

MY LORD AND MY GOD

BY

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Y LORD AND MY GOD: this is the summing up by St Thomas the doubter after he had seen the Christ risen from the dead. It is the challenge every man since has had to face: is Christ God?

The following is not going to be an exhaustive analysis of the evidence, nor is it to be written in an apologetic spirit. My aim is to state the position as I see it.

The Catholic Church today holds as its basic object of belief the fact that Christ is God. The Protestants wobble, some do believe, some do not. The Eastern Churches, until their contact with modernism, held the Catholic faith. It was this fact—that Christ is God and Man—that was worked out in the first six councils of the Church between the 4th and 6th centuries.

Nicaea: 'We believe . . . in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, only begotten, that is of the substance of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through whom all things were made. . . .'

And the Definition of *Chalcedon*: 'Therefore, following the holy Fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man, consisting also of a reasonable soul and body; of one substance with the Father as regards his Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards his manhood; like us in all respects, apart from sin; as regards his Godhead, begotten of the Father before the ages, but yet as regards his manhood begotten for us men and for our salvation, of Mary the Virgin, the God-bearer (*Theotokos* Mother of God); one and the same Christ Son, Lord, Only-begotten, recognised in two Natures without confusion, without change, without division, without separation. . . .'

There is then no doubt as to the attitude on this point of that early Church which Harnack, as well as we, would call the Catholic Church.

The early pagan writers, though they are vague enough about the Christian tenets, seem to be aware of this: that the Christians worship Christ as God.

Pliny: 'They (the Christians) declared that the sum of their guilt or error had amounted only to this, that on an appointed day they

had been accustomed to meet before daybreak and to recite a hymn in alternate choirs to Christ, as to a god'.

The Apostles themselves were unanimous in their writings that Christ was God, beginning with Thessalonians and ending with the Gospel of St John. It begins with the 'Christ the Son of God' in I Thessalonians 1, 10, and ends with 'In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God . . . and the Word was made flesh' of the Prologue to St John's Gospel, beginning with A.D. 51 and ending with the dying voice of the Beloved Apostle A.D. 100 c.

Let us make a little list of the divine titles attributed to Christ in the Epistles and Apocalypse:

Acts 2, 36—Lord and Christ.

Acts 5, 31—Prince and Saviour.

Rom. 9, 5—God, blessed for ever. (2 Peter I, 1).

Rom. 10, 12, etc.—Lord over all.

Rom. 14, 9—Lord of the living and the dead.

I Cor. 1, 24—Power of God.

I Cor. 1, 9—Son of God. (Thess. 1, 10; Heb. 1, 2.)

I Cor. 1, 24—Wisdom of God.

2 Cor. 4, 4—Image of God.

Gal. 2, 20—The Son of God. (Eph. 4, 13.)

Phil. 2—Equal with God.

Col. 1, 15—Image of the Invisible God.

I Tim. 1, 2, 12, etc.—Lord (and *passim* in the Epistles).

Heb. 1, 2—Heir of all things.

Heb. 1, 3—Brightness of the Father's Glory.

Heb. 1, 3—Figure of his substance.

Heb. 1, 3—Upholder of all things.

James 1, 1—Lord Jesus Christ of glory.

I Pet. 4, 5—Our judge.

I Pet. 1, 3—The Son of God. (I John 2, 22-24.)

2 Peter 1, 1—Our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

I John 1, 10—The Word.

I John 4, 9—The Only-Begotten.

Apocalypse 1, 8—Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end.

If others said all this of Christ, what did he himself say? He said, when quoting Isaias upon the Messias, that this very day that prophecy was being fulfilled. He called himself Lord of the Sabbath; he said that the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah deserved a lesser fate for not listening to God than did the cities of the plain for not listening to him. He said that a greater than Jonas, and a greater than Solomon was here. He quoted the Commands of God and putting himself on the level with the divine Law-Giver said, 'But I say to you. . . .' The angels are his messengers; he is the king of the Kingdom of God; he is *the judge*, coming to judge the world on the last day, he is the *forgiver of sins*, both of which powers are God's own. He is not merely a Son of God, but the Son, God's own Son, when we all are his servants. He is the Christ, the son of the living God. When asked to explain how Abraham could have rejoiced to see his day, he replied: 'Before Abraham was made, I AM', thus echoing

the name that God called himself when Moses in the desert asked him his name: God had replied, 'I am who am'.

In the synoptic Gospels Christ is reported as having said: 'All things are delivered to me by my Father. And no one knoweth the Son, but the Father: neither doth any man know the Father, but the Son, and he to whom it shall please the Son to reveal him' (Mt. 11, 27).

But it is in St John's Gospel that the titles our Lord gives himself are most abundant:

The Father and I are One.	The Bridegroom.
The Source of Life.	The Door.
The Light of the World.	The Prophet.
The Way, the Truth and the Life.	The Shepherd.
The Bread of Life.	The Vine.
The Beginning.	The Lord.
The only-begotten of the Father.	

When we contemplate these stupendous titles, this all-embracing claim, and when we face the fact of the miracles done before multitudes and not denied, when we know the resurrection as the basic fact of all, then do we see that here is no mere man, nor any myth of the pre-historic world, but the mightiest event in history, the moment chosen from all eternity when God stepped down into his universe, to save it and free it from its sins, to lead it back unto himself.

We cannot ignore Christ any more than we can ignore our own life. He is God made man, our God and our all. If we lose him, we lose all, for nothing has sense outside him. All history since his death would be senseless without Christ, all history before his birth an unmeaning dream. Creation and creatures are all made new through him, with St John, in love and faith we cry

Come, Lord Jesus.

Some excuse themselves for not believing in Christ's divinity because he never said 'I am God'. But is their excuse valid? We must examine what those who heard him concluded from his sayings, his life, and his works. St Thomas the doubter cried out on his knees before the risen Master, 'My Lord and my God'. St John, in an outburst of wonder and of insight, wrote at the beginning of his *Life of Jesus*, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God . . . and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us'. St Paul in his letters to his dear Philippian converts wrote speaking of humility, 'Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who *being in the form of God*, thought it not robbery to be *equal with God*, but emptied himself taking the form of a slave'. St Peter, to conclude, though testimonies abound, called Jesus,

'Our God and Saviour Jesus Christ'.