

## The Divinity of Christ.

BY P. W. HUGHES.

We have four Biographies of Christ, written by different men, from four distinct points of view. In this diversity there is unity; combined they form a perfect and harmonious whole. The portrait is without a flaw. While it is that of a perfect man, it is manifestly that of One who was more than man.

The reliability of these biographies, as authentic historical documents, has been fiercely assailed; but the internal and external evidence of their authenticity, have proved impregnable.

One of the strongest of the internal evidences is, the uniqueness of the character portrayed. Its originality is so striking, and throughout, so consistent, that scepticism has admitted its historical truth. In the words of Rousseau: "It has features of truthfulness, so great, so striking, and so perfectly inimitable, that its inventor would have been scarcely less wonderful than his Hero."

These narratives defy imitation. The greatest literary genius, even with them as models, could not write the life of an imaginary God-man, without representing him as so speaking or acting, as to make his ideal character ludicrous. What the old minister startled his people by saying of the Bible, is applicable to those four lives of Christ: "The Bible is a wonderful book, if it be true;" then after a pause he added, "but it is ten times more wonderful if it is not true!" The difficulties of faith are not to be compared with those of unbelief.

Another strong proof of the truthfulness of these Biographies is, that the Christ, whose life they delineate, instead of corresponding with, is in marked opposition to, the Messianic conceptions and expectations of His race. To a Jew, such a Messiah was, and is, an absurdity. This of itself, makes the invention of such a Biography, even if it were possible, absolutely incredible.

## II. CHRIST CLAIMED TO BE DIVINE.

"Thou, being a man, makest thyself God" (John x. 33). The Sanhedrim condemned Him on this ground (Matt. xxvi. 65), and if He were only a man, legally condemned Him to death (Lev. xxiv. 16).

## III. HIS MOST INTIMATE FRIENDS BELIEVED HIM TO BE DIVINE.

At first, "His own brethren did not believe on Him" (John vii. 5); but they were afterwards believers (Acts i. 14) and two of them, James and Jude, writers of two of the Epistles.

This proves, that while His life was so perfectly human as not to betray His Divinity, there was nothing in it inconsistent with His Divinity. The more we reflect on this fact, the more significant and convincing it will appear. Consider what it means. It means, that His brethren had never in His conduct at home, neither in His play as a boy, nor His work as a man, heard or seen, in word, or look, or act, anything out of keeping with Divinity! The man has never lived, who could live up to such a level for a single day; Jesus did so, all His life.

"The best of men, are but men at the best." Hence the proverb: "No man is a hero to his own valet;" for such a servant sees flaws in the popular idol, which those who see him only from a distance,

cannot detect. Intimate acquaintance is invariably fatal to unqualified admiration and respect, for even the very best of men.

The reverse was the case with Christ. The closer the intimacy with Him, the deeper the reverence and love. John, who was honored with most familiar intercourse, is the Evangelist who dwells most on the Divinity of his Master. To him, as to the other disciples, His life was as unsullied as falling snow. When therefore Jesus asked these men, who for three years had been his constant companions, who had heard His words, and noted His behaviour, not only in public, but in the most unconstrained circumstances of private life; "Who say ye that I am?" Peter, speaking for them all, replied, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. xvi. 16).

## IV. HIS RECORDED UTTERANCES ATTEST HIS DIVINITY.

We are, perhaps, too familiar with His words, to realize how startling they must have been to their original hearers. As we read such words as: "I am the light of the world" (John viii. 12), "He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father" (John xiv. 9), "Before Abraham was, I am" (John viii. 58), "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest" (Matt. xi. 28), "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly" (Matt. xi. 29), "I am the Resurrection and the Life," etc. (John xi. 25), we can scarcely be surprised that some of His hearers were so shocked that they thought Him insane (John x. 20). Such language might well seem intolerable from mortal lips. If the speaker were only a man, then He was guilty of an arrogance, an irreverence, and self-laudation which degrade Him. If not Divine, He was far from being a model man. His words are not "full of grace and truth," unless they are the words of One who was God, as well as man. Being God, "by His words He is justified;" if only man, then "by His words He is condemned" (Matt. xii. 37).

## V. HIS WORKS BEAR WITNESS TO HIS DIVINITY.

He Himself insisted upon their evidential value (Matt. xi. 21; John v. 36, etc.). He knew He was credited with working miracles; if the people were wrong, He was bound, as an honest man, to put them right. His character and the genuineness of the miracles which He professed to work, stand or fall together. To expunge the miraculous from His life is to destroy His identity. No such impoverished Christ could have created Christianity.

## VI. THE RESURRECTION PROVED HIS DIVINITY.

He foretold that He would rise from the dead (Matt. xii. 42). "Declared the Son of God, . . . by resurrection" (Rom. i. 4). Its historical reality is well authenticated. It is attested by such facts as:

(1) The testimony of many, and reliable witnesses, who had nothing to gain; many of whom suffered martyrdom by adhering to their testimony.

(2) It was believed in, and expected by his disciples (Matt. xvi. 11; John xx. 26-36).

(3) His death filled His followers with dismay. Instead of being scattered, they were soon welded together more firmly than ever. The very men, who, when their Master was arrested, "forsook Him

and fled," or denied they ever knew Him (Matt. xxvi. 56; Mark xiv. 71), by some means became courageous and defiant in the presence of His murderers (Acts iv. 8, etc.). What wrought such a transformation? No adequate cause can be given, other than they themselves gave: "Begotten again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter i. 3).

(4) The substitution of the first, for the seventh day of the week, can only be explained by the belief that He rose from the grave on that day. When we remember the sacred character of the Jewish Sabbath, and how interwoven it was with the nation's history, we cannot fail to see, that only an event of tremendous importance and significance, could have induced the first Christians to pay more respect to the first than the seventh day. Nothing but belief in His resurrection, as a thoroughly verified fact, can account for Jews making such a revolutionary change.

## VII. THE GROWTH AND SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY PROVE HIS DIVINITY.

Himself a Jew, the religion He founded, provoked, as it does to this day, Jewish hatred and opposition. It was mortifying to the pride of the elect race, and falsified their long cherished hopes. Putting Jew and Gentile on an equality, it encountered the rage of those to whom it was first preached; and yet it was from among them it won its most signal triumphs. In the conversion of the Apostle Paul, we have illustrated the deep-rooted enmity, and the secret of its power to overcome all obstacles. Judaism and Paganism were alike impotent to arrest its progress; persecution only promoted its growth, and accelerated its expansion (Acts viii. 4).

Christianity ignores all distinctions of race or creed. It claims the world for Christ. Its missionaries and converts are to be found in every quarter of the globe. "The weapons of its warfare are not carnal" (2 Cor. x. 4). It makes no compromise with sin, but insists on holiness of heart and life, and provides the means for their attainment. It has banished idolatry, strangled slavery, raised woman from the degradation to which Islamism and heathenism consign her; and is the beneficent mother of all the kindly charities, which distinguish Christian from other nations.

Whence this universality and success? "Go ye therefore and teach all nations . . . and lo, I am with you," etc. (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20). His presence in, and with His Church, is the only adequate explanation. "This Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations" (Matt. xxiv. 14). "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away" (Matt. xxiv. 35). He practically staked all on prophecies like these, which, when spoken, seemed so unlikely of fulfilment. Their accomplishment proves His Divinity.

## VIII. HIS DIVINITY ESSENTIAL TO OUR SALVATION.

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son" (John iii. 16). No lesser sacrifice could suffice. There was that in the nature of sin on the one hand, and in the character of God on the other, which made the Incarnation a Divine necessity.—Glasgow, Scotland.