

HIS NAME—THE MIGHTY GOD

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“The mighty God.”
Isaiah 9:6.

OTHER translations of this Divine title have been proposed by several very eminent and able scholars. Not that any of them are prepared to deny that this translation is after all, most accurate, but rather that while there are various words in the original which we render by the common appellation of “GOD,” it might be possible so to interpret this as to show more exactly its definite meaning. One writer, for example, thinks the term might be translated, “The Irradiator”—He who gives light to men. Some think it bears the meaning of “The Illustrious”—the bright and the shining One. Still there are very few, if any, who are prepared to dispute the fact that our translation is the most faithful that could possibly be given—the mighty God.”

The term here used for God, El, is taken from a Hebrew root, which, as I take it, signifies *strength*. And perhaps a literal translation even of that title might be, “The Strong One,” the strong God. But there is added to this an adjective in the Hebrew, expressive of mightiness and the two taken together express the omnipotence of Christ, His real deity and His omnipotence, as standing first and foremost among the attributes which the Prophet beheld. “The mighty God.” I do not propose this morning to enter into any argument in proof of the Divinity of Christ, because my text does not seem to demand it of me. It does not say that Christ shall be “the mighty God”—that is affirmed in many other places of Sacred Writ. But here it says, “He shall be called Wonderful,” called “Counselor,” called, “The mighty God.” And I think that, therefore, I may be excused from entering into any proof of the fact, if I am at least able to establish the truth of that which is here foretold, inasmuch as Christ is indeed called at this day and shall be called to the end of the world, “the mighty God.”

First, this morning, I shall speak for a moment on the folly of those who profess to be His followers, but who do not call Him “the mighty God.” In the second place I shall try to show how the true Believer practically calls Christ “the mighty God,” in many of the acts which concern his salvation. And then I shall close by noticing how Jesus Christ has proved Himself, indeed, to be “the mighty God” to us and in the experience of His Church.

I. First let me point out THE FOLLY OF THOSE WHO PROFESS TO BE THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST, YET DO NOT, AND WILL NOT, CALL HIM GOD. The question has sometimes been proposed to me—how is it that those of us who hold the Divinity of Christ—manifest what is called “uncharitableness” towards those who deny Him. We continually affirm that an error with regard to the Divinity of Christ is absolutely fatal and that a man cannot be right in his judgment upon any part of the Gospel unless he think rightly of Him who is personally the very center of all the purposes of Heaven and the foundation of all the hopes of earth. Nor can we admit of any latitudinarianism here. We extend the right hand of fellowship to all those who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth. But we cannot exchange our Christian greetings with those who deny Him to be “very God of very God.” And the reason is sometimes asked—for say our opponents—“We are ready to give the right hand of fellowship to you, why don’t you do so to us?” Our reply shall be given thus briefly—“You have no right to complain of us, seeing that in this matter we stand on the defensive. When you declare yourselves to believe that Christ is not the Son of God, you may not be conscious of it, but you have charged us with one of the blackest sins in the entire catalogue of crime.

“The Unitarians must, to be consistent, charge the whole of us, who worship Christ, with being idolaters. Now idolatry is a sin of the most heinous character. It is not an offense against men, it is true, but it is an intolerable offense against the majesty of God. We are ranked by Unitarians, if they are consistent, with the Hottentots. “No,” say they, “we believe that you are sincere in your worship.” So is the Hottentot. He bows down before his Fetish, his block of wood or stone and he is an idolater. And although you charge us with bowing before a man, yet we do hold that you have

laid at us a sin insufferably gross and we are obliged to repel your accusation with some severity. You have so insulted us by denying the Godhead of Christ—you have charged us with so great a crime—that you cannot expect us to sit coolly down and blandly smile at the imputation. It matters not what a man worships, if it is not God, he is an idolater.

There is no distinction in principle between worship to a god of mud and a god of gold. No, further—there is no distinction between the worship of an onion—and the worship of the sun, moon and stars. These are alike idolatries. And though Christ is confessed by the Socinian to be the best of men, perfection's own self—yet if He is nothing more, the vast mass of the Christian world is deliberately assailed with the impudent accusation of being idolaters. Yet those who charge us with idolatry expect us to receive them with cordial kindness! It is not in flesh and blood for us to do so, if we take the low ground of reason. It is not in grace or truth to do so, if we take the high ground of revelation. As men, we are willing to show them respect—we regard them, we pray for them—we have no anger or enmity against them. But when we come to the point of *theology*, we cannot, as we profess to be followers of Christ, tamely see ourselves charged with an offense so dreadful and so heinous as that of idol worship.

I confess I would almost rather be charged with a religion that extenuated murder, than with one that justified idolatry. Murder, great as the offense is, is but the slaying of man. But idolatry is in its essence the killing of God—it is the attempt to thrust the Eternal Jehovah out of His seat and to foist into His place the work of His own hand, or the creature of my own conceit. Shall a man charge me with being so besotted as to worship a mere man? Shall he tell me I am so low and groveling in my intellect that I should stoop down to worship my own fellow creature? And yet does he expect me after that to receive him as a brother professing the same faith? I cannot understand his presumption! The charge against our sanctity of heart is so tremendous—the accusation is so frightful—that if there has been some severity and bitterness of temper in the controversy, the sin lies upon our opponent and not on us. For he has charged us with a crime so dreadful that an upright man must repel it as an insult.

But to go further. If Jesus Christ is not a Divine Person or if I could once imagine that He were no more than a mere man, I should prefer Mahomet to Christ. And if you ask me why, I think I could clearly prove that Mahomet was a greater Prophet than Christ. If Jesus Christ is not the Son of God, co-equal, co-eternal with the Father, He so spoke as to induce that belief in the minds of His own disciples and of His adversaries likewise. Mahomet, with regard to the unity of the Godhead, is so clear and so distinct, that there is no Mahometan to this day that has ever fallen into idolatry. You will find that throughout the whole of the Mahometan world the cry is still sternly uttered and faithfully believed, “There is but one God and Mahomet is his prophet.”

Now, if Christ were but a good man and a Prophet, why did He not speak more decisively? Why has He not left on record a war cry for the Christian which would be as explicit and decisive as that of Mahomet? If Christ did not mean to teach that He Himself is God, at least He was not very clear and definite in His denial and He has left His disciples extremely in the dark, the proof whereof is to be found in the fact that at the present day, nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand of the whole of the professed followers of Christ, do receive Him and bow down before Him, as being very God. And if He is not God, I deny His right to be esteemed as a Prophet. If He is not God, He was an impostor, the grandest, the greatest of deceivers that ever existed. This, of course, is no argument to the man who denies the faith and does not avow himself to be a follower of Christ. But to the man that is Christ's follower, I do hold that the argument is irresistible, that Christ could not have been a good and great Prophet, if He were not what He certainly led us to believe Himself to be—the Son of God, who thought it not robbery to be equal with God—He very God, by whom all things were made and without whom was not anything made that is made.

I will say yet another thing—which may startle the Believer—but which is intended rather to reduce the heterodox doctrine of Christ not being God to an absurdity. If Christ were not the Son of God, His death, so far from being a satisfaction for sin, was a death most richly and righteously deserved. The Sanhedrim before which He was tried was the recognized and authorized legislature of the country. He was brought before that Sanhedrim, charged with blasphemy, and it was upon that charge that they condemned Him to die, because He made Himself the Son of God. Now, I do not hesitate honestly to declare, that if I had been called on to plead in that case, I should have pleaded a frank admission. And that, moreover, I should have stood up and said and felt that I had a clear case before me, which nothing but lying and perjury could ever have put on one side, if Jesus of Nazareth had been charged with having declared Himself to be the Son of God.

Why, His whole preaching seemed to derive from there it's unrivalled authority. There was continually in His actions and in His Words, a claim to be something more than man ever could lay claim to. And when He was brought before the Sanhedrim, witnesses enough might have been found to prove that He had made Himself the Son of God. If He were not so, His condemnation for blasphemy was the most just sentence that ever was pronounced and His crucifixion on Calvary, was absolutely the most righteous execution that ever was performed by the hand of the government. It is His being verily God that frees Him from the charge of blasphemy. It is the fact that He *is* God. and that His Godhead is not to be denied, that makes His death an unrighteous deicide at the hand of apostate man and renders it, as before God, an acceptable sacrifice for the sins of all the people whom He redeemed with His most precious blood. But if He is not God, I do repeat, that there is no reason whatever why we should have had a New Testament written. For there would be then nothing in the sublime central-fact of that New Testament but the righteous execution of one who certainly deserved to die.

Do you remember, my dear Friends, when the Apostle Paul was preaching on the resurrection of the dead, in his letter to the Corinthians, how he uses an ex post facto argument, to show the natural consequences, if it were possible to overturn the truths? He says, "If Christ is not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain and you are yet in your sins." Now, I may fairly use the Apostle's line of argument in reference to the Godhead and Sonship of Christ, of which His resurrection gave such a palpable demonstration—"If Christ is not the Son of God, then is our preaching vain and your faith is also vain and you are yet in your sins all our visions of Heaven are blasted and withered. The brightness of our hope is quenched forever. That Rock on which our trust is built turns out to be nothing better than mere sand. If the Divinity of Christ is not proved. All the joy and consolation we ever had in this world in our belief that His blood was sufficient to atone for sin has been but a dream of fancy and a "figment of idle brains." All the communion we have ever had with Him has been but an illusion and a trance and all the hopes we have of beholding His face in Glory and of being satisfied when we awake in His likeness are but the foulest delusions that ever cheated the hopes of man.

Oh, my Brethren, and can any of you believe that the blood of all the martyrs has been shed as a witness to a *lie*? Have all those who have rotted in Roman dungeons, or have been burned at the stake because they witnessed that Christ was God, died in vain? Verily, if Christ is not God, we are of all men the most miserable. To what purpose is the calumny and abuse that we have had to endure day after day? To what purpose are our repentance, our sighs, our tears? To what purpose is our faith? To what purpose have our fears and bodings been supplanted by our hope and confidence? To what purpose our joy and our rejoicing, if Christ is not the Son of God? Will you put yourselves all down for fools—can you imagine that God's Word has misguided you? That Prophets and Apostles and martyrs and saints, have all leagued together to lead you into a trap and to delude your souls?

God forbid that we should think such a thing. There is no folly in the world that has in it so much madness, compared with the folly of denying the Divinity of Christ and then professing to be His followers. No, Beloved—

*"Let all the forms that men devise,
Assault our faith with treacherous art—
We'll call them vanity and lies,
And bind the Gospel to our heart!"*

We will write this on the forefront of our banner—Christ is God—co-equal and co-eternal with His Father—very God of very God, who counted it not robbery to be equal with God.

II. This brings me to the second part of the subject—HOW DO WE CALL CHRIST THE MIGHTY GOD? Here there is no dispute whatever. I am now about to speak of matters of pure fact. Whether Christ is mighty God or not, it is quite certain that we are in the constant habit of calling Him so. Not, I mean, by the mere utterance of the term, but we do so in a stronger way—in fact—and actions speak louder than words. Now, Beloved, I will soon prove that you and I are in the habit of calling Christ God. And I will prove it first, because it is our delight and our joy and our privilege to attribute to Him the attributes of Deity.

In hours of devout contemplation, how often do we look up to Him as being the Eternal Son? You and I sit down in our chambers and in our House of Prayer and as we muse upon the great Covenant of Grace, we are in the habit of speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ's everlasting love to His people. This is one of the jewels of our life, one of the ornaments with which we array ourselves as a bride does. This is a part of the manna that tastes like wafers made with honey upon which our souls are desirous to feed. Speak of God's eternal love, of our names having been inscribed in His eternal book

and of Christ's having borne them from before the foundation of the world upon His breast, as our great High Priest, our Mediator before the Throne of Heaven. In so doing, we have virtually called Him the mighty God. Because none but God could have been from everlasting to everlasting. As often as we profess the doctrine of election, we call Christ the mighty God. As often as we talk of the Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure, so often do we proclaim Him to be God—because we speak of Him as an Everlasting One and none could be from everlasting but One who is self-existent—who is God.

Again—how frequently do we repeat over to ourselves that precious verse—

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today and forever”?

We are always in the habit of ascribing to Him immutability. Some of our choicest hymns are founded on that circumstance and our richest hopes flow from that attribute. We know that all things will change. We are convinced that we ourselves are mutable as the winds and as easily moved as the sand by the waves of the sea. But we know that our Redeemer lives and we cannot entertain a suspicion of any change in His love, His purpose, or His power. How often do we sing—

*“Immutable His will
Though dark may be my frame,
His loving heart is still unchangeably the same.
My soul through many changes goes—
His love no variation knows!”*

Do you not see that you have in fact called him God, because none but God is immutable? The creature changes. This is written on the forefront of creation—“Change!” The mighty ocean, that knows no furrows on its brow, changes at times and at times shifts its level. It moves here and there and we know that it is to be licked up with forked tongues of flame and yet we ascribe to Christ immutability. We do, then, in fact, ascribe to Him Divinity—for none but the Divine can be immutable. Is it not also our joy to believe that wherever two or three are gathered together in Christ's name, there is He in the midst of them? Do we not repeat it in all our Prayer Meetings? Perhaps some minister in Australia began the solemnities of public worship this day with the reflection that Jesus Christ was with him, according to His promise and I know that as I came here the same reflection comforted me, “Yes, I am with you always even to the end of the world.” Wherever a Christian is found, there is God. And though there are but two or three met in a barn, or on the greensward under the canopy of God's blue sky, yet there Christ vouchsafes His presence.

Now I ask you, have we not ascribed to Christ, Omnipresent? And who can be Omnipresent but God? Have we not thus, in fact, though not in words, called Christ “God”? How is it possible for us to dream of Him as being here and there and everywhere—in the bosom of His Father, with the angels and in the hearts of the contrite all at the same time—if He were not God? Grant me that He is Omnipresent and you have said that He is God, for none but God can be present everywhere.

Again, are we not also desirous to ascribe to Christ Omniscience? You believe when your heart is aching that Christ knows your pains and that He reckons every groan. Or at least if you do not believe it, it is always my satisfaction to know that—

*“He feels at His heart,
All my sighs and my groans.”*

And so He does yours. Wherever you are, you believe that He hears your prayers, that He sees your tears, that He knows your wants, that He is ready to pardon your sins. You believe that you are better known to Him than you are to yourself. You believe that He searches your hearts and tries your reins and that you never can come to Him without finding Him full of sympathy and full of love. Now do you not see that you have ascribed Omniscience to Him? Therefore, though not in words, you have, in accents louder than words, called Him the mighty God, for you have assumed that He is Omniscient. And who can be Omniscient but the very God of very God? I shall not stop to descant upon the other attributes, but I think we might prove that we have each of us ascribed to Christ all the attributes of the Godhead in our daily life and in our constant trust and intercession. I am sure that it is true of many loving hearts of God's own children here. We have called Him the mighty God and if others have not called Him so, nevertheless the text is verified by our faith. “He shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God.” So He is and so He shall be, world without end.

And now I have another proof to offer, that Christ is called “the mighty God.” We call Him so in many of His offices. We believe this morning that Christ is the Mediator between God and man. If we would understand the term mediator, we must interpret it as Job did—one “that might lay his hand upon us both.” We are accustomed to say that Jesus Christ is the Mediator of the New Covenant and we offer our prayers to God through Him because we believe that He mediates between us and the Father. Let it once be granted, then, that Christ is the Mediator and you have asserted His Divinity—you have virtually called Him the Son of God. And you have granted His humanity, for He must put His hand upon both. Therefore He must put His hand upon man in our nature—He must be touched with a feeling of our infirmities and be in all points like as we are. But He is not a Mediator unless He can put His hand upon God, unless as Fellow of the Eternal One, He shall be able without blasphemy to place His hand upon the Divine Being.

There is no mediatorship unless the hand is put on both and who could put His hand on God but God? Can cherubim or seraphim talk of laying their hands on the Divine? Shall they touch the Infinite? “Dark with insufferable light His garments appear”—then what is He Himself in the glorious Essence of Deity?—an all-devouring and consuming fire. Only God can put His hand on God and yet Christ has this high prerogative, for mark, there is no mediatorship established—there cannot be—unless the two are linked. If you wished to build a bridge you might commence on this side of the river—but if you have not connected it with the other side—you have not built the bridge. There can be no mediatorship unless the parties are fully linked. The ladder must have its feet on earth but it must reach to Heaven, for if there were a single breach we should fall from its summit and perish. There must be entire communication between the two. Do you not see, therefore that in calling Christ Mediator we have in fact called Him the mighty God?

But again—we call Christ our Savior. Now, have any of you that foolish credulity which would lead you to trust in a *man* for the everlasting salvation of your soul? If you have, I pity you—your proper place is not in a Protestant assembly, but among the deluded votaries of Rome. If you can commit the keeping of your soul to one like yourself, I must indeed mourn over you and pray that you may be taught better. But you trust your salvation to Him whom God has set forth for a propitiation, do you not, O follower of Jesus? Can you not say all your hope is fixed on Him, for He is all your salvation and all your desire? Does not your spirit rest on that unbuttressed pillar of His entire satisfaction, His precious death and burial, His glorious resurrection and ascension?

Now, observe, you are either resting on man, or else you have declared Christ to be “the mighty God.” When I say I put my faith in Him, I do most honestly declare that I dare not trust even to Him, if I did not believe Him to be God. I could not put my trust in any being that was merely created. God forbid that my folly should ever go to such an extent as that. I would sooner trust myself than trust any other man and yet I dare not trust myself, for I should be accursed. “Cursed is he that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm.” And would the Socinian have me to believe that I am to preach faith in Christ and that yet, if my Hearers trust Christ, they will be accursed, as they assuredly must be, if He is nothing but man? For again I repeat it—“cursed is he that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm.” You get a blessing by faith in Jesus, but how? Is it not because—“Blessed is he that trusts in the Lord and whose hope the Lord is?” Christ is very Jehovah and therefore the blessing comes to those who trust in Him. So, then, as often as you put your trust in Jesus, for time and eternity, you have called Him, “the mighty God.”

This subject is capable of the greatest expansion and I do believe there is sufficient interest attaching to it to warrant me in keeping you to a late hour this day, but I shall not do so. There has been enough said, I think, to prove at least that we are in the habit continually of calling Christ “the mighty God.”

III. My third proposition is to explain to you how CHRIST HAS PROVED HIMSELF TO US TO BE “THE MIGHTY God.” And here Beloved, without controversy, great is the mystery of Godliness, for the passage from which the text is taken says, “Unto us a Child is born.” A child! What can that do? A child totters in its walk, it trembles in its steps—and it is a child newly born. Born!—an infant hanging on its mother’s breast, an infant deriving its nourishment from a woman? What? Can that work wonders? Yes, said the Prophet, “Unto us a Child is born.”

But then it is added, “Unto us a Son is given.” Christ was not only born, but given. As Man He is a Child *born*, as God He is the Son *given*. He emotes down from on high—He is given by God to become our Redeemer. But here behold the wonder! His name is named! This child’s name “shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God.” Is this child, then, to us the mighty God? If so, O Brethren, without controversy, great is the mystery of Godliness, indeed! And yet, just let us look, look through the history of the Church and discover whether we have not ample evidence to substantiate

it. This Child born, this Son given, came into the world to enter into the battle against sin. For thirty years and upwards He had to struggle and wrestle against temptations more numerous and more terrible than man had ever known before. Adam fell when but a woman tempted him. Eve fell when but a serpent offered fruit to her—but Christ—the second Adam, stood invulnerable against all the shafts of Satan though tempted He was in all points, like as we are.

Not one arrow out of the quiver of Hell was spared—the whole were shot against Him. Every arrow was aimed against Him with all the might of Satan's army and that is not little! And yet, without sin or taint of sin, more than conqueror He stood. Foot to foot with Satan, in the solitude of the wilderness—hand to hand with him on the top of the pinnacle of the temple—side by side with him in the midst of a busy crowd—yet ever more than conqueror. He gave him battle wherever the adversary willed to meet Him and at last, when Satan gathered up all his might and seized the Savior in the garden of Gethsemane and crushed him till He sweat as it were, great drops of blood—then when the Savior said, “Nevertheless, not as I will but as You will”—the tempter was repulsed. “Go! Go!” Christ seemed to say. And away the tempter fled, nor dare return again. Christ, in all His conquests over sin, seems to me to have established His Godhead. I never heard of any other creature that could endure such temptation as this.

Look at the angels in Heaven. How temptation entered there I know not, but this I know, that Satan, the great archangel, sinned and I know that he became the tempter to the rest of his companions and drew with him a third part of the stars of Heaven. Angels were but little tempted—some of them not tempted at all—and yet they fell. And then look at man—slight was his temptation—yet he fell. It is not in a creature to stand against temptation. He will yield, if the temptation is strong enough. But Christ stood and it seems to me, that in His standing He proved Himself to have the most radiant purity, the immaculate holiness of Him before whom angels veil their faces and cry—

“Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth.”

But these proofs might appear insufficient if He did not accomplish more than this. We know also that Christ proved Himself to be the “mighty God” from the fact that at last all the sins of all His people were gathered upon His shoulders and, “He bare them in His own body on the tree.” The heart of Christ became like a reservoir in the midst of mountains. All the tributary streams of iniquity and every drop of the sins of His people, ran down and gathered into one vast lake, deep as Hell and shoreless as eternity. All these met, as it were, in Christ's heart and yet He endured them all. With many a sign of human weakness, but with convincing signs of Divine Omnipotence, He took all our griefs and carried all our sorrows. The Divinity within strengthened His Manhood and though wave after wave rolled over His head, till He sank in deep mire where there was no standing and all God's waves and His billows had gone over Him—yet did He lift up His head and more than a conqueror, at length, He put the sins of His people to a public execution. They are dead. They have ceased to be. And, if they are sought for, they shall not be found any more. Certainly if this is true, He is “the mighty God,” indeed.

But He did more than this, He descended into the grave and there He slept, fast fettered with the cold chains of death. But the appointed hour arrived—the sunlight of the third day gave the warning and He snapped the bands of death as if they were but thread and came forth to life as “the Lord of life and glory.” His flesh did not see corruption, for He was not able to be held by the bands of death. And who shall be the death of death, the plague of the grave, the destroyer of destruction, but God? Who but immortal life, who but the self-existent, shall trample out the fires of Hell? Who, but He whose Being is eternal, without beginning and without end, shall burst the shackles of the grave? He proved Himself, then, when He led captivity captive and crushed Death and ground his iron limbs to powder—He proved Himself, then to be the mighty God!

Oh, my Soul, you can say that He has proved Himself in your heart to be a mighty God. Sins many has He forgiven you and relieved your conscience of the keen sense of guilt. Griefs innumerable has He assuaged. Temptations insurmountable has He overcome. Virtues once impossible has He implanted, grace in its fullness has He promised and in its measure He has given. My soul bears record that what has been done for me could never have been done by a mere man. And you would rise from your seats, I am sure, if it were needful, and say, “Yes, He that has loved me, washed me from my sins and made me what I am, must be God, none but God could do what He has done—could bear so patiently—could bless so lavishly, forgive so freely, enrich so infinitely. He is, He must be—we will crown Him such—“The mighty God.”

And in conclusion, lest I weary you, permit me now to say I beg and beseech of you all present, as God the Spirit shall help you, come and put your trust in Jesus Christ. He is “the mighty God.” Oh, Christians, believe Him more than ever. Cast your troubles constantly on Him. He is “the mighty God.” Go to Him in all your dilemmas, when the enemy comes in like a flood, this mighty God shall make a way for your deliverance. Take to Him your griefs, this mighty God can alleviate them all. Tell Him your backslidings and sins—this mighty God shall blot them out.

And, O Sinners, you that feel your need of a Savior, come to Christ and trust Him for He is “the mighty God.” Go to your houses and fall on your knees and confess your sins and then cast your poor, guilty, helpless, naked, defenseless souls before His Omnipotence, for He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. When He died He was not manhood without Divinity, but He was “the mighty God.” This, I say, we will write on our banners, from this day forth and forever. This shall be our joy and our song—the Child born and the Son given is to us “the mighty God.”

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