

What Think Ye of Christ?

by John A. Witmer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing Jesus' deity and identity, and highlights the contemporary problem of rejecting Jesus' claims to deity by modern theologians.

Scripture: Matthew 6:24, Luke 16:9-13, Romans 8:5, Romans 8:8

Topics: "Wealth And Possessions", "Kingdom Of God"

Description

The preacher discusses the concept of wealth (mammon) as a personification of riches or earthly goods, warning against being possessed by possessions and the dangers of serving both God and wealth. Various Bible verses and theologians emphasize the shift of mammon from entrusted wealth to a god-like entity, highlighting the need to prioritize serving God over material possessions. The sermon stresses the importance of seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness above all else, trusting in God's provision while avoiding worldly anxieties and distractions.

Transcript

Christianity Is Christ is the title of a handbook by W. H. Griffith Thomas written almost half a century ago on what he called "the central subject of Christianity--the Person and Work of Christ." The affirmation of his title and his statement is true. Whatever else may be involved by way of tenets of faith or canons of conduct, the essence of Christianity is personal union with Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, as Savior and Lord by grace through faith. No matter how strategic may be one's view of the Bible--and strategic it is--the crucial question every human being must face is the one Jesus asked the Pharisees, "What think ye of Christ?" (Matt. 22:42). All who answer worshipfully by faith with Thomas, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28), are Christians; all others are not.

Confronting his contemporaries with the issue of his identity as the incarnate Son of God, the anointed one whom God the Father had sent into the world, was a part of Jesus' ministry on earth. The rest of his question to the Pharisees was, "Whose son is he?" Their response, based on the accepted Jewish interpretation of the Old Testament (cf. John 7:41-42), was, "The son of David." Jesus then asked, "How then doth David in spirit call him Lord?" (Matt. 22:43). To substantiate his assertion that David does call the Christ Lord he quoted the statement from an acknowledged Messianic psalm (v. 44; Ps. 110:1). Then he summarized the issue in the question, "If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?" (v. 45). Without thrusting himself and his claims into the picture Jesus sought to confront the Pharisees on the basis of their own rabbinic interpretations of their Scriptures with the fact that the promised Messiah is presented

as a divine being whom David worshiped as Lord as well as a descendant of David. Among the Pharisees "no man was able to answer him a word" (v. 46). The answer is found in the biblical record of the incarnation of the eternal Son of God as the Holy Spirit conceived son of a virgin daughter of the house of David (Luke 1:30-35; Matt. 1:20-23; Gal. 4:4). The answer is found in the unique theanthropic person of the Lord Jesus Christ. This the Pharisees would not--yes, even could not--see.

In similar fashion Jesus confronted his disciples with basically the same question of his identity. In fact their response to this question marked a turning point in Jesus' teaching and his whole ministry (Matt. 16:21). First Jesus asked, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? (Matt. 16:13). In reply the disciples recited the confused welter of erroneous identifications current among the Jews-- "John the Baptist . . . Elias ... Jeremias . . . one of the prophets" (v. 14). Then Jesus faced the disciples personally and directly, "But whom say ye that I am?" (v. 15). Speaking for the group Peter confessed Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (v. 16). Jesus' commendation made the point that this conviction (cf. John 6:69) came not from human insight or instruction, but was the gift of divine revelation (v. 17). The enigma the learned Pharisees could not fathom God solved for the uneducated disciples (cf. Acts 4:13). So it ever is (cf. Matt. 11:25).

The parallels between the generation when Jesus walked this earth and today are obvious. When he lived among men, Jesus was largely unknown in his true identity. The same is true today. Although he contributed little to an accurate identification, Bruce Barton correctly called Jesus The Man Nobody Knows. Many of the religious leaders today refuse to accept the identity Jesus claimed for himself just as did the Pharisees and chief priests when Jesus ministered on earth. Men today hold as many or more erroneous views of Jesus' identity as they did when Jesus queried his disciples. Yet people today are interested in Jesus just as the crowds gathered around him in Galilee and Judea. Young people today show little interest in the church and Christianity as an established religion, but they are eager to hear about Jesus as a person. As Harrison asserts, "Those who have little or no theological interest in him are nevertheless powerfully affected by the quality of Jesus Christ . . . they stand erect and salute the man." As a result Christians today need to confront this generation with the same questions Jesus asked, "What think ye of Christ?" and "But whom say ye that I am?" But the questions today must be accompanied by the biblical evidence and the Christian witness that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the living God" who died to accomplish redemption for sinful men estranged from God. When the questions are asked and the witness is given, God the "Father which is in heaven" will reveal the truth to whom he wills as he did to the disciples.

The Contemporary Problem

The crux of the problem of the identity of Jesus today, as it was when he presented himself to his generation, is the recognition of the reality of his deity--that Jesus is the eternal Son of God, the Second Person of the triune God incarnate. This was what the Jews, with their stress upon God as one (Deut. 6:4), could not fathom and would not accept. As a result Jesus' claims to deity threw the Jews into a frenzy of indignation against him as a blasphemer (cf. John 5:18; 8:59; 10:31, 39). Under this accusation of blasphemy, after eliciting Jesus' confession under oath that he was "the Christ, the Son of God" (Matt. 26:63-64), the Jews condemned him to death (vv. 65-66). Similarly the miracle of incarnation as revealed in Scripture and the absolutely unique theanthropic person of the Lord Jesus Christ portrayed there is what the twentieth century man cannot comprehend and refuses to accept. As a result, in his frenzy of rejection, he restructures the person of Jesus as essentially human, or at least as less than fully God. In so doing he simply repeats in modern form and words the ancient error of Anus, which was condemned as

heresy by the ancient Christian church, and its recapitulation in Socinius and others.

The irony of twentieth century Christendom is that such men are in large measure the leaders in the church and the spokesmen for Christianity. Instead of being honored as churchmen and spiritual leaders, they should be branded as heretics, false teachers (cf. II Peter 2:1; I John 4:1-3), and promoters of apostasy. But they are permitted to promote their heresy as the truth to be accepted by the Christian church and they present the historic doctrine of the Scriptures and the church concerning the Lord Jesus Christ as the error to be repented of and to be denied. Ferré, for example, asserts that "from Judaism and Islam Christianity should learn and repent of its central idolatry: its substitution, in effect, of Jesus for God, its making Jesus God." When the historic doctrine of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ is called "idolatry," Isaiah's pronouncement of woe upon "them that call evil good, and good evil" (Isa. 5:20) needs to be invoked.

The latest twist in this topsy-turvy theological world is for liberal theologians to classify the historic Christian doctrine of the person of Christ as a specific heresy, which is docetism. Robinson asserts,

"In fact, popular supernaturalistic Christology has always been dominantly docetic. That is to say, Christ only appeared to be a man or looked like a man: 'underneath' he was God." Now docetism was the earliest Christological heresy to be faced and contradicted by the early church, appearing even in apostolic times. Building upon the dualistic idea of the essential evilness of anything material, including the human body, it denied the physical reality of Jesus' humanity, making his body in effect a phantasm. John dealt with this error in his first epistle, showing it to be wrong by stressing the reality of the Lord's body in its subjection to sensory perception (I John 1:1-3). Later he declared that "the Spirit of God" in contrast to the spirit "of antichrist" is known by the fact that he "confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh" (I John 4: 1-3) with the emphasis falling on the phrase "in the flesh." In the light of this New Testament denial of docetism, it is obviously false to accuse the historic doctrine of being that.

In his presentation of the historic doctrine as disguised docetism, which he acknowledges to be "a parody," Robinson reveals a critical lack of understanding of the biblical doctrine of incarnation. He declares that "Jesus was not a man born and bred--he was God for a limited period taking part in a charade." This implies, if not directly states, that the incarnation of Jesus Christ was a temporary thing which ended at his death. Nothing could be farther from the truth of the New Testament teaching and the church doctrine. In the incarnation God the Son joined himself with human nature in the theanthropic Lord Jesus Christ once for all.

Furthermore, throughout his discussion of the historic doctrine and its caricature as docetism, Robinson is careful to note that his picture is not what the historic doctrine states nor what orthodox theologians understand by it but only that his description is the way the average person conceives of the doctrine. He says that the traditional view "leaves the impression" or "conjures up the idea" or "inevitably suggests" the docetic distortion he graphically portrays. His logic is that the doctrine should be abandoned and changed because the popular picturing of it--or at least his picturing of it--is wrong. Robinson's basic complaint is not with the historic doctrine of incarnation but with the biblical revelation of the incarnation and the supernaturalism that undergirds it.

Contemporary Views

After contemporary theologians such as Robinson have expressed their discontent with the historic doctrine of the person of Christ, it is fitting to ask how they answer the question, "What think ye of Christ?"

If Jesus queried them, "Whom say ye that I am?" how would they respond? The answers, of course, are as individual as the men who make them, but it is valid to say that a common theme runs through them all. This theme is the essential humanness of Jesus. The biblical emphasis on Jesus' deity is reinterpreted in one way or another so that he becomes the servant of God or the personification of God in a sense that all men can be, but to a degree that only he was. This is nothing more than the immanent spark of divinity of old modernism expressed in new terms.

D. M. Baillie is an illustration. He interprets the mystery of the incarnation as the paradox of grace of the Christian life raised to its fullest measure. He writes: "If the paradox is a reality in our poor imperfect lives at all, so far as there is any good in them, does not the same or a similar paradox, taken at the perfect and absolute pitch, appear as the mystery of the Incarnation?" In the light of such a view, Jay rightly asks, "Is his [Jesus'] divinity, then, simply that his God-consciousness, to use Schleiermacher's phrase, is complete, whereas in the rest of us it is imperfect?" Schultz concludes that Baillie's position--a view he presents as shared by most neo-liberals-- holds that "God was in Christ, working through him as he has worked through others, but to an infinitely greater degree."

Robinson presents a different approach but the same end result. He makes it plain that he builds his Christology on Tillich and Bonhoeffer. "Jesus," therefore, "reveals God by being utterly transparent to him, precisely as he is nothing 'in himself.'" He is the one, therefore, "in whom Love has completely taken over, the one who is utterly open to, and united with, the Ground of his being." As a result, "the life of God, the ultimate Word of Love in which all things cohere, is bodied forth completely, unconditionally and without reserve in the life of a man--the man for others and the man for God." Robinson seems to restrict his concept of God to something immanent in man which is perfectly displayed in Jesus. As Jay concludes, "His doctrine of incarnation blurs the distinction between God and man in such a way as to raise the question whether he believes God to have any existence apart from the existence of man."

In their opposition to the historic doctrine of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ many contemporary liberal theologians attempt to create a chasm between the faith of the early Christians that Jesus was "the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world" (John 11:27) and the teaching and claims of Jesus concerning himself. This is not to be confused with the old theory of modernism that both the teachings of Jesus and the simple faith of the early church were changed and, in their judgment, perverted by the theological ideas of Paul. Harnack presented this when he wrote, "Paul became the author of the speculative idea that not only was God in Christ, but that Christ himself was possessed of a peculiar nature of a heavenly kind." More recent study has demonstrated that the other apostles and the early church shared Paul's faith in the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Ramsey says, "The truth is that it is impossible to penetrate back to a time in the history of the church when the Risen Christ was not looked upon as a Divine Being. . . . From the very beginning he was proclaimed to be the heavenly Son of man in utterly transcendent terms. From the beginning he was assigned attributes heretofore reserved strictly for God." But it is the view that this faith of the early church in Jesus Christ as the Son of God was not claimed by Jesus for himself in his teaching, but was developed by the church after his resurrection and was inserted into the teaching of Jesus in the Gospels.

Bultmann expresses this argument as well as anyone. He writes, "The common opinion is that this belief of the earliest Church rests upon the self-consciousness of Jesus; i.e., that he actually did consider himself to be the Messiah, or the Son of Man. But this opinion is burdened with serious difficulties. It does agree with the evangelists' point of view, but the question is whether they themselves have not superimposed upon the traditional material their own belief in the messiahship of Jesus." Bultmann seems

to forget that according to the Gospels Jesus himself solicited from his disciples their confession of his Messiahship and he commended them for it. Furthermore, their confession marked a distinct turning point in the ministry and teaching of Jesus. It does not constitute, therefore, a simple superimposition of an extraneous idea upon "the traditional material," but a crucial fulcrum in the account of Jesus' life and ministry.

Bultmann recognizes the logical force of the argument that it is easier to understand the early church's faith in the Messiahship of Jesus as coming from Jesus' teaching of it rather than their belief being inserted in their records of his teaching. He writes, "Some advance the following reasoning as an argument from history: The Church's belief in the messiahship of Jesus is comprehensible only if Jesus were conscious of being the Messiah and actually represents himself as such--at least to the 'disciples.' But is this argument valid? For it is just as possible that belief in the messiahship of Jesus arose with and out of belief in his resurrection." Bultmann, however, does not accept the historical reality of the physical resurrection of Jesus. Furthermore, the disciples' faith in the resurrection that really did not happen. according to the liberal argument, developed from their hope that Jesus was the Messiah. So now the argument goes in a circle. If the disciples' faith in Jesus' Messiahship actually rested upon their faith in his resurrection, as Bultmann says, then where did their faith in Jesus' resurrection come from except from the event itself. On the other hand, if the disciples' faith in Jesus' resurrection rested upon their faith in his Messiahship, then that faith must have come from Jesus' claims and teaching. In either case Bultmann is caught on the horns of a dilemma.

No one questions the fact that the gospel writers had a purpose in writing their accounts of Jesus' life and ministry. The four Gospels are witnesses to the Lord Jesus Christ; not impersonal, totally objective history. All history is interpretative to a greater or lesser extent. The apostle John plainly stated his purpose (John 20:31). The purposes of the other gospel writers are not stated, but are fairly obvious. But recognizing that John and the others had a purpose in writing does not necessitate the conclusion that they distorted the facts and deliberately made Jesus say things he had not said. At most all that having a purpose implies is that the writer from the total mass of material available records selected events and statements that demonstrate the validity of his purpose. This is exactly what John explained that he did (John 20:30-31; 21:25). Scripture declares that in doing this John and the other gospel writers were sustained and guided by the Holy Spirit (II Peter 1:21).

An examination of the qualifications of the gospel writers to provide a record of the life and ministry of Jesus is revealing. If traditional authorships are accepted--good arguments can be marshalled to support them--then two of the authors belonged to the band of twelve apostles and were eyewitnesses of the events and teaching they report. One of these records the promise of Jesus to his disciples that "the Holy Spirit . . . shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you" (John 14:26). A third, Mark, is generally recognized to have written his Gospel under the supervision of Peter, another of the apostles. Furthermore, his home and his personal experience aided him in his task. The fourth writer makes the point of telling his readers that he has gained "perfect understanding" of what he writes about from "eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word" (Luke 1: 1-4). From the human perspective these men were ably qualified to give faithful, accurate records.

If the faith in the Messiahship of Jesus of the early church has been "superimposed upon the traditional material," as Bultmann insists, then these four gospel writers did it. First of all, insufficient time exists between the events themselves and the production of the gospel records for legendary accounts of the events to develop and to be accepted by the church. Furthermore, the eyewitness writers would know the

difference between the true incidents and any embellished accounts. In the second place, legendary details could not have been woven into the gospels after their original composition. No literary or textual evidence of such tampering exists. As Dibelius writes, "The doubt as to whether our Gospels have been preserved in their original form turns out to be more and more unwarranted.

No book of antiquity has come down to us in such old, such numerous, and such relatively uniform texts as the Gospels and the Pauline Epistles." Therefore, if Bultmann's theory is accepted, the gospel writers must have been responsible for the superimposition. This makes them in effect deliberate deceivers, reporters that Jesus did and said what they in truth knew he did not do and say. Such a conclusion does not jibe with their historical accuracy where it can be checked, with their portrayal throughout Scripture as honest and sincere men, or with their devotion even unto death to the Lord they proclaim and what they proclaim about him.

The Claims of Christ

In more recent years strong reaction to Bultmann's position has set in. Jay discusses Bultmann's arguments at length and then concludes: "This writer holds that the rise of this faith in Jesus was occasioned in the way the New Testament suggests, by what Bultmann and his school sometimes call 'the Christ-event.' . . . The Christ- event included, must have included, Jesus' teaching about himself and his mission. . . . his teaching about himself no doubt was cautiously given, with the intention of drawing the truth out of his disciples. . . . We hold then that Jesus did speak to the disciples of his person and his sense of divine mission. We find it too great a psychological improbability to suppose that the early Church, or any member, or group of members of it, invented a Christology which attributed to Jesus a status of which he had given them no hint and had even denied." Similarly Vincent Taylor entitles one chapter "The Divine Consciousness of Jesus" and explains why he adopts it instead of the more familiar phrase Messianic Consciousness. By the phrase Divine Consciousness, Vincent writes, "I mean the sense in which he was conscious of being more than a man, of sharing during his earthly existence in the life of Deity itself. This putting of the question has the advantage of raising the central issue."

The central issue to which Vincent refers, as mentioned earlier, is the reality of the Lord Jesus as the eternal Son of God, second person of the Godhead, united with human nature forever as the theanthropic person. Closely tied to this is the question of whether Jesus knew and presented himself as such or not. As Bowman expresses it, "And this after all is the point at issue: Whom did Jesus know himself to be? It is interesting to know what Mark or Luke or Peter or Paul thought about Jesus. . . . But they are not after all very important--not, at all events, by comparison with the supreme question of Jesus' own consciousness regarding himself! For obviously, if it could be shown that Jesus failed to agree with those above mentioned on this vital topic, then his view in our judgment would quite outweigh all of theirs combined. The Church cannot indefinitely continue to believe about Jesus what he did not know to be true about himself! The question, accordingly, of his Messianic consciousness is the most vital one the Christian faith has to face." Bultmann and his school insist that the faith of the church in Jesus Christ does not rest upon Jesus' consciousness and claims, but common sense as expressed by Bowman does. It is worth mentioning that Bultmann accepts neither the historic doctrine of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ nor the idea that this was the claim of Jesus.

The bulk of the evidence from the four Gospels supporting Jesus' consciousness and claim to be the Son of God incarnate comes from the Gospel of John. This is understandable. John's stated purpose is "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (John 20:31). It would be surprising if this were

not the situation. But as Harrison asserts, "No apology need be made for this. Clearly this gospel has a more sustained christological interest than the others, but to say that it stands completely apart and gives an entirely different picture of Christ's person than the Synoptics is to revive a dogma of the criticism of yesteryear. Today men of various schools of thought are agreed that it is vain to try to establish a lower Christology from the Synoptics than is taught in the Fourth Gospel."

The witness from the Gospel of John can be multiplied almost endlessly. There are direct statements--"I and the Father are one" (10:30), "Before Abraham was, I am" (8:58), "I am in the Father, and the Father in me" (14:11; cf. 10:38; 17:21, 23), "I that speak unto thee am he [Messias]" (4:26; cf. v. 25), "the Son of God . . . is he that talketh with thee" (9:35-37). There are claims that he "came down from heaven" (3:13; 6:38, 51) and was sent from the Father (3:17; 6:57; 7:29; 8:29). He insists he has authority over his own physical life (10:18) and over the physical and spiritual lives of all men (11:25-26; 4:14; 6:40, 44, 47). He presents himself as "the bread of life" (6:35, 48), "the light of the world" (8:12; 9:5), "the good shepherd" (10: 11, 14), "the door" (10:7, 9), "the resurrection, and the life" (11:25), "the way, the truth, and the life" (14:6). In fact, the divine consciousness and claims of Jesus so permeate the discourses which form so much of the Fourth Gospel that it is almost pointless to separate individual statements from the impact of the discourse as a whole.

A significant christological discourse which is frequently passed by is the one with the Jews following the healing of the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda recorded in John 5. Several observations need to be made about this discourse. First, although Jesus usually spoke of himself as the Son objectively in the third person, he changed to the first person at the beginning, middle, and end of the discourse (vv. 17, 24,30) and made it plain that he was talking about himself. Furthermore, his auditors (the Jews) understood Jesus to be speaking about himself, and they were in a better position to perceive than a twentieth century Bible critic (v. 18). Second, Jesus used the titles "Son of God" (v. 25) and "Son of man" as, for all practical purposes, interchangeable. He used each title where he did with deliberate intent and special significance, and yet they are obviously basically interchangeable titles. Third, Jesus spoke of God as "my Father" in a way which stated a unique personal relationship (v. 17). Jesus never spoke of his filial relationship to God as being on the same level as those to whom he spoke, even his disciples (cf. John 20: 17). The only time he used the phrase "Our Father" was when he expressed a model prayer for his disciples in response to their request that he teach them to pray (Luke 11:1-2; cf. Matt. 6:9). Once again confirmation of this meaning of the phrase "my Father" is the fact that the Jews to whom he spoke "sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his [own] Father, making himself equal with God" (John 5:18).

The final and most meaningful evidence of Jesus' divine consciousness in this discourse is the emphasis throughout the discourse on the complete and exact parallelism between what the Father does and what the Son does (e.g., vv. 17, 19b, 21, 26). The equality between the Father and the Son is stressed in these verses, because the emphasis is that exactly what the Father does the Son does also in precisely the same way. The heart of the entire discourse and the purpose of God in all that he commits to the Son is expressed in the words, "That all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father" (v. 23). For added emphasis Jesus then stated the same truth negatively, "He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him."

As Bauman summarizes the evidence, "It must be maintained just as strongly, however, that Jesus knew himself to be the Son of God, partaking fully of the divine nature. . . . This unique filial consciousness contributed a divine dimension to every word and act of his life. The author of John built his Gospel on this

conviction, but it is just as obvious in the Synoptics, where Jesus is the Son of God." The Synoptic Gospels are the ones which record the trial of Jesus before the council of the Jews where the high priest places him under oath to say whether or not he is "the Christ, the Son of God" (Matt. 26:63). Mark says, "the Christ, the Son of the Blessed" (Mark 14:61), and Luke makes two questions with Jesus answering the one, "Art thou then the Son of God?" (Luke 22:70). In all three Gospels Jesus in effect (the wording varies slightly) acknowledges under oath this identity. To his admission Matthew and Mark add the statement: "Henceforth ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matt. 26:64; Mark 14:62). Instead of accepting Jesus' statement under oath as the truth and acknowledging him as "the Christ, the Son of God," the high priest and the council condemn him as guilty of blasphemy by his own words and worthy of death. Their accusation of Jesus before Pilate was sedition and treason (e.g., Luke 23:2), but John records their acknowledgment of Jesus' divine consciousness and claim when the Jews explained to Pilate, "We have a law and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God" (John 19:7). Many modern churchmen are like the Jewish leaders; in spite of the evidence they refuse to accept it.

Facing the Alternatives

The incongruity and logical inconsistency of modern theology on this point is recognized by many. Harrison points this out when he writes, "Those who exalt Jesus as the great teacher do not always realize the awkwardness of their position when they go on to refuse to him the rank of deity. Is it logical to accept his teaching on God, on man, on the ethical life, and then refuse to accept his teaching about himself?" The logical alternatives to the biblical evidence of Jesus' divine consciousness and claims are (1) he was indeed the Son of God incarnate; (2) he was a liar and a deceiver; (3) he was insane, suffering from illusions of grandeur. If either of the latter two alternatives is accepted, then Jesus' teaching should no more be extolled and believed than his claims. Harrison writes, "Is it psychologically possible for a person to project such claims, which lie so far outside the realm of human attainment, and be otherwise completely normal; and could the record of these claims as they stand in the Gospels have created such profound reception and faith as it has created, apart from having solid truth behind them?"

Hiram Elfenbein carries the logic a step farther. As a Jew he does not accept the New Testament records concerning Jesus of Nazareth. But he does recognize the centrality of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ to those records and to the Christian faith. He writes, "But 'Christianity-without-Christ' is as sensible as a rice pudding without rice. It just can't be." He insists that modern churchmen who agree with him in the denial of the deity of Jesus are at best playing a great game of make-believe by continuing to call themselves Christians and to remain in the Christian church. He asks, "If Jesus is eliminated from the credo as a God Who once lived in Human Form, how can the church's buildings, personnel and 'services' be justified? How can individuals honestly and intellectually continue to patronize and to belong to that establishment of brick and mortar and ritual and clerics minus the nominal God around Which they worship?" He summarizes as follows, "Obviously, if you delete from the New Testament, the one all-important detail of Jesus' divinity, we see the collapse of the whole story of his prophesied birth and death, his miracles, and his long mistaken and misunderstood expressions, which together in an inseparable union form the foundation of Christianity."

Modern churchmen should face the question, "What think ye of Christ?" in the light of Elfenbein's logic. If they cannot honestly respond with Thomas, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28), they should resign from their positions and separate themselves from the Christian church. In turn all believers who from the heart answer the question, "Whom say ye that I am?" with Peter's confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of

the living God" (Matt. 16:16), need to recognize their responsibility to confront this generation with the witness concerning the Lord Jesus Christ as the incarnate Son of God and Savior from sin.

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