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# CURSORY REMARKS

ON

REV. DR. WORCESTER'S SECOND LETTER

ON THE SUBJECT OF THE

# TRINITY.

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BY A LAYMAN,

The Author of the Language of Scripture respecting Christ, &c. who believes, that "there is One God, the Father, of whom are all things, and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things—And that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world."

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## CURSORY REMARKS.

WE very well understand what is implied and meant by the term “orthodoxy,” in modern times : and we well know the *object* of those who *monopolize* it. By “*orthodoxy*” they mean their own peculiar opinions, viz. *Athanasianism*, as it regards the doctrine of the *Trinity* ; and *Calvinism*, as it respects depravity, election, irresistible grace, &c. But it will not be admitted, as Dr. Worcester would pretend, that such were the doctrines of the holy apostles, or that their preaching was of this cast. When, therefore, the Dr. suggests, that *orthodox* sentiments ; that is, (according to his view) the correct and true doctrines of the gospel, are not received by *Unitarians*, we humbly conceive he speaks without proof. This is rather an artful, than an ingenuous suggestion. He must and does know, that those whom he accuses of *heterodoxy*, profess to adhere fully and entirely to the plain language and meaning of the gospel ; and endeavour to preach as did the apostles, rather than follow *Athanasius*, *St. Augustin*, *Calvin* or *Hopkins*. We will quote some expressions of the inspired apostles, and see whether the *Unitarians* do not now use similar language.

“Ye men of Israel,” said Peter, in his first address to the Jews, “hear these words, Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by mira-

cles and wonders, which God did by him in the midst of you all—ye have taken and with wicked hands have crucified and slain ; whom God has raised up” from the dead. This Jesus God has raised up, and exalted to his right hand ; and having received of the Father the promise of the holy spirit, he has shed forth this which ye see and hear ;” that is, the miracles performed by the apostles. “ Therefore, let all the house of Israel be assured, that God has made this Jesus, whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ :” —And when they enquired, what shall we do, Peter said, “ repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.”

In his second address to the Jews, when questioned about the miracle he had performed on the lame man at the gate of the temple, Peter said, “ ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this, or why look ye so stedfastly on us, as though we had done it by our own power ? The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers has glorified his son (or child) Jesus, whom ye denied and delivered up, &c.—God has raised him from the dead ; and his name, by faith in his name has restored this man—Unto you first, God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, by turning you from your iniquities.” Again, when interrogated on the same subject, Peter said, “ Be it known unto you all, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him does this man stand before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought by you builders, which is become (made) the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name *given*, under heaven, whereby we can be saved.”—Again, “ We ought to obey God, rather than man : The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom ye slew ; Him God has exalted at his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins.” When Peter was sent to instruct Cornelius, he said, “ God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the holy spirit and

with (miraculous) power—and God was with him. The Jews slew him, and hanged him on a tree ; but God raised him from the dead. And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify, that it is he who was ordained of God, to be the Judge of the living and dead—to him all the prophets bear testimony that through his name, whosoever believeth on him shall have remission of sins.”

The preaching of Paul, after his conversion, was to the same effect. “ He proved to the Jews, that Jesus was the very Christ, or Messiah—and preached to them that he was the Son of God”—“ Of this man’s (David) seed, God has, according to his promise, raised up unto Israel, a Saviour, even Jesus.— And we declare unto you glad tidings, that the promise, which was made to the fathers, God has fulfilled the same to us, their children, in that he has raised up Jesus again ; as it is written in the second psalm, ‘ Thou art my Son, this day I have begotten thee’— Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.” His language in the epistles is in substance the same. He teaches, “ that we are justified freely by the grace of God, through the redemption which there is in Christ Jesus ; whom God has appointed a propitiation through faith for the remission of sins.”

Many of his expressions are to be considered with reference to the strange, absurd and dangerous tenets of the Jewish teachers, that if they conformed to the ritual of Moses and observed the traditions of the rabbis, they would be saved, whatever might be their moral character. This, Paul laboured to shew was a most erroneous and a most dangerous doctrine. And that faith in Christ, as the Messiah, and repentance towards God for all sin, with future holiness of life, were essentially necessary to salvation. His first great object was to prove, that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised and long expected Messiah ; and that he was to be received and obeyed as a messenger

from heaven : And that without acknowledging and receiving him, we should be essentially defective both in faith and practice. But this same apostle insists, that we must walk in newness of life ; must crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts ; must die to sin and live to holiness, and that we must all be judged “according to the deeds done in the body.” He also teaches that Christ, though a propitiation, is made such by God, and “that unto us there is *one* God, the Father, of whom are all things, and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things—that there is one God, and Father of all, and one Lord, one faith, one baptism.”

The apostle John declares the same doctrine. “This we testify,” he says, “that God sent his Son to be the saviour of the world.”

Here is no doctrine of a “*Triune God*,” of “*three persons in the Godhead*”—of “*infinite satisfaction*” made to God, by the sufferings and death of an infinite Being. It is simply this, that God in his great and unmerited grace provided a redeemer for ignorant, guilty men ; and that through and by him, his doctrines, mediation, sufferings, death and resurrection, we are offered pardon and salvation, on sincere penitence and new obedience ; and thus the hope of eternal life is confirmed to mankind. We are therefore indifferent to the praise of *orthodoxy*. Yet we trust, we are evangelical and apostolical. Christ is acknowledged as the Messiah promised to the Jews ; by appointment and qualification of God, the saviour of the world, the divine instructor and judge of mankind.

Dr. W. observes, that “the learned Dr. *S. Clark* believed in the *essential divinity* of Christ ;” and still pronounces “his opinion to be erroneous, and of *dangerous tendency*.” It is well known to all theological students, that Dr. *Clark* was not a *Trinitarian*, would not subscribe the *Athanasian* creed ; and was considered by his contemporaries as decidedly *Unitarian*. His ideas were similar, in many respects, on this subject to those of the ingenious author of “*Bible*

News." He believed Christ in some sense a divine person, though entirely distinct from the Father, on whom he was dependent, and from whom he received his miraculous and exalted powers to be the Saviour of men. He supposed him possessed of a nature and qualities far above human or angelic. And such is the opinion of many Unitarians at present in New England.

But it would seem, from Dr. W's. remark respecting the opinion of the celebrated divine above named, *that it is not assenting to the essential divinity of Christ, but to a PARTICULAR AND HUMAN EXPLANATION of the doctrine*, which will entitle us to the saving name of *orthodox*. Dr. W. says, if we believe Christ to be a creature, it makes no difference (in his judgment) whether we admit that he was superangelic, or merely a man. Dr. Clark, the author of *Bible News*, and all of their sentiment, then, are as great heretics as *Priestley* or *Belsham*. In fact, this is the ground taken by him, and the editor of the *Panoplist*, though they deny having confounded the various classes of *Unitarians*. And this it is, of which we have reason to complain. We complain, that it is both uncandid and unjust. It is uncandid to attempt to fasten unpopular opinions upon those who do not hold to them, though less hostile to them than others may be. It is uncandid to endeavour to make *Unitarians* of the higher class, who believe in Christ as the Son of God, in some peculiar sense, and as the mediator and redeemer of men, answerable for the opinions of those who consider him merely as a good man inspired by God to reveal his will, and die a martyr to the truth.

It is even unjust—For Dr. W. must know that Dr. *Price* and others of his character and sentiments have opposed and do oppose Socinianism; and consider Christ as having suffered and died for the sins of the world; yet by the appointment and grace of God, who was pleased to ordain this method for the recovery of sinful men.

Dr. W. will perhaps claim Dr. Doddridge as a Trinitarian. We admit that he was generally classed with them ; yet he explicitly declined using many phrases introduced by Trinitarians, as unscriptural ; and had christian charity for those who he knew denied the doctrine of the Trinity. When one of his church was accused of being an *Arian*, and *anti-calvinistic*, with a design to censure and excommunicate him, Dr. Doddridge declared, “ he fully believed the person accused a *sincere, pious christian* ; and sooner than have him censured for his peculiar faith, he would give up his *place and living*.”

If Dr. W. means any thing, by contending, that those who do not believe in a *Trinity*, in the *essentially infinite* perfections of Christ, and his *entire equality* with the Father, do not receive the doctrine of atonement and reconciliation for sin by the mediation and sufferings of the Saviour, then he must admit and believe that God suffered, that the infinite Deity died on the cross. This, we think, he will not—But will tell us, that, in consequence of the union of the divine and human nature in the person of Christ, though the man or human nature only suffered, yet there was an infinite atonement made for sin. Indeed, he has said this : and so have *Athasians* and *Trinitarians* for many centuries. This is not new. But we ask for the ground and proof of this notion in scripture ? and we ask further, how any Trinitarian can show, that there was greater merit or value in the sufferings of the man Christ Jesus, because the Deity had resided in him, and had been united to him, than in the sufferings of a super-angelic Being, of great dignity and power, as the Arian Unitarians represent Christ to be ?

The passage quoted by Dr. W. and repeated, from Philippians, “ that Christ thought it no robbery to be *equal* with God,” it should be remembered, admits a very different translation from the one in our common version ; and that the argument and meaning of the apostle rather requires it. Christ, who was in the *form* or *image* of God ; that is, full of grace and

truth, of divine wisdom and power, did not *vainly claim*, or *pretend*, or *boast* to be equal with God, (always ascribing his great ability, his doctrines and miraculous power to the Father) but humbled himself for our sakes and became subject to death, &c.

Dr. W. says much of persecution ; and pretends there is as great evidence of a persecuting spirit among Unitarians, as Trinitarians or the *orthodox*. He ought to know, and, we think, cannot but recollect, that all the difficulty and obstacles to a free intercourse and communion are with his religious friends. Unitarians do not refuse to hold communion with Trinitarians. They often assist to ordain them : and they have never called upon the people to withdraw from them and be separate. This is the very jet of the late dispute. The editor of the *Panoplist* openly and expressly denounced the liberal, or Unitarian clergy, as so grossly heretical that good people ought to withdraw from them ; and the people were called upon to do so accordingly. And this is the bigotry and persecution, of which we complain. It is the same spirit, which, in other times, has lighted the fagot around the body of the supposed heretic. Not only the liberal clergy, but those of the laity, who are real protestants, who call no man master, except Christ, and who prefer the word of God to the words and tenets of men, enter their protest against such spiritual tyranny ; against this claim to infallibility, this assumption of the prerogative of heaven.

We think the Trinitarians and the high Calvinists to be in error, to have mistaken the sense of scripture ; to be unduly governed by human creeds and confessions of faith. We lament this ; but believe it consistent with piety and goodness, and wish not to censure or disturb those who are of this opinion. But, it cannot be denied, that there has long been a plan among the *highly orthodox*, to render those odious who do not subscribe to their creed. They would not hang or burn. But they do excite prejudices against, and

misrepresent the opinions of the liberal christians, as they are generally denominated. They attempt to destroy the confidence of people in their teachers, by calling them heretical, socinian, &c. Whether this is not as unchristian as burning, let the intelligent and candid determine.

The apostle Peter speaks of some "who denied the Lord who bought them." Dr. W. insinuates that the Unitarians do this. The editor of the Panoplist had made the same uncandid suggestion. It is wished to ascertain whether either of them have the temerity to make such a charge direct. The apostle says nothing of a Trinity, or of a Triune God, or of three persons in the Deity. All this is mere modern refinement. But in his time, there were those who denied Jesus to be the Christ, or Messiah. Some who taught Christ was merely a spirit, and never in reality suffered on the cross. Some, who supposed Christ was one Being, the Son of God another, and the only begotten, another still. They were visionary, licentious, profligate, impious men, who rejected the gospel, and the claims of Jesus of Nazareth to the Messiahship. These he justly condemns. But here is nothing about the Trinity. This is a fiction of more recent times; and has grown out of the strange theories of subtle and unintelligible metaphysicians.

With as little propriety does Dr. W. pretend that Unitarians, who receive not his notions of a Trinity and of infinite atonement for sin by the sufferings and death of an infinite Being (though it is only the human nature he will admit could suffer) are alluded to by St. Paul, when he speaks of some in his day, who preached another gospel. He had reference to Judaizing christians, as is evident from perusing his epistle to the Galatians, who taught the perpetual obligation of the ceremonials of the laws of Moses, and insisted that all the Gentiles must be circumcised and observe every ritual enjoined in the Jewish code. This was a doctrine different from and opposite to the



preaching of the apostle, who only required repentance towards God, faith in Christ as the Messiah long expected, and a holy conformity to his precepts.

In the close of his letter, Dr. W. expresses a wish, that we may decide on this great question, not by prejudice and party spirit, but by *reason, conscience and scripture*. All Unitarians, all liberal christians, we presume, will say "*Amen*" to this sentiment and wish. The Dr. however, has taken up much time in condemning those, who exercise reason in interpreting scripture : and complains, that any 'orthodox' opinions are rejected, because they appear irrational or absurd. He says the Unitarians exalt human reason and wisdom above the word of God. I will not pretend to justify every thing said or written by those who call themselves *rational* christians. The true protestant principle is, to exercise our reason in construing scripture, and to judge of its general, obvious and uniform sense, by comparing different passages, and by an interpretation, according to common sense. At the same time, if any thing is clearly and fully asserted, to receive it, by faith, on the authority of the inspired writer.

The argument of Dr. W. and other *orthodox* clergymen proves too much : For it would oblige us to receive the doctrine of the infallibility of the Romish church, and of transubstantiation. For it is expressly said by Christ, in reference to the sacramental bread, "this is my body ;" and of the wine, "this is my blood"—and "except ye eat my flesh and drink my blood, ye have no life in you." The difficulty of the doctrine must not prevent our receiving it. Though it is contrary to reason, philosophy, and common sense, yet, according to the argument of Trinitarians we must believe in transubstantiation. For we must not use our reason in judging, or deciding on the subject. There is no text in the bible, which asserts the doctrine of the Trinity, so plainly, so expressly, as the above does the change of the bread and wine into the real flesh and blood of our Lord.

We acknowledge that Christ was the special representative, messenger, or agent of the Most High, to display the divine character and power ; to instruct and redeem the world. Highly figurative expressions, therefore, are used in speaking of him, of his dignity, power, wisdom and divinity. But we should always recollect, that it is expressly declared that all his ability and wisdom were imparted to him by God, his Father, the Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, for the glorious purpose of reforming and saving mankind.

We have no hesitation in saying, that the bible does not expressly and explicitly teach the doctrine of a Trinity ; or of three persons in the Godhead, or Deity. The dogma is adopted by some theologians by way of *inference* or construction. They *reason* on the subject, and undertake to shew, that certain passages establish the doctrine. But Unitarians have the same right to examine and compare scripture, and interpret for themselves. And the man who judges and condemns his brother for his opinion, is rash and dogmatical ; and so far is influenced by an anti-christian spirit.

Dr. W. complains, that Unitarians are too general in their expressions, when writing on the character of Christ, that they are not sufficiently particular, distinct and precise. And he considers it so great a fault, that it renders them unfit to be teachers of christianity. But if they are as particular and distinct as the apostles were, this should satisfy us. In their preaching to Jews and Gentiles, we find nothing said about a *Trinity*—nothing of the *calvinistic* notion of an *infinite* atonement by the *sufferings* of an infinite Being. They taught, (as Unitarians do now) that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ, the Messiah, long promised in the Jewish scriptures ; and, that, though he had been put to death, God raised him up, and exalted him to be a Prince and Saviour, to dispense pardon and immortality. The Unitarians believe with Peter, that “ Jesus was the Christ, the Son

of God"—and "taught the words of eternal life"—with Mary, that "he is the Messiah or Saviour, who was to come into the world." They believe he is a sufficient Mediator and Redeemer, having been endowed by God with all proper qualities and attributes for that great work.

We cannot but observe, that *Trinitarians* appear to us very indistinct, various and confused in their language on the subject of the present controversy. It is well known, that there are various systems and theories among them touching this doctrine. "What, indeed, is Trinitarianism, but Socinianism involved in mystery?" as the able author of *Bible News* observed. We think there is great obscurity and indistinctness in their writings on this subject. They talk about an *infinite* atonement being made by the sufferings of Christ, merely as man, in consequence of the Deity having been united to him—For they will not assert that God suffered. This appears strange and irrational; and we think it unscriptural. The scriptures speak of Christ as being sent by God, and singularly endowed and assisted to be our Saviour, and as dying for our pardon and salvation. But the peculiarities of Calvinism, or Trinitarianism, are mere opinions, or conclusions of certain divines, by them adopted in their reasonings, on different texts of scripture; and by no means necessary to be believed in order to be a christian, any further than they appear to our deliberate judgment to be supported by the word of God. We are willing to leave the subject, in some sense as unexplained and incomprehensible; and to speak of it in the language of scripture. We believe, that "the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world"—And we trust in him, as the Redeemer appointed and qualified by God, to direct, instruct, guide, and save us.

Unitarians wish not to dictate articles of faith to others; nor do they condemn those called "orthodox" for avowing their opinions. It is the positive and dogmatical conduct, the censorious, exclusive spirit,

which Trinitarians often discover on a subject confessedly mysterious and incomprehensible, which we consider reprehensible. We see not that they have authority to be the sole interpreters of scripture ; or to insist that others should admit their particular explanations of passages of high and difficult import. And we complain, that they should denounce those as “ heretical,” as “ having another gospel,” as “ denying the Lord who bought them,” who cannot subscribe to the creeds and declarations of fallible men. This spirit is much to be regretted. It ought, we think to be opposed. It is contrary to the spirit of protestantism. And we consider it the duty of all those who wish to maintain the present happy degree of christian liberty in New England, to bear testimony against it.

The liberal party, as they are denominated, deny not this liberty to their brethren of different sentiments. They consider the bible the standard of faith and rule of conduct : and allow every one the right to construe and explain for himself, so that he be not licentious and immoral. We believe the Unitarians have as great respect for, and are as much influenced by the declarations of the bible, as those called “ orthodox,” who form creeds and articles of faith in the words of “ human wisdom,” and condemn all who hesitate to subscribe to them. We are willing others should have formulas of faith, and fix upon certain articles of doctrine, as a system or guide for themselves : but must claim the same right and privilege on our part. We fully admit the authority of inspired scripture. What is highly important and *essential*, we believe to be very intelligible and plain. What is mysterious and difficult to be understood, we leave for every one to consider, and to receive according to his own judgment and understanding. And we think the “ orthodox,” who undertake to explain the mysteries of religion, and to dictate particular modes of belief, are justly chargeable with a departure from the “ simplicity which is in Christ,” and with substituting the words of man for the language of inspiration.







