

sin conscious. How can we turn this suffering consciousness to the main question, sin? Isn't social action bypassing the main issue?

Conclusion: Natural man sees suffering as the problem and wants to do away with it. He may either accuse God of being unjust or claim that suffering shows that no loving God exists. However, God wants man to stop his rebelling, which is the root cause of the suffering. A doctor does not treat only the symptoms; he must also attack the disease. But serious symptoms must also be treated.

Question: Just what is the diaconal ministry of the Church?

Conclusion: It is the Church showing forth Christ's love among the brethren within and Christ's mercy to all men outside the Church. This must be given an important place. The Christian community has not adequately felt the need to be involved.

Question: How does this diaconal ministry relate to evangelism?

Conclusion: It is a powerful witness to Christ's presence in his Church when men see *truth* being practiced in and from the Christian community.

Question: Do people listen more to the Gospel when they have experienced the diaconal ministry toward themselves?

Conclusion: Sometimes yes, sometimes no.

Question: Then, why help them?

Conclusion: We extend them Christ's mercy for Christ's sake, "We love because he first loved us" (I John 4:19). There should be an evangelistic effect, but not merely an evangelistic purpose. People will know the difference as to whether we have sincerely acted in love for Christ and for them, or merely to gain opportunity to preach to them. Our first priority and act should be to pray for those who are suffering; but we must not stop there. We must then share in their suffering. This may then give opportunity to share our experience of Christ — how he has helped us in our need. The interest we show in them must be real in relation to their felt need. A starving person may need bread in order to be able to listen to the Gospel.

Question: But, if we could relieve all hunger, for example, would there not still be a deeper suffering? Many of those who have the most that this world can offer are among the most desperate and frustrated.

Conclusion: We must keep our main aim on treating the real problem: man's sin, which can only be treated by the full communication of the Gospel of Christ. But at the same time, we must do what we can for the symptoms of suffering. Perhaps the simplest statement of this combination is, "Give a cup of cold water in the name of Christ." The water represents physical ministry to a real need: physical thirst, while the "name of Christ" represents all that Jesus Christ is — the God-man who gave himself for our spiritual need, to free us from the sin that is at the root of mankind's problem; the sin that is the root cause of all suffering, and also the cause in every man's personal frustration, spiritual suffering and separation from God.

JESUS CHRIST, THE UNIQUE SON OF GOD: THE RELATIONSHIP OF HIS DEITY AND HUMANITY WITH REFERENCE TO EVANGELISM

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It is clear beyond challenge that the New Testament identifies the hope of salvation for any human being with the name of Jesus Christ. Peter the Apostle said, "There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Paul said, "That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved." As the Scripture says, "He who believes in him will not be put to shame." For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile — the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" (Rom. 10:9-15).

John said "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life" (I John 5:11, 12). And again, "Whoever puts his faith in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see that life, for God's wrath remains on him" (John 3:36).

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). "If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned" (John 15:6). "No one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him" (Matt. 11:27).

These are only some representative verses from some of the most highly accredited teachers in the New Testament. They could be supplemented by scores of other passages to the same effect as well as by the sense of intense urgency which prompted Jesus Christ to accomplish his work on earth and the apostles to proclaim the salvation which only he could secure for fallen man. In fact, the centrality of Christ for salvation is not found in the New Testament alone, but it is envisioned in prophetic perspective in the Old Testament, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:15).

"The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner" (Psa. 118:22). "The root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him" (Isa. 11:10, quoted in Rom. 15:12).

This approach may appear narrow-minded to some, restricting the opportunity of salvation to a minority of the human race who may have contact with the Gospel. But it lies in the face of the texts quoted that this attitude was that of some of the greatest of inspired writers, of the very ones who in the most moving manner have spoken of God's immeasurable love (cf. for Isa. 42:1-3, 49:15-16, 61:1-3; for Paul, I Cor. 13; for John, I John 3 and 4; for Jesus Christ, John 3:16, 10:11, 13:1, 15:13; Rom. 5:8; etc.). One who seeks to be more generous than God, and on that account does take a stance different from that of these great exponents of revealed truth, places himself in a precarious position. The net effect of this approach is injurious in two respects:

1. In assuming that there are other remedies to sin than Jesus Christ, such visionaries tend to encourage people who are lost to seek for salvation in places where it certainly may not — and quite probably cannot — be found. What kind of charity and concern is this, when a doctor who knows a sure remedy for cancer directs his patient to be satisfied with aspirin? Such a man could be charged with malpractice in the medical profession, but there are those who think that this method should be standard in the Christian ministry!

2. In claiming that there are other sources of salvation beside Jesus Christ, these friends assert by implication that the work of Christ is really not necessary at all. If some can be saved without Christ, why did the Son of God view it as essential that he should come to this earth, and suffer at the hands of sinners, and die on Calvary, and rise from the dead on the third day? The mediatorial career of Jesus Christ is so very spectacular and so very central in God's purpose, that it does not make sense to imagine that men can attain to fellowship with God apart from it. God does not use an atomic bomb in order to kill a mosquito: is it not absurd to think that he would undertake the extreme form of intervention involved in the incarnation and the Cross if there were multitudes that could attain to salvation without Christ? Those who are so glib to speak of a larger hope have not always given sufficient reflection to the havoc which this view wreaks with our understanding of God's purpose in general and of Christ's work in particular.

1. In view of this biblical emphasis upon the centrality of Christ for salvation, it is not surprising that we should note a corresponding emphasis upon the question of who Christ was. The crucial significance of the doctrine of the person of Christ is to be seen in its close inter-relationship with the work of Christ. A Christ who is less than the Scripture asserts could not perform what the Bible teaches he has accomplished. And *vice versa*, a Christ who is seen as the potential "Savior of the World" (John 4:42; I John 4:14; I Tim. 4:10) must be such a superlative person as to be capable of this gigantic task.

The Church in history was therefore not on a wrong track when it kept on discussing christological issues in the period of the great councils (325-451 and also later). While its judgment of heretics appeared sometimes harsh, what was at stake was truly paramount, and we must admire the resoluteness with which the fathers insisted on securing a consensus of faith with respect to the doctrine of Christ. The indifference and laxity frequently characteristic of present-day attitudes in this respect can scarcely be viewed as a virtue, even by those who desire to cultivate charity and compassion at all times and towards all people.

a. In order that Christ might effect his saving work on a universal scale it is necessary that he should be God. The deity of Christ is not just a fine tenet of the faith developed at a relatively late date in the history of the Church: it is an indispensable prerequisite for a proper understanding of the atonement. In his atoning work Christ took the place of a great multitude of sinful men and women; he bore in their stead the full sanctions of God's holy law against all their sins; in the short time span of his life in the flesh, and particularly in the crucial hours between Gethsemane and his death on the Cross, he endured to the fullest the burden of the eternal wrath of the triune God against all these sins, thus vindicating the full exercise of divine justice while securing the total release of the guilty sinners. What creature is there in the whole universe who is sufficient for such a task? A man, even if he were perfect from his birth to his death, would not be an adequate ransom for more than one life. An angel, even of the highest order, would hardly suffice for the ransom of one soul. We need here a substitute whose offering is literally infinite in value so that the giving of his one life might indeed provide a ransom for the *many*, for the innumerable multitude of those of the human race who will be saved. We need one whose person is so great that the relatively brief time of his torment might be readily seen as equivalent to the eternal punishment and death which sin rightly deserves. No one but God himself satisfies these conditions: the immensity of the work of salvation demands the deity of the Savior. Inversely, whoever claims that Christ is not God undermines by his denial the adequacy of the salvation which he has wrought. It is not surprising therefore that we should find that the New Testament in fact, clearly, repeatedly, and vigorously asserts the deity of Christ (John 1:1, 18, 10:30, 33-36, 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Phil. 2:6; Tit. 2:13; Heb. 1:8, 9; etc.) Even though this truth forced a drastic reinterpretation of the traditional Jewish view of God, the reality of salvation imposed a trinitarian outlook upon the Christian Church. This outlook does indeed not deny the unity and uniqueness of God so strongly taught and apprehended in Old Testament times, but it manifests the distinctness of the persons and recognizes that Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are God in the same full sense as the Father. In pressing toward a systematic formulation of this great truth the Council of Nicea did not distort the biblical revelation, but simply manifested its correct apprehension of the scriptural data in their appropriate relationships. Those who fought and died for the "*homo-ousios*" were better than "martyrs" for a

"vowel's sake" — they had gained hold of something which is of the very essence of Christianity. No evangelism which fails to acknowledge the deity of Christ can be considered in any sense adequate.

b. In order that proper worship and praise be directed to God on account of our redemption it is also essential that Christ be acknowledged as God. One great marvel of the biblical doctrine of salvation is that it is presented as God's own work (Exod. 6:6, 20:2; Deut. 7:8; II Sam. 7:23; Psa. 49:15, 107:2, 130:8; Isa. 43:1, 14 and repeatedly in Isaiah; Jer. 31:11; Hos. 13:14; Matt. 1:21; Luke 1:68; Eph. 2:4; etc.) as is so forcefully asserted in Jonah 2:9, "Salvation is of the Lord."

Now God does not delegate this work to another. Very specifically he does not permit a third party to intervene and to bear in the place of the sinner the judicial penalty of sin. Where there is a burden to bear, God himself bears it; where there is a price to pay, God himself pays it; where there is an obligation to be met, God himself provides satisfaction. Jehovah will not give his glory to another (Isa. 42:8, 48:11). The saving work of Jesus Christ is emphatically the work of God, which no one but God can perform. Were it otherwise, two very damaging consequences would follow:

(i) If Christ were not God, it would appear that God would have permitted that another should bear man's penalty. God himself would not have done anything to help man in his plight. The one invariable thing in God's character would be his disposition to vent his wrath against sin and in this process he would permit that an innocent third party should die in torment and desperation rather than relent and attenuate the punishment of the wicked. This approach would set before us a picture of God arrayed in judicial rigor and unrelieved by any mercy, a kind of celestial Shylock who will have his revenge no matter who has to bear the cost! But this is deeply unbiblical and disgraceful, for the Scripture represents that in Jesus Christ it is God himself who takes the burden and who satisfies by his own suffering and death the full requirements of divine justice and holiness. No Shylock ever gave his own flesh to meet the obligation of his debtor, but God the Son shed his own blood to redeem the Church (Acts 20:28).

(ii) Since Jesus Christ is the one who in love offered his own life for the redemption of sinners, surely the highest gratitude and allegiance of the redeemed should be directed to him. "We love" him, they would say, "because he first loved us" (cf. I John 4:19). Such a statement would not be made concerning God, whose love, if existent at all, would not have been manifest in action. We would thus be left with an inveterate disposition to relate to Christ in supreme gratitude and love, while our attitude toward God would only be one of fear tempered by the assurance that a third party had borne our punishment. For all practical purposes Christ, although not God, would become our God, and the true God would pale into a star of the second magnitude in the sky of our devotion and worship. This could never be tolerated.

But now Christ is God indeed. There is no disjunction between the Father and the Son. They concur and collaborate in the work of redemption. The love and worship with which we approach Jesus

Christ (John 20:28; Acts 7:59; etc.) is not an act of idolatry, but the worship of the true God, addressed alike to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. This understanding is fundamental to the proper presentation of the evangelistic message. Hesitancy or denial here threatens the very foundations of salvation.

2. Jesus Christ is true God, and he is also true man. The true and full humanity of our Lord is an essential element of the salvific message. It is scarcely less important than his deity.

Surely if Christ is to take our place, and be our representative as Adam once was, it is imperative that he should himself be a human being. The redemption that we need cannot be achieved extrinsically, but must be worked organically, from within the race and as an appropriate satisfaction to God's righteous demands. The reality of the connection of the saving work of Christ with us depends on the reality of his humanity.

"The Word became flesh, and lived for a while among us" (John 1:14).

"... he made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness..." (Phil. 2:7).

"Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity... for surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way... that he might make atonement for the sins of the people" (Heb. 2:14, 16, 17).

"There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men..." (I Tim. 2:5, 6).

"Just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous" (Rom. 5:19, cf. 5:14-17).

The need to retain a firm hold of Christ's real humanity must put us on our guard against any form of docetism which would tend to obscure or erase the human in Christ. This is a subtle danger about which certain enthusiastic advocates of the deity of Christ have not always been sufficiently watchful. Specifically we must pay close attention to the historical details of the life of Christ on earth, as recorded for us in the Gospel. No ethereal Christ, however divine, could compensate us for the loss of the real, historical Jesus whom the New Testament presents to us. To lose Christ's humanity is to lose the relevancy of Christ's saving work to our race.

It may surprise the observer that frequently people of various races and nations, when making pictorial representations of the life of Christ, have portrayed him and his disciples as members of their own community. Few have attempted to depict a Jewish Galilean artisan, except sometimes in his clothing. Since the historical record is so clear, this may puzzle us at first, but we may well ascribe this phenomenon to an instinctive desire to manifest the close relationship of Christ to any part of our race. It is a good thing that Chinese, Flemish, Hottentots, Arabs, Maoris, Indians, Eskimos, Spaniards, as well as Jews could recognize unmistakably that Jesus Christ is one of them, for what he assumed is generic humanity found alike in every

member of the race, male or female, child or adult, great or small, Jew or Gentile.

Evangelism needs to feature the humanity no less than the deity of Christ. We need to stress that when the Son was sent by the Father he went all the way to our earth, to make common cause with the outcasts, the downtrodden, the broken-hearted. He was not born in a marble palace in imperial Rome, or in an academic grove in intellectual Athens, but in an ill-favored stable in lowly Bethlehem. He lived a life of humility and poverty; he died the death of a slave or a criminal, although unjustly condemned. There is literally no one, however low on our scale of human values, who can say that Christ cannot or will not sympathize with him (Heb. 2:17, 4:15).

The pattern of the incarnation must be the norm of our evangelistic ministry. "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21). We must ever learn again to go all the way, sin excepted, to make common cause with those to whom God sends us in order to lead them from where they are to the loving arms of the Savior.

3. Inasmuch as Jesus Christ is both God and man there must be two ways of approaching his person. One is to start with his deity and to descend to his humanity, and the other is to start from his humanity and to ascend to his deity. At first we might expect that the former approach is that of faith, while the latter is that of empirical evidence and of historical ratiocination. But really the issue is not so simple. The starting point is not all that matters, for indeed the orientation and landing point are also of paramount importance. Furthermore, one may start where one wills at any point of the historic incarnation of the Son of God and proceed from there, under the guidance of the Scripture, to the fullness of what Christ is.

The Scripture itself gives us examples of both types of approach. The Gospel of John is largely taking its starting point in heaven from which the Son "came down" (John 3:13), and then it proceeds to present some stages of his career on earth, uncovering for us the meaning of his life. Throughout the development there is the overarching sense of the divine origin and mission of our Lord, not only in his own consciousness, but also in the mind of the reader. This lends special significance to the theme of the struggle between belief and unbelief, characteristic of the whole development of John's Gospel, and culminating in the triumphant confession of Thomas, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28).

The Synoptic Gospels, on the other hand, appear to take their start in the earthly beginnings of the career of Jesus: Matthew and Luke dealing with his birth and tracing his ancestry by genealogy; Mark beginning with Christ's public ministry. All three Gospels from the outset emphasize strongly the supernatural element in Christ's life and lead us to an understanding of his Messianic mission and claims. In the final analysis, therefore, we may say that the four Gospels differ among themselves in their starting point and in their aim, but all of them have a firm footing in the historical reality of the life of Christ on earth and a recognition of the superhuman dimensions of his whole person.

This balance, so well maintained in Scripture, between the deity and the humanity of Christ, was not always kept by theologians and exegetes. For many centuries the dominant tendency was to place such one-sided emphasis on his deity that his humanity almost vanished from sight. This is the problem which besets the Monophysites and the many schools of christological thought, where a kind of fusion of natures is thought to take place in the incarnation. To start with the divine and to place emphatic stress on it is no guarantee against heresy; and evangelicals need to remember this, for they may face their besetting temptations in this direction.

On the other hand, much study was bestowed upon the so-called "historical Jesus," in which, by virtue of naturalistic presuppositions, the supernatural was expunged or systematically downgraded, so that the picture which emerged was that of a gentle (or not so gentle) human genius who met a tragic end. But this approach fails utterly to explain the prodigious impact of Jesus upon his followers, from the first hour and to the present time. No one can really make good historical sense with Christ unless he is prepared to recognize that here we are truly faced with a visitation from heaven, unique in the annals of mankind, and the ground of the hope of the world.

Christology is fundamentally the study of a bridge: God's bridge, which crosses the whole chasm opened by sin between God and man. It is of the essence of a good bridge that it should have a firm foundation on both sides and carry the traveler all the way across the gap.

Christ, being true God and true man, has his moorings in the very nature of God and of humanity and he is "the one mediator between God and men" (I Tim. 2:5), who alone can safely lead us from the estrangement and misery of our sin into restored fellowship with the triune God. *Salve Christe, spes unica* (We salute you, O Christ, the only hope).