

POETRY.

"LET THERE BE LIGHT."

God said, "Let, there be light!"  
 Grim darkness felt his might,  
 And fled away;  
 Then startled seas, and mountains cold,  
 Shone forth all bright in blue and gold,  
 And cried, "'Tis day, 'tis day!"

"Hail, holy light!" exclaimed  
 The thunderous cloud that flamed  
 O'er daisies' white;  
 And lo! this rose, in crimson dress'd  
 Leaned sweetly o'er the lily's breast,  
 And blushing murmur'd "Light!"

Then was the sky-lark born,  
 Then rose the embattled corn—  
 Then floods of praise  
 Flow'd o'er the sunny hills of noon;  
 And then, in stillest night the moon  
 Poured forth her pensive lays;  
 Lo! heaven's bright bow is glad!  
 Lo! trees and flowers all clad  
 In glory, bloom.

And shall the immortal sons of God  
 Be senseless as the untrodden clod,  
 And darker than the tomb?  
 No, by the mind of man!  
 By the stout artizan!  
 By God, our sire!  
 Our souls have holy light within,  
 And every form of grief and sin  
 Shall see and feel its fire.

By earth, and hell, and heaven,  
 The shroud of souls is riven!  
 Mind, mind alone  
 Is light, and hope, and life, and power.  
 Earth's deepest night, from this blessed hour,  
 The night of mind, is gone.

UNITARIANISM

THE DOCTRINE OF  
 OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

My present design is to give an outline of the evidence which proves that Unitarianism was the doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ. In doing so, I shall appeal to our Saviour's own words, as recorded in the pages of the Evangelist. But while, for this purpose, I shall constantly refer to the statements contained in the four Gospels, I wish it to be understood, that the subject of the present address does not require, nor indeed would it admit of, my taking notice of any things which are recorded in the Gospels, except the discourses and conversations of our Lord. I mention this, to prevent any disappointment being felt at my omission of several points which, were my subject more comprehensive than it is, it would be wrong to pass over without remark.

I shall make only one more preliminary observation. I would call your attention to the great importance of the argument which is now to be considered. Some may think—and indeed, it has been said, that even though it were granted, that Unitarianism was the faith of the Old Testament times, still this would not prove our doctrine to be true; for that we live under another dispensation of religion; and the doctrine of the Trinity may be one of the points of difference between the Mosaic and the Christian systems. The soundness of this reasoning I do not admit; and I am of opinion, that with regard to the great article of the Unity of God, we live under no new dispensation. (See Mark xii. 28—34.) But this point, I stop not now to canvass more minutely. I would merely remark, that whatever may be thought of the relevancy of these points, there can be no question of the great importance of that which is now to engage our attention: for, I think, there is no reflecting Christian in the world who will not admit, that, if I succeed in demonstrating, that the faith which was taught by our Saviour was a pure Unitarian faith, I shall have laid a sufficient ground for appealing to every man, who desires to be a disciple of Christ, to maintain and profess the same doctrine. Such being the great authority and influence which this is entitled to exercise upon the mind and faith of us all, I earnestly call upon, both those who agree with me, and those who differ from me at present, to dismiss, as far as possible, from their minds, all preconceived opinions,—all prepossessions and prejudices,—all selfish and partial affections,—and to listen to the words of the Saviour with a pure and single desire to learn,—to embrace, to profess, and to obey the truth, as it is in Christ Jesus. And may Almighty God give to each one understanding to discern—candor to avow, and integrity to maintain,—the pure and holy doctrine which the Captain of our salvation came into this world to reveal, and died to confirm.

The main point to be considered is this,—did our Saviour, either in his private instructions or public discourses, inculcate the doctrine of the Trinity; or did he teach and preach the simple Unity of the Most High? Did he proclaim, that in the Godhead, there are three distinct persons, exactly equal to one another in power, wisdom, and eternity; in majesty and in glory, and in all divine perfections? Did he farther declare, that those three distinct persons are nevertheless but one Being, so that while each of them, separately considered, is truly and properly God supreme, yet there are not three Gods, but only one God? Or did he teach, as Unitarians believe he did, and as they believe that all Scripture and all nature teaches,—that there is

but One God, the Father? This is the question now to be determined; and to its examination I shall immediately proceed without farther preface—appealing, as my plan requires, to our Lord's own words exclusively.

1. And it does appear to me, that the language and conduct of our Great Master, on a great variety of occasions, shew most clearly—I was about to say, beyond all dispute or doubt—that he maintained the same strict views of the Unity of God, which were propounded in the Old Testament,—which were universally entertained by his countrymen at the time of his appearance, and which are professed by their descendants down to the present day;—those, namely of pure Unitarianism. For example, very soon after the descent of the Holy Spirit upon him, he had occasion to repress an instigation to idolatry, by which he was assailed during the scene of his temptation in the wilderness. And in what manner did he do so? By quoting an injunction contained in the books of the Old Testament,—“Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God,” or rather, as in the original, *Jehovah, thy God*: “and him only shalt thou serve.” But this text would not have been of any authority, if Jesus knew that two other divine persons were as well entitled to religious homage as the great Being to whom, and to whom only, it is here declared to be due. In this case, the commandment given to the Jews, respecting the object of supreme adoration, would have been abolished, and a different one, adapted to the new revelation, ought to have been substituted in its stead. The same point is most convincingly established by the conversation recorded by Mark, xii. 28—34. The Scribe, who appears to have been a man of sound understanding, desirous, as it would appear of testing our Saviour's fitness for the office of a public teacher, asking him,—“Which is the first commandment of all?” Here, then, was a fair opportunity, and, indeed, an open challenge, to declare any change that our Lord was authorized to make in the doctrine held by the Jewish nation touching the One God. Had our Lord known, that henceforth the one person of Jehovah was no longer to be worshipped in the true Church, he was bound, in common honesty, to declare it. But, instead of announcing any change in the generally-received doctrine, or in the worship founded upon it, our Lord quoted, for his sole answer, an explicit scriptural assertion of the Unity, and the commandment built upon it. “The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel! the Lord our God is One Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.” On this point, there was no dispute between the Scribe and the Saviour,—no difference between the Law and the Gospel; for the Scribe admitted the correctness of our Lord's reply; and Jesus approved the wisdom of his observations, and declared he was “not far from the kingdom of God.”

To the same effect I might quote many other passages; but for brevity, I pass on to another topic. I proceed, then, to observe, that, even if we leave out of account the connexion between the old and the new dispensation, our Lord's own teachings would have been sufficient to inculcate the doctrine of the strict unity of the Supreme Being. On different occasions he asserted it in express terms. He said to the disciples, “One is your Father who is in heaven,” (Matt. xxiii. 9.) no mention here of any but one. “None is good but One; that is God,” (Mark x. 18. Luke xvi. 16.) He here tells us that God is One. Had he been commissioned to reveal that God was Three, or Three in One, I cannot but believe he would have been equally explicit in declaring the important fact; nay much more so; for it would have stood much more in need of illustration and proof. This One God he declares over and over to be “THE FATHER;” that is the name by which he loved to distinguish the great object of worship and veneration. With that glorious Being he never associates any co-equals in partnership of Deity. On the contrary, he affirms that the Father is the Only True God: “This is life eternal, that they might know thee THE ONLY TRUE God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent,” (John xvii. 3.) He addresses the Father as the Lord of Heaven and Earth,” (Luke x. 21,) a title which he never applied to any other person or substance but the Father alone. He elsewhere declares that THE FATHER is greater than all,” (John x. 38.) It is remarkable that our Saviour, throughout the whole course of his ministry, continually spoke of God and of his Father, and always in such a manner as shewed that he meant by the two terms, exactly the same thing. Of this I may give one example.—“The true worshippers shall worship the FATHER in spirit and in truth; for the FATHER seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” The two names are perpetually interchanged in this manner; but there is no other person, besides the Father, whose name is thus employed as a substitute or equivalent for that of God. And yet we are told that two other persons are equally with the Father included under this latter title, equally entitled to bear it, and that the main object of our Saviour's coming upon earth was to reveal a knowledge of this co-equal and co-ordinate Trinity to mankind! If this were the case, how does it happen that our Lord seems to take every opportunity of implying and asserting the sole supremacy of the Father, the One Divine Person, whose Godhead no one disputed; while he never, upon any one occasion, asserted the co-equal Deity of the Son and Holy Ghost, two divine persons of whose Deity none

of his hearers had ever dreamt; and the more especially as we are assured that this is a glorious doctrine, a saving truth, may, a truth without which there can be no salvation. Is it thus, I ask, that any orthodox Trinitarian minister would preach the Trinity to a nation of Unitarians? Is it thus that such persons do preach the Gospel in any Unitarian families to which they gain admission? I allude to their conduct in this respect, as a fact neither for the purpose of censure nor of approbation. It is to be hoped they are conscientious in their motives; but I trust they will admit that our Blessed Saviour was neither less zealous for the truth, nor less honest in its avowal, than themselves. Yet either he or they must be wrong; for, as I have shown, they proceed upon plans totally distinct. They are perpetually insisting upon the Trinity; he never insisted upon it at all.

2. I must pass over many passages which might be selected for examples under this head, and proceed to the second point which it is necessary to consider in illustrating what our Lord taught on the subject; I mean his doctrine concerning himself. Did he ever declare that he possessed, in one person two distinct natures united,—the human and the divine; that he was truly God, in all respects equal to the Father, possessed of eternal duration, almighty power, omniscient wisdom, unbounded goodness, and the infinity of all the divine perfections; while at the same time, he was also properly a man, subject to all the wants and imperfections of humanity, sin only excepted? This is the commonly received doctrine. But did our Saviour himself teach this? If so, I confess I cannot find it in any of his discourses. On the contrary, I find that throughout all his instructions, our Lord ever most distinctly recognised his own dependence upon a superior power; and, far from tracing his gifts to his own inherent authority, he uniformly referred them to the will and appointment of the Father alone.

With a declaration of this kind he opened his public ministry. He commenced it by reading to the people assembled in the synagogue of Nazareth, where he had been brought up from his youth, and by applying to himself the words of the prophet Isaiah:—“The spirit of JEHOVAH is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor: he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted; to announce deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord,” (Luke iv. 18.) compare Isaiah xi. 1, words which are most beautifully descriptive of the character and office of Jesus, as a person endowed with the spirit of God; as the Christ, or the anointed one; as a messenger sent forth to proclaim glad tidings in his name, but which are utterly unsuitable to describe one who was himself the source of every endowment, and could not possibly be the delegate of any higher power. Our Saviour, therefore, began his preaching with a text and a discourse most distinctly Unitarian; for it is exactly in this manner that we are accustomed to speak of him in our ordinary ministrations.

In fulfillment of the commission thus announced, Jesus travelled from place to place through Galilee, Judea, and the neighboring countries; every where giving evidence, by the mighty miracles which he wrought, that the spirit of the Lord was actually upon him. The merit of these wonderful works he never once assumed to himself. On the contrary, he repeatedly declared that “the works which he did were works that his FATHER had given him to finish,” (John v. 36,) that “THE FATHER, who dwelt in him, himself performed the works,” (John x. 30.) A strange declaration this must appear to those who consider it as proceeding from the lips of the Almighty! On one occasion he expressly thanked the Father for enabling him to work a miracle in answer to his earnest prayer.—“FATHER! I thank thee that thou hast heard me,” (John xi. 41.) I ask my Trinitarian friends to consider, is this an expression such as was to have been expected in accordance with their theory? On the same occasion he intimates that all his miracles were preceded by prayer to God for power.—“I know that thou hearest me always.” Is not this most strange and unaccountable to those who regard him as omnipotent?

He delivered doctrines the most sublime that the world ever heard; but he referred the wisdom by which he spoke to the inspiration of the Father.—“My doctrine,” he said, “is not mine, but his that sent me,” (John viii. 16;) “He that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him,” (John viii. 26;) “Even as THE FATHER hath said unto me, so I speak,” (John xii. 50.) These sentiments are in most exact agreement with the opinions held by us Unitarians; but they must appear somewhat extraordinary to those who suppose that he by whom they were spoken was himself the omniscient source of all wisdom and of all knowledge.

His devotional habits lead us to the same conclusion; for he was much in prayer. In every important emergency of his life, his prayers are expressly recorded: on some occasions we find him withdrawing from the world, and spending whole nights in supplication. This fact alone would disprove the commonly received opinion respecting his Supreme Deity; for why or how could he have prayed, if he had, in his own person, an omnipotent nature, which could, by a word, a thought, accomplish every wish? If the common doctrine be true, he was himself the hearer of prayer, and under necessity of praying to none. But yet we find he prayed—he prayed to the Father: he thereby owned subjection to the Father's power, and testified to his own infe-

rior and dependent nature. But more than this. He prayed in agony, until his sweat was as it were great drops of blood; and in that very prayer, he owned subjection to the Father in express words,—“Not as I will, but as thou wilt,” (Luke xxii. 41—43.) In this hour of distress an angel was sent to comfort him, but the immediate object of the prayer was not fulfilled; for it pleased the wisdom of the Eternal Father that the bitter cup, which he deprecated, should not pass away until he had drained it to the dregs. Could the being who prayed—who prayed to another—who prayed thus fervently—whose prayer was thus refused—could this being be Almighty God? I almost shudder to put these questions; but they are needful to elucidate the truth.

Even more decisively to the point are the instructions which our Lord has given to his disciples on the subject of prayer. He commanded them to address their prayers to God, even the Father. “Pray to thy FATHER who is in secret,” (Matt. vi. 6.) “When ye pray, say,—OUR FATHER who art in heaven,” (Matt. vi. 13.) “The true worshippers shall worship THE FATHER,” (John iv. 23.) “How much more shall your heavenly FATHER give good things to them that ask him,” (Matt. vii. 11.) These instructions are literally complied with by all Unitarian Christians. The worship which the Saviour enjoined is constantly practised in our churches, and in our families our supplications are addressed to THE FATHER; and we humbly trust, that we address them to him in spirit and in truth. The worship, therefore, which the Saviour recommended is a pure Unitarian worship. He even went farther, for he expressly disclaims being the hearer of prayer. “In that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it to you,” (John xvi. 23—26.) How can this be reconciled with the idea, that Christ is God, equal with the Father?

He expressly disclaimed all thought of equality with God. The Jews on one occasion, falsely,—and to all appearance, maliciously—accused him of making himself God, or rather a God, (John x. 33.) If he had said so, or if he were so in fact, he was bound to avow and justify his claim. But did he do so? No; but, on the contrary, he shewed that the accusation was false. He shewed that he had not asserted any such character. He produced, from the Old Testament, a much stronger expression than that which he had employed; and he proved, that the charge was groundless. “Jesus said it is written in your law, ‘I have said ye are Gods.’ If then, he (that is, the psalmist) called them Gods unto whom the word of God came, how say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God,” (John x. 34—36.) Surely if the common opinion respecting him had been true, Jesus would not have had recourse to such equivocation as this. On our principles, and, we believe, on the principles held by our Great Master, the reasoning is just, and the exculpation triumphant; but, on the Orthodox hypothesis, I cannot but think, the reply was evasive, not to say deceptive.

On another occasion, Jesus disclaimed divine knowledge in express terms. “Of that day and hour knoweth no man; not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son; but THE FATHER,” (Mark xiii. 32.)

On another occasion, he expressly disclaimed the attribute of divine power. “To sit on my right hand, and on my left hand is not mine to give; but to those for whom it is prepared of my Father,” (Matt. xx. 21—23.)

On another occasion, he expressly disclaimed the attribute of divine goodness. “Why callest thou me good? There is none good but ONE, that is, God,” (Mark x. 17, 18. Luke xviii. 19.)

On another occasion, he directly affirms his own inferiority to the Father. “If ye loved me, ye would rejoice because I go unto the Father; for the Father is greater than I,” (John xiv. 28.)

His customary language plainly asserted and proved his subordination to the Father. He declared, that God his Father had sent him,—had anointed him,—had sanctified him,—had given him his spirit,—had sealed him,—had given him a people out of the world,—had granted him to have life in himself,—and had appointed him to judge the world. With this cursory notice I must pass over all these topics, and the passages of our Lord's discourses in which they are found. I shall only mention one or two points more. He declared that while in this world, “he lived by the Father,” (John vi. 57.) He announced to the disciples before his removal from this earth, that he was about to ascend “to his Father, and to their Father; to his God, and to their God,” (John xx. 17.)

Such is the account which our Saviour himself has given of his mission, power, doctrine, devotion, life, resurrection, and ascension. For my own part I must declare, that I cannot reconcile these numerous, and repeated, and express assertions of inferiority, to any other system of doctrine, except that which as a Unitarian Christian I glory in professing. And where I to attempt to explain them on any other principle, I should feel myself, at every step, contradicting my Saviour's direct affirmations, and virtually impugning either his knowledge or his veracity.

[To be concluded in our next.]