

John Adams
Library,



IN THE CUSTODY OF THE
BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY.



TWO LETTERS

TO THE

REV. ALEXANDER M'LEOD, D. D.

PASTOR OF THE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

CONTAINING

R E M A R K S

UPON THE

TEXTS FROM WHICH HE PREACHED

ON THE

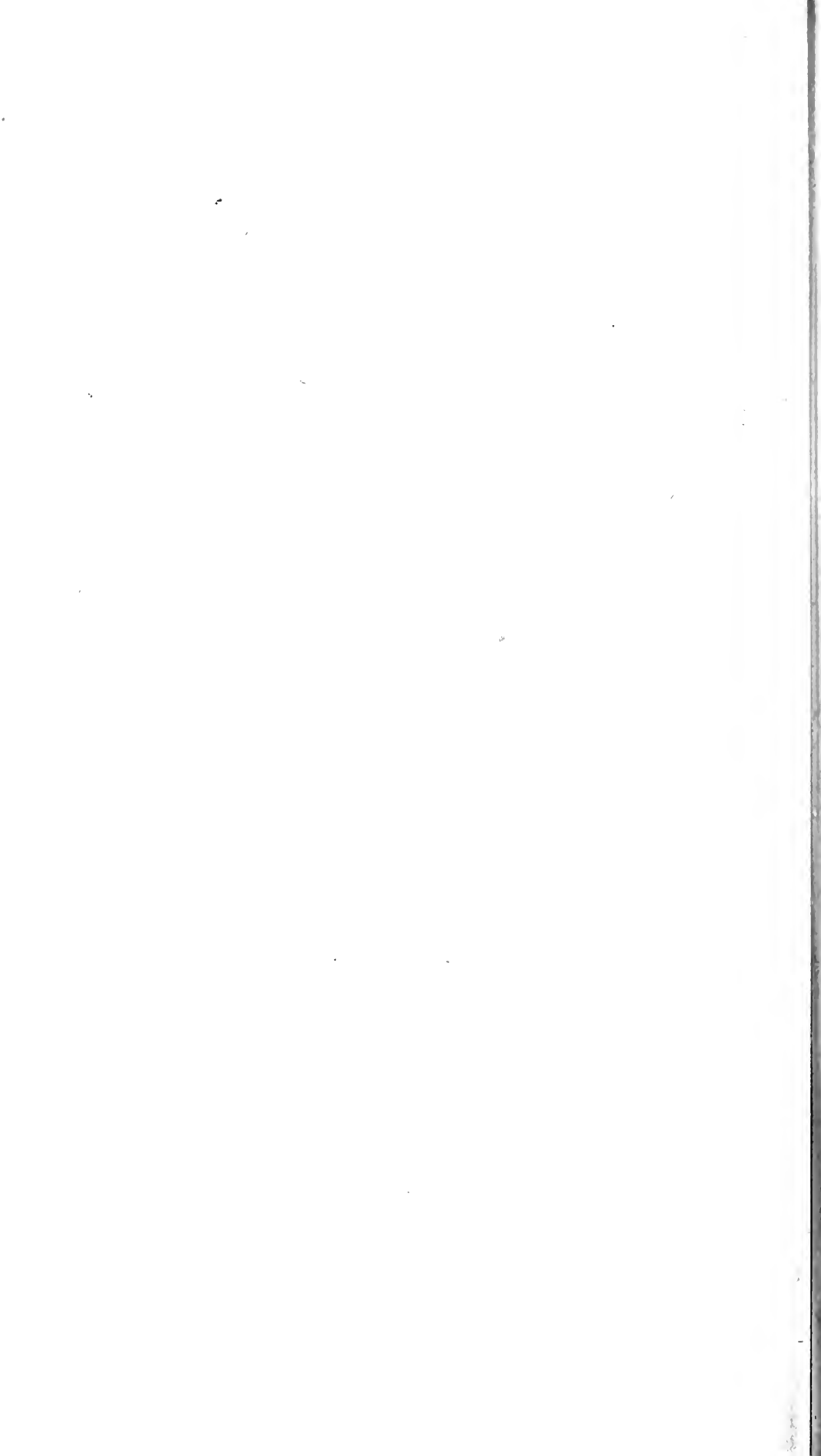
EVENINGS OF APRIL 30, AND MAY 7

BY HENRY WARE,
MINISTER OF A CHURCH IN BOSTON.

NEW-YORK:

Printed by C. S. Van Winkle, 101 Greenwich-street.

.....
1820



TWO LETTERS.

LETTER I.

REVEREND SIR,

I AM sensible, that in addressing these Letters to you, I am taking a liberty, which nothing but the importance of the occasion could excuse. The deference and respect which are due to a stranger of your age and standing should have kept me silent, did not a powerful sense of duty to the uncorrupted Word of God, and of my obligations to that system of religious faith which I believe it to contain, urge me to speak. This must be my apology. My persuasion of the importance of Christian truth, and of a careful watch by those who are set for its defence, lest its records should be corrupted, is too strong to suffer me to be silent, when I conceive it to be within my power to render any service, however feeble, to the cause of religious knowledge. I came to this city, as some of my brethren had done before, for the purpose of aiding a small band of Unitarian believers to enjoy the worship and ordinances of the gospel, according to the dictates of their consciences; and when, upon attending the religious service of your church, I found not only the principles of their faith assailed, but assailed by the use of a sentence which is generally held to be no part of the Bible, I felt myself bound, in their defence, and in defence of the truth, to

make this public address to yourself. I desire to do it respectfully, for I feel no disrespect; and if, as I fear may be the case, I should express myself with great confidence, I beg you would do me the justice to believe, that it is not from the spirit of opposition, but is the religious confidence of one who thinks himself called to support the purity and integrity of God's revelation, in a point where he is convinced there is hardly the shadow of a doubt.

It is not my object to make any general defence of the faith against which you have been preaching; much less to complain at your taking an opportunity to warn your people against what you esteem a dangerous error. Your duty to your conscience, and to them, required it of you; and I would be the last to advocate any abridgment of the liberty of speech in the pulpit. It is not because you have defended Trinitarianism that I ask to be heard; that, you had an unquestionable right to do; but because you defended it upon ground which, it appears to me, you had no right to take. When I went up to worship in your church, on the evening of the last Sabbath in April, nothing could exceed my astonishment at hearing you announce as your text, that celebrated verse—*There are three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one.* (1 John, v. 7.) I did not readily recover from my surprise. The opinion which is universally expressed by the learned respecting this verse, came fresh to my recollection; and it was with difficulty I could persuade myself, that I had heard it quoted as part of the Christian Scriptures in that sacred place. It was true, I had been told, that some ministers had lately quoted it as authentic; but I had taken it for granted they must be uninformed and ignorant men; for I had never yet seen reason to doubt the assertion of an able theologian, “that no man of tolerable learning or fairness, at the present day, would think of using it.” But now I found it adduced by one to whom I could attribute neither

ignorance nor unfairness; and what, then, should relieve my wonder?

My surprise at your use of this text has not ceased. The learned of the present day, throughout the religious world, have agreed, after a long and laborious examination, in pronouncing it no part of the original scriptures. All who are most competent to judge, Trinitarians as well as Unitarians, with one voice, and with scarcely any reserve, declare it to be an unauthorised addition to the Epistle of John; so that it is, with one consent, thrown out of the Trinitarian controversy. I may well, therefore, be astonished, as I am ignorant of the reasons upon which you have made up your mind, that you should argue from it as genuine.

I do not forget that you told us, that it had been your object in a preceding discourse, “to establish its genuineness as a part of Scripture.” I could not suspect you, indeed, of omitting, as some have done, so important a consideration; and I cannot but regret, that I had not the opportunity of hearing it discussed. For I acknowledge I am at a loss to conjecture whence you could have gathered sufficient proof to outweigh all those circumstances of evidence, which have for so long a time put the question at rest. It would be wrong, however, to deal in mere assertion on this subject. I beg leave, therefore, to lay before you the language of a few respectable writers—all Trinitarians—whose decisions on this subject, of which they were well able to judge, have been thought conclusive.

Let me first ask your attention to the *Eclectic Review*, the religious character of which is unsuspectingly orthodox. The passage has been frequently quoted, but the very honourable and decided stand which it takes in behalf of the purity of the sacred text, renders it worthy of perpetual remembrance.

“Upon this,” says the writer, “we need not spend many words. It is found in no Greek manuscript, ancient or modern, except one, to which we shall presently advert; in no ancient Version, being interpolated only in the later

transcripts of the Vulgate. Not one of the Greek fathers recognises it, though many of them collect every species and shadow of argument, down to the most allegorical and shockingly ridiculous, in favour of the doctrine of the Trinity; though they often cite the words immediately contiguous both before and after; and though, with immense labour and art, they extract from the next words the very sense which this passage has in following times been adduced to furnish. Of the *Latin* fathers, not one has quoted it, till Eucherius, of Lyons, in the middle of the fifth century; and in his works *there is much reason to believe that it has been interpolated.*"

After this summary of the evidence, the writer proceeds in the following striking and decided tone. "Under these circumstances, we are UNSPEAKABLY ASHAMED that any modern divines should have fought, *pedibus et unguibus*, for the retention of a passage so INDISPUTABLY SPURIOUS. We could adduce half a dozen, or half a score passages of ample length, supported by better authority than this, but which are rejected in every printed edition and translation."

The learned Griesbach, another believer in the Trinity, whose ability to judge in questions of this nature will be universally acknowledged, makes use of language equally strong with that just quoted. "If it were worth while," he says, "I would undertake to defend *six hundred of the most futile and universally rejected readings* by testimonies and arguments equally numerous and valid, nay, in general, more numerous and valid, than those which the advocates of this passage adduce; nor would the defenders of a genuine text have so many and weighty arguments to oppose to such an absurd attempt, as have been produced against the defenders of this verse. I wish those would seriously consider this, who may in future undertake to defend this text."

Bishop Lowth, another learned Trinitarian, is equally decided. "We have some wranglers in theology," he says, "sworn to follow their master, who are prepared to defend any thing, however absurd, should there be occasion. But I

believe there is no one among us, in the least degree conversant with sacred criticism, and having the use of his understanding, who would be willing to contend for the genuineness of the verse, 1 John, v. 7."

Dr. Middleton, in his elaborate work on the Greek article, tells us, that this passage is "now pretty generally abandoned as spurious;" and that if any one will study the controversy, "the probable result will be, that he will close the examination with a *firm belief that the passage is spurious.*" He adds afterward—"in the rejection of the controverted passage, learned and good men are now for the most part agreed; and I contemplate with admiration and delight, the gigantic exertions of intellect which have established this acquiescence."

Mr. Wardlaw, a late zealous and eloquent defender of the doctrine of the Trinity, is no less positive. "Certainly," he says, "this text should have been entitled to hold the first place, had its genuineness not been disputed, or disputed, as that of many texts has been, on slight grounds. I freely acknowledge, however, that the evidence of the spuriousness of this celebrated passage, even if it were much less conclusive, than, in my mind, it appears to be, would be quite sufficient to prevent me from resting upon it any part of the weight of this argument."

To the same purpose the Bishop of Lincoln, in his 'Elements of Christian Theology,' says, "I must own, that after an attentive consideration of the controversy, relative to that passage, *I am convinced that it is spurious.*"

In this place may be added the fact, that the Great Reformer, LUTHER, uniformly rejected this verse from his translation of the New Testament. He did not admit it to a place in the edition which was publishing at the time of his death; and, "he concluded his preface to that edition," says Charles Butler, "with what may be termed *his dying request*, that upon no account his translation should be altered, in the slight-

est instance ;”* which, of course, implies his firm persuasion, that this verse does not belong to the Bible.

To these names, some of them amongst the most honoured in the church, might be added many more equally well known ; it is enough to mention those eminent biblical critics, Simon, Wetstein, and Michaelis ; Sir Isaac Newton, Bishop Herbert Marsh, Archbishop Newcome, and the distinguished Methodist, Dr. Adam Clarke ; and, finally, that illustrious scholar, Porson, whose letters, by which the controversy concerning the verse was brought to a final conclusion, “ are an eternal monument of his erudition, critical sagacity, and wit.”

To the extracts already made, others might be added, if I were in a situation to have access to the necessary books. I have not made them under the idea that you are unacquainted with them ; but simply, that it might be seen how strong and unqualified is the conviction produced upon the minds of the most competent judges, by the evidence against this verse.

Since, however, you have differed from them in your judgment of the case, it is to be presumed, that you are possessed of facts or arguments upon the subject, which have escaped the research and ingenuity of European learning ; or that you have discovered a method of arranging *their* facts and arguments so as to bring the weight of evidence into the opposite scale. In either case, no one has a right to question your honest conviction. But you must not be surprised if others should have a different persuasion, and should continue to account this passage of no authority, until they are acquainted with, and feel the force of, the reasons which have led you to restore it to its place in the sacred volume. If it *do belong to the volume*, it cannot be for the interest of any one that it should be excluded ;† because it is of the utmost

* I recollect having somewhere read, that Luther made it the subject of *particular request*, that the verse in question might never be inserted in his Translation of the New Testament. As, however, I have not the authority by me, I do not mention it with confidence.

† If any should think it necessary to contend for the genuineness of this verse, under the impression, that it is essential to the proof of an essential

importance to us all, of every name, that we should receive THE WHOLE of Scripture without diminution or reserve. And, on the other hand, if it be *not* a part of the records of Christianity, it cannot be for the interest of any one to retain it. The reverence which all profess for the word of Life, would prompt every one to strike from its pages the smallest sentence which had crept in and made its home there without authority from God. We should be indignant at the attempt *now* to thrust in even a word, for the support of the most valuable truth of revelation; and how can we more quietly submit to such intrusion, because it has existed for a few hundred years? *The truth*, on this subject, *the exact truth*, is the only important consideration, and is equally important to all. The Christian world have heretofore showed a readiness to hear, and be convinced, by fair evidence, however it might interfere with their prejudices. No doubt the same disposition exists still; and if other evidence can be found, than has been found, it will be gladly received, and candidly considered.

But until such evidence *is produced*, we must be permitted to believe, that the verse was never written by St. John. At present, the evidence of its spuriousness appears to us overwhelming. It is not easy to conceive of a fact, depending upon proof of this kind, susceptible of stronger proof than exists in this case. It has been examined and re-examined, and canvassed and discussed by the partial and the impartial, at different periods and in different countries, with great labour, great learning, and great zeal; and it deserves notice

doctrine, perhaps, after reading the following from Calvin, they will find reason to think otherwise.

“The expression, ‘*these three are one*,’ does not relate to the *essence* but to the *agreement* of the persons spoken of. The meaning is, the Father, and his eternal Word and Spirit, harmoniously bear testimony to Christ. Some copies, accordingly, read *us iv* [i. e. agree in one thing.] But although you read *iv iviv* [are one,] as it is in other copies, still there is no doubt that the Father, Word, and Spirit, are said to be one, in the same sense as the blood, and water, and spirit, in the verse immediately succeeding.”

as a remarkable fact in the history of controversies, that this is one of those few points which has been acknowledged on all hands to have been brought to a final decision. Do not, therefore, I entreat you, construe it into any want of respect to yourself, that I protest against its being publicly alleged as part of Scripture. I esteem it a sacred duty to show my supreme regard for the Volume of Divine Truth, by bearing testimony against this manifest addition.

It is only necessary to add, that all the best editions of the New Testament, since the Reformation, have omitted it, or at least have set upon it a mark of suspicion and doubt. Some mark was fixed upon it, in, I believe, all the earliest editions to which it was admitted. If you will look at the first printed English Bibles, you will find the passage either in smaller type, or enclosed in brackets. It was so printed in the edition of 1566. It was not till after that year that it was suffered to stand undistinguished on the page; and by whose authority the distinction was first removed, is not known.

But if it be no part of the genuine Epistle, how, it will naturally be asked, can we account for its ever obtaining a place there?

The answer which is usually given to this question, and which is perfectly simple and satisfactory, I quote, almost verbatim, as it is stated by Butler. The mystical interpretation of the *eighth* verse, which some of the Fathers adopted, (making "the spirit, the water, and the blood," to stand for the three divine persons,) was frequently inserted in their commentaries, and sometimes *in the margin of their copies*. A transcriber from such copies might easily suppose it to be a verse which had been accidentally omitted, and so introduce it into the text; insensibly it came to be considered as part of the text; at first it appeared sometimes in one form, and sometimes in another, and was inserted sometimes before, and sometimes after the eighth verse; at length, the dignity of the subject gave it a precedence over the eighth verse;

and thus it came to be considered as the seventh verse of the chapter. The eighth century may be considered as the era of its final settlement in the Latin text; from the Latin it was transplanted into the Greek; the first Greek writer by whom it was quoted, lived in the fourteenth century.

In this way it is easy to conceive, that a marginal note, or interpretation, might gradually creep into the text, just as the small type, and the brackets of the first English editions, were gradually exchanged for a uniformity with the rest of the chapter.

If it were not for the names of high authority which I have been able to show are united in the opinion for which I contend, I should fear that these remarks might be the occasion of again exposing Unitarians to the charge of mutilating the Bible, and striking from it, at will, such passages as do not suit their views. But, as it is a notorious fact, that the most strenuous adversaries of the verse are among those who believe in the doctrine it is supposed to maintain; as it is held to be "indisputably spurious," by men who have the confidence and respect of the whole Christian world, the reproach cannot, on this occasion, be uttered; and, I could hope, that our brethren would do us the justice to believe, that in every instance the reproach is as little deserved as in this. We have no stronger desire, than to ascertain *the true text* of the sacred volume, and to have our opinions tried by that. If brought fairly and honourably to the true text, *and the true text only*, we do not fear that they will be found inconsistent with Divine truth. I trust we have as much respect for revelation as our brethren; we have, perhaps, less respect for councils, assemblies, and creeds; but it is because we think, "THE BIBLE, *the Bible only*, is the religion of Protestants." And when our fellow Christians will understand us better, and use only Scriptural arguments against us, we believe they will think better of us, and of our doctrine.

Permit me to indulge the hope, that you will pardon any inadvertencies which may have escaped me in this letter, and

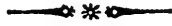
will candidly consider what I have presumed to offer you ; and to conclude with subscribing myself,

Respectfully,

And with Christian salutations,

H. W.

New-York, May 9th, 1820.



LETTER II.

REVEREND SIR,

THE interest which was excited by the sermon upon which I presumed to address you in a former letter, led me to your Church on the evening of the following Sabbath. Of the discourse, which I then heard, I should say nothing, had not you alluded expressly to the First Congregational Church in this city, and to the ceremony of laying the corner stone, in which I had had the happiness of taking part. The manner in which you did this, appears to justify, and in some degree to call for, a few remarks, which, I hope, may have the effect to remove from your mind some of the misapprehensions under which it seems to labour ; or at least to satisfy you that we have not thrown away our regard for the authority of Scripture, our claim to the title of Christian. In doing this, I must again ask your indulgence, and entreat you to lend a candid and patient attention.

Your discourse commenced thus :—“ JOHN xvii. 3. *And this is life eternal ; that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* When this text was deposited on the Saturday of the last week, in the corner stone of the First Congregational Church, now erecting near us, it is probable that those who were concerned in that transaction *did not rightly understand its meaning.*” These are nearly your very words : and you added afterward, “ that if they had rightly understood it, they would

not have made it, as seemed to be their intention, the corner stone of their opposition to the doctrine of the Trinity.”

Now I acknowledge I had been in the habit of thinking, that these words of our blessed Lord do contain a positive and unanswerable argument against that doctrine. I had never yet seen it answered, nor do I recollect having ever met with what could be called a serious attempt to answer it. Your presumption, therefore, that I did not understand it, was calculated to arrest my most earnest attention, and I listened with eagerness for the exposition which you imagined me to need—not a little curious to discover by what possible method this text could be brought to support the doctrine which you were engaged in defending. I do not know whether I am right in the conjecture—but when, after this introduction which so excited my expectation, instead of proceeding with the immediate purpose of your discourse, you stopped to prepare the minds of your hearers by reading the articles respecting the Trinity, from three or four established confessions or creeds of different churches,—I confess I could not help suspecting that you felt conscious, like myself, that the declaration of your text was in too direct opposition to the doctrine of your sermon, to be ventured before the congregation without some extraneous support. If I was wrong or uncharitable in this, I beg you to forgive me; and my apology must be, that appearances forced upon me such a judgment.

I could not but feel grateful to you, (and I take this opportunity, in my own name and in that of the Church to which you alluded, to express the obligation) for admitting that we intend to lay this text—a text of the undisputed Bible, as “THE CORNER STONE OF OUR OPPOSITION to the doctrine of the Trinity.” We have been so accustomed to hear it said that we abandon the scriptures, and found our religious opinions on Reason in opposition to Revelation, that it seems an act of especial kindness in a gentleman of your respectable standing, to allow that the corner stone of our faith is laid in the words of our Lord himself. We do indeed place that

verse at the foundation; it is our joy and pride to rest upon the authoritative language of the Son of God; and we confidently trust, that the Temple of our religious system, standing upon this, stands upon a foundation that cannot be moved. The tempest of human opposition may beat upon it, but it will not fall; "for it is founded upon a rock." Till this text can be set aside—till it can be made by fair and direct interpretation to speak a language consistent with the idea that *Jesus who uttered it* is the same Being with Him whom he addresses as the ONLY TRUE GOD, we do not fear being found in error, or being cast away by God, though we should be rejected by man.

The manner in which you attempted to explain its consistency, is to my mind quite unsatisfactory. If I rightly understood it, it was simply the assertion that Jesus uttered his prayer in his mediatorial capacity, in the *human nature only*, and that his *divine nature* took no part in it. I do not think that this solves the difficulty, because, in the first place, it evidently takes for granted the very thing which is to be proved—that he possessed *two distinct natures*, and could act according to one without the participation of the other; a supposition which is founded altogether *on inference* from detached passages of the New Testament, and adopted for the sake of reconciling difficulties, and which *never has been, and never can be*, proved by any express assertion of the Scriptures. I know that I speak confidently; but I know, too, that I may challenge the whole world to show, that my confidence is unfounded. But, in the next place, even taking your own ground—admitting the supposition to be true, the explanation remains equally unsatisfactory. For, at the time of his speaking these words, his divine nature must either have been *present* or *absent*. If *absent*, it was not Jesus Christ who prayed, for he is "two natures in one person *forever*."* But if his divine nature were *present*, then, of course, it join-

* These are the words of the Assembly's Shorter Catechism.

ed in the prayer, for *both natures together* constitute him what he is; so that it is necessary that wherever he is spoken of by name, both natures should be included. Besides, it is evident, the verse does not assert an opposition, or distinction, solely between the Father and Jesus Christ; but asserts, if it assert any thing, that the Father, *exclusively of all others*, is the Only True God. Put yourself in place of the Apostles with whom he was praying; did they understand him to be praying to the same Being with himself? or to be making an exception in favour of a portion of himself? Or if he had designed to give them a declaration, that he was *not* the only true God, could he have framed in language a sentence that should express it more explicitly? So that, after all attempts to explain this text in consistency with the Trinitarian faith, I solemnly believe it to contain a full and express denial, by our Lord himself, of his equality with the Father.

This is not the only text which we think contains such a denial. Others equally strong are to be found, which have equally exercised the ingenuity of orthodox exposition. I will take the liberty of laying a few of these before you, that you may not only see the "corner stone," but a few of the other stones of the Building, and so judge whether "the Lord have not built the House."

Let me ask your first attention to 1 Cor. viii. 6. "To 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." Are words capable of declaring more explicitly that the Father is the one God, and that Jesus is *not*? It seems to me that such an assertion cannot be made in any words, if these words of Paul did not contain it.

1 Tim. ii. 5. is equally expressive. "There is ONE GOD, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Who is the God of whom Paul speaks here? Is it Jesus? Is it not rather a formal denial of his supreme divinity? There is one God—but Jesus Christ is not he. I beg that the sentence may be weighed, and I believe Paul will be found to have declared the Unitarian's faith.

Take once more the words of our Lord himself. Mark xiii. 32. "Of that day and hour knoweth no man; no, not the angels which are in heaven, *neither* THE SON, but the Father." Here we are told, almost in so many words, by Jesus himself, that he is not God:—*not even the Son* knoweth when that day shall come; yet if he were God he must have known it.

The conclusion from these passages is irresistible. And let me ask, are we to be accounted as denying the word of God, when our faith rests on such explicit, *unanswered* passages? We reasonably ask for *one passage* which shall assert (now that the verse from John's Epistle is satisfactorily proved to be no scripture) that there are three persons in one God, or there are two natures in Jesus Christ, as explicitly as these, which I have quoted, assert that the Father alone is God. I do not know, I cannot conceive, by what method they are to be made consistent with the popular theory. I have never seen them fairly reconciled; I have examined the attempts which have been made to do it, candidly, I trust, and fairly, for I have felt that if on that side lay the truth, it was of immense importance for me to discover it; yet I always have risen from such examination with my faith strengthened rather than shaken. It has appeared to me that these passages were evaded rather than answered, and they have continued to inspire my mind with triumphant confidence in the correctness of the Unitarian sentiment. And, I confess to you, that when I see the Corner Stone of the truth in which I rejoice, laid in the holy words of our beloved Master himself; and the Corner Stone of the opposite system, laid in a verse which is found to have been inserted in the Bible without authority; I cannot hesitate to declare my thorough confidence in the divine support and sure triumph of the doctrine I profess, and to feel grateful that I am permitted, however feebly, to bear witness to it in the world.

But the Scriptural support of our faith is not confined to the few passages which I have cited above; indeed, it could not be contained within the limits to which I must confine

myself. Permit me, however, to add a few more, for the sake of those who have been taught to believe that Unitarianism receives no countenance from revelation; some of whom may, perhaps, be led to think better of those who profess it, when they shall learn, that they can, and do, plead *the same Bible* in its defence, which *they* are accustomed to use. Let such ask themselves, whether they have ever stopped to weigh expressions like the following, and have reflected whether they are, or are not, consistent with the doctrine we oppose.

Jesus says, *The Son of himself can do nothing*. Does this imply the possession of infinite underived power? Is it possible it can be God who speaks thus of himself?

As the Living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father. Can we suppose him who used this language, denying that he lives *by himself*, to be the self-existent God—possessed of independent life?

Again: *I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I myself, but he sent me*. Is it God who speaks thus; who says he came not of himself, but was *sent*? Yet if you will read the gospels attentively, you will find this to be Christ's perpetual language.

He is called in the Epistles, the *image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature*. Is it possible the Apostle would call him the *image of God*, or the *first born*, if he were himself God? or, as in another place, *the express image of his person*?

Equally decisive, as it appears to us, are all those passages which say, that Jesus was *made Lord and Christ; made heir of all things; that authority to execute judgment was committed to him; that power was given to him; all these expressions, when duly considered, are utterly irreconcilable with the idea that he was possessed of infinite, independent, original power: i. e. that he was God.*

Nothing is more frequent than passages of this sort. They occur so frequently, as to give a complexion to the whole

New Testament. Indeed, our confidence in the opinion we hold on this subject, does not rest so much on single detached sentences and insulated expressions, however decisive, as upon the general character and style running throughout the volume, which we are unable to account for, or comprehend, upon any other supposition. I am so convinced of this, that I can hardly conceive it possible for a man to read the New Testament through, attentively considering what aspect every part bears upon the question of the Divine Nature, without being convinced that it is impossible the doctrine of the Trinity should be true. The general mode of expression and of thought utterly contradict it; and though some passages might seem to favour it, yet he would think it more probable that he misunderstood these, than that they should contain a doctrine at variance with the general tenor of the Scriptures.

Although I have been able, at this time, to present only a bare sketch of our argument from Scripture, it is yet sufficient to afford some idea of the mode by which we are convinced that the doctrine of the Trinity is contradicted by the express voice of Revelation, and, like the word itself,* and the famous text by which it has been supported, derives its origin from human sources.

Having this firm persuasion, that ours is *the faith once delivered to the saints*, we must be permitted, on all proper occasions, *earnestly to contend for it*; especially since we find it connected with opinions upon other subjects, which appear to be most favourable to genuine Christian holiness, and the excellence of the gospel. I know that this is strenuously denied; and it is, perhaps, to be expected, that every denomi-

* The venerable Reformers, Luther and Calvin, appear to have had as great dislike to this word, as the most zealous disbeliever in its doctrine. "The word Trinity," says Luther, "sounds oddly, and is a human invention; it were better to call the Almighty, *God*, than Trinity." Calvin says, he has no objection to its being disused, or "buried;" and in another place, "I like not this prayer, 'O holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity!' it savours of barbarism; the word Trinity is barbarous, insipid, profane, a human invention, grounded on no testimony of *God's word*."

nation of believers should imagine its own peculiar sentiments to be of the best practical tendency, for the simple reason, that it believes them to be *truth*. The real fact probably is, that the most important and powerful principles of virtuous action are common to believers of every name ; so that the true question to be decided between them is, whose peculiarities of sentiment offer least opposition, or afford most assistance, to these fundamental and universally accepted principles ? It, indeed, we were justly liable to the charge, which, with such uncommon vehemence of voice and gesture, you brought against us in nearly the following words—*It is a notorious fact, that our Socinian brethren* (for so you were pleased to call Unitarians, but unjustly, for they have no right to the name) *are Universalists, who hold, that the wicked, and vile, and base, and profligate, and criminal, shall be equal partakers of the happiness of Heaven, with the Saints*—if this unfounded, this cruel accusation, were just, then, indeed, it would be time for us to pause, and reflect upon the moral tendency of our opinions. But I have the happiness to inform you, (and I doubt not that as a Christian, you will rejoice at the removal of such a reproach from your brethren,) that it is thoroughly false ; our sentiments upon this head have been basely misrepresented to you, and it is to be regretted that you should have thought yourself authorized to repeat so injurious a slander. It is probable, indeed, that the great body of Unitarian Christians would dissent from any description which your church might give of the nature and degree of future punishment ; but when you are acquainted with them, you will know, that the doctrine of a tremendous retribution, inconceivable and *indescribable*, awaiting the wicked in a future world, is a part of their creed and of their preaching, no less than of your own.

I regret being compelled to add, that there appeared to be other passages in your discourses, beside this, less calculated to throw light upon the subject of your discussion, or to promote a spirit of candid attention to it, than to create prejudice and make men *afraid* of candidly attending to it.

This, however, is not a novel thing, or by any means peculiar to yourself; and I certainly am not disposed to doubt, that it results from a strong persuasion, that it is your *duty, by every means*, to render obnoxious and strive to crush what you believe to be a fatal error. But it serves to strengthen one conviction, that the real weight of *argument* is on our side; otherwise there would be less anxious effort to enlist the prejudices of men against us. We believe it to be only because such a violent odium has been excited, and industriously maintained, as effectually to forbid an impartial inquiry into our sentiments, that they have not more generally prevailed; and this belief is confirmed by the fact, that wherever Christian communities have been left to themselves, undisturbed by the alarms and outcries of *heresy*, and at liberty quietly to follow the light of the Scriptures without being led at every step by a creed or a master, *there* these opinions have ceased to excite terror, and have gradually gained ground. It is the fear of this result, unconsciously indulged perhaps, which can alone account for the perpetual endeavours that are made to render them odious. And the well grounded fear of this result was strongly expressed in a celebrated orthodox Magazine, which admitted that the omission to inculcate the points of orthodox theology for some time, would occasion them to be looked upon with unbelief and aversion. If I mistake not, a similar apprehension was expressed in the discourse of which I have been speaking.

It is not surprising, therefore, that our faith should be confirmed rather than shaken, by the obloquy which is cast upon it. There is but one bad consequence to be apprehended from it; and that is, that it should excite in us feelings of ill will and uncharitableness; that we should be made to forget the charity *which endureth all things*, and return railing for railing. This would be doing us a serious injury, for the spirit of the gospel is the Christian's most valuable possession. By provoking him to part with it, you rob him of that *which not enriches you, and makes him poor indeed*. I trust that the

members of the rising congregation are aware of their exposure to this danger, and will guard themselves against this, the greatest injury that can be done them. At present, they certainly are far from a censorious or retaliating spirit. They have united for the security of their personal religious rights, and of such an administration of the worship and ordinances of the gospel, as shall not be inconsistent with their views of divine truth. They wish neither to molest nor to be molested; they have no enmity to any, and they wish well to all.

Their views and feelings, I have reason to think, are fairly represented in the Address, which was made at the laying of the corner stone of their intended church; and as you were pleased to take some interest in that ceremony, I copy it for your perusal.

CHRISTIAN FRIENDS,

WE have assembled upon an occasion of no small interest. The erection of a new Temple to the honour of Almighty God demands of us the religious acknowledgment of his providence, and earnest supplications for his blessing. "Except the Lord build the House, they labour in vain that build it." Confident, therefore, in the uprightness and purity of our intentions; humbly trusting that we sincerely seek his glory in the promotion of that blessed religion, which he has so mercifully sent to guide us to eternal salvation; we have come now, under the open eye of Heaven, to consecrate to Him the beginning of our labours, and to ask of Him their prosperous completion. To Him we submit the judgment of our spirits; and, conscious as we are, that the way in which we worship the God of our fathers is by many called heresy, and every where spoken against; it is our consolation and joy to be permitted to appeal to Him, and to believe that He, who looketh not on the *outward appearance*, but on *the heart*, will approve our purpose, and graciously accept our humble offering. It is a small thing to be judged of man's judgment; he who judgeth us is the Lord.

As, therefore, the tribe of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh,—who, when they had built an altar for themselves on the other side of Jordan, were accused by their brethren of revolting from the true worship of God,—answered in that bold appeal and said: “The Lord, God of Gods—the Lord, God of Gods, he knoweth, and all Israel shall know, if it be in rebellion, or if in transgression against the Lord, that we have built us an altar”^{*}—so, Christian friends, if any of our brethren should imagine that this our altar is erecting in opposition to the truth, or the influence of our common Christianity, let us make the same appeal; not doubting that they will receive it with the same ready candour. For although we have been led by the dictates of our conscience and our honest understanding of the scriptures of truth, to withdraw from their temples, it is *not* in the spirit of rebellion or hostility; though we are about erecting another altar, it is not on the other side of Jordan, and need not destroy their confidence or friendship. We place ourselves under the broad banner of those protestant principles, which are the present glory of Christendom. We claim, and in this land the claim will not be denied us, to have our rights of conscience respected, and to be left accountable to God only; and we trust that we are ready freely and fully to extend to others the invaluable privilege so dear to ourselves.

It is true that we differ in some points, and, as we conceive, in some important points of religious faith, from many of the disciples of our common Lord. The Church has in every age had divisions. It is not strange that finite minds should vary in their judgments respecting infinite things. While we see darkly, it is to be expected that we should see differently; and this difference cannot be sinful, unless it overthrow the foundations of holiness and piety, or occasion the destruction of the spirit of the gospel. It is they who have *not the spirit* of Christ, that are none of his. While, therefore, our allegiance

^{*} Judges, xxii. 22.

to conscience, to truth, and to God, compels us to rear these walls of separate worship, we have unspeakable joy in the belief, that the great body of Christians are serving the same universal sovereign—pursuing the same holy end; and that, when we shall leave this abode of imperfect knowledge for that blessed state in which imperfection shall be done away, then, all seeing as they are seen, and knowing as they are known, shall unite in one worship in the one Temple of which God himself shall be the light and glory. In that day, when, according to our ascended Saviour's prediction, "all shall be one even as he and the Father are one;" in that day, it shall be our happiness to understand alike the nature of that union of the Blessed Jesus with our Heavenly Father, concerning which we are now at variance. It is with such feelings and anticipations that we proceed to lay the corner stone of our religious edifice.

I have now completed the task which I assigned myself. I again beg of you to excuse inadvertencies, and to pardon me if, perchance, any of my language should appear improperly confident or disrespectful. All such, if any such there should seem to be, I regret and disclaim.

I am, respectfully,

And with Christian salutations,

Your's, &c.

New-York, May 11th, 1820.

Inscription deposited under the Corner Stone of the First Congregational Church, referred to by Dr. M'Leod.

This is Life Eternal—to know THEE, the only TRUE GOD, and JESUS CHRIST, whom thou hast sent.

THIS CORNER STONE

OF THE

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF NEW-YORK,

DEDICATED TO THE WORSHIP OF THE ONLY GOD,

THROUGH THE ONLY MEDIATOR,

Founded upon the great principles of the *Reformation*—the sufficiency of the Scriptures, the right of private judgment and liberty of conscience ;

WAS LAID,

With earnest prayer for the acceptance and blessing of God,

On Saturday, the 29th of April, 1820.

“ Call no man master upon earth, for one is your master, even *Christ*, and all ye are Brethren.”

“ In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee and bless thee.”

THIS SOCIETY WAS FOUNDED,

May 24th, 1819 ;

INCORPORATED

November 15th, 1819.

