

The Deity of Christ

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The belief in the deity of Christ is derived directly from statements concerning Him in the Bible. The references are so many and their meaning so plain, that Christians of every shade of opinion have always regarded its affirmation as an absolute and indispensable requisite of their faith. It is proclaimed in the very first sermon of the infant Church (Acts 2:36) where Peter, to the loftiest title known to a Jew, adds a loftier still—Lord and Christ (Messiah); while in the last vision of the Book of Revelation the Lamb occupying one throne with God (Revelation 22:3) can betoken only essential oneness.

Christ's claim to be equal with God underlies His teaching right from the start. The disciples could not long have missed the implication of the change in the very frame of His message from that of the Old Testament prophets, whose familiar introduction, 'Thus saith the Lord', was now replaced by 'But I say unto you' (no fewer than nine times in the early part of the Sermon on the Mount recorded in Matthew, chapter 5).

In content and scope His teaching embraced much that was new about the nature of God. Not only the disciples but also the Jews soon recognized that He was affirming His equality with God (John 5:18). He was beginning to reveal that the 'unity' of God involved a true uniting of three 'persons' in the Godhead, of whom He was claiming to be one. ('Godhead' simply means 'the divine

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nature'; 'head' is an abstract ending, commonly appearing as 'hood', and it was just by chance that 'Godhead' became current instead of the equally proper 'Godhood'.)

The New Testament writers seem never to have felt the need to systematize the many statements of Christ on His unique relationship to the Father, or to define by way of a logical formulation the basis of their belief in the 'Trinity'. For them this doctrine was practical and implicit, rather than theoretic. Not surprisingly, therefore, the word 'Trinity' itself never appears in the New Testament. To see in its absence a possible objection to the doctrine, would be as illogical as to deny that theological knowledge is to be found in the New Testament since the word 'theology' is nowhere used. It is, moreover, a well-known fact that evidence for the beliefs of a community does not demand the existence of a systematic statement. No one, for instance, would question the belief of certain primitive peoples in polytheism because it lacks orderly expression.

By 'trinity' is meant 'three in one' and 'one in three', 'trinity in unity' and 'unity in trinity'. Thus it is not 'tri-theism' or 'three Gods', nor is it merely three aspects of God. The word 'person' is the word that, by a process of transference, has been adopted to designate the distinctions existing in the Godhead, namely Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is probably the best term at our disposal to denote the possession of such decisive characteristics of personality as intercommunication and fellowship, as ascribed individually to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In numerous passages in the New Testament the trinitarian pattern is so clearly defined that one would be compelled to invent some such word as

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‘trinity’, if it did not already exist, to describe the implications of the statements.

It was not until the Gospel had been preached for some 300 years in New Testament terms, that anyone took on himself to assail the belief of Christians in the deity of Christ. The person who did it was Arius. The novel form of his attack shows that Christians had hitherto accepted it without question. His arguments, as formulated by him, were clearly intended as an objection to the prevalent view, not as a correction of a heresy. If the state of affairs had been otherwise, that is, if Christians generally had denied the deity of Christ, then his opposition would have been meaningless. As promotion to a bishopric had been denied him, he has left himself wide open to the suspicion of having been motivated by a desire for personal revenge. He was evidently a man who knew how to exploit secular political influence to the full and the story of his machinations makes sordid reading. As a consequence of strong political support, a controversy arose out of all proportion to the merits of his arguments. His views were finally shown to be at complete variance with Scripture and were pronounced heretical. Nevertheless, from time to time they have been revived, either deliberately or in ignorance, often peddled from door to door by text-mongers, unaware that the very passages which they have learned to quote so glibly were first used over sixteen hundred years ago by a frustrated ‘cleric’.

Within the brief compass of this booklet it will not be possible to quote all the passages referring to the deity of Christ and to consider all the ways in which this truth is indicated in Scripture. The reader should, however, find

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no difficulty in adding to the references given here. In the passages quoted, the original text has been kept constantly under review, and on occasion wording not to be found in any standard translation has been introduced, where it was felt that the meaning of the original could be made more apparent. In the section that immediately follows, the evidence is all the stronger for being of an incidental nature.

OLD TESTAMENT TITLES OF JEHOVAH APPROPRIATED BY CHRIST

One of the most remarkable things in our Lord’s ministry is the quiet assurance with which he unhesitatingly applies to Himself titles from the Old Testament which are there indisputably used of Jehovah. Moreover, the writers in the New Testament often ascribe such titles to Christ.

‘First and Last’

A significant title assumed by the Lord Jesus in the book of Revelation is: ‘First and Last’ (chapter 1:11; 2:8; 22:13). In 22:16 the speaker says of Himself: ‘I Jesus have sent my angel to testify unto you of these things’, having already said in verse 13 ‘I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last’. Also in chapter 2:8, there is no doubt about the person to whom the words refer: ‘These things saith the first and last, who died and came to life’. Now this

designation 'First and last' occurs three times in Isaiah (41:4; 44:6; 48:12) where on each occasion Jehovah is the speaker.

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The 'I AM'

Jehovah, the incorrect but well established rendering of the Hebrew consonants YHWH, was regarded by the Jews as too sacred to be pronounced and was replaced by a variety of substitutes, such as 'Lord' (*Adonai*), or 'The Name'. We can no longer say with certainty how it was pronounced, but from Exodus 3:14 we know that it was derived from the verb 'to be': 'God said to Moses "I am who I am"; and He said: Say to the people of Israel "I am" has sent you.' Now on more than one occasion our Lord refers to Himself by using 'I am' in a way that points unmistakably to this Old Testament title of Jehovah. In a controversy with the Jews He declared: 'Before Abraham was, I am' (John 8:58). Had He been merely a pre-existent Being, then He would have had to say 'Before Abraham was, I was'. That the amazing implication of His claim did not escape the Jews is clearly shown by the extreme violence of their reaction in attempting to stone Him to death for alleged blasphemy. Another occasion on which He used it was at the time of His arrest. To His question to His approaching captors 'Whom seek ye?', they answered 'Jesus of Nazareth', to which He replied, 'I am'. The effect that this brief utterance had on them was dramatic: 'They went backward and fell to the ground' (John 18:5, 6). The mere literal sense of these words could hardly have produced this extraordinary effect. Then again at the crucial stage of His trial, Jesus being interrogated by the high priest as to His messianic claims, replied 'I am': and you shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven' (Mark

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14:62). The savage vehemence that this called forth in the high priest and the company can be explained only if it was understood by them to be a claim to personal deity, a blasphemy in their eyes of such magnitude as to be expiated only by death.

Author of Eternal Words

The Old Testament constantly claims to be an authoritative and immutable communication from God. In Isaiah 40:8 we are told: 'The grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of our God stands for ever'. To this view of the Old Testament as a divine revelation our Lord unquestionably subscribes. For instance, His words in Matthew 5:18, 'For truly I say unto you, until heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall not pass away from the Law, until all things are fulfilled'. For His own words He makes a substantially similar claim: 'Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words shall not pass away' (Matthew 24:35).

Light

The coming Messiah is designated in two familiar prophecies as 'Light' (Isaiah 9:2, compare Matthew 4:16; and Isaiah 49:6, compare Luke 2:32). Five times in the first chapter of John (verses 4, 5, 7, 8, 9) this description is used. His uniqueness is stressed in verse 9: 'The true light'. Our Lord Himself said: 'I am the light of the world' (John 8:12). Now light is a well-

known title of Jehovah in the Old Testament, for instance, Psalm 27:1, 'The Lord is my Light and my salvation', or even more specifically in Isaiah in a context of messianic prophecies:

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'Jehovah will be to you an everlasting light' (Isaiah 60:19 and 20). Again, following on the messianic prophecy of Isaiah 59:20 we have in 60:1 'light' designating the Messiah, equated with the glory of Jehovah. 'Arise, shine (that is, Zion), for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has dawned upon you'. It is instructive to see how John in his introduction to his first epistle uses the very same epithet of God that he had already used in the opening verses of his Gospel of the incarnate Son, who is there the 'light that the darkness found invincible' while in 1 John 1:5, God is light and in Him is no darkness at all'.

Rock

There are two words commonly used in Hebrew for 'rock', as well as the word 'stone'. One is used for instance in Psalm 18:2, 'Jehovah is my rock', the other in Psalm 95:1, 'O come let us sing to Jehovah, let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation'. Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:4 interprets the 'rock' of Exodus 17:6 as referring to Christ. 'Stone' is used as a title of God in Genesis 49:24, and in the messianic passage in Isaiah 28:16, 'Behold I am laying in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tested stone'. Peter in his first letter (I Peter 2:6-8) understands this passage to be speaking of Christ as the foundation stone of the 'spiritual house', the church. Although the word here is not the one used in Matthew 16:18 ('and upon this rock I will build my church'), the similarity of function is so obvious that Peter must also have had these words in mind. This seems all the more certain from his application two verses later of 'rock', a

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description of Jehovah taken from Isaiah 8 :14, to Christ. On linguistic grounds there could be no objection to seeing in Matthew 16:18 another instance of our Lord, taking to Himself a common title of Jehovah in the Old Testament (in II Samuel 22 alone, 'rock' is used five times of God).

Bridegroom

The figure of a bridegroom is one that is frequently used either implicitly or explicitly of Jehovah in the Old Testament. In Hosea 2:16, for instance, Jehovah says, 'You will call me "my husband"'. Again in Isaiah 62:5, 'As a bridegroom rejoicing over the bride, your God will rejoice over you'. Our Lord early in His ministry and often subsequently depicts Himself as a bridegroom. In a reply to the Pharisees, He says concerning Himself: 'Can the sons of the wedding chamber fast while the bridegroom is with them?' (Mark 2:19). Again in the parable of the 'Foolish Virgins' He is the bridegroom (Matthew 25:1-13). In that great final beatific vision (Revelation 21:2) the church is depicted 'as a bride adorned for her husband'.

Shepherd

In Psalm 23:1 we read, 'Jehovah is my shepherd', and in Ezekiel 34:15, 'I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep'. In John 10:11, our Lord uses this title of Himself, 'I am the good

shepherd, the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.' Peter calls Him 'The Shepherd and Guardian of your souls' (I Peter 2:25) and again 'the Chief Shepherd' (I Peter 5:4). The writer of the epistle to the

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Hebrews speaks of Him as 'the great shepherd' (Hebrews 13:20). That the title is unique is clear from John 10:16 'So there shall be one flock, one shepherd'.

Forgiver of Sins

In the Old Testament God alone has the right and power to forgive sins: Jeremiah 31:34, 'For I (Jehovah) will forgive their wickedness, and their sin will I remember no more'. Or again Psalm 130:4, 'For with Thee is forgiveness that Thou shouldest be feared'. In the New Testament we find our Lord claiming this right for Himself. In Luke 5:21 we read of the Pharisees protesting that only God could forgive sins. This was to them, as it would be to us, self-evident. To this Christ replied by substantiating His authority to forgive, by healing the paralytic. In Acts 5:31 Peter proclaims Christ as the One whom 'God has exalted at His right hand as Prince and Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins'. In Colossians 2:13 Paul speaks of God 'having forgiven us all our transgressions', while in chapter 3:13, it is 'the Lord (or Christ) has forgiven you'. If the right reading here is Lord, it must stand for Christ, as is clear from such a reference as 'Christ Jesus the Lord' in chapter 2:6.

Redeemer

The act of redemption is peculiar to God in the Old Testament. Two Hebrew words are in use, and both occur in Hosea 13:14, 'From the power of Sheol, I will ransom them, from death I will redeem them'. Again in Psalm 130:7, 'For with Jehovah is grace and abundance of

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ransom and He will ransom Israel from all his iniquities.' A direct parallel to this is found in Titus 2:13 with the difference that now Christ is identified with God (see verse 10): 'Our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that He might ransom us from all iniquity'. A different Greek verb for redemption is found in Galatians 3:13, 'Christ has purchased us from the Curse of the law'. Again in Revelation 5:9, 'For Thou (the Lamb) avast slain, and didst purchase unto God with Thy blood, men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation'.

Saviour, or Author of Salvation

In the Old Testament Jehovah is frequently described as Saviour or as the author of salvation: Isaiah 43:3, 'For I am Jehovah, thy God, the holy One of Israel, thy Saviour'; or Ezekiel 34:22, 'And I (the Lord Jehovah, verse 20) will save my flock and it will no longer be for booty and I will judge between sheep and sheep, and I will establish over them one shepherd'. The resemblance to John 10:17, 16, is striking: 'I (Jesus) lay down my life for the sheep' and 'they shall be one flock, one shepherd'. In Isaiah 45:22 a world-wide salvation is promised: 'Turn to me and let yourselves be saved, all the ends of the earth', and a little later (verse 23):

‘To me every knee shall bow and every tongue shall swear’, words taken up by Paul in Philippians 2:10, ‘At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow’, (verse 11) ‘and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord’. It would be impossible to quote all the passages in the New Testament that refer to the Lord Jesus as Saviour or the author of salvation. He was given the name Jesus expressly: ‘for He will save His people from their sins’ (Matthew 1:21); in Hebrews 5:9, ‘He became unto all those who obey Him the author of eternal salvation’. In harmony with all this is the significant parallel between ‘our God and Saviour Jesus Christ’ and ‘our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ’ by Peter (II Peter 1:1 and 1:11).

Co-Partner of Divine Glory

In Isaiah 42:8 we read: ‘I am Jehovah and I shall not give My glory to another’, and the phrase is repeated again in Isaiah 48:11. Now in that sacredest of all His prayers recorded in John 17, our Lord speaks of the reciprocal nature of His shared glory with the Father and says: ‘Father the hour is come, glorify the Son, that the Son may glorify Thee’ (verse 1). And again a little later: ‘And now glorify me, Father, with Thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was’ (verse 5). Paul sums all this up in an arresting phrase. When he confronts the abjection of His humiliation with the sublimity of His exaltation, the title he uses contains two superlatives. ‘For had they (the leaders) known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory (I Corinthians 2:8).

Judge

One of the earliest titles of Jehovah is that of universal judge. Abraham standing before Him says: ‘Shall not the judge of all the earth execute justice?’ (Genesis 18:25). And in Joel 3:12 Jehovah says: ‘I will sit to judge all the nations round about’. Now from Matthew 25:31-46 we

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learn that Christ will occupy the throne of glory—and there can be none more eminent than this—and preside at the last judgement. Here it is not so much the assumption of a title as the exercising of an office. In Romans 2:3 Paul speaks of the judgement of God but in II Timothy 4:1 it is, ‘Jesus Christ who shall judge the quick and the dead’. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that II Corinthians 5:10 speaks of the judgement seat of Christ, whereas the better reading in Romans 14 :10 has the judgement seat of God.

THE PERSON OF CHRIST IN OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY

Some of the prophecies about Christ make it clear that He is more than man. Isaiah 9:6, ‘For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the principdom will be upon His shoulders, and His name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace’. No plainer words could be used to express His deity. Again, although often designated as the son of David, this implied more than an earthly descendant of David. The Lord makes this plain by quoting the words of David in Psalm 110:1, ‘The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand until I put Thy enemies as Thy footstool’ (Matthew 22:43 and 44). That an angelic Being is not meant is shown by Hebrews 1:13, ‘But to what angel has He ever said: “Sit at my right hand, till I make Thy enemies Thy footstool”.’ Peter also quotes this

passage in his sermon on the day of Pentecost to prove the Lordship and Messiahship of Jesus (Acts 2:34-35).

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**WORKS OR ACTIONS PECULIAR TO JEHOVAH
IN THE OLD TESTAMENT PERFORMED BY
OR ASCRIBED TO CHRIST**

Both Jehovah and Christ are said to have the power to give life. Hannah in her 'Magnificat' says: 'Jehovah is the one who causes to die and the one who makes alive' (I Samuel 2:6). Eleven times in Psalm 119 alone Jehovah is credited with the power to make alive. In John 5:21 Christ claims to have this power in equal measure with the Father: For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom He will'. In I Corinthians 5:45, Paul quotes Genesis 2:7 'The first man Adam became a living being' and adds 'the last Adam a life-giving spirit'. And, perhaps, the best-known and most often quoted passage of all, the words of Jesus to Martha: 'I am the resurrection and the life, he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live' (John 11:25).

Creator and the Act of Creation

The Bible opens with the statement: 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth', that is, all things. In Isaiah 40:28, 'Jehovah is the eternal God, the creator of the ends of the earth'. Jeremiah calls him 'The former (or creator) of all things' (Jeremiah 10:16). Paul speaks of Christ in similar terms. 'For by (or in) Him were all things created in the heavens, and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers, all things have been created through Him and for Him' (Colossians 1:16), and John 1 :2 'He (the Logos) was in the beginning with God; all

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things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made'.

**THE NEW TESTAMENT REFERENCES
TO THE DEITY OF CHRIST**

No clearer expression of the fact of the Trinity could be desired than that given by the risen Christ in the baptismal formula in Matthew 28:19, with its inescapable implication of the co-equality and hence co-eternity of the three persons of the Godhead. 'Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'. Notice that our Lord said 'name' not 'names'. There subsist three co-eternal persons, but the Divine essence or substance is one. The model for this formula is probably to be found in the benediction given by the Lord to Moses in Numbers 6:24, 'Jehovah bless thee and keep thee, Jehovah cause His face to shine upon thee and be gracious to thee, Jehovah lift up His face upon thee and give thee peace'. And God adds: 'That they may put my name upon the people of Israel and I will bless you'. Although there are three blessings there is only one Blessor, thus it is 'name' not 'names'.

At the end of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians he pronounces a benediction in which the three persons of the Trinity are named as partners with co-equal power to bless: 'The grace of

the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen'. The use of all of Christ's titles is significant, He is not merely Jesus Christ, He is the Lord Jesus Christ (II Corinthians 13:14).

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Paul again in I Corinthians 12, gives us a passage in which the 'trinitarian' pattern is obvious: 'Now there are diversities of gifts of grace, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of services, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities but the same God, who is effecting all things in all' (verses 4, 5, 6). The mention of the same Spirit, the same Lord, the same God, demands the use of the word 'trinity', or another word meaning the same thing.

In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, within a brief compass he refers to the Trinity no fewer than four times. The first mention describes the trinitarian nature of our approach to God: 'For through Him (Christ) we both (Jew and Gentile) have access by one Spirit to the Father'. The word for 'access' is that used of bringing a subject into the presence of his king, or as we would say 'to have audience of (Ephesians 2:18).

The second reference describes the collaboration of the 'Trinity' in our edification (Ephesians 2:22) 'In whom (Jesus Christ, the chief corner stone, verse 20) you are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit.' Again the same pattern: In whom—Christ; to whom—God; through whom—the Spirit.

The third passage is Ephesians 3:14-17, 'For this cause I bow my knees to the Father, of whom the whole 'repatriation' in heaven and on earth is named. That He would grant unto you according to the riches of His grace, that ye may be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may come and take up His abode in your hearts by faith.' Thus for enjoyment of abiding fellowship we have the co-operation of the Father, the Holy Spirit, and Christ.

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Again Paul refers to the work of the Trinity in maintaining unification in His church (Ephesians 4:4-6) 'One body, and one Spirit, even as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all'. Here we have unity in tri-unity.

In the first chapter of Colossians we have a number of significant statements concerning the person of Christ. In verse 15 we read: 'who (the Son) is the image of the invisible God'. 'Image' by the common process of extension came to denote not only representation but manifestation. Thus in II Corinthians 4:4 we find it used in this latter sense: 'that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them.' But Christ is also: 'the first-born of every creature'. The word first-born had long since ceased to be used exclusively in its literal sense, just as prime (from Latin *primus*—first) with us. The Prime Minister is not the first minister we have had, he is the most preeminent. A man in the 'prime' of life has long since left the first part of his life behind. Similarly, first-born came to denote not priority in time but pre-eminence in rank. For instance in Psalm 89:27, 'I have put him (given him) as first-born, higher than the kings of the earth'. In a given situation even a whole company may rank as first-borns, as in Hebrews 12:23, 'and church of the first-born

ones, who are enrolled in heaven'. But Paul leaves us in no doubt as to what he means by the word; for he proceeds: 'for (because, for this reason) by Him were all things created'; and the word Paul uses for 'all' means without any exception whatever. Had Christ Himself been a created being, Paul would have had to use

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the Greek word meaning 'other things' or the word meaning 'remainder, rest'. But then Paul would not have called Him first-born but 'first-created', a term never applied to Christ. But verse 17 clinches the whole matter: 'And He is before all things', not 'He was'. The force of this statement is equal to that of the 'I am' of John 3:58.

Paul on occasions exploits language to its maximal limit to find terms in which to describe the absolute exaltation of Christ. To the believers in Rome he writes: 'From whom (the Jewish nation) as concerning the flesh is Christ, who is over all, God blessed for ever' (Romans 9:5). When speaking to the Corinthian converts about the cross as the focal point of their salvation, he goes on to say: 'To us there is one God: the Father, of whom are all things, and we unto Him, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we through Him' (I Corinthians 8:6). To the Ephesians, he asserts: (He is set) far above all hierarchy, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to Come' (Ephesians 1:21). To the Colossian Christians he says: 'In Him dwells the fulness of the deity bodily' (Colossians 2:9). Even in his short letter to Titus he must mention it: 'Expecting the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and the Saviour Jesus Christ' (Titus 2:13).

In the most unlikely places in the New Testament we find the deity of Christ taken for granted. James, His brother, begins his letter with the words: 'James, a servant of God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ'. James must have heard our Lord often say 'No servant can serve two masters' (Luke 16:13). But the very title, too, that he gives to Christ, shows that he is placing Him equal with God.

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And if emphasis was needed he provides it in chapter 2:1, 'My brethren, hold not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory, with respect of persons'. For a Jew, glory was an attribute of God alone.

In I John 5:6-9 (as everyone knows, verse 7 is absent from all good manuscripts) there appears again the trinitarian pattern: the witness of the Spirit with the witness of God witnessing concerning His Son. Before John finishes his letter he leaves us in no doubt concerning the person of the Son (verse 20); "And we know that the Son of God is come and has given us understanding that we know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, in His Son Jesus Christ, this is the true God and eternal life'.

It was evident for the writers in the New Testament, as it should be for us, that Christ could not save if He were not fully divine. The all-sufficiency of His sacrifice depends on His absolute authority. Had He been a created being, He would have been in some sense under compulsion, a victim. It is His possession of absolute free-will that removes the stigma of

injustice from the cross. And only of one who had Himself absolute immortality could it be said, that 'He became obedient unto death'.

Among the disciples was one who refused to believe in the resurrection of Christ without tangible proof. For him the witness of others was not sufficient in a matter of such momentous consequence. He demanded nothing less than positive proof within the domain of his own senses. When Our Lord appeared to Him, He did not rebuke him for his scepticism, rather He readily provided the kind of proof asked for. His confession, in words expressing the ultimate in Christian faith, could not have

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been a consequence of seeing someone risen from the dead, for he must surely have seen the risen Lazarus. There is no mistaking their intent: 'Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and My God"'. And our Lord did not restrain him nor rebuke him, He received this as His rightful designation (John 20, 24-29).

The claims of Christ to deity, embedded in the highest ethical teaching known to man, are expressed in irreducible matter-of-fact language. Either He was a fraud, or He was God. There is no middle position.

Paul provides a simple test for the sincerity of our faith. To be able to confess Jesus as Lord, Paul says, we need the power of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 12:3). Ask the one who places Christ any lower than the highest, if he will submit to this test. What is your own response, for this is a condition of salvation?

'Because, if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved' (Romans 10:9).

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Brief notes on some of the texts used by Arians

John 1:1 Much is made by Arian amateur grammarians of the omission of the definite article with 'God' in the phrase 'And the Word was God'. Such an omission is common with nouns in a predicative construction. To have used it would have equated the Word and the Word only with God, whereas without it the force is 'And the Word was Himself God'. The article is omitted, too, on occasion in other constructions, in fact, there are four instances of it in this

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very chapter (verses 6, 12, 13, 18), and in John 13:3, 'God' is written once without and once with the article. To translate in any one of these cases 'a god' would be totally indefensible (see R. Kuehner - 13. Gerth, *Ausführliche Grammatik der griechischen Sprache*, Vol. I. p. 591f., and E. Schwyzer, *Griechische Grammatik*, Vol. II. p. 24ff.).

Strange literalistic interpretations, too, have been put on the word 'beginning' in this verse, and to read as if it said 'In the beginning the Word began', whereas what is affirmed is that in the beginning He was already existing. The reference is to something within the divine, not

the human, order of things, and to apply the analogy of temporal succession and progression to the presence of God ('And the Word was with God') is utterly unwarranted. Equally narrow interpretations have been put on the word 'Beginning' in such passages as Revelation 3:14: 'the beginning of the creation of God'. The context, however, demands an agent as a parallel to 'witness', so the sense must be 'Beginner' or 'the first cause', as is the case in Revelation 21:6 where 'Beginning' is applied to God Himself (compare the Greek translation of Genesis 49:3, and Colossians 1:18, and Revelation 22:13). To understand what John means by 'Word' (Logos) read Revelation 19:13-16 in conjunction with 1 Timothy 6: 14-16.

John 14:28. 'My Father is greater than I'. This can refer only to the self-imposed limitations of the Son in His incarnation. He has already claimed equality with God (John 5:18), and oneness with Him (John 10:30), but He was not only true God, He was now also true man. In fact, rightly understood this is a claim of the highest import, for only things of the same order of magnitude can be compared. No mere man or angelic being could ever say 'God is greater than I', for created and uncreated are of different orders.

Mark 13:32 (Matthew 24:36 R. V.) 'Concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, not even the Son, but the Father'. This is in complete harmony with His consistent claim that He came to do the Father's will. He came to reveal the redemptive purpose of God but certainly not His whole mind (see John 17:8). There is again nothing here to contradict the many passages where His deity is positively and clearly stated, on the contrary it is in itself a very extraordinary claim, when we consider the ascending order: men, angels, Son, Father. He places Himself above the category of angels (the highest created beings) and classes Himself with the Father (see Hebrews 1:13).

I Corinthians 11:3. 'And the Head of Christ is God'. Paul cannot imply by this inferiority, no more than in the case of the wife to the husband, which would be a contradiction of Galatians 3:28.

I Corinthians 15:28. 'And when all things are subjected to Him, then the Son also Himself will be subjected to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all'. Paul is speaking of the relation of the Son to the Father (verse 24) which was ever one of subjection (see John 5:30). But subjection does not imply subordination in the sense of inequality (see I Corinthians 14:32, 'The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets'). The reference in verse 28 may well refer to organisational matters that do not come within the purview of revealed knowledge.

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John 17:21. This verse is quoted in an attempt to weaken the force of John 10:30, 'I and the Father are one', about the meaning of which his audience were in no doubt whatever (see verse 33). In 17:21, however, the second 'one' is not in the best manuscripts (see R.V.), thus simply, 'that they also may be in us'.

Philippians 2:5-9. A fair rendering of this passage might be: 'Cultivate this attitude of mind among you, which was in Christ Jesus, who being already in the form of God, did not treat it as a prize to be equal with God, but divested Himself, taking the form of a servant'. No one would dispute that when Paul says, Christ was in the 'form' of a servant, he meant that He was a servant in the truest and fullest meaning of the word. There is no ground for taking the

phrase 'in the "form" of God' to mean less. Now from the nadir of His humiliation God has re-invested Him with the insignia of His ineffable and divine glory, 'and has given Him the name that is—without exception—above every name'.

Mark 10:18 ('Jesus said to him, Why tallest thou me good; none but one is good, God'). 'Good' in the phrase 'Good Master' meant in the suppliant's language (Aramaic) 'benevolent', not 'morally good', hence there is no question of Christ denying that He was sinless (see H. L. Strack, P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud and Midrasch*, Vol. 1. p. 808f. and Vol. II, p. 24f). Moreover, 'The Good'—Psalm 145:9 was probably cited—was one of the many Judaic titles for God (op. cit. Vol. 1. p. 809). The point of our Lord's remark is that a word with such hallowed association should not be used in a merely conventional manner. He is not stating that God alone is sinless, but that He is the personification of benevolence. To deduce from this an unexpressed contrary: 'I am not sinless' or 'I am not God' would be sheer sophistry. Besides, in all interpretation, situation and context, immediate and remote, must be taken into account. Now when Christ comes to disclose (verse 21) the full limit of benevolence (the end of selfish possessing), He demands a response that hitherto had been the prerogative of God alone: "And come, follow Me". No prophet had ever presumed to say this. Even the great Samuel unshakeable in his integrity (1 Samuel 12, 3) did not suggest personal discipleship but said: "Turn not aside from following Jehovah" (verse 20). And invariably in the Old Testament 'following' in a religious sense has as its object God (Numbers 14, 24 and passim). The implication is surely undeniable.

Mark 15:34 (Matthew 27:46). This prayer on the cross ('My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?') has been seized upon as a possible refutation of Christ's claims to deity. We cannot, of course, know all that these words meant for Him at that terrible moment, but there are several possible interpretations. First, He was still in communion with His Father, in spite of the past tense of the verb. Second, the meaning of these words to an attentive Jew would be that He was claiming all the 22nd Psalm for Himself, for it was a common practice to name books and Psalms by their opening words, e.g. Psalm 113 was called the '*Hallel*', from the Hebrew word with which it begins.

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An approximate analogy might be a dying Christian saying only: 'Just as I am without one plea' but his friends would know that the hymn as a whole was in his mind. The third possibility is that He was quoting it with the immediate context in mind, namely, forsaken with regard to present help. The fact that He did not use the Hebrew wording of the original but that of His mother-tongue serves only to bring out the poignant depth of His feeling of desolation.

The main argument of those who deny the deity of Christ seems to rest on a misconception of the full meaning of 'Son'. The fallacy consists of arguing from the analogy of human experience, that 'son' implies a pre-existing father in time. The truth is, however, that 'son' is used widely both in the Old and New Testaments divorced from the idea of 'generation' or 'priority', to denote relationship only. For instance in Hebrew, age is expressed by the son of x years', and in the New Testament in such expressions as 'the sons of disobedience'. It was, in fact, one of the commonest ways of expressing identity. Again the phrase 'only-begotten' refers to the uniqueness of Christ's relationship to the Father. The word is even applied to God Himself in John 1:18 where the reading in the most ancient and textually best

F.F. Bruce & W.J. Martin, *The Deity of Christ*. Manchester: North of England Evangelical Trust, 1964. Pbk. pp.24.

manuscripts is 'God only-begotten' (In Hebrews 11:17 of Isaac, one of several sons, where the stress is on relationship).

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