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THE DEITY OF THE KING 111

DR. FREDK. A. TATFORD

Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us' (Matt. 1:23). In such simple and unembellished language does the Evangelist intimate the identity of Mary's Son with the Almighty God. Christ's history did not commence at Bethlehem: He knew no beginning and will never know an ending. As the Logos, He was eternally with God—pre-existent before time began—and, in fact, was Himself the self-revealing and self-communicating God. John 1:1 specifically indicates 'His eternal subsistence, His eternal intercommunion with God, His eternal identity with God.' As 'an only begotten from a Father' (John 1:14), His Sonship was an unoriginated relationship to the Father: He did not derive from the Father but was (and is) the unique Son, always consubstantial with Him. Nor did the incarnation affect that relationship, for He still continued in the bosom of the Father (John 1:18). 'He *is*, not *was*,' remarks Warfield. "The state is not one which has been left behind at the incarnation, but one which continues uninterrupted and unmodified. . . . He continues in the most intimate and complete communion with the Father. Though now incarnate, He is still "with God" in the full sense of the eternal relation intimated in John 1:1'.

Our Lord repeatedly confirmed His pre-existence. 'Before Abraham was, I am,' He told the Jews (John 8:58). He declared that He came down from heaven (John 3:13; 6:33, 51), that He came forth from God (John 8:42; 16:28) and that He was with the Father before the world was (John 17:5). The disciples who companied with Him had no doubt regarding the authenticity of His claims and unreservedly accepted them as true (John 16:30).

He consistently claimed equality of power, function and dignity with the Father, and vouchsafed no apology or sign of withdrawal when attacked by the Jews for what appeared to them to be blasphemy. Not only did He assert His superiority over the temple, the sabbath, Jonah and Solomon (Matt. 12:6, 8, 41, 42), but stated

that He was one with the Father and that there was a complete interpenetration and intercommunion (John 10:30; 14:10; 17:21). Indeed, He informed Thomas and Philip that those who had known and seen Him, had known and seen the Father (John 14:7-9). His authority was equal to that of the Eternal. 'Ye believe in God, believe also in Me,' He told His disciples (John 14:1).

He unhesitatingly used the Divine title, 'I am' (John 18:6) and insisted that the same honour should be paid to Him as to the Father (John 5:23). He accepted worship (Matt. 28:9) and gave no sign of disapproval when Thomas addressed Him as Lord and God (John 20:28). He claimed that 'all things the Father hath are Mine' ((John 16:15), and further stressed His complete intimacy with God in the words. 'All things are delivered unto Me by My Father: and no one fully knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth anyone the Father, save the Son' (Matt. 11:27).

That Christ's power was co-extensive with that of God was evidenced, for example, by His asseveration that, as the Father raised the dead, so did the Son (John 5:21), and that as the Father had life in Himself, so had the Son (John 5:26).

The operations of our Lord and of the Father are closely related to each other. He said, for instance, 'My Father worketh hitherto and I work' (John 5:17). Again, the Father is referred to as sending the Holy Spirit (John 14:16, 26), whilst Christ is also stated to send Him (John 15:26; 16:7). Furthermore, the security of the believer is jointly assured by the Father and the Son (John 10:28, 29).

The Lord maintained that He did nothing from Himself (i.e., of His own volition and initiative), but did only what He saw the Father doing. On the other hand, whatever the Father did, the Son also did in like manner (John 5:19). He spoke only what He had seen with His Father (John 8:38).

Isaiah's reference to God as a light and glory (Isa. 60:19) was quoted by old Simeon in the temple as applicable to our Lord (Luke 2:32). The prophecy of a forerunner to prepare the way of Jehovah (Isa. 40:3) was applied by Zacharias to Christ's

forerunner, John the Baptist (Luke 1:68-76; see also Matt. 3:3). The Jehovah of Isaiah was, therefore, identified with the Christ of the N.T.

Many times He claimed to be the Son of God (John 3:18; 5:25; 9:35; 11:4; etc.) and the angry Jews plainly understood this as a specific claim to equality with God (cf. John 5:18; 10:33). Indeed, His affirmation of this fact in response to the high priest's question at His trial sealed His condemnation by the Sanhedrin (Matt. 26: 63, 64; Mark 14:61, 62).

Certain powers and authority possessed by our Lord Jesus were patently Divine. On more than one occasion, He claimed to exercise the Divine prerogative of forgiveness of sins (Matt. 9:2, 6; Mark 2:7; Luke 5:20; 7:48), which the Jews at once recognised as synonymous with a claim to Deity (Luke 5:21) and, therefore, in their eyes, blasphemy. God is the sole source of spiritual illumination, yet the Saviour stated that He was the light of the world (John 9:5; cf. 1:9).

By actually raising the dead to life, He demonstrated that this power was in His hands, (Mark 5:39-42; Luke 7:12-15; John 11:43, 44). Others, however, have raised the dead (e.g., 1 Kings 17:22), but the Master identified His power to do so with that of the Father Himself (John 5:21-29). Moreover, He told Martha, 'I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth on Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live' (John 11:25). He even maintained that He had authority to lay down His own life and to take it again (John 10: 28: c.f. 2: 19). In addition, He declared that His death would magnetically draw all to Him (John 12:32).

Despite the fact that the Mosaic law had originated with God, Christ asserted His superiority to the law: after reciting the requirement of the law, He added, 'But I say unto you . . .' (Matt. 5). He disclosed that the angels of God were His servants (Matt. 13:41; 26:53). He declared that the right of judging the nations in a future day would be exercised by Him (Matt. 25:31-46).

There are certain attributes—such as omnipotence, omnipresence and omniscience—which, by their very nature, belong to God alone, but these were manifestly possessed by the Lord Jesus Christ. That all power was His is plainly evident. He was

the Creator of all things. The Evangelist states that 'All things were made by Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made' (John 1:3; cf. Col. 1:16). In addition, He is the universal Sustainer (Heb. 1:3). Creation owes to Him not only its origin but its continued existence.

It will be readily admitted that omnipotence is His today for, after His resurrection, He declared that 'All authority is given unto Me in heaven and on earth' (Matt. 28:18), but it is clear from the N.T. that omnipotence was still inherently His during His earthly life. 'Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name,' He promised, 'that will I do' (John 14:13). His power to impart eternal life (John 10:28; 17:2) is a strong argument, not only for His Deity, but also for His omnipotence. His power over death (Luke 7:14, 15; 8:54, 55; John 5:25; 11:41) is additional evidence. His absolute (and not merely derived) power over disease and physical infirmity was repeatedly demonstrated (Matt. 14:36; Mark 1:42; 3:5). As He told the messengers from John the Baptist, 'The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up' (Matt. 11:5).

Christ's power was unhesitatingly recognised in the spirit realm: the demons unreservedly acknowledged His superiority (Matt. 8:16; Mark 5:7; Luke 4:35-41).

His authority over the elements and the laws of nature was abundantly clear. He actually walked on the sea (Matt. 14:25; Mark 6:48, 49). The storm, which threatened to engulf the little boat on the lake, was calmed at a word from the Master (Matt. 8:26, 27). His touch multiplied the loaves and fishes (Matt. 14:17-20). His will transformed water into wine (John 2:7-9).

His possession of the attribute of omnipresence must also be accepted. 'No one hath ascended up into heaven, but He that came down out of heaven, even the Son of Man who is in heaven,' said our Lord to Nicodemus (John 3:13; see also 1:18). Although the last clause of this quotation is omitted in the Sinaitic and other MSS., it is found in the Alexandrian MS. and in most other versions. It is true that it is rejected by Westcott and Hort, but

it is accepted by the majority of the best editors, and the weight of evidence is in favour of the retention of the words.

Whatever the sense in which our Lord's words are to be understood, the implication is clear that, while physically upon earth, He claimed to be still in heaven. It is futile to argue that He could not be bodily present in two different places at the same time. He subsequently assured His disciples that 'where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I in the midst of them' (Matt. 18-20). He gave no indication that fulfilment of this promise was to be restricted to some future period after His resurrection (although it is obviously still applicable to that period). If the pledge had application to the days in which He spoke, the practical difficulties are as great as those created by the statement recorded in John 3:13. If it related to the present period, the difficulties still exist, for the risen Lord has still a physical body in heaven, yet He is always with His people (Matt. 28:20). His omnipresence, therefore, is not a physical attribute but a spiritual one. It is interesting to note that, to a Jew, the promise of Matt. 18: 20 is tantamount to a claim to Deity. Rabbi Hananiah ben Tradyon says, 'Where two are seated together, intent upon the Torah, glory (Jehovah) is in the midst of them.' Christ claimed to take the place of Jehovah.

If the record of Scripture is reliable, our Lord was unquestionably omniscient. Because of His nature, the Eternal God is infinite, inscrutable and unknowable. Yet Christ specifically declared that He knew Him (John 8:55) and that, in fact, He was the only One who did. 'No man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him' (Matt. 11:27). He claimed to know the Father in the same way as He was known of the Father (John 10:15; Luke 10:22), implying a complete acquaintance not merely with the Person of God but with all His actions, past and present. He further explained, 'I know Him for I am from Him' (John 7:29). His knowledge was co-extensive with the omniscience of God.

The Master not only had a full knowledge of whence He came (John 8:14, 42), but of the eternity of the past (John 17:5) and the earlier dispensations of human history (John 8:58). He

had, moreover, a complete knowledge of the actions and movements of individuals (Matt. 24:2; Mark 13:13; John 1:48). He was able, for example, to tell Nathaniel that He had seen him under the fig tree in his own garden, reading (as His greeting and subsequent remarks imply) the Scripture (Gen. 28:12) regarding Jacob, the son of guile (John 1:47-51). He revealed to the woman of Samaria His knowledge of her five marriages and present adultery (John 4:18). He disclosed to His disciples His knowledge of Lazarus' death (John 11:11, 14). When He sent Peter and John to prepare the passover, He foretold that they would meet a man bearing a pitcher of water (an unusual sight) and that he would show them a large furnished upper room (Luke 22:10-13).

His knowledge of men was deeper, however, than an acquaintance with their actions. He read their hearts and knew their unseen motives. What was hidden to all but Jehovah, the great Searcher of hearts (Jer. 17:10), was open to Christ (Mark 2:8; John 2:24; 6:61). The Evangelist states that it was unnecessary for any to bring a testimony to the Lord Jesus, for He knew already what was in men (John 2:24, 25), and our Lord Himself emphatically declared, 'I know you' (John 5:42). He knew the very thoughts of human beings (Matt. 9:3). Every volition of the mind was bare to Him. He knew what those around Him were reasoning in their hearts (Mark 2:8; Luke 5:22). He knew who would not believe (John 6:64). He read the wickedness of heart of His questioners (Matt. 22:18). He discerned the heart movements of Judas Iscariot (John 6:70, 71). He read the thoughts of His own disciples (John 16:19). The disciples were compelled to acknowledge, 'Thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should enquire of Thee' (John 16:30), and Peter frankly confessed, 'Lord, Thou knowest all things' (John 21:17).

The happenings in the spirit world were also an open book to Christ (Luke 10:18; 22:31), and He was acquainted with every detail of the activities in the animal kingdom. He knew precisely where fish were to be caught and where the disciples' nets should be let down (Luke 5:4-6; John 21:6). In His omniscience, He could send Peter to the shore to find a stater for the tribute money in the mouth of the first fish he caught (Matt. 17:27).

The future held no secrets from our Lord and He foretold events, some of which are even yet still to be fulfilled (Matt. 11:24; 12:41, 42; 24; Mark 13 etc.). He predicted Judas' betrayal of his Friend (Mark 14:18; John 6:64); He foretold Peter's denial of his Master (Luke 22:34); He foretold in detail His own betrayal, trials, scourging, crucifixion and resurrection (Matt. 20:19; Mark 8:31; 10:33, 34). The Arians held that Christ was ignorant of many things. The Agnoetae went further and 'attributed ignorance not merely to Christ's human soul but to the Eternal Word' (Schaff). But of His omniscience there is abundant evidence in the Gospel narratives.

The inevitable conclusion which must be reached by the unbiased reader of the N.T. is that the Man who walked the dusty streets of Nazareth was possessed of all the attributes of Divinity and was no less than the Eternal God tabernacling in human flesh.

—*The Harvester*

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

'What think ye of Christ?' is the test
To try both your state and your scheme.
You cannot be right in the rest
Unless you think rightly of Him.

Some take Him a creature to be—
A man or an angel, at most:
But they have not feelings like me
Nor know themselves helpless and lost.

So guilty, so helpless am I
I durst not confide in His blood,
Nor on His protection rely
Unless I am sure He is God.

JOHN NEWTON