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# The divine human consciousness of Jesus

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Thesis.

The Divine-Human Consciousness of Jesus.

Benson Perley Wilkins.

Believing that the preacher's power is tested mainly by his ability to reach the people I have addressed this paper not to the student or the professor but to the common people.

### Thesis.

The Divine-Human Consciousness of Jesus.

I want you to look into the mind of Christ with me today. I want you to see what was the content of His consciousness, both on the divine side and on the human. What did He think about? What were the thoughts that passed through His mind, in regard to His relationship to God and to man? These shall be our queries today. The divine-human consciousness of Jesus; what was the content of that consciousness? By consciousness we mean the things that pass through our mind from day to day, the things that we think about. Now the content of a man's consciousness will vary with his occupation. A farmer will be thinking mostly about

the crops from morning till night; he will be studying the weather indications. Are there going to be any early or late frosts to blight the vines? Now most of us are not seriously troubled about those things because we have no crops to spoil. The content of our consciousness will be different from that of the farmer. The stock owner will be thinking most of the time about the rise and fall in the market; he will be concerned about the health of a leading financier. When he gets his paper in the morning the stock quotations will be the first thing for which he will look. Not many of us care much whether the market rises or falls. We have no stocks to fluctuate and so are not deeply concerned. The housewife will be thinking most of the time about what she is going to have for dinner. Or, she is wondering who she is going to have for callers in the afternoon.

The content of a man's consciousness will vary also with age. The child consciousness is filled with rocking horses, sleds and tin horns,

but as he grows older gradually he thinks less and less of such toys. Dr. Bowne once said that he could remember the time that he used to love to go out into the mud-puddles, and tread about, and feel the slick juicy mud squash between his toes, but since he has grown older larger things have occupied his mind, and mud-puddles now have but little attraction for him.

Now we are going to look into the mind of Christ and see what were the things that He thought about, what was the content of His consciousness from childhood to manhood. We will find our data in the Gospel picture of our Lord. And just for a moment before we do so let us look at the structure of the human mind. The human mind we are told is in two compartments; it is a two storied house if you please. It has an upper and a lower story. The upper story is the one in which we live from day to day; but the lower story is where the real springs of life are. What goes

on in the lower story determines what takes place in the upper story. All that goes on in the lower part we do not know, we know only what takes place in the upper rooms. Now I wonder if we cannot make that perfectly sun clear just what we mean by this, for I am sure that this will help us to understand the divine-human consciousness of Jesus. Here is a man who is out on the pond fishing. And he is having good luck; the fish are biting as fast as he can pull them in, and he is kept busy all the time. He is just now thinking about nothing else but just fishing. His mind, so far as he knows it, is now filled with hook and line and boat and fish; this is all he is thinking about at this present time. But it is probable that there are a great many other things that he knows that he might think about if he wished: ~~to~~ He knows something about astronomy. He knows something about geology, something about arithmetic, a little about logarithms; but he is not thinking about

those things now. They are his, they are a part of him. These other things are the possession of his mind; but they are not in consciousness at the present time. The upper story of his mind is the story where the fish and the boat, the line and the sinker are. The lower story is where the astronomy, the geology, the arithmetic and the logarithms lie, the things that he knows and are his, which he can use upon occasion, but which he is not thinking about at the present time. Now it is evident that we do not know all that takes place down there in that lower tenement, even though that is a part of our house and it belongs to us. And so it is quite possible for a man to be more than he knows himself to be. What are the powers that are in this young man's mind anyway? Is he born to be an artist, or a general, or a statesman? Has he the genius for music lying dormant and hidden in the lower story of his mind? I do not know, he does not know. There are the faculties, the

power, stored up like the contents of a storage battery, but it has not been revealed to him yet who he is or what his calling in life may be. Now these thoughts have an important bearing upon the consciousness of our Lord. We believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. We believe that He was truly divine, that He was co-equal with the Father, that He was and is a member of the Godhead. And we also believe that Jesus was truly human. That He was the son of man. Now this has been a grave stumbling block to many honest souls. How can we think of the little infant Christ as the God of all the world? How can it be that that little baby there in the cradle can be the eternal God who made all things and without whom was nothing made that was made? Is it necessary for us to think that because He was God therefore He knew all things, and could do all things? And is it necessary for us to believe that He knew Himself to be the almighty God from the day of the incarnation? No, certainly not.

Whatever the Son of Man may have been in the deeper essence of His nature, whatever may have been His relationship to the Father, whatever may have been His position in the Godhead in the real depths of His being, it is by no means necessary for us to suppose that He was conscious of all He really was from the beginning of His life on the earth.

Bearing this in mind let us look at the beautiful Gospel picture of Jesus of Nazareth, and let us behold Him from the time of infancy to the time that He was taken up into glory. The picture that we have given to us of the infant Christ is a perfectly natural one. From all we can gather from the scenes of His infancy as given in the Gospel picture we should say that He was a perfectly normal baby. He laughed and cried and tossed Himself about in His mother's arms, a helpless little child. Nothing is said of any extraordinary knowledge or peculiarity in Him. Whatever He may have been born for or whatever may have been

His relationship to God the Father, He does not seem to know now what that relationship is. He is a child like other children.

The first recorded words that fell from the lips of our Lord were uttered at a significant time in the young child's life. It was when He was twelve years of age in the temple at Jerusalem. His parents had lost Him, and had gone a day's journey on toward home, before they found that He was not in the company. Then they returned to Jerusalem and they found Him in the temple sitting among the Doctors and talking with them about the deep things of the law. And then when His mother reproved Him for his carelessness He uttered his first recorded words — "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Now these words seem to me to be very significant. As I have studied the Gospel picture of Christ it has seemed to me that there in the temple while He was talking to the Doctors of the Mosaic law, there began to

dawn upon the conscious life of our Lord the idea that He had a peculiar mission to perform in the world and that He was uniquely related to God the Father. I do not think that at this time Jesus had a full consciousness of what that relationship to the Father was; I do not think that at this time He knew He was the Son of God. But I do think that that knowledge was beginning to dawn upon Him at this time; even as when a boy who is born to be an artist having the genius for art lying hidden in his breast steps for the first time into an art gallery, and he begins to realize for the first time what his mission in the world is to be. Hidden deep in the recesses of his nature is the genius for art, he does not know it, his people do not know it; but now as he stands face to face with the works of the masters his deeper self begins to take possession of him; he feels that he is born to be an artist, and he rushes out of the gallery and goes and chisels out a form that is the admiration and

astonishment of the critics. So it seems to me when our Lord stood for the first time in the temple where was the holy of holies and where the ark of the covenant was kept, there began to spring up in Him a consciousness that He was called of God for a peculiar mission, and that He was related to God the Father in a unique manner.

It is significant that we should have this picture of our Lord at the age of twelve, the age when a new consciousness naturally begins to dawn upon the growing child. The ages from twelve to fourteen in a boy's life are most momentous. This is a crisis period in his life. It is the age when he passes from boyhood to manhood. It is the age when the kind of a man he is going to be or his particular mission in life will most likely assert itself. It is the age when he turns either to the right hand or to the left, to evil or to good. At this age the large arteries increase one third their size, the temperature of the body rises one degree,

the brain stops growing. Temptations unknown before beset him. The boy is passing into manhood. The Church of Christ should be alive to its responsibility in looking after the boys when they are passing through this crucial period. At this age more people are converted than at any other, for it is a time of decision. It is significant I say, that these first recorded words of our Lord giving evidence of the dawning of a new consciousness should come at this time of His life.

The next time that we behold our Lord after the temple scene is at the baptism, where the people are all gathered on the banks of the Jordan, and Jesus together with John the Baptist steps down into the waters and is baptized of him in the river. And then as they come up out of the water, the record reads, a voice was heard, and mark you what that voice says: Matthew records it:—  
 "This is my beloved Son in Him I am well pleased,"  
 as though the voice were spoken for the sake of

the people who stood watching that they might be convinced that this was the Christ—the chosen of God. But both Mark and Luke read:— "Thou art my beloved Son, in Thee I am well pleased," as though the voice was addressed to Christ and was for His sake,—and the weight of evidence is in favor of the records of Mark and Luke:— "Thou art my beloved Son." It seems as though there was a struggle going on in the mind of Christ. He was thinking, wondering, meditating upon His call and His mission. Who was He? Was He the chosen of the Lord? Was He the Messiah who was to deliver Israel? Was He the Son of God? Did He have a place in the Godhead? Even though He may not have known or have had the full consciousness of who He was at this time, that in no way invalidates His real divinity in the depths of His nature. He may have been the Son of God and not have known it at this time. And it seems as though the voice was given to Him from the skies to convince Him with the

authority of heaven that He was the Son of God.

From the baptism Jesus goes away into the wilderness to ponder what He had heard and to think out the great thoughts that were arising in His mind. And there He was tempted of the devil. And notice please the form in which the temptation came to Him: - "If Thou be the Son of God command that these stones be made bread" "If Thou be the Son of God cast thyself down-etc." Does it not seem as though the question that was before the Lord was whether He was the Son of God or not? If He was the Son of God then He was co-equal with the Father, He was a member of the God-head. Well might He spend forty days - and forty nights pondering such a stupendous theme. And it seems as though the battle was fought to a finish there in the wilderness. There in the darkness and damp of that awful struggle the nature of His relationship to God was threshed out and He was convinced of His identity, and from that hour

He goes forth on His public ministry and He speaks with authority and without equivocation, and never again do we hear of any questionings or doubtings as to His mission and identity.

And what do we hear Him saying after He enters upon His ministry? We hear Him uttering such words as these "And now oh Father glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." We hear Him saying; - "Before Abraham was I am" and also "All power is given unto me both in heaven and in earth." And such striking and inclusive statements as these run like a network all through the Gospel picture of Christ. Think for a moment what must have been the content of the consciousness of one who could make statements like these. Take for instance the words just quoted: "And now oh Father glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Jesus speaks as though He could remember things that took place

before the foundations of the world were laid. He remembers being with the Father and sharing His glory with Him before the world was, and He is now praying to Him that He will restore unto Him the glory which He then had. Jesus says, "I and my Father are one." He is conscious of such an organic unity between Himself and the Father that He can speak of Himself and the Father as one. He says "All power is given unto me both in heaven and in earth." He feels the powers of omnipotence within Him. These are the words of Him of whom it was written "All things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made."

Now when I compare the consciousness of our Lord with my own consciousness I find there both a resemblance and a contrast. I too am conscious that God is my Father; I am conscious of a close relationship to Him; I can pray to Him and I know that He hears. In these respects my consciousness resembles that

of Jesus of Nazareth as we find it in the Gospel picture. But I find this difference that while I am conscious of the divine, Jesus Christ had a divine consciousness. I could never consistently make such a prayer as this: "Restore unto me the glory which I had with thee before the world was." I cannot remember things that took place before the foundation of the world. If the Gospel picture of the son of Mary is true, then Jesus of Nazareth, during the time of His public ministry on the earth, possessed a consciousness, on the divine side, that was absolutely unique in the history of the world.

And as the Gospel picture of Christ points to a unique consciousness on the divine side so also it pictures a consciousness that was unique on the human side. It portrays Christ as having an extraordinary relationship to the Father and also a relationship to mankind that is without a parallel. Jesus came into the world to set up a new kingdom — the

kingdom of heaven and this kingdom was to be realized through Him. To the woman at the well He said "He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life." To Nicodemus on the housetop He said "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life." He said "I am the bread of life." Again he said "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." By these words and others like them it seems that Jesus was conscious of powers within Himself that reached to all mankind. When I compare his consciousness of His relationship to men with my own, I find here also both a resemblance and a contrast; for while I am conscious that to a certain extent I can exert an influence over my neighbor yet I know that that influence

is limited and I could not consistently give such broad and sweeping invitations and promises as those which the Gospels represent Jesus as giving. I find then when I look into the mind of Christ - and see the things that He thought about that He was enough like myself to enable me to call Him brother, and I find also that He was so much more than I that I can call Him Lord. And He is the one whom we preach to the people. The Son of God, the son of man. The one to whom is given all power both in heaven and in earth and who stretches out His hands to all the world and says "Come unto me and I will give you rest."