

UNITARIANISM OF THE APOSTLES.
[CONTINUED.]

ST. MATTHEW.
[Concluded.]

It was my second object to show, that even the few passages which are thought by Trinitarians to relate to this subject, have in fact, no relation to it whatever, and are misinterpreted when they are adduced as evidence to the doctrine of the Trinity, or the Deity of Jesus Christ.

The first which occurs, is the text, "Thou shalt call his name Immanuel," &c. The prediction here cited was originally made by the prophet Isaiah. It was accomplished, as many eminent Trinitarian writers maintain, in the days of Ahaz, one of the kings of Israel, and used here by way of accommodation, or in a secondary sense, of the Messiah. The term, Immanuel, is composed of two Hebrew words, meaning *God* and *with us*, i. e. *God helpeth us*. This signifies divine interposition in favor of Ahaz against his foes, an appropriate title for Jesus, but one which is not applied to him any where else in the Bible. The Jews were accustomed to form and apply appellations indicative of God's goodness, and compounded of his name. Thus, Bethel, *house of God*, Lemuel, *God with them*, Elijah, *God the Lord*. If the application of the word Immanuel, *God with us*, to Jesus Christ, proves that he is God, as some hold, it might be argued just as strongly that the application, for instance, of the word Elijah, which means *God the Lord*, to John the Baptist, proved him to be God likewise.

The next is in Matt. ix. 2. "He saith to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee." Hence, Trinitarians infer that Jesus was God; for none can forgive sin but he. To this it is enough to reply, that the authority to forgive sins was as easy and natural a power to be conferred on the Saviour as any other, and proves him to be God no more than does every other exercise of miraculous power. Besides, the apostles had power to forgive sins. To them our Lord said "whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted; whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." Were the apostles, each, God?

Matt. xi. 27. "All things are delivered unto me by my Father; and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whom the Son shall reveal him." If the knowledge which Jesus is here said to have of God implies Omniscience and Deity on his part, the implication is extended, let it be observed, to those to whom the Son shall reveal him—Supreme Deity is ascribed as much to them as to Jesus; that is, it is not to either.

Besides, the first part of this verse, denies the doctrine it is brought to support. "All things are given unto me by my Father." The receiver is not the same as the one who gives, any more than the sender can be the same as the sent.

Matt. xviii. 20. "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them;" and chap. xxviii. 20; "Lo I am with you always, even to the end of the world," are commonly adduced as declaring Christ's Omnipresence and thence his Supreme Deity. It is not easy to reply seriously to argument like this. These passages have not the most distant relation to the subject. Our Lord, in these verses, merely expresses according to a universal license—a beautiful and universal form of language—his interest and affection for his disciples; for the presence of which he speaks, whatever it be, is confined to them. How often do we say to our absent friends, "Though away from you, consider us as present,"—"Our hearts are with you,"—"In spirit we are among you?" Paul says to the Corinthians, writing from Ephesus, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, &c. Had Paul the attribute of Omnipresence? Was Paul God?

Chap. xxviii. 19. "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Since the text of the three heavenly witnesses has been abandoned by the intelligent and honest of all parties, as indisputably a forgery, this is the strong-hold of the doctrine of the Trinity; for, unless I greatly err, it is the only instance save the form of benediction in the Epistles, in which the supposed persons of the Trinity are mentioned together. And how can that doctrine claim our faith or our respect, which is so supported? Is it to be believed, that so tremendous a mystery would have been left at such loose ends by the sacred writers, had they believed it? But, in regard to the text before us, how you ask, does it teach the doctrine of the Trinity? That doctrine teaches, that three Divine and Infinite Beings or Gods, are yet but one; that one God is three. These points, it is most manifest, are not proved by the text. Nothing is said of the equality of the persons named; it is not said that the Holy Ghost is a person; it is not said that they are one and yet three, or three and yet one; all of which ought to be said to warrant the use that orthodoxy makes of it. But if these things are so, in what way is the doctrine of the Trinity derived from it even by inference? Thus, it is said in the first place, that because these three persons (allowing them all to be persons) are named together, they must be equal; and therefore, each God. But this will hardly do; for, in Exod. xiv. 31, it is written, "And the people believed the Lord, and his servant Moses."—Is Moses God? (1 Sam. xii. 18.) "And all the people feared the Lord, and Samuel."—Is Samuel thus proved to be equal to God? (1 Chron. xxix. 20.) And all the congregation blessed the Lord God of their fathers, and bowed down their heads, and worshipped the Lord and the

king.—Are they equal because named together, and, in the Scripture use of the word, worshipped together? Paul says to Timothy, (1 Tim. v. 21.) "I charge you before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that ye observe these things."—Are the angels Gods? Just as mistaken and childish as these inferences would be, is that which Trinitarians make from the verse in question, of the three persons named in it.

But once more, the Deity of Jesus and the doctrine of a Trinity is inferred from this passage, because it is thought that *Baptism* must necessarily be into the name of God, or of a Divine Being equal to him. But not so; for Paul speaks of the Israelites being "baptised into Moses," who certainly was not God, or his equal, though he was called a God to Pharaoh. The same apostle, writing to the Corinthians, says—"Is Christ divided, was Paul crucified for you, or where you baptised into the name of Paul? I thank God I baptised none of you, save Crispus and Gaius, lest any one should say I baptised into my own name." Some, therefore, imagined that Paul might abuse his power, and baptise into his own name. But did they believe Paul to be God? It is therefore, no evidence that the persons named in the text are divine, because baptism is administered in their names.

The true and whole meaning of the verse, is, "go forth and make disciples of all nations, baptising the converts into the belief of that religion which was the gift of God, through his Son Jesus Christ, and which was confirmed by the Holy Spirit, or miraculous powers bestowed on the apostles, on the day of Pentecost." Let it be remembered, in this connection, that no weight was attached to this form by the apostles, though so much is now-a-days; for they never used it, always baptising into the name of Jesus alone. But if they had thought that so solemn and essential a doctrine as the Trinity was contained in those words of the Saviour, they would scarce have felt authorized to depart from them.

Such is the testimony of Matthew to the doctrine of the Trinity.

And is it credible, that such a doctrine should be left to rest on such support? Is it to be believed that an inspired apostle should have written what he doubtless regarded a full account of all the essential peculiarities of the religion of Jesus, and have passed over in such silence, its most remarkable one? Nay, as will be seen should have recorded sayings of our Lord, utterly contradictory of it, which wholly refute and deny it? Which must be expunged from the Gospel, before it can be admitted to be true?

Let me now as was proposed, in the third place, bring forward the direct and indirect evidence of St. Matthew to the unity of God, and the derived power of Jesus Christ.

I shall not pretend to adduce the whole body of proof of this description, since it would be to transcribe the greater part of the Gospel.

Every instance in which the singular pronouns are used in connexion with the name of God, is a proof of his Unity. This universal usage throughout the bible is a demonstration of it. Every instance in which Jesus is spoken of as a man, with human feeling and affection, acting, speaking, suffering, and at last dying as a man, is an argument in behalf of his derived nature. Every prayer which he offered up to God, every reference to him as his God as well as ours, is a complete demonstration of the supremacy of the Father, and the dependence of Jesus: unless we are willing to believe that our Saviour went through the mockery of praying to himself; that one person of the sacred three was obliged to solicit favor and assistance from the others, which he was as able to procure himself, as they to bestow, and which, indeed, an Infinite Being could not need.

Jesus says, chap. iv. 10. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only shalt thou serve." Therefore God is but one; for if Jesus had been God, he must have also been an object of worship as such—xix. 17. Our Saviour says to the young man, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God." Whatever he meant by the term good, our Lord says there is no second being to whom it can be applied in the same sense in which it is applicable to God. Therefore our Saviour did not regard himself as God. It is an explicit denial that he was so. He absolutely refuses a title which he conceived could be used with propriety only in relation to the Supreme God. This marked and instantaneous rejection of a title so modest and humble, shows, I think, a determination to repress, in the beginning, every disposition to bestow upon him extravagant honors, and which the wonderful powers he possessed would be so likely to draw from them. The *sensitiveness*, as it may without impropriety be termed, which our Lord discovers on this occasion, is worth a chapter of direct assertions, in proof of his derived and inferior nature.

I quote but one more text of this class. Chap. xxiv. 36. "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, not the angels of heaven. (In Mark, it is added 'neither the Son') but my Father only." In these words our Saviour plainly and distinctly replies to an earnest and anxious question of his disciples, (verse 3, asking, "when these things shall be,") that "he does not know." The reference of our Lord is to the destruction of Jerusalem. When that was to happen, he says in so many words, he does not know, nor any other being beside the Father Omniscient. By this declaration he disclaims all participation of the Divine nature and mind. He declares that his knowledge is partial and limited. It is a denial, from his own mouth, of his supreme deity, or his equality with God.

I will waste but few words on the mode of reasoning, or trick, I should rather say, by which the true sense of this text and similar ones, is evaded. "Our Saviour did not know the day, as man, though as God he did." This is the Trinitarian argument. It is enough to reply to this, that it involves the blessed Saviour in the grossest prevarication, and therefore it cannot be maintained. The moral character of Jesus is sacrificed. For, the infinite, divine mind in Jesus, must have embraced and included the human; so that the human nature could not by any possibility, know or be ignorant of any thing, but what the divine nature must have participated in it. Therefore, for the Son (including both natures,) to say that he was ignorant of the day of Jerusalem's fall, or of any thing else, indeed, was a plain falsehood.

But our objection to this mode of reasoning on the part of Trinitarians, rests upon a broader ground than this. We say that it entirely sets aside the authority of Jesus, and provides a way of escape from all that he uttered, whether relating to doctrine or morals. For if the devout and sincere Trinitarian is at liberty to explain away and reject the explicit statements of his Master, which do not harmonize with an adopted theory, on the ground that he spoke them as a man, and therefore they are not binding; the undevout man of the world may resist and shake off the morality of the Gospel, and the great sanction of future punishment, on the ground that, in his opinion, it was all uttered as man, and therefore is without authority. And we are all at liberty to select such doctrines and such moral precepts as are agreeable to us, and say of the rest, "Oh, it was spoken as man, and we have nothing to do with it."

For myself, therefore, I shall always hold that, as unanswered and unanswerable, the force of which can only be evaded by a resort to that wretched subterfuge, that unauthorized and unscriptural dogma, the double nature of Christ; fatal alike to the moral character of the Saviour, and to the whole authority of his religion.

Before concluding, I will refer to a few passages which are wholly inexplicable on the Trinitarian hypothesis, except on the ground of the two natures of Christ, which is to be considered in the light of a mere evasion of the difficulty, and only to encounter far more formidable ones.

I name first the account given by the evangelist, of the temptation of Christ. This I maintain, is intelligible only on the supposition that Jesus was actually what he appeared to be. It opens thus: "Then was Jesus led up by the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the Devil." "That is," says the Trinitarian, "then was Jesus, i. e. God the Son, led up by the Spirit, i. e. God the Holy Ghost, to be tempted—of the Devil." What inextricable confusion, what impossibilities are here! Can God be tempted? And by the Prince of evil? And yet all this can be avoided only by that dangerous resort, which overthrows Christianity itself—the double nature of Christ.

Again. We read in the 26th chapter of this Gospel of the agony in the garden, during which our Saviour utters this prayer: "O, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." Was the being who put up this petition in so much agony, the Almighty God? And to whom then was the prayer preferred? And how could it be necessary? Was God subject to weakness and want, to infirmity and fear? And if so, what higher power was there to succor?

Again, "And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me? And when he had cried again with a loud voice, he yielded up the ghost."

The questions which arise on this verse, but which I will not state, for they are truly shocking, can be answered only by the aid of the twofold nature of Christ, and must be always regarded, therefore, as unanswered.

Although the testimony from this Gospel, both direct and indirect, in behalf of the Unity of God, and the derived power of Jesus Christ, is far from exhausted, yet I feel warned to bring these remarks to a close.

In the statements which have been made, many may think that I have been too minute, and have dwelt too long and earnestly on points already sufficiently obvious and plain. This may be so. I hope every one who calls himself a Unitarian, has often revolved the arguments which have now been offered, in his mind, and has long felt their force. But we do not make these statements over and over again so much in the hope of pouring new knowledge into the minds of those who have diligently studied the principles of their faith, and feel, and know the adamant foundation on which they rest, as with a view of catching the eye of some who may not as yet have given their thoughts to the subject, but who may be willing to attend to it with dispassionate and honest minds; and with more especial reference, also, to those who nominally embrace our views, but who are but slightly acquainted with the grounds and reasons of them. For it cannot be denied, that there are not a few of those who think themselves and call themselves Unitarians, who are woefully ignorant of the worth and strength of that faith which they profess, and for whom, if they could be persuaded to read and study, scarce any statements or discussions could be too plain and elementary. These have been considered in what has been said, and should always be held distinctly in sight. For these, there should be line upon line, precept upon precept; for if unenlightened, they will be too apt in times of tribulation, to fall away, and apostatise. It is ignorance, ignorance

alone, which Unitarianism has to fear. The intelligent Unitarian cannot fall away. It is incredible, that he who has ever thoroughly and devoutly studied the evidences of Unitarian Christianity, should afterward doubt their validity. Such a one has the same clear and confident perception of their unassailable strength, that the well-grounded Christian has of the evidences of Christianity. We hold it to be an intellectual impossibility, for the well-informed Christian to doubt the conclusiveness of that testimony that has made him such—to be converted to infidelity by a Paine or a Carle. But nothing less impossible do we deem it, that a Unitarian Christian, supposing him possessed of ordinary strength of mind, to have conscientiously studied the subject, and adopted his views on reflection and conviction, should be converted from his Unitarianism back to Orthodoxy. We may as well believe that a scholar would suddenly renounce any of the great principles in science or philosophy, which by universal consent have become a part of demonstrated truth; that in chemistry, he would become a convert to the exploded doctrine of Phlogiston; that in philosophy, he would cast away the system of Newton, and return to the whirlpools of Des Cartes; would forswear Bacon and Locke, and retreat to the logic of the schools. But these things cannot be supposed of a sound mind, neither can the other.

Let therefore, the leading points of the Unitarian belief be frequently stated, and the arguments which establish them be frequently presented in various forms, and in different aspects, and in new relations, that if it be possible, minds of every character may find something suited to their peculiar wants and habits of thinking. If Unitarians will only read, and look into the evidences of their faith, they can never waver. Let them once be Unitarians from conviction and reflection, and it will be impossible that they should ever be any thing else. If, unhappily, they have trusted to the prejudices of education for safety, or to a second-hand faith, they may not be able to stand in the evil hour, nor should their fall surprise themselves or others. The essence of Unitarianism is self-inquiry, self-conviction. Then, it is quietness and assurance for ever.

It is hoped that the examination that has now been made of the evidence of Matthew touching the doctrines of the Trinity, and the Unity of God, may be of service in strengthening the faith of some of those who are still inquiring for the right way. To the Unitarian who would desire to add fresh strength to his faith, it is recommended as the most effectual method of confirming him in all good doctrine, to read over any one or all of the Gospels, with a particular view to the evidence for the doctrine of the Trinity—let him mark the passages—without referring to commentators—which appear to him distinctly to teach or imply that doctrine—and I am willing to predict that he will never again be tempted to doubt, if he had ever done so before, the solidity of that foundation on which his faith rests. Let the Trinitarian, who has made up his mind to be honest and fair, and unprejudiced in the work, go through a similar process, and I have not the least doubt that he would cast away his old belief as a baseless, unsubstantial dream. For he would say, "whence should I derive my faith, if not from the discourses of Jesus himself, and the professed historians of his life and doctrine; but from these sources I can gather no evidence that bears any proper proportion to the importance of the doctrine to be proved; the doctrine must have its origin elsewhere."

My conclusion from the whole of what has gone before, is—if Matthew has failed to record the doctrines of the Trinity and of the supreme deity of Jesus Christ, he did not believe them—did not know of them, as doctrines of the Christian religion; and therefore they are not doctrines of Christianity. He has wholly failed to record them. He has not directly taught them, and the whole tenor and prevailing language of his Gospel rejects them as false. In connection with this, let it be remembered, that Matthew's is to be regarded as a distinct and independent account of Christianity, containing what he must have deemed a complete representation of it; and the conclusion is irresistible, that he never heard of the dogmas in question, and never intended to teach them.

LOVE INVINCIBLE.

Nothing in the world is so dangerous and untractable in a false state of society, as one who loves God and men. You cannot silence him by threat or torture; nor scare him with any fear. Set him in the stocks to-day, he harangues men in public to-morrow. "Herod will kill thee," says one. "Go thou and tell that fox, behold I cast out devils, and deceivers to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected," is the reply. Burn or behead such men, and out of their blood, and out of their ashes, there spring up others, who defy you to count them, and say, "come, kill us, if you list, we shall never be silent." Love begets love, the world over, and martyrdom makes converts certain as steel sparks, when smitten against the flint. If a fire is to burn in the woods—let it be blown upon.

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