

UNITARIANISM OF THE APOSTLES.  
[CONTINUED.]

S. T. PAUL.

"I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you." "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."—Acts xx. 20, 27. These passages exhibit the manly and fearless principles on which Paul acted as a minister of Jesus Christ. The great talents, extended learning, and ardent zeal with which he went forward in the perilous way where duty called him, give him a claim to the first rank among the inspired apostles of our Saviour. We have no doubt that he was eminently faithful to his great trust. We may receive his testimony respecting the character and office of Jesus Christ, with entire confidence that it could not have been erroneous or defective in any important respect.

There are two senses in which Christ is said to be divine. One class of Christians believe that he is the eternal, self-existent God—that he "whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world," is the same Being who sent him—that he "who had all power given him in heaven and on earth," is the same God who gave him that power.

Another class of Christians, called Unitarians, believe in Jesus, not as the Supreme God, but as one "whom God hath highly exalted and made a Prince and a Saviour—head over all things to the church." They call him a divine messenger; but it is a divinity derived from God. His precepts were the precepts of God—his wisdom the wisdom of God—his power the power of God. The Unitarian then believes in Jesus Christ as a subordinate agent or representative of God, invested by him with divine wisdom and power to save and bless mankind.

It is our object to show that Paul's views of our Saviour correspond with this statement—or in other words, that he was a Unitarian. And for this purpose, it is necessary to review his preaching and his writings.

I. Let us examine his preaching, as we find it recorded by Luke, in the Acts of the Apostles. At that time the gospels containing our Saviour's history were not written. It was necessary therefore, for preachers to relate this history, and inform their hearers distinctly who Jesus was, what he was, and what he had done, and taught, and suffered for man's salvation. Paul professes to disclose the whole truth, and "keep back nothing profitable;" if therefore the supreme divinity of Jesus Christ is not formally stated in his preaching, there is a strong presumption that he did not believe it. But we need not rest on this presumption alone; it will be easy to show positive evidence that he regarded him as a subordinate agent. This apostle says, he became all things to all men; or, in modern phrase, he accommodated his instructions to the condition and prejudices of the people whom he addressed. He addressed the Jews, as a nation acquainted with the one true God. They had long believed, from their ancient prophets, that God would send a messenger for their deliverance, called the Messiah, or Anointed. But they had mistaken the meaning of the promises to which they trusted. They expected a prince in the pomp of earthly power, to wear an earthly crown, and deliver them, not from moral ruin and death, but from the yoke of the Romans, their foreign masters. They would gladly have welcomed Jesus as the Messiah, if he had promised to drive out his country's proud oppressors, raise the banner of independence, and re-establish the throne of David in its long departed grandeur. But they would not receive as the messenger of God, him who had refused to be their king, and blasted their fondest hopes. They rejected with bitter scorn the meek and lowly Jesus, whose kingdom was not of this world. They were still less likely to admit his claims, after he had suffered an ignominious death. It was necessary therefore for the apostle, when he preached to Jews, to accommodate his arguments to their peculiar state of mind. He explained to them the spiritual nature and design of our Saviour's office, and proved from their sacred books, that this very Jesus whom they had crucified, was no other than the promised Messiah.

His first preaching recorded in Acts ix was directed solely to this point. At Damascus, "he preached Christ in the synagogues, (that he is the Son of God," or the Messiah. (Acts ix. 20.) Again, "he confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ"—(Acts ix. 22.) that is, the true Messiah whom they expected.

His next discourse to the Jews, of which we have any record was at Antioch. He had the same object in view as before, and the author, Luke, gives an account of his method and course of argument. (Acts xiii. 17—42.) After the reading of the scriptures, he addresses them as the chosen people of God; gives a sketch of their history; to show his peculiar care of their nation down to the time of David: then he says, "of this man's seed hath God, according to his promise, raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus." He then proceeds with the history of Jesus, comparing it with the ancient scriptures, to prove that he is the Messiah. "When they had filled all that was written of him; they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre, but God raised him from the dead." (Acts xiii. 29—37.) The fact that God raised Jesus from the dead is proved and powerfully urged as conclusive evidence, that he was the Messiah, long expected by the Jewish nation.

He finally adds, "be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man (Jesus Christ) is preached unto you the forgive-

ness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified;"—believe what? that Christ is God? Nothing like it, but only the doctrine he had been teaching them, which free as it is from Trinitarianism, he himself called the "word of salvation."

The term *Messiah* or *Christ*, literally means the anointed. It originated in an ancient practice of anointing with oil one who was set apart or consecrated to an office. Now it is perfectly well known that the Jews supposed that their expected Deliverer, whom they called, by way of eminence, the Messiah, would receive and fulfil his high office under the authority of Jehovah. They looked forward to him as God's most distinguished messenger to them. They invested him with high titles as the Son of God. But no Jew ever for a moment supposed that the Most High himself would come down to earth in human form as the Messiah. When the apostle therefore proved to them, that they were not to expect a temporal prince, but a spiritual one, and that Jesus of Nazareth was the true and long expected Messiah, they could have received him only as a messenger or agent of God—not as the ever-living Jehovah, whom they had worshipped in the Holy of Holies. Paul knew that the Jewish converts to Christianity must regard our Saviour only as an agent, deriving his power and dignity from God, and he gives them no intimation that they were in error. Nay, we find him "testifying both to the Jews and to the Greeks" that he had "kept nothing back that was profitable to them, nor shunned to declare all the counsel of God." But how could this be true if he had been commissioned to preach the doctrine of the Trinity? Would any Trinitarian preacher have thought that he had "declared all the counsel of God," if he had failed to inform his hearers that Jesus Christ was no other than God himself?

But Paul gives no intimation of such a doctrine; all he says is directly against it. He aims merely to establish two points—first, that Jesus, whom they crucified was the promised Messiah—and second, that God had raised him from the dead by his own power. He reasons with the Jews on their own received opinions; his argument is as follows:—You already believe from your sacred writings, that God will qualify and send for your deliverance, a personage called the Messiah, who will be obedient to his will, and as his representative accomplish his purposes of mercy. Now if you compare these promises, on which you rely, with the life, character, death and resurrection of Jesus, who was crucified at Jerusalem, you will be convinced that he is the true Messiah. He was no impostor, for God raised him from the dead, he did not suffer his "holy one to see corruption." (Acts xiii. 37.)

Now had the Jews admitted fully all that Paul had told them, they were obviously as far as ever from believing that Jesus was the supreme God; the Apostle knew that this must be the case, and yet he is willing to leave them in this state of mind. He not only does not tell them of our Saviour's undivided divinity; but all he does say is adapted to confirm them in the opposite belief. It is then certain, either that the inspired apostle did not believe that Jesus was God, or that he did not consider it profitable to state it to his hearers. If you choose the former alternative, you will of course adopt his opinions, if you prefer the latter, we may ask why many Christian ministers are now reviled and denounced for not preaching a doctrine which Paul did not think profitable?

As the same remarks may be applied to all his preaching to the Jews, we will next examine his mode of addressing Gentiles, or Heathens. He had been preaching to the Jews in Athens, (Acts xvii.) when his doctrines excited the attention and curiosity of some philosophers of that city. We notice a curious mistake of these idolaters. They heard Paul preaching to the Jews, and some of them supposed that he was proclaiming two new deities, "because he preached Jesus, and the resurrection." (Acts xvii. 18, 19.) To gratify their love of novelty, they conducted him to Mars Hill, saying, "May we know what this new doctrine is, whereof thou speakest?" He then proceeds to give them a full development of Christian truth. Indeed, no faithful minister of the gospel could have neglected an opportunity so favorable. We may remark that his reasoning differs considerably from that which he thought proper to address to the Jews. He could not prove to these Heathens, from the scriptures, that Jesus was the Messiah whom God was to sanctify and send into the world; for they knew nothing of the scriptures, nor of the one God whom they revealed. He was obliged to address them on principles of natural religion. He even quotes one of their own poets to support his argument, (Acts xvii. 28.) "for we are also his offspring."

Having proved the existence of one Eternal God, Creator, Ruler, Father of the Universe, he proceeds to make a moral use of this great truth. He proclaims the certain judgment of a future life, as confirmed by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. He does not tell these idolaters that the Supreme Deity, whose existence he has been proving, assumed a human form, and came into the world to be its Redeemer, Sovereign and Judge. No, his doctrine is as different as possible from this; he tells them that God overlooked the conduct of men when in darkness and ignorance, (v. 30, 31,) but now commandeth all men every where to repent, because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance, inasmuch as he hath raised him from the dead."

This discourse on Mars' Hill must be considered as exhibiting Paul's views of the impor-

tant doctrines of Christianity, because it was delivered to the Athenians at their express request for full information. And he could not fail of giving them this information without gross unfaithfulness to the cause, for which he was ever ready to encounter peril, suffering, and death. We shall see what he really taught on this occasion, and how perfectly it accords with Unitarian preaching. He enforced the following great practical truths. 1. That there is one, only true God, Creator and Ruler of all things. 2d. That this God now calls all men everywhere to repentance (or reformation,) because, 3d. There is a future life of retribution, and God has appointed a day of judgment for the world. 4th. He has ordained a man, and given him power and wisdom to judge in righteousness, or justice. And, 5th. He has raised this agent from the dead, to prove beyond a doubt, that he had a divine commission. These five propositions embody the whole substance of the Apostle's sermon to the Athenians. The doctrine is pure Unitarianism. It is obviously impossible that his hearers could have inferred from this discourse that Jesus, whom God had ordained, and whom he had raised from the dead, was that God himself. The same remark may be applied to every instance of his preaching as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. The whole tenor of his discourse is to give glory to Jesus Christ as one whom "God hath highly exalted," but not an intimation is given, that he believed him to be God himself.

The only apparent exception to this remark is found in Acts xx. 28. "Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." There is a mistake in the common version. By recurring to Greisbach's Greek Testament, which is received as the best authority both by Trinitarians and Unitarians, it will be seen that the word *God* is not found in the original;—it should read, "to feed the church of the Lord," a common appellation of our Saviour as "head of the church."

It may perhaps be said, that as we have only a part of Paul's preaching handed down to us, we are not authorised to infer with certainty that he was a Unitarian preacher. To this we may answer, we can judge of his sentiments only by what we have. What is lost can prove no thing. This is believed to be fair reasoning. We gather the opinions of Dwight or Backminster from what remains of their discourses. Our Trinitarian brethren call every preacher a Unitarian, if he do not distinctly avow his belief in the supreme, undivided divinity of Jesus Christ. They will not allow that any faithful minister could omit this doctrine in an exhibition of Christian truth. We reason in the same way in this case. We have shown several occasions in which the inspired Apostle would have felt himself obliged to declare that Jesus was the living God, had he believed him to be so. We appeal to his own powerful and impassioned descriptions of our Saviour, when it was his object to exalt him in the estimation of his hearers. He professes to declare the whole counsel of God, to fully explain the character and office of Jesus; yet his highest praise is, that he is the Messiah, "whom God hath appointed to judge the world in righteousness—whom he hath raised from the dead—made him sit at his right hand, and crowned him with glory and honor." Now, how is this reserve to be accounted for? If he did not preach Christ's supreme divinity to Jews, who had never thought of him as God, nor to Gentiles, who had never thought of him at all, to whom should he have preached it? To whom should it ever be preached, if so many different times and occasions could not call it forth from this bold and powerful champion of the cross?

It is to God, the Father of the Universe, and to him only, that the Apostle ascribes supreme and undivided divinity. It is the reflected lustre of this divinity that shines in the face of his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased. The Father reigns on the throne of the universe, unrivalled, and alone, and from this eternal and fathomless fountain emanations of light, and wisdom, and power have descended, "without measure" upon this chosen representative; so that in him "dwells the fullness of the divinity."

II. Having shown that Paul was a Unitarian in his preaching, we have reason for supposing that he was so in his writings. To prove this it will be necessary to take a brief notice of each Epistle. It will not be denied that this is a work of some difficulty; for even Peter says there are things in his brother Paul's writings, hard to be understood. The plain unequivocal proofs, however, that he was a Unitarian, are so very numerous, that the chief difficulty consists in making such a selection as can be reduced within proper limits.

In the second chapter of Romans, we find the following passage. "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, by Jesus Christ." (Rom. ii. 16.) The Apostle here refers all judgment to God, through the agency of his Son. Compare this testimony, with that of our Saviour himself—"the Father judgeth no man but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." (John v. 22.) If God hath committed all judgment to the Son, it is obvious that the Son himself had not eternal and undivided power of judging—therefore he is not the Omnipotent God—"God has given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man." (John v. 27.)

"Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him, for in that he died, he died unto sin only; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God." (Rom. vi. 9, 10.) The Apostle here wishes to inspire confidence in the Saviour by showing that his life and divine commission are beyond the

power of death; "because he liveth unto God"—because his life is devoted to the purposes of God, or is sustained by the power of God. He could not have used this argument, if he had believed Christ to be the ever-living, self-existent God; for it plainly denies his self-existence. He would have said death hath no dominion over him, because he is Jehovah, who cannot die. Compare this with our Saviour's own assertion, "as the Father has life in himself, so he hath given to the Son to have life in himself." (John v. 26.) If this assertion does not mean that God only is self-existent, and Christ derived his being from God, I see not that any explanation of it can be given. But it is not from a few texts only that Paul is proved to have written to the Romans as a Unitarian; evidence of the fact presents itself on every page of this Epistle. Such expressions as the following need no comment. "I thank my God through Jesus Christ," (Rom. i. 8.) "Christ Jesus whom God hath set forth," iii. 25. "We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," v. 1. "The grace of God . . . which is by one man, Jesus Christ," v. 15. "Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father," vi. 4. "Alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord," vi. 11. "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord," vi. 23. "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord," vii. 25. "God sending his own Son," &c. viii. 3. "He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies," viii. 11. "We are . . . heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ," viii. 17. "Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God," viii. 34. "That ye may . . . glorify God even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," xv. 6. "To God only wise be glory through Jesus Christ for ever," xvi. 27.

In the Epistles to the Corinthians, we find the following testimonies. "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who, of God, is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." (1 Cor. i. 30.) "And ye are Christ's and Christ is God's" iii. 22. "And God hath both raised up the Lord" [Jesus] "and will also raise us up at the last day by his own power," vi. 14. Is it possible that St. Paul could have made these assertions, if he had believed Christ to be the omnipotent God? Here are three propositions, all false unless he is a dependent being.

1. God made him wisdom, &c.—therefore these are not inherent attributes. 2. Christ belongs to God, he is his subject,—his property—therefore not himself supreme. 3. God raised him from the dead by his own power, in the same manner as he will raise us—therefore Jesus is dependent on God for life, itself.

If further testimonies were needed, we might quote many such passages as the following. "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. i. 4.) "The head of man is Christ, and the head of Christ is God," xi. 3. "We have testified of God that he raised up Christ," xv. 15. "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. i. 3.) "Thanks be unto God, which always causes us to triumph in Christ," ii. 14. All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ," v. 18. "Though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God," xiii. 4. Such is the apostle's usual manner of distinguishing between God and Jesus Christ. The following passage is important in this enquiry on two accounts. "And there is none other God but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or on earth, (as there be gods many and Lords many;) but unto us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." (1 Cor. viii. 4, 5, 6.) This shows that the term God is applied to beings inferior to Jehovah. But this is not all. If language has any meaning, it proves that God is one being, and Jesus Christ another being distinct from him. It also asserts that we are to regard God as the ultimate source, from whom all things flow; and Jesus Christ as the agent or channel of his favor, through whom all things flow.

The next passage which I shall quote is absolutely decisive of this question. "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power; for he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. . . . But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he [God] is excepted, who did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto Him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." This can scarcely require a comment. Here are two plain direct assertions, each sufficient to prove that Paul regarded our Saviour as a subordinate agent. 1. God put all things under him—that is, Jesus acted with delegated power. 2. The time is coming when he is to give up this delegated power. I am not aware of any argument which can render it credible, that the apostle should apply this language to Jehovah, "whose dominion endureth for ever." Let the Trinitarian seriously ask himself if he is not in a great error? If Jesus is the Almighty God, does he believe that he will ever give up his power and become a subject?

[To be continued in our next.]