

Contributions.

The Commission vs. Denominationalism.

V.

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The analysis of the commission, given in a former number, was for the purpose of presenting the logical arrangement and order of its general divisions, rather than a view of all the truths vital to the plan of salvation which it enforces. A fuller presentation of these will now be necessary, as we place in contrast the divine teachings of the commission with the human teachings and practice of the creeds.

The foundation truth of the gospel is the divinity of Jesus of Nazareth. When Peter, in that memorable confession, answered: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," Jesus accepted it, with the statement that, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven, . . . and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." This sublime truth is emphasized in the commission by our Lord, as has been shown, and by the apostles throughout their preaching and writings, as the centre truth of the Christian system. It is important, therefore;

1. That Jesus of Nazareth, who was condemned by the highest court of the Jews as worthy of death, because, when placed under oath, he affirmed that he was "the Son of God," should be clearly identified as the one of whom the Holy Spirit declared, on the day of Pentecost, "that God hath made him both Lord and Christ;" and in whose name forgiveness of sins is preached to men. Let us see with what carefulness and clearness this identity is proved. The person who was known to be Jesus of Nazareth, and was tried before the high priest and before Pilate, did, on oath, declare before the court of the high priest, that he was "the Son of God" (Matt. xxvi. 63, 64). That same person was, by the authority of Pilate, crucified (John xix. 15, 16), and Pilate identified him on the cross by the title which he wrote and placed over him: "JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS" (J. xix. 19). Also, the chief priests, scribes and elders identified him, saying, "He trusted in God, for he said, I am the Son of God" (Matt. xxvii. 41-43). Furthermore, he was watched by a Roman guard till he died (Matt. xxvii. 54), and then his body was given to Joseph, an "honorable counsellor, a good man, and a righteous," for burial, by personal permission of Pilate (Matt. xxvii. 57, 58). Again, it is stated that Nicodemus, "a ruler of the Jews," assisted Joseph in the burial (J. xix. 39). It is also carefully stated that the tomb, in which they placed the body, belonged to Joseph, was new, and was one "wherein never man before was laid." They made the tomb secure by rolling "a great stone to the door of the sepulchre" (Matt. xxvii. 60). But, to make it secure against any possible fraud, the tomb was sealed and a guard stationed to watch it, by the authority of Pilate and desire of Christ's enemies (Matt. xxvii. 62-66.) When the third day dawned upon that tomb it was empty. No, the linen cloths and the napkin, fully identified, were lying there. No human hand opened that tomb. The Roman guard were true to their charge till overawed by a Divine power. They bore testimony to the appearance of the Angel and the resurrection of him whom they had guarded in the tomb (Matt. xxviii. 2-4, 11-13). The angels bear strong testi-

mony, and identify him thus: "Ye seek Jesus the Nazarene, who hath been crucified: he is risen: he is not here: behold the place where they laid him" (Mk. xvi. 6). But the personal appearance of Jesus to Mary, who knew him perfectly, and to whom he showed "his hands and his side," and was known by "many proofs, appearing unto them by the space of forty days," etc., up to the time "he was taken up," and was then identified by the affirmation of the angels: "This Jesus, who was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner," etc., place his identity on earth beyond a question. One link more in this chain of evidence is needed, and this is furnished by the testimony of the Holy Spirit, when he announced, through the apostle, that "Jesus of Nazareth" was "by the right hand of God exalted," and that "He hath poured forth this, which ye see and here," and, "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified" (Acts ii). Thus, from the court of trial to the cross, and from the cross to the resurrection, ascension and the throne, the identification rest upon the clearest divine proof and authority, that he who said, "I am the Son of God," when put under oath, is now both Lord and Christ.

2. It is proper that we give attention to the meaning of our Lord's language, the sense in which he used the language "Son of God." Did he affirm his deity? or was it a mere play on words? There can be no middle meaning given to the claim of Jesus. He either meant that he was divine, as the Father is divine; or, he intended to deceive, and was the merest impostor. But this cannot be admitted, nor has it ever been shown, even by his enemies. Nay, the testimony of infidels themselves rejects such an imputation. They admit his honesty and purity of life. RENAN said: "Whatever may be the surprises of the future, Jesus will never be surpassed. His worship will grow young without ceasing: his legend will call forth tears without end; his sufferings will melt the noblest hearts; all ages will pronounce that among the sons of men there is none born greater than Jesus." And STRAUSS said: "He remains the highest model of religion within the reach of our thought, and no perfect piety is possible without his presence in the heart." And ROUSSEAU said: "Where is the man, where the philosopher, who could so live and so die, without weakness, and without ostentation."

Jesus claimed to be equal with the Father. (1) And so the Jews understood his claim, as is thus stated: "For this cause, therefore, the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only broke the Sabbath, but also called God his own Father, making himself equal with God" (John v. 18). Again they said: "We have the law, and by that law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God" (chap. xix. 7). The same was expressed by them while he hung upon the cross; said they, "If thou art the Son of God, come down from the cross." "He trusteth on God; let him deliver him now, if he desireth him; for he said, I am the Son of God" (Matt. xxvii. 40, 43). Now, let it be remembered that Jesus never, at any time or in any way, corrected the Jews as to their view of his meaning, or even intimated that they misunderstood his meaning. If they did not understand him to claim equality with God, then their charge of "blasphemy" was most inconsistent. But they said, "Because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God" (John x. 33). (2) The affirmation of Jesus, "I and my Father are

one," is in harmony with the statement of John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (J. i. 1). Here, too, his pre-existence is affirmed, which he, himself, clearly expressed to the Jews, when he replied, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was born I am." And long before his appearance on earth the prophet spoke of him, as the one "to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah v. 2). When "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us," John said of him, "This was he of whom I said, He that cometh after me is become before me, for he was before me." Clearly Jesus affirmed his pre-existence in his prayer, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine ownself with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was" (J. xvii. 5). And to this the apostle testifies, that "Christ Jesus, who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant," etc. (Phil. ii. 5, 6.)

Once more let us have the Holy Spirit's testimony through this apostle—in Col. i. 15-17—"Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things have been created through him, and unto him; and he is before all things, and in him all things consist." Much more could be produced from the sacred page, in the clearest proof of the pre-existence and deity of Jesus Christ; but let this suffice.

3. And now, I submit, that it would be strange, indeed, that any man, or set of men, should attempt to subvert this divine truth which lies at the foundation of man's salvation from sin and hope of eternal life; for, "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Has such madness been attempted? Let the following declarations and insipid reasonings of Socinianism answer. I quote from the Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge and from Unitarian Authors. (1) On the question of the pre-existence of Jesus Christ, Elliot says: "Upon one point of considerable importance, Unitarian believers are divided in opinion, some of them, among whom are included a majority of English Unitarians, believe that the existence of Christ began when He was born at Bethlehem of Judæa" (Doc. of Church, pg. 42, Italics mine). "Their sentiments are that the Son had no existence whatsoever, before he was conceived by the Virgin Mary." (Ency. Relig. Kno., pg. 1085). (2) The two distinct natures, divine and human, declared, John i. 1, 14, and by Christ Himself when he said to the Jews: "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up," is opposed thus: "We find no passage in the Bible, and there is none, in which it is taught that our Saviour had two natures, one human and one divine" (Elliot, pg. 50). The oneness of Christ with His Father is thus opposed. "Trinitarianism teaches that Jesus Christ is the supreme and infinite God . . . one and the same being. Now, to us this doctrine is most unscriptural and irrational" (Channing's complete works, pg. 321). "They confess that Christ is called God in the Holy Scriptures; but contend that it is only a deputed title, investing Him with great authority; and that while He is nominally God, He is really nothing more than a mere man" (Ency. R. K.).

Andrews Norton, in his notes on John, v. 27, 28, says: "The meaning is, do not marvel that I, though only a man, claim such connection with God, or that I claim to be charged with such a ministry by Him" (Statement of Reasons, pg. 267). Commenting on John, i. 1, the same writer says: "'The Logos,' he says, 'was God,' that is, the Supreme Being . . . the passage itself affords, perhaps, sufficient reasons for believing that the Evangelist did not intend to speak of an hypostatized Logos" ("The Logos . . . conceived of as a proper person," pg. 313) (Stat. of R. 319). It is then of the attributes of God as displayed in creation and government of the world, that St. John speaks under the name of Logos" (Ib. 322). Again he says: "I shall adopt the term 'power of God.' Adopting this term, we may say that the power of God personified, is the subject of the introductory verses of His gospel." St. John then says: "In the beginning was the power of God, and the power of God was with God, and the power of God was God" (Ib. 323, 324). Just so! Let the reader judge, in the light of God's Word, "what is truth." We war not against men, but their human systems, that dishonor God and bind men with error's chain.

The Storm on Colpo's Bay, July 27th, 1892.

PETER ANDERSON.

Through the long summer afternoon
Low muttering thunder shook the North,
But yet no storm-cloud had come forth,
No winds were walling out of tune.

The bay lay calm and peaceful there,
And "slumbered like an unweaned child,"
No premonition strange or wild
Appeared on water, earth or air.

But on the far horizon's rim
Clouds are arising, black as ink;
And see the sun behind them sink,
And all the earth grow hushed and dim.

Nature seems dazed by strange alarms,
And standing still in her affright,
Seems waiting for the falling night
To fold her in its sheltering arms.

And now the sombre clouds have spread
Afar, o'er all the Northern sky,
And onward still their streamers fly
In mad confusion overhead.

While through the hush on bay and shore—
And far the flying clouds behind—
We hear the onward-rushing wind
Approaching with its sullen roar.

And sheets of mingled rain and spray
Whitened by flakes of fleecy foam,
Before the furious cyclone come
Adown the ever darkening bay.

And see yon boat before it fly,
God pity now its helpless crew,
When human hands can nothing do
But struggle desperately—and die.

One moment, and the sail is lost
Within that hell of hissing spray,
Which, blotting out the dying day,
Comes rushing down upon the coast.

Where now is yonder struggling sail?
The solid shores that impact feel,
And cowering, seem to rock and reel
Before the fury of the gale.

O, with that crew how has it sped,
And where are now those living men?
Their friends may see their forms
Again
When seas have given up their dead.

O treacherous, lapping, liquid lips,
That softly kiss the pebbled shore,
How soon, with demoniac roar
You swallow down the freighted ships.

Is it from you we slake our thirst?
In you our wearied limbs we lave,
So soon a slayer and a grave,
A hideous thing, a thing accursed?

O mystic, murmuring waters dread,
Ere half your siren song is sung,
The strain on your inconstant tongue
Turns to a requiem for the dead.

Your wrecks are strewn on every shore,
No land but you have filled with
moans,
And since men were, their bleaching
bones
Whiten on every ocean floor.

O, lay the ones beloved by me
Where spring shall clothe in green
the bowers,
And cover every mound with flowers,
But not beneath the heaving sea.
Hepworth, Ont.

Creed, Character, Dogma, and Deed.

In our sister city of Brooklyn, in a church known the world over, a Western minister recently referred to the Christian Endeavor movement as one of the means that are changing the thought of the Church from creed to character and from dogma to deed. That may be alliterative, but there is an air of absurdity about it, because if the Church is to take her thought away from creed and dogma, she will very soon be devoid of character and minus any good deeds. The church might as well talk of giving up thinking about faith for awhile and giving attention to works. We cannot have works apart from faith. We cannot have deeds of value without dogmas, nor can we have sterling character without creed. For a few years past there has been abroad a movement to exalt character at the expense of creed and to lift up deed at the expense of dogma; but this is owing to the one-sidedness of the human mind, which fails to take in the complete view of truth. It is so engrossed with the full corn in the ear and the beauty of it that it proposes to dispense with the more practical stalk. Or it is so taken up with the fruitage of the tree that it proposes to dispense with the root. It is ever well that the Church's creed should ripen into character and her dogma into deed. Without works faith is dead, and in too many experiences there is little else than a name to live. But we object to seeing these set off one against the other as though Creed and Dogma were great Philistines, which the little Davids of Character and Deed were about to engage and with their stones from the brook to lay low in humiliation and death. These are not contending forces but intimately related qualities. Creed scarce deserves the name till it has blossomed into character, and dogma will be of little worth till it has fruited into deed. It is true, too, as indeed we have already intimated, that dogma and creed are at times made to take the place of deed and character. Too many persons are content to possess a clear-cut creed which fences off the border lines of truth to a nicety, but ploughs no fields, sows no seed, and reaps no harvest. Such faith, however clear, is not vital, for faith that bringeth not forth works is dead, it abideth alone. The essential connection between faith and works is too vividly set forth by Christ in the parable of the judgment of the sheep and the goats to be forgotten or in the slightest degree ignored—*New York Observer*.

"There's a wideness in God's mercy,
Like the wideness of the sea.
There is kindness in His justice
That is more than liberty:
For the love of God is broader
Than the measure of man's mind,
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind."
(Luke vi. 35.)

"The right word is always a power,
and communicates its definiteness to
our power.—GEORGE ELIOT.

"TELL me of Jesus, is the cry of the
world in sin to the world of redemption."
—*Mershon*.