

FULNESS OF THE GODHEAD DWELLING IN CHRIST
ILLUSTRATED IN A DISCOURSE
DELIVERED AT HAVERHILL, (New Hampshire) ON LORD'S DAY,
APRIL 17, 1814.

BY CALEB BURGE, A.M;
Minister of the 'Gospel.
BOSTON;

www.CreationismOnline.com

A DISCOURSE.

COLOSSIANS 2, 8, 9.

BEWARE LEST ANY MAN SPOIL YOU THROUGH PHILOSOPHY AND VAIN DECEIT, AFTER THE TRADITION' OF MEN, AFTER THE RUDIMENTS OF THE WORLD, AND NOT AFTER CHRIST; FOR IN HIM DWELLETH ALL THE FULNESS OF THE GODHEAD BODILY.

THE apostle, inspired with a view of future things, foresaw dangers to which the Church would be exposed, which are of quite a serious and alarming nature. He foresaw that the followers of Christ would be exposed, and their faith be in danger of being spoiled. He foresaw the very characters who would introduce the evil, and the very manner in which they would succeed in spreading it. He foresaw that professed teachers of divine truth, more fond of philosophical research, than the labor of examining the holy Scriptures, would, after the rudiments of the world, introduce their imaginary discoveries into the sacred desk, and attempt to bring down the system of revealed religion, to tie standard of their own conceptions. He foresaw that after men had thus left Christ, and the plain instructions of his word, to follow the deductions of their own reason, their research. es. would result, in a denial of the essential divinity of the Savior; that they would confidently conclude, that the fulness of the Godhead could not dwell bodily in him; that the thing itself is 'philosophically impossible, and therefore untrue. He foresaw that many honest minds, which might not be capable of discovering the vain deceit of such reasoning, would, in this way, be in danger of being bewildered, and led to deny an article of the Christian scheme, of such fundamental importance, that a denial of it would spoil them for disciples of Christ. Foreseeing these dangers, he has, like a faithful apostle, pointed them out. He has plainly told us of the awful consequences of giving heed to such deceit. He has faithfully warned us to beware of the man who would, through philosophy, lead us to doubt, whether the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily in Christ. How evident is the very object, which the apostle had in view, when he wrote this passage! How plainly has he pointed out the danger he apprehended! How faithfully has he warned his disciples to beware of it! How plainly too, has he, in this very place, borne testimony to the essential divinity of Christ! Indeed, had he lived in our day, what stronger, more explicit, and unequivocal language could he have used! He assures us, that all the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily in Christ. As though he had said, 'Beware that you are not deceived. Be assured of this important truth, the fulness of the Godhead actually dwells in Christ. Be careful that you be not deceived, in this important matter. Though philosophy may dispute it, and seem to demonstrate to the contrary, yet be not deceived. Listen not to such deceit. If you do, it will spoil your faith; it will spoil you for a disciple of Christ.'

My object, at present, is to show from Scripture, that, notwithstanding the objections of philosophy, the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Christ. By the fulness of the Godhead, we are to understand those attributes, powers and honors, which belong exclusively to the one eternal and self-existent God.

If it can be shown that all these belong to Jesus. Christ, it will follow, irresistibly, that he is a divine person, or truly God. That they do, is evident, because in the Scriptures, the divine attributes are ascribed to him—the works which God alone can do are said to be done by him—he taught himself that he was God—the names and titles of God are given him—and divine worship is paid him.

Omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, immutability and eternity are attributes which belong to no being, except the self-existent God. All these, however, must be implied in the fulness of the Godhead, and these the Scriptures assure us dwell in Christ.

Omnipotence dwells in him. He calls himself the Almighty. To John the Revelator he said, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." Just before he left his disciples, "Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying, All power is given unto me, in heaven and in earth." He is also said by the apostle to "uphold all things by the word of his power."

Omnipresence dwells in him. He declared, "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Before he departed from his disciples to ascend to his Father, having commissioned them to publish his gospel, he for their encouragement added, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." How well was this calculated to deceive his disciples, unless he were really an omnipresent being! Yet no one can suppose that he was willing to deceive them. For even those

who allow him no dignity greater than that of a human being, yet grant that he was an honest man. But how could he be always with his disciples to the end of the world, and be in all places where two or three were met in his name unless he is, in his own nature, omnipresent? How, otherwise, could he be in heaven, and on earth, at the same time, agreeably to his own declaration? "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven."

Omniscience also dwells in him. John testified this of him when he said, that "he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what was in man." Matthew testifies of him that he "knew the thoughts" of men. And Christ himself declares, "I am he which searches the reins and hearts, and I will give unto every one of you according to your works."

Immutability also dwells in him. This the apostle declares when he says, "Jesus Christ the same, yesterday, and to-day, and forever." And again when he says, that the heavens and the earth shall be changed; "but thou art the same and thy years shall not fail."

Eternity also dwells in him. He is the "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending" of all things. His "goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." He "was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever, the earth was." Of himself he declared, "before Abraham was I am." Thus the Scriptures represent, that all the attributes which constitute the fulness of the Godhead dwell in Christ.

But not only so, but the works which God alone can do are said to be done by him. It is a work which belongs to God alone to create and uphold all things. But, the Scriptures declare that this is done by Christ. "In the beginning was the Word," says John, "and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." "All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made." "By him," saith the apostle, "were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in the earth, visible and invisible; whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created, by him, and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist."

It belongs exclusively to God to forgive sins. This power Christ claims as his. This he did, when he said to the man sick of the palsy, - "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." Then the Jews were greatly enraged against him, and accused him of blasphemy, because he had proposed to perform a work, which none has authority to perform except God. But he did not pretend to deny that he had performed such a work. Instead of denying, he rather acknowledged it. Instead of attempting to moderate their rage, by qualifying explanations, he silenced them by another display of the same power and authority. He gave them ocular proof that he had, in himself, power and authority to perform those works, which belong exclusively to the eternal God. He said to the sick man, whose sins he had just pardoned, "I say unto thee arise, take up thy bed and walk." The paralytic heard his, almighty mandate, and immediately arose, in perfect health. Observe the manner in which our Savior spoke. He did not say as, his disciples, always said, whenever they performed miraculous cures, "the Lord make thee whole," but he said either explicitly or implicitly, 'I make thee whole; I say unto thee arise; in my own name and by my own power, I perform the peculiar works of Almighty God.' The same manner may be observed, respecting all the miracles which he wrought. He cast out devils, raised the dead, rebuked the winds and the sea, by the word of his power, in his own name and authority.

Thus we see that the Scriptures ascribe to Christ, also, the works, which necessarily belong to none, except the self-existent and eternal God. Hence it is evident that the fulness of the God-head dwells in him.

But further, Christ taught himself, that he was God. He declared, in the most unequivocal terms, that he and his Father were one. He made this declaration, under circumstances, which would have forbid it, if it had not been true, in the most natural and unqualified sense. The Jews came to him, while he was walking in Solomon's porch, and said to him, "How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be Christ, tell us plainly." Observe their request. They desire our Savior to tell them whether he were the Christ, and to do it plainly. Would he, under these circumstances, give them an answer which was calculated to mislead and deceive them? He certainly would not. Yet he answered them strictly according to their request. He did it plainly. He answered them; "I told you, and ye believed not; the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me." "I and my Father are one." Now if he was one with the Father, only in a low and qualified sense, how unaccountable is it, if he were honest, that he should give them such an answer for a plain one; an answer so directly calculated to mislead them. At this answer they were enraged and took up stones to stone him, under an apprehension that he had blasphemed. "For a good work," said they, "we stone thee not, but for blasphemy, and because that thou being a man makes thyself God." It is evident that, from his conversation, on this occasion, in which he spoke plainly, they understood that he designed to make himself God, not merely in a limited, but in an unlimited sense. And indeed, from the very terms of his answer, they could not understand him otherwise. His enemies, who saw and heard, always accused him of making himself God. This was their principal charge against him. But it was a charge, which he never once denied; either explicitly or implicitly. It was what he often acknowledged. It was what the words and actions of his life confirmed. "He well knew that it was on a charge of this, that he was arrested, and finally executed. He knew, too, that he had spoken of himself, his powers and character, in terms which were very offensive to the Jews—that he had again and again, used expressions, which led them to think, that he challenged to himself prerogatives, and powers which can belong to no mere creature. He was conscious too, that, whenever they brought a charge against him, for these high pretensions, instead of saying anything to remove unreasonable jealousies, on their part, his replies were always such, as actually confirmed them; in the opinion, that he claimed an equality with God—Finally he suffered and died under the

imputation of making and maintaining this high claim, without ever saying a word, either to deny, or refute the charge; or even giving a hint that it was unjust." How perfectly unaccountable is all this, on the ground that Christ did not intend to make himself God.

If however, he designed to be thus understood, of which indeed there can be no doubt, it is no more than is testified of him by the uniform tenor of the Scriptures. For these, everywhere, ascribe to him the names and titles peculiar to God. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." "This is the true God and eternal life." "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." Thomas, awaking from his unbelief, cried out, "My Lord and my God." "To the only wise God our Savior," saith the apostle Jude, "be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever." "Whose are the fathers," saith Paul, "and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever." He is also called. the Lord of lords, and King of kings. "The Lamb shall overcome them, for he is the Lord of lords, and the King of kings." His own testimony is, "I am the first and the last; I am he that lives, and was dead; and behold I am alive forever more." "These things saith the first and the last, which was dead and is alive." "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending." These declarations of Scripture are perfectly unintelligible, unless they teach that Christ is the supreme and eternal God.

But once more—Christ actually receives that worship and honor, which are alone due' and with propriety belong, to the fulness of the Godhead. The women who met Jesus, on the morning of his resurrection, came and held him by the feet and worshipped him. Soon after this, Jesus appeared to his disciples, on a mountain in Galilee, where he had before appointed to meet them, and there they worshipped him. When Thomas, who at first discredited the report of the disciples concerning his resurrection, actually saw him himself, he also worshipped him and called him his God. After all this, Jesus led the eleven to Bethany, where he lifted up his hands and blessed them, after which he was parted from them and carried up into heaven. And there also they worshipped him. After his ascension to glory, they still continued the same practice of rendering him divine worship. Stephen, under the hands of his persecutors, called on the name of the Lord Jesus, and prayed, "Lay not this sin to their charge." "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." The apostle Paul also honored and worshipped him as God, and prayed to him and besought him thrice, that he would take from him the thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, which was given to buffet him. Indeed, in the primitive age of Christianity, the practice of praying to Christ was so common, that Christians were ever known by the appellation of them that call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Examples of their being thus denominated are numerous, in the New Testament. Nor is the Church on earth the only body which render divine worship to Jesus Christ. The command, "let all the angels worship him," was long ago published, in the upper world. When the beloved disciple to whom the Revelation was made, in the isle of Patmos, was favored with a view of the society of heaven, ad their sublime employment, he particularly noticed, that they were all obeying this command. "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof for thou was slain and has redeemed us to God, by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. And has made us unto our God, kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth.

And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders; and the number of them, was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying, with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, forever and ever." Is it not evident from these testimonies and declarations of Scripture, that all di. vine perfections belong to Jesus Christ? Is there an attribute, a work, a name, or an honor which is peculiar to the self-existent God, and distinguishes him from all other beings, which is not in the Scriptures, ascribed in the clearest manner to Jesus Christ? If the ascription of these attributes, works, names, and honors, to Jehovah proves that he is God, the ascription of them to Jesus Christ equally proves that he is God. If it does not, it is impossible to prove that there is any such being in the universe.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. Since the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Christ, we infer, that all those passages of Scripture, which speak of him as sustaining a subordinate character, or as being inferior to the Father, must have reference to his human nature. Christ possesses two natures. He is not only called God, but he is also called "the man Christ Jesus." In his divine, nature, in which the Godhead dwells, he is in every respect, equal with the Father. It is in this nature that he and his Father are one. It was in this nature that he created all things, whether in heaven, or on earth. But, in his human nature, he was born of the Virgin, increased in stature and knowledge, hungered and thirsted, like other men. It was in this nature that he was made in the likeness of his human brethren, in a capacity to be touched with the feelings of their infirmities. These two natures were united in Christ. The divine nature was the Word, which, in the beginning was with God, and which was God, which, afterwards, when the human nature was conceived, was made flesh and dwelt among us. These two natures being united, the Scriptures sometimes speak of him as a divine being, and sometimes as a human being. He also speaks of himself in the same way. With reference to his divine nature, he says, "I and my Father are one." With reference to his human nature he says, "My Father is greater than I." Thus we may explain all those passages, which proclaim the Divinity of Christ, according to their most natural import, in perfect consistency with the natural meaning of those passages which represent him as being inferior to God. This, as far as I understand the subject, is true of no scheme of the character of Christ, but this. On all other schemes which I have ever seen, there are two classes of Scriptures which, according to their natural import, are totally irreconcilable. Some

must be expunged from the sacred volume, and others twisted entirely into a new shape, and made to speak a language which they never were intended to speak, and after all, no harmony is produced. But if men will subject their reason to revelation, and allow Christ two natures, which the Scriptures evidently give him, all this difficulty at once vanishes; the Scriptures are completely harmonious; and although Christ was the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, yet the fulness of the Godhead dwells in him. Hence,

2. We infer the exceeding folly of rejecting any particular doctrine merely because it is incomprehensible. On this ground, if we would be consistent, we must renounce the whole Bible, and then the material world, and at last our own existence, because all these are incomprehensible. After all our philosophical boasting of experiment and demonstration, we can never comprehend a single principle of nature's laws. We may, in many instances, ascertain the effects which they will produce, in given circumstances, but can never tell the reason why. We may ascertain modes in which matter exists, but can never tell what matter is. We may examine the spires of grass on which we tread, but we can never comprehend them. The truth is, incomprehensibility is a divine stamp which God has put on all his works. If then the Bible is a revelation from God, reason climates that it must bear the same stamp which is impressed on his other works. If then the Bible contained nothing mysterious and incomprehensible, reason would dictate that it was untrue. The objection would rise from the other hand with irresistible force; this book, which professes to come from God, is destitute of the divine mark which God has put on all his works. It is a forgery. Hence it is evident that all who reject the Bible or any of its doctrines, on account of mystery or incomprehensibility, are justly chargeable with the greatest folly. Yet as great as the folly is, men are guilty of it. "Vain man would be wise, though he be born like the wild ass's colt."

3. If the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Christ, it will follow that it is our duty to render him divine honor. He is truly God, if then we worship God we must worship him. Indeed if we do not worship him we cannot worship God. Hence this solemn declaration of inspired truth, "he that honored not the Son, honored not the Father which hath sent him." We also learn in what manner we ought to worship him. We are bound to honor him as a being possessing, in himself, all those incommunicable attributes, powers and honors, which constitute the fulness of the Godhead. This is also agreeable to inspired truth; for it is the will of God "that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." If they honor the Father as the omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, immutable and eternal God, even so must they honor the Son. If they honor the Father as the uncreated, and underived fountain of all being and blessedness, even so must they honor the Son. How great then must be the guilt and danger of all those who remain impenitent and unbelieving!

How great the guilt and danger of all those who slight Christ! By living in this manner, they neglect the great salvation, withhold honor from the Father, and remain in opposition to the fulness of the Godhead. With what pressing importunity, should such be exhorted to immediate repentance, to humble faith in Christ, that they may appease the anger of a slighted Savior, and secure the friendship of an eternal and infinite God.

4. Since Christ is truly God, we infer that there is an infinite fulness and sufficiency in the atonement which he has made for sin. As possessing a divine nature, he is capable of offering a sacrifice for sin, which is infinitely meritorious.

The dignity and greatness of his character rendered his mediatorial work infinitely important and consequential. The divine nature alone, however, would not have been in a capacity, without the human nature, to atone for sin. For "without the shedding of blood there is no remission" of sin, and without the human nature, Christ would not have been in a capacity to suffer. Neither would his created nature alone have been sufficient to procure pardon of sin and conciliate the divine favor for guilty men. But Jesus Christ, God man, was abundantly qualified for the arduous and momentous work. He was "such an High Priest as became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." Here, sinners, in Christ you may find a safe hiding place from the tempest of God's anger. "Look unto him and be saved all the ends of the earth." Behold in him a divine fulness of pardon and salvation. It is Christ, God manifest in the flesh, whom God hath made unto his people, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and complete redemption. All are invited to Christ, even the most vile, guilty, and miserable. If you wish for a haven of rest for your weary souls; come to Christ. If you seek a removal of the burden of your sins; come to Christ, and you shall find relief. If you desire permanent happiness, sublime pleasure, solid joy, ever fresh and increasing delight; you shall find it in Christ. Come to him. Drink of the waters of his salvation. Taste the sweetness of divine forgiveness; and what you have hitherto considered gain you will count as loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ.

5. We are led by our subject to admire the wisdom and goodness of God, in laying our help on one so mighty to save. His wisdom in this is above the comprehension of created intelligences. Here also is exhibited, unbounded goodness, love and compassion. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." How ought we then to flee to Christ, as our only hope, admiring, praising and adoring his unparalleled love.

6. As the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Christ, we see to what an infinite height the redeemed are raised, by virtue of their union with him. "Behold," exclaimed an apostle, "what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" Believers are united to Christ; they are therefore heirs of God, and joint heirs with his Son. Jesus Christ is a divine person, the fulness of the Godhead dwells in him; the human nature, therefore, which he hath taken into union with himself is infinitely dignified and honorable. Believers are united with the man Christ; they are therefore exalted, in honor, above all the angels of glory. Christ is

the head, and believers are members, in particular, of a glorious body. Christ is a Bridegroom, and believers are his bride. They share in his honors and the riches of his love. They are "raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." No matter then if the world despise them; for God honor: them. No matter if the world condemns them; for Christ has redeemed them, and God has justified them. Rejoice, ye saints, in the loving kindness of your God. Then are ye Christ's disciples, if ye keep his commandments. Keep them therefore, and wait with patience your appointed time, ever looking for the coming of the Lord. Wait, with holy joy, and humble confidence, the fruition of your glorious hope. "Eye bath not seen, nor ear heard, neither bath entered into the heart of man the things which God bath prepared, for them that love him."

AMEN.

www.CreationismOnline.com