a lesser degree be possessed by man. See his great conception of the Ruling Christ in Ephesians. There the whole universe is depicted as one grand unity, completely controlled by the one purpose which God purposed in Christ Jesus. There is one God and Father of all Who is above all and through all, and in us all, Who by His one Spirit makes one Body of all mankind in Christ; and there in the very centre of the Divinely controlled system “in the heavenlies” we see the Risen Lord, Christ Jesus, enthroned at “God's right hand,” as “the Head” of all, the source of union, love and power, the universal Saviour and Redeemer, Who with the Father possesses the Kingdom, Who with the Father gives peace, faith and love, and in Whom God hath forgiven us.¹ And yet this majestic Divine Being Who “was originally in the form of God,” lived a life of humility, emptying Himself of His glory, and became obedient

¹ i. 10, 20-23; ii. 6, 13; iii. 11, 19; iv. 6, 32; v. 5; vi. 23.

unto death, the death of the Cross, and then received back His glory.¹

St. Paul thus sets out His Divinity and His humanity in a manner which has been maintained by the Christian Church ever since in spite of various heresies on the subject. Against the Arians, who held modified views of His Divinity as well as imperfect views of His humanity (being minus a rational soul), the Council of Nicæa (325) declared that Jesus is *truly* God, while that of Constantinople (381) maintained that He was *perfectly* Man against the Apollinarians who developed the latter part of Arius's theory regarding the humanity. The Council of Ephesus (431) against the Nestorians upheld the unity of His Person, while that of Chalcedon (451) disallowed the confusion of His "natures." These dogmas were slowly during the five centuries hammered out by men whose training in philosophy, logic and theology was equal if not superior to any in our day. Who among us, for example, is worthy of a place beside Athanasius? These dogmas have survived empires and philosophies not for the reason given in these lectures—because there were no Christian philosophers until the present time able to draw up a satisfactory formula! Will they be allowed to perish now? We must remember that if the categories of philosophic thought are somewhat different to-day from those employed by Plato and his school that the problems of philosophy and laws of thought are the very same, and that we have constantly to go back to that school for light and help. The claim that the evolution theory has revolutionized the whole subject does not bear examination. We may safely assume that these writers who regard our Lord's Divinity as a matter of debate accept the theory of evolution which involves man's origin from an ape-like ancestor. Now if, as the Modernists assume, "God and man are akin"—which I deny, because it assigns to nature the work of Christ and the Divine Spirit—and if man has evolved from ape-like creatures—which I also deny, because of the many gaps inexplicable by that theory between the moral, rational and spiritual nature of man and the ape—we are bound to regard that ape-like being and his brother apes as possessing divine potentialities, in fact, as a possible deity, or a deity in an embryonic state. Is not this a *reductio ad absurdum* of the whole position? Man is not God. He has, however, a "God-

¹ Phil. ii. 6-12.

like reason." The best modern philosophy has not improved upon the positions of Plato or Shakespeare. We know more about the laws and forces of the natural and kindred sciences, but we have not advanced to any great extent in the principles of ethics, in philosophy, in religion, or theology, beyond the fourth and preceding centuries. How much superior is the view of Athanasius that instead of man being of the same nature as God he is deified or made divine through Christ by the indwelling of His Divine Spirit. "The Word was made flesh in order to offer up this body for all, and that we, partaking of His Spirit, might be made gods" (Decr. 14). "We men are made gods by the Word, as being joined to Him through His flesh" (Orat. iii. 34). "We are sons and gods because of the Word in us." "Because of our relationship to His body, we too have become God's Temple, and in consequence are made God's sons" (i. 43). "He was not man and then became God, but He was God and then became man and that to make us gods" (i. 39). And He is able to do this because He is of the same nature or substance with the Father, being "the deifying and enlightening power of the Father in which all things are deified and quickened" (Syn. 51). Sensible and scriptural statements like the above give a very different meaning to that modern catchword "the divinity of man." We are divine because God in and through Christ has made us so. Through Him and in Him Who revealed the love of God the Divinity of man becomes a possibility. The epigram, "the humanity of God and the Divinity of man," may mean anything or nothing, and certainly proves nothing. If "a dominant characteristic of religion of the present day be its impatience of mere tradition" (p. 301) a like impatience of mere assumptions is a conspicuous *desideratum*. Now the ordinary Christian worshipper is satisfied to know that his Saviour is God as well as man, one who showed the power of God and shared the nature of man—without his sin. He is not interested in attempts to analyse the natures and the Personality of Christ, or to explain how the two natures are united in one Divine Personality. But a sure instinct will at least safeguard him from the modern fallacy of identifying a perfect human nature—the creation of God—with the Divine nature—with the Creator. He knows, too, that our knowledge of Jesus is partial, that such deep matters as His Humanity and His Divinity we see now imperfectly as in a mirror. He

feels that no portrait of Jesus in art or literature satisfies; that every "life of Jesus" but that in the Gospels disappoints. We cannot form a complete mental picture of His human life. There are so many gaps we dare not fill up. Neither can we form an adequate conception of His Divinity. There are so many dark spaces in our star-lit sky. As our faith increases so does our vision. The dark spaces are filled with light, but other dark spaces appear in their turn. So we are baffled in our quest, and yet all the time we are being led on from one glorious aspect of truth to another and a larger, and are receiving preparation the while for fresh vistas and new revelations of the glory and majesty of the Eternal Christ. And as we thus stand and gaze we see how—

"That one Face, far from vanishes, rather grows,
Or decomposes but to recompose,
Become our Universe that feels and knows."

Certain statements,¹ about the date of the last day and the assignment of seats, seem to imply a limit to His knowledge and authority. They are made much of by one party, and are variously explained by the other. It is said that "not even the Son, but the Father" means "not even the Son apart from the Father"; that Jesus was speaking here officially as Head of the Church; that the words were spoken as a sort of accommodation to the audience, i.e. that *relatively to them* He professed ignorance although *absolutely in Himself* He had knowledge. Such explanations do not satisfy others, who would explain them as due to the Lord's *Kenosis* or self-emptying. This theory based on Philippians ii. 7 (He emptied Himself, R.V., He made Himself of no reputation, A.V., *Ἐκένωσεν ἑαυτὸν*) implies that the Divine Word laid aside certain of His essential attributes in becoming flesh. In the Philippian passage the Apostle was speaking of the Lord's great condescension and self-renunciation in assuming the form of a servant. He had just spoken of His essential glory in being originally in the form or essence of God, which glory could not be laid aside without a change in God. He had also spoken of His glory in being "on an equality with God." This latter glory was laid aside. He emptied Himself of it. On the eve of His greatest humiliation He asks the Father

¹ Mark xiii. 32; Matt. xxiv. 36, "Of that day and hour knoweth no one, neither the angels *nor the Son* but the Father." In Matt. "nor the son" may be a scribal addition, not being found in some high authorities. Matt. xx. 23; Mark v. 34 "to sit at my right hand . . . is not mine to give."

“ to glorify Him with the glory He had with Him before the world ” (John xvii. 5), referring to what He had given up voluntarily. In His Incarnation He assumed Manhood in a perfect human nature, in order to heal and save, for the “ unassumed is unhealed ” (Greg. Naz.). It is obvious then that the Kenosis theory does not do full justice to the Divine personality of Jesus.

Others suggest a dual-consciousness theory of a Divine and a human consciousness meeting somewhere in the subconscious or subliminal sphere. But it creates more difficulties than it solves. The Gospels do not represent our Lord as now absorbed in His human experience and now in His Logos-experience. There is no hint of His retiring for a moment into His subconscious sphere, no sign of any movement of His soul from one sphere to the other. Quite the contrary. The dominant note in His life and character is His sense of His continuous fellowship with God, as a Son with His Father. This theory also detracts from the unity of His Divine personality.

The Lord's statements referred to must be taken in connexion with others that mention His tears, His thirst, His weariness, and mark the greatness of His self-renunciation and self-sacrifice, and the reality and completeness of His Manhood. They also indicate the Son's subjection as Son to the Father which St. Paul predicted in 1 Corinthians xv. 28, “ When all things have become subject to Him, then shall the Son also Himself subject Himself to Him that made all things subject to Him, that God may be all in all.” That subjection being the free submission of love to love is not inconsistent with the Godhead of Jesus which the same Apostle had set forth in two previous epistles, 1 Thessalonians iii. 2 and 2 Thessalonians ii. 16, where the Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father are united in a prayer by a verb in the singular. The Apostle, who had more reasons than we know for his statements, saw no inconsistency between them. Such apparently discordant experiences were not really discordant, for they would be merged for him in an inner harmony in the synthetic unity of the Saviour's consciousness.

As we marshal the various scriptural aspects of the Christ together, His Being, His Personality, His humanity, His work and His teaching, we have a catena of proofs which establish the fact that the Christ of the Scriptures, the Christ of history, the Christ of Dogma, and the Christ of Christian experience is the same, Strong

Son of God who became the Son of Man in order to make the sons of men sons of God. As we consider fairly and impartially, unbiased by "scientific" or "critical" prejudices, His entrance into the world and all that it under the circumstances implied; the claims implied and based by Him and by His Church upon the manifestation of the Divine and the revelation of the Father in His human life; upon His attractiveness; upon His sympathy; upon His sinlessness; upon His invitation; upon His mediation; upon His Resurrection, and His Commission of Peace; upon His Ascension and His Advent or Return; His relation to mankind as the source of moral and spiritual progress; and the light He throws upon all the problems of life, we must acknowledge that the Jesus of Christian faith and worship cannot be explained on any natural or humanistic or "divinity-of-man" hypothesis. We shall also see that if men believe that He actually lived—and this is generally admitted by English critics—they cannot decline at the same time to believe that supernatural manifestations accompanied His birth and mission and that stupendous claims were made about His Messiahship, His Authority, His Second Coming and His Divinity without raising greater difficulties than they can solve. Finally, if it is true that "no formula which expresses clearly the thought of one generation can convey the same meaning to the generation which follows"—words of Dr. Westcott quoted at the Conference with reference to the creeds we have, would not the Modernist attempt to formulate a creed be open to the very same objection from the very outset?

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A tenth volume has been added to Herbert Strang's Historical Stories. In *In Stirring Times*, by Walter Rhoades, we have a miniature history of the English Revolution interwoven with fiction, it is true, but fiction which in no way detracts from the historical accuracy of the narrative. This volume, as are all the others in the series, is well written, interesting and contains excellent moral teaching. The portion of the book devoted to the circumstances which led up to the coming of William of Orange is of particular value. The prices are—cloth, 3s.; picture boards, 2s. 6d.; school edition, 1s. 9d.