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THE UNREASONABLENESS OF DENYING THE DEITY OF CHRIST

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THE Person of Christ has long been a theological storm centre. Was Jesus the Son of God? Neutrality on this great question is impossible. There is no middle ground. Belief in the Deity of Christ is fundamental. It is the heart of faith, the dynamic of power, and the citadel of Christianity. To deny that Christ is God's Son is grossly to dishonor Him. Let Christians, then, stand up for the Deity of Jesus Christ as loyally and courageously as they defend their flag and the reputation of their loved ones.

To deny the Divinity of our Lord leads to three unthinkable conclusions.

I

If Jesus was not Divine, then we are forced to the unthinkable conclusion that the falsest Book ever written has been the mightiest force for good in all the world's history.

The Scriptures witness throughout to the Deity of Christ. The Old Testament abounds in prophecies of a Coming Messiah. These predictions were strikingly fulfilled in Christ. Jesus made the strongest possible claims to Deity. His earthly life was such as only God could live. The New Testament from beginning to end is built upon the assumption that Christ was Divine. The central theme of the whole Bible is that Christ came as God's Son to redeem the world.

If Christ was not Divine, then the whole Bible is a lie. The patriarchs were deceived by phantom hopes. The Psalmist was the victim of rosy fancies. The prophets fooled the people with empty promises. Jesus was either an imposter or a lunatic. His Apostles were gullible simpletons. The early church was built upon a fraud. If the very heart of the Bible thus proves false, dare we

*This excellent article was unsigned. In some way it became separated from the letter accompanying it and it is impossible to identify the author with certainty. If he will kindly send his name, due acknowledgment will be made in the October issue.

trust any of it? It is fit only for the rubbish pile of exploded superstitions.

But even if we do throw away the Bible as the master falsehood of the ages, we cannot escape the fact that this Book has produced the greatest harvests of good in all history. It has transformed millions of lives. It has opened the gates of immortality. It has been the guiding light of civilization. It is the foundation of all that is best in modern life. Both individuals and nations have prospered to the degree that they have followed the teachings of this Book. To say that such streams of blessing have been flowing from a fountain of falsehood is absurd. Yet this conclusion is unavoidable if we deny that Jesus is the Son of God.

II

If Jesus was not Divine, then we are forced to the unthinkable conclusion that God used a blasphemous imposter to give the world its highest conceptions of God and righteousness.

Jesus has unquestionably given the world its greatest religious ideas. His life was a revelation of perfect wisdom, holiness and love. From Him have come the purest teachings about God that men have ever heard. They soar inconceivably higher into the realms of truth than the loftiest speculations of human genius. They are woven into the very texture of all subsequent Christian thinking.

If it be admitted, as it must be, that Jesus has given the world its highest conceptions of God, while at the same time it is denied that He was Divine, this insistent question arises. Would God have been true to Himself if He had made such a blasphemous imposter His chosen Representative through whom to reveal Himself to men? We know from our Bible reading that God's wrath blazed forth again and again in vengeance upon those guilty of irreverence and idolatry. According to the New Testament, Jesus claims Deity and was worshipped as God by the early church. Would God have suffered such blasphemy and idolatry—as it surely was, if Christ was not what He claimed to be—to go unpunished and unrebuked? But we find that Jesus' earthly ministry was crowned

with every evidence of Divine favor. His words and deeds proved that God was with Him in an absolutely unique way. Furthermore, we find that faith in Christ is made the medium for the transmission of Divine grace into the lives of men. Now if Jesus was not Divine, then He was the Arch traitor against God, for He sought for Himself such worship and allegiance as belong to God alone. We are driven, then, to the utterly absurd conclusion that God did everything possible to assist the Arch-rebel against Himself and to enable Him to win a devoted following of millions of souls. As well might we expect a king knowingly and voluntarily to furnish a rebel leader against himself with funds and ammunition.

There arises another insistent question. Could Jesus have wrought as He did if He were a self-deluded fool or a deceiver? We know that it requires mental power of an unusual order to generate ideas that for centuries are potent to shape the thought and activity of men individually and collectively. Could a supreme fool have given the world its highest wisdom? Our own bitter experience tells us only too plainly how effectively insincerity and wilful sin lock the heart against God. Is it conceivable that if Jesus' whole earthly ministry had been based upon a fraudulent pretension to Deity, He could have lived in such rich and happy fellowship with God? Insincerity is bound sooner or later to leak out and weaken a man's influence. How could Jesus have persuasively moved men into fellowship with the very God against whom His whole earthly ministry was a blasphemous lie? And to imagine so stupendous a lie gaining ground and heavenly influence for nineteen centuries is preposterous. In a word, to suppose that a man falsely claiming Deity could be the strongest power ever known for winning men not merely to Himself but to the very God against whom He was the Arch-conspirator is simply unthinkable.

III

If Jesus was not Divine, then we are forced to the unthinkable conclusion that the Christian experience of the centuries must be rejected as empty delusion.

The Christian centuries are rich in testimony to the Deity of Christ. Millions have believed in Jesus as the

Son of God and have found in Him satisfaction for the deepest needs of their souls. Multitudes today know Christ as a personal Savior and Friend and would be willing, if need be, to die for Him. The magnetic power of Jesus over the hearts and lives of men is absolutely unparalleled in history.

But if Jesus was not Divine, then these millions who have believed in Him have been either fools or liars. Are we willing to make this terrible and sweeping indictment? Let us see what it involves. We are in duty bound to combat falsehood; we must be the opponents of error. The champions of unwelcome truth are better than the supporters of delightful delusion. This is impregnable Ethics. If those who believe in the Deity of Christ are wrong, then those who deny it are right. In other words, during all these centuries the Christian Church has been a camp of error, while those who have turned their backs on the Gospel Message have been on the side of truth. It is then our duty to throw Christianity overboard with all its attendant blessings, as an outworn superstition.

We cannot, however, destroy the fact that Christianity has in the past made the wealthiest contributions to mankind. Christian people have done more to bless and enlighten the world than have all the forces of Paganism, infidelity, and materialism combined. Christians have been the very cream of society. They have launched the great forward movements of civilization. Their service has been the very flower of human achievement. Churches that have drifted away from faith in the Deity of Christ have lost power to win men for God, while those that have held most fervently to the doctrine have been open doors through which thousands have found their way into saving fellowship with God. Assuredly if the trustworthiness of a belief is to be judged by its fruits, the evidence would seem to be overwhelmingly on the side of those who hold that Jesus was the Son of God.

Neither can we destroy the certainty of our own Christian experience without overthrowing the very foundations of all certainty. We find that Jesus Christ meets the deepest wants of our souls as only God can. We can no

more doubt that in Him we find spiritual life than that we live by breathing. In Him our souls rise to their best. His presence is burningly real to us. We pray to Jesus and our prayers are answered; and we know that if Jesus were not the Son of God, God would not answer prayers addressed to Christ, thus aiding us in self-deception. If we cannot trust our experience of fellowship with the living Christ, we might as well distrust all personal experience.

CONCLUSION.

If Jesus was not Divine, then one of two conclusions is inevitable. (1) God has permitted the supreme lie of history to draw the world to Himself and to nurture the highest type of goodness. But this is as absurd as to say that men are nourished by deadly poison. (2) Our ideas of God and goodness are directly opposed to fact. This would be to enthrone vice and encourage devil worship.

If we cannot subscribe to either of these two conclusions, then we must take another premise and confess that the Bible and Christian experience are true, and that Jesus Christ is, indeed, the only begotten Son of God.