

Knox suggests (in *The Early Church and the Coming Great Church*: 74) that “the true way to ask the christological question,” namely, “Must Jesus not have been divine to have been the center of so divine an event?” parallels the question about the resurrection, namely, “Must not Jesus have arisen from the dead, since he is the present living center of the church’s life?” His suggestion takes on particular significance when it is related to Marxsen’s analysis of the second question, according to which the experience of Jesus as present and alive after his crucifixion, *together with the Jewish concept of the resurrection* (of the martyr?), lies behind asking this rhetorical question. So, too, one could say, does the experience of Jesus as explicit primal authorizing source, together with the Jewish [?!] concept(s) of such a source, lead to asking the parallel rhetorical question about his divinity. To be sure, where Knox’s reasoning seems to break down is with the claim that, in the sense of “the earliest statement of faith, the first ‘creed,’” i.e., “Jesus is Lord and Christ” (68), the words “Lord” and “Christ” indicate that Jesus “was, of course, believed in as divine” (73). For Knox also allows that “there is no convincing evidence that [Jesus] was called ‘God’ in the first century, and indisputable evidence that he was not generally called by that name,” although “it is clear “that [Jesus] was thought of as being related to God as no other man could be” (73). In other words, even though Knox himself appears to hold that “Lord” and “Christ” in their earliest senses did *not* indicate that Jesus was believed in as divine, he nonetheless claims the contrary! (Or is he distinguishing between being divine and being God, and using “divine” so broadly as to mean simply “being related to God as no other man could be”?—in which case, he would be saying much the same sort of thing I have characteristically said.) In any case, the essential point of his argument remains. Given certain religious or philosophical presuppositions (i.e., warrants), a certain kind of experience (i.e., datum) naturally leads to drawing a certain inference (i.e., conclusion). Of course, the conclusion is, in effect, an interpretation of the datum in terms of the presuppositions; and the question remains whether there is anything about the presuppositions that has more than a merely relative validity.

Be all this as it may, Knox’s point is entirely sound when he contends that, in addition to being unable to deny or doubt the historical existence of Jesus or the fact of his resurrection,

... the church could never have minimized the significance of Jesus. This is true for the reason that . . . its understanding of the meaning of the event was from the beginning expressed in terms of a definition of the person of Jesus, and it would have been quite impossible for it to state that meaning in other than the highest terms it knew. . . . [N]o name was deemed too exalted for Jesus. He must be given 'the name which is above every name,' whatever that name might in a given time and place seem to be. Whenever there was an issue as between possible names of Jesus or definitions of his person, it was the higher possibility that inevitably carried the day. Thus, it was inevitable that the Christology of Athanasius should defeat Arianism. . . . I believe the whole history of Christology will demonstrate . . . that where a greater or lesser name is proposed for Christ, it is always the greater that is adopted. And this is true . . . because the name of the person is really a symbol of the significance of the event; and the church finds it impossible to minimize that significance. The real question lying back of all speculations and controversy about the metaphysical nature of the person is the question: How important is the event? It is because the church, on the basis of its own experience, cannot set any limits whatever to this importance that it must inevitably accept for the person the highest name it can conceive for him. . . . All real heresies are denials, just as all essential doctrines are affirmations, not of the church's opinions, but of its existence and nature (79 ff.).

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