

FOREWORD

It was a tremendous blessing to discover *The Person of Christ* by Dr. Philip Schaff. Rarely is a book written that so overwhelmingly presents a case, so thoughtfully and deftly addresses the issues, and so warmly sets forth the truth, as does this volume. My appreciation of it has increased upon every reading. In his description of the humanity of Jesus, Dr. Schaff draws an awe-inspiring picture for the thoughtful reader, an image entirely transcendent to even the highest and best lives of other men, which demonstrates a little of what those who knew Jesus best described as His bright and divine glory, “*glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*” (John 1:14).

Dr. Schaff ministered primarily in the last half of the nineteenth-century. The time was characterized chiefly by intense, fierce criticism of the Bible’s textual and historical authenticity. These attacks were led primarily by the so-called intellectualism of the liberal schools in Germany and the atheistic philosophers and writers of France. The atmosphere of the day was thick with skepticism about Christianity, and the scene in the academies was one of unbelief. Modern man increasingly convinced himself that the idea of a personal and infinite God, interacting with His creation in miraculous ways, was simply outdated and old-fashioned, a restricting superstition of a bygone era. The Christ of the Christian faith, therefore, *whose very Person is the miraculous appearance of this personal God in the human race*, was regarded as utterly untenable.

The most convenient thing for the critics would have been to disprove that such a person as Jesus of Nazareth ever existed; but these men were scholars, and such an intellectually irresponsible solution as that was never seriously entertained, because the evidence is so overwhelmingly decided for His very real existence. They attempted rather to *divorce* what they considered to be superstitious myths,

contrived by the Church about a miracle-working God-man, from the undoubtedly great man named Jesus who once lived in Galilee. In other words, they were perfectly willing to praise the *humanity* of Jesus, so long as everyone at the “round-table discussion” was agreed that there could be no entertaining the idea of His true *divinity*—at least in the traditional use of that term by the Christian. Miracles, as well as all talk of a personal God, were rejected in this discussion *a priori*, or before the fact; that is, their existence was presupposed to be a non-possibility, and such thoughts were therefore not allowed into the discussion.

With such serious *a priori* commitment to the naturalist worldview, and with the overwhelming evidence for the real existence of the Nazarene before them, this unbelieving and therefore immoral movement exchanged the truth of God for a lie. Having rejected the truth about Jesus, they were left with only their vain imaginations by which to invent some possible explanation for the words written about Him on the pages of the New Testament. Some of them blamed this so-called superstitious belief in the ‘divine Christ’ upon Jesus himself, others upon His disciples. Still others proposed a theory that the miracle-working Christ was invented by the early Church in order to strengthen the boundaries of their communities; or just the opposite, that the pure, naturalistic morality of Jesus, and to a lesser degree, His first disciples, was gradually polluted by the Church’s mixing with the ‘misinformed and uneducated’ religions of the now ancient Roman world and that this mixing created the miraculous Christ of the New Testament. These views are themselves mutually contradictory and refuting. That each view was supposedly based on scientific, historical research and analysis merely demonstrates how *novel* man can be in his attempts to explain away the truth.

How is a Christian to respond to such discussion? Can the disciples of Jesus remain quiet at such a time and not lovingly address the lies? What does truth stand to lose in the debate? If Jesus was, in fact, who the New Testament confesses Him to be, then He whom “*God has made both Lord and Christ*” (Acts 2:36) dictates morality

and religion for all men without exception. But if this demanding view can be explained away as mistaken, and if Jesus was merely a great man, then we may admire His proposed goodness, but either take or leave His counsel. Truly there was much at stake in this new discussion of who Christ was.

Into this skeptical discussion Philip Schaff sets forth his argument. He is only allowed into the room because he agrees to discuss Jesus *solely on the basis of His humanity*. But this will suffice. And together with him, we as Christians boldly declare, “Behold the man!” It is precisely *this humanity, this Jesus*, as found in the New Testament, who in His conduct so far eclipses all of the highest ideals and aspirations imagined by men, whose example so radically inspires us to selfless and pure love for others, who so nobly and sanely cut through the most perplexing of controversies, and who so lovingly walked among even the cruelest of opposition; who overwhelms all our doubts and leaves us captivated at what we see in His person. Having thus called the attention of everyone at the “round-table” to the evidence, there is only one conclusion that anyone can dare to make: Jesus of Nazareth, *even His miraculous works excluded*, must have been divine. The transcendence of His true humanity, the beauty and completeness of His character, and the holiness and morality of the life He lived; all can only be explained by the testimony of the man Himself: “*I and the Father are one*” (John 10:30).

The present volume is intended for a number of audiences and purposes. *For the skeptic* who is informed about the arguments against Christianity, we urge you to listen and give heed to the voice now at your table. *For the honest inquirer*, we plead with you to consider the person of Jesus Christ and to ask yourself if this man is anything like anyone you have ever met, or if it is possible that a mortal man could ever approach any of His marvelous and wonderful characteristics. And when you conclude that this is not possible, that this Jesus Christ is simply the most wonderful and thrilling person conceivable, and must have been more than a man; that you sit down, so to speak, at the feet of Jesus, and let

Him tell you about His Father in Heaven, His love for the sinner, and the work He came to do on earth—to pay the penalty that He Himself demands for your sin, and to rescue you from the clutches of this evil and fallen world. If you will come to Him, as He demands you do, He will transform your miserable world and grant you everlasting life through fellowship with Him. *For the believer in Christ*, we trust you will read this book with joy; not because it presents a clearer picture of the glory of Christ than is found in the Bible, but because like a prism it brings out and into view many fragments of that glory.

Aiming to help men see the glory of God
in the face of Christ,

– C. T.
Hannibal, Missouri
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