

## IMPECCABLE

The design of the following pages is not to engender controversy, but rather to quiet an uneasiness felt by not a few plain and serious Christians. It would give the author real pain, if he thought anything here said should diminish the high esteem in which any of his brethren are held. If any of the opinions commented on admit of an explanation, which would quite relieve the minds of pious men, it would be doing a public service to bring it out. If this little treatment should accomplish so much good, it would not be in vain.

We should not forget that true piety cannot fail to be interested in suitable teachings respecting the person and character of our Savior. How could it be otherwise? He is the Life of men, the Prophet, Priest, and King of all the saints. His lips shall pronounce the final award to angels and men. To all believers He is made of God wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. All truth respecting Him is precious. Let us look at some matters of great importance, chiefly relating to this inquiry, "*Was our Lord Jesus Christ impeccable?*"

Let not the reader be offended at the subject thus announced. Our Savior either was or He was not capable of sinning. If the truth on this matter can be learned, like all other truth, it is valuable. Let us not lightly esteem anything which God enables us to know respecting Himself or His Son. But before entering at large on the subject, it will be found convenient to consider some preliminary matters.

## What Prophets Said

The evangelical prophet foretold that Messiah should not only “be for a sanctuary”; but also, “for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence.” Blessed Simeon, with the infant Savior in his arms, said: “Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel” (Isaiah 8:14; Luke 2:34). With these views many other Scriptures well agree. Church history fully confirms the truth of these predictions. The doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of the Person of Christ are both great mysteries. But they are not contradictions. They are the mysteries of godliness, in which the righteous glory (I Timothy 3:16). No one should be offended at them. The best writers admit these things. Turretin says: “There are in the Christian religion two matters more difficult than others. The first relates to the unity of three persons in one essence in trinity. The other refers to the union of two natures in one person in the incarnation. These questions are quite different from each other. For in the first we treat of unity of essence and trinity of persons; in the other, we treat of unity of person and diversity of natures. As the divinity of Christ has been furiously assailed by many heresies, so Satan has stirred up many enemies against the doctrine of Christ’s humanity.”<sup>1</sup> For eighteen hundred years the great stumbling block of the world has been God in Christ, Christ incarnate, or Christ crucified. A plurality of the heresies that have disturbed the Christian Church, have related in some way to the person, natures, grace, or glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Both His divinity and humanity have been stoutly denied.

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1. Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed. James T. Dennison, Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1997), 2:310-311, 306.

## Dr. Shedd's Statement

In his history of Christian doctrine, Shedd says: “Four factors are necessary in order to the complete conception of Christ’s person: 1. True and proper deity; 2. True and proper humanity; 3. The union of deity and humanity in one person; 4. The distinction of deity from humanity, in the one person, so that there be no mixture of natures.”<sup>2</sup> Against one or more of these truths, Arians, Nestorians, Eutychians, Apollinarians, Patripassians, Monothelites, and various others have laid out their strength.

## The Westminster Assembly

Thus states the true doctrine: “The Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance and equal with the Father, did when the fullness of time was come, take upon Him men’s nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin; being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary of her substance. So that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the Manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion. Which person is very God and very Man, yet one Christ, the only mediator between God and man.”<sup>3</sup> This is the true, catholic faith on these matters. The person,

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2. William Greenough Thayer Shedd, *A History of Christian Doctrine* (Charles Scribner’s Sons: New York, 1863), 1:392.

3. *Westminster Confession of Faith*, 8.2; At least five different editions of the Westminster Confession—including the United States Presbyterians’ revisions—

incarnation, character, and work of our Lord Jesus Christ are the common inheritance of all Christians. No man, no sect, no century can claim any exclusive right to them. If they are assailed, any man is at liberty, and every watchman is bound to give warning to the friends of truth, and to defend the Scriptural doctrine at all hazards and by all appropriate arguments.

### **The Divinity of Christ**

No sound or orthodox man denies or doubts the divinity of Christ. How could he? Isaiah and Joel call Him Jehovah (compare Isaiah 6:6 and John 12:41, Joel 2:32 and Romans 10:32). He is called God, the mighty God, the true God, and Eternal Life, over all God, blessed forever, Lord of all and Lord of glory (John 1:1; Isaiah 9:6; I John 5:20; Romans 9:5; Acts 10:36; I Corinthians 2:8). No name of honor is given to the Father more fitly expressing divinity, than those given to the Son. He is even called the everlasting Father, literally the Father of Eternity (Isaiah 9:6). Christ has also the attributes of God. He was in the beginning with God. He was before John the Baptist, though not born for months after His forerunner. He was before Abraham. He was before all things (John 1:2; 1:15; John 8:58; Proverbs 8:22-23; Colossians 1:17). He is everywhere present (Matthew 18:20; 28:20). He knows all things. He knows the human heart. He knows

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appeared between 1820 and 1870. Plumer likely used the edition included in *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. of A., Containing The Confession of Faith, the Catechisms, and the Directory of Worship* (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1841), 50-52.