

A SERMON ON THE GODHEAD OF CHRIST;
OR THE DIVINITY OF THE SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD,

BY THE

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TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE LORD BROUGHAM AND VAUX.
I HAVE TAKEN THE LIBERTY TO DEDICATE THIS DISCOURSE, ON THE DIVINITY OF THE SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD,
TO YOUR LORDSHIP.
AND REMAIN, YOUR LORDSHIP'S VERY OBEDIENT, HUMBLE SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

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PREFACE.

Let all the Unitarian preachers in the kingdom, saith the author, come forward and answer this discourse. If they are able, let them answer it fairly. It is incumbent on them to do this. Their honor; their character is at stake. If they are not able to do this, for ever hereafter let them hold their peace on the great subject of Christ's Divinity.

The author of this discourse also (who is a man far advanced in life, and near to the silent grave, and who mourns sincerely for the spread of error on the earth,) humbly takes the liberty, with all deference, to solicit such of the Nobility, Gentry, and others, as acquiesce in the doctrine of the Established Church, to unite with him in making this discourse public, if it shall be found deserving of it, through all his Majesty's dominions, as he considers the Unitarian principles to be most odious and offensive to Almighty GOD, and totally subversive of all true religion and goodness in the world.

" For men to worship Jesus Christ as GOD," says a celebrated Unitarian preacher of the present day—" they might as well fall down and adore the moon, or worship an image of stone:" and he confidently affirms that the crying sin of Christendom, (so far as doctrine is concerned) is the paying divine honors to Jesus Christ, as to God. And a noted Unitarian preacher, some years ago, openly declared that all the evils that ever existed in church or state, originated from that single circumstance, the worshipping Jesus Christ, as GOD; and that he would never rest till he had pulled that idol, Christ, from off his throne.

Awful indeed! Surely, language such as this is blasphemous to a high degree. Sentiments like these are, indeed, dismally horrid! Let mankind then, at large, in reading this and other discourses on the same subject, judge for themselves:—let them, we say, at this time, judge for themselves.

Would it not be prudent in the Unitarian preachers of the present day, to pause a moment, and consider well what they are about? They are public men. Most assuredly then are they doing much good, or incalculable mischief in the world. If their doctrines should be found the very reverse of truth, they will have a most awful account to give, at the great day. " Take heed," says the great and learned St. Paul to Timothy, " to thy doctrine."

The author of this discourse acknowledges himself greatly indebted to a late divine, on the subject. The thoughts, however, here exhibited, are his own thoughts: this he affirms in the most solemn manner. May it be accepted by that Divine and Almighty Savior, for whose glory it is designed. May it also contribute, at the least in some small degree, to check the progress of vice, and to encourage virtue and religion among us. This is the ardent wish and prayer of the author.

SERMON.

REVELATION OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE.

Chapter 5. Ver. 11-14.

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, for ever and ever. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that lives for ever and ever.

ATHEISM and superstition are weapons which have been often employed by the devil, against the truth.

An excess of stupidity it was that formed superstition; and Atheism owes its origin to corruption. A very little knowledge, however, united with a small degree of integrity, are sufficient to preserve us from both.

Shocked is our reason, and our minds -recoil to see fire, air, earth, water, men, beasts, devils themselves, placed by idolaters on the sovereign throne, and elevated to honors supreme.

It is a question decided, whether a Creator exists, wherever there is a creature. Everywhere we meet with proofs of a first cause. Within us, and without us; in our souls, and in our bodies. An infinite Being follows and surrounds us. These, then, are not Satan's most formidable arms. Another class of arguments is there against our mysteries.

There is a system of error which seems to proceed from the bosom of truth; and to have been extracted from the very substance of reason and religion. That system we mean which tends to rank the Savior of the world with simple creatures. In appearance, there is a distance so great between an infant, born in a stable, and the Father of eternity; between that Jesus, who conversed with men, and that God, who, by the word of his power, upholds all things; between him who expired on a cross, and him who receives honors supreme on a throne, that we need not stand amazed if human reason judge these objects contradictory. This system seems also founded on virtue; it aims at supporting those excellencies, of which God seems most jealous, his divinity, his unity; it aims at preventing idolatry. The men, then, who defend this system, are the Phineases, the Eleasors, who draw their swords only to maintain the glory of Jehovah; they are the Elijahs, who are moved with jealousy for the Lord of Hosts; they are the Pauls, whose spirits are stirred at seeing the idolatry of Athens.. But if the partisans of error are so zealous, should the ministers of the truth sleep in indolence? If the divinity of the Son of God be attacked with weapons so formidable, should not we oppose them with weapons more formidable still? We also are moved with jealousy for the Lord of Hosts.

To prove, then, the doctrine of Christ's divinity, we will not refer you to the philosophers of the age. We will not ask you to hear even your own teachers. They are the elders; they are the angels; they are the ten thousand times ten thousand, before the throne of God, who render to Jesus Christ honors supreme.

It is then in relation to the doctrine of our Savior's divinity that we are going to consider the words of the text. We might indeed inquire, first, who are the twenty four elders? We might ask, who are the four living creatures? But we will confine ourselves to one single subject, the doctrine of Christ's divinity. We will then ground this doctrine on three propositions.

FIRST.—Jesus Christ is adorable, and adored supremely, -by beings of the highest order.

SECOND.—To suppose that God. communicates the honors of supreme adoration to a simple creature, implies a contradiction.

THIRD.—Our ideas on this article are in unison with the ideas of the first fathers of the Christian church.

We join the term supreme, to the term adoration. This we do, to avoid an equivocation, of which this proposition is susceptible. The Scripture nowhere distinguishes many sorts of religious adoration. Religious adoration is distinguished from civil adoration. Thus we are told that Lot, seeing two angels, rose up to meet them, and bowed himself with his face toward the ground. In the Hebrew it is, he adored them. Numberless examples have we of the same kind. To remove this equivocation, we have affirmed 'that Jesus Christ is adorable and adored supremely.

But let us pause a moment, and well consider wherein this supreme adoration consists.

Supreme adoration supposes three dispositions in him who renders it. It supposes, also, three excellencies in him to whom it is rendered.

FIRST.

Supreme adoration supposes the most transcendent perfections in him, to whom it is rendered. It supposes also, an homage of mind, relative to those perfections, in him who renders it. Adoration is a disposition of our minds, by which we acknowledge that God excels all other beings. We acknowledge that he has no superior, no equal; we acknowledge him to be supremely wise, supremely powerful,

and happy; we acknowledge that he possessed all conceivable perfections, in the most elevated manner, and in exclusion to every other being. In this sense it is said, our God is one Lord; he only is wise he only hath immortality.

SECOND.

Supreme adoration supposes that he, to whom it is rendered, is supremely good. Goodness is a perfection: it is the goodness of God which relates God to us; it is that which moves towards us all those other attributes, the 'immensity and the glory of which confounds us. Adoration- supposes in him who renders it, an adherence of heart, by which he cleaves to God, as to his supreme good. It is an effusion of soul, which makes the worshipper consider him as the source of all the advantages he now enjoys, or can ever enjoy. It makes him perceive that he derives from him life, motion, and being. It makes him say, Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. It is good for me to draw near to God. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

THIRD.

Adoration supposes in him to whom it is rendered, an absolute empire over all other beings that exist. It supposes in him who renders it, that perfect devotedness by which he acknowledges himself responsible to God for every instant of his duration. That there is no action, no circumstance, no breath, which ought not to be consecrated to him; it is that profound homage, by which a man owns that God only has a right to prescribe to him laws; to regulate his course of life; and that all the honors which are rendered to other beings, ought to be in subordination to the honor which is rendered to himself.

These truths being thus set forth, we affirm, Jesus Christ is supremely adorable, and supremely adored by beings of the highest order. He is supremely adorable, is a question of right; he is supremely*adored, is a question of fact. What the Scripture says of Jesus Christ, fully, decides the question of right. The three excellencies supposed in him to whom adoration is paid, are ascribed to him in Scripture. We are there also required to render to him those three homages which suppose adoration in him who renders them. That eminence of perfections, which claims the homage of the mind, is attributed to him in Scripture. What perfection is there that is not, by the sacred writers, ascribed to Jesus Christ?

Is it OMNIPOTENCE?

He is the Almighty.—Rev. 1.

Is it OMNISCIENT?

He knows all things: he needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man: he searches the heart and the reins.—John 21.

Is it OMNIPRESENCE?

Where two or three are gathered together in his name, there is he in the midst of them. Matt. 18.

Is it UNCHANGEABLENESS?

He is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.—Heb. 13.—When the heavens perish, he shall endure; when they shall be changed like a vesture, he shall be the same; and his years shall have no end.

Is it ETERNITY?

He existed in the beginning.—John 1. He was before Abraham. He is, he was, he is to come.—

Rev. 1.—Hence it is that, the Scripture attributes to him an equality with his Father. He counted it no robbery to be equal with God. In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father. In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. We are in him that is true, even in Jesus Christ: this is the true God, and eternal life. Hence he is called the great God.—Tit. 2.—God over all, blessed for evermore.—Rom. 9.

It is wonderful, and we are overwhelmed with amaze, to see what constructions the Unitarians put on these grand and sublime passages of Scripture. We have not time or room here to lay them before the world. They explain away the spirit, and the force, and the meaning of them. Awful indeed will be their situation, if God shall deal with them in a similar manner, as he has said, and explain away their names and their part in the Book of Life.

SECOND.

The Scripture attributes to Jesus Christ that supreme goodness, which is the foundation of that second homage, required of the worshipper, the homage of the heart. Hence we are directed, by the Holy Scriptures, to consider him as the Author of all the blessings we enjoy.

If the heavens, rolling above our heads, serve us for a pavilion; if the earth be firm beneath our feet, it is he who is the Author of both. Thou, Lord, hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thine hands.—Psalm 102.—If innumerable creatures

contribute to the happiness of man, it is he who has formed them. Without him nothing was made that was made.—John 1.—If the Jews gained immortal victories over the nations which they defeated, it was he who procured them.

The angel of his presence, he saved them. In his love and in his pity he redeemed and carried them all the days of old.—Psalm 63.—If the church has emerged from the thickest darkness, it was he who made it vanish. He is the true light, who lighted every man that cometh into the world.—John 1.—If we are reconciled to God, it was he who made our 'peace. We have redemption through his blood.—Eph. 1.—It pleased the Father; by him, to reconcile all things unto himself, and by the blood of his cross to unite things in heaven and things on earth.—Col. 1.—If we have received the Comforter, it was he who sent him. It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.—John 16.—If, after death, our souls be carried into the bosom of God, it will be by his Almighty hands. Lord Jesus,—said St. Stephen;—receive my spirit.—Acts vii.—If our bodies arise from their graves, after they have been reduced to ashes, he alone will re-animate them. He is the resurrection and 'the life. He that believeth in him, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever lives, and believeth in him, shall never die.

THIRD.

Empire over all creatures, which is the third ground of adoration, is by the Scriptures attributed to Jesus Christ. This it is that requires the third homage of the worshipper, devotedness of life.

I saw in the night visions,—said the prophet Daniel,—and behold, one like the Son of Man, came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days; and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom; that all people, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away; and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, chap. vii.—The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee; ask of me, and I shall give thee the Heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.—Psalm 2.—Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; the scepter of thy kingdom, is a right scepter.—Psalm 40.—The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.—Psalm 110.—The question of right, then, is sufficiently proved. Now follows the question of fact. As Jesus Christ is supremely adorable, so he is supremely adored, by beings of the highest order: this adoration is recommended by Scripture. Let all the angels of God worship him.—Heb. 1.—The Father judges no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son, that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father.—John 5.—He hath received a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow.—Phil. 2.—The four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him who lives for ever and ever. All the particular acts of adoration are, by the direction of the holy Scriptures, rendered to Jesus Christ.

These are reputed acts of Idolatry, when rendered to any but God.

PRAYER is addressed to Jesus Christ. And they stoned Stephen, praying and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.—Acts 7.

CONFIDENCE is an homage rendered to Jesus Christ. Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. Rom. 10.

BAPTISM is an homage rendered to Jesus Christ. Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son.—Matt. 28.

SWEARING is an homage rendered to Jesus Christ. I say the truth in Christ, I lie not; my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost.—Rom. 9.

BENEDICTION is an homage rendered to Jesus Christ. Grace be to you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.—Rom. 1.

SUPREME PRAISE is an homage paid to Jesus Christ. And I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures, and the elders, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength; to the Lamb be honor, and glory and blessing, forever.

Let us weigh that expression; before my face. Thou shalt have no other Gods before my face. But here the elders, the angels, the ten thousand times ten thousand in heaven, in the presence of God, adore Jesus Christ, and pay the same honors to him as they pay to Jehovah himself, seated on his azure throne.

Let us now collect all these reflections into one point of view.

Jesus Christ is not the supreme God, (thus our opponents are obliged to speak) but he possessed that eminence of perfections, which constitutes the essence of the supreme God. Like him, he is eternal; he is omnipresent; he is almighty; he knows all things; he searcheth the heart and the reins; he possesses the fulness of the Godhead, and, like him, merits the most profound homage of the mind.

Jesus Christ is not the supreme God; but he possessed that goodness which is the grand character of the supreme God. Like God supreme, he made heaven and earth; he formed all creatures; he wrought miracles for the ancient church; he enlightens; he sanctifies; he saves us; he raises us from the dead; he glorifies-us; and, like him, merits the most profound homage of the heart.

Jesus Christ is not the supreme God; but we are commanded to worship him. St. Stephen prays to Jesus Christ, as if he were God. The faithful confide in Jesus Christ, as if he were God. They swear by Jesus Christ; they bless in the name of Jesus Christ, as if he were God. Who does not, in a moment, perceive these contradictions?

Our first proposition, then, is fully proved. Jesus Christ is supremely adorable; Jesus Christ is supremely adored, by beings of the highest order. But it implies a contradiction, to suppose that the honors of supreme adoration should be communicated to a simple creature.

This is the second part of this discourse.

SECOND.

Supreme adoration cannot be communicated to any being, unless the above-named perfections be communicated to that being. Omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, independence, eternity must be communicated to him.

Supreme adoration cannot be communicated to any being, unless supreme goodness be communicated to him.

Supreme adoration cannot be communicated to any being, unless absolute empire be communicated to him also.

To communicate, then, these perfections to a simple creature; is to communicate the Godhead to him, so that what had a beginning, becomes what had no beginning, and so on.

How ridiculous! how absurd! Absurd is it also to suppose that a simple creature can become possessed of these perfections. To affirm, then, that a created being can become supremely adorable, implies a contradiction. If, then, we have proved that Jesus Christ is supremely adorable, we have proved he is the supreme God. Important, then, as our second proposition may be, we should consider it fully proved; did not the Scripture seem to intimate that a right to supreme adoration is a right acquired by Jesus Christ, that it is ascribed to him on account of what he did in time, and not for what he was from eternity. The Father judges no man,—says Jesus Christ,—himself, but hath committed all judgment to the Son, that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. Here Jesus Christ does not require men to honor him, by reason of the purity and great excellence of his nature, but on account of that power to judge the world, -which was given him in time. He made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God, also, hath highly exalted him. Here, again, Jesus Christ seems to have received this exaltation in -virtue only of that perfect obedience and humiliation he rendered to his Father. In the text, also, it seems as if those acclamations are offered to him, on account only of that sacrifice which he offered in time. Thou art worthy to take the book, and open the seals thereof; for thou was slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood. This difficulty comes from the equivocal meaning of the term worship. This may regard those infinite perfections, which render him who possesses them, worthy of supreme honors; or that particular honor, which God merits by the performance of some new work in time.

The first sort of adoration cannot be acquired. The second kind of adoration, that which is rendered to God in virtue of some new achievement; that honor he acquires.

Far, then, from proving that he who acquires this new honor, does not possess essential Deity, it is, on the contrary, an argument invincible, that divinity is essential to him. God himself is essentially adorable; yet every new favor he grants, is an acquisition of a new title of adoration. Let us apply this remark to Jesus Christ. As God, he is essentially adorable; but Jesus Christ may confer some new favor upon us. In this sense he may acquire a new title of adoration; as he affords us a new motive to adore him. What more powerful motive can be proposed than that of his profound abasement for our salvation. The inspired writers, then, in the passages before cited, speak of this latter kind of adoration; they do not say, Jesus Christ hath acquired that divine essence, which renders him essentially adorable: this would imply a contradiction. They only say, that by the benefits he hath communicated to us, he hath acquired over us a new title of adoration. This is clear, in regard to the Phillipian text. St. Paul, far from saying Jesus Christ was not supremely adorable, till after his humiliation, affirms the contrary. He says, Jesus Christ thought it no robbery to be equal with God, before he was found in fashion as a man; that before he took upon him the form of a servant, he was in the form of God.

This shall suffice on the second proposition,

Let us attend a few moments to the third; and let us prove that, our ideas on this subject are in perfect unison with the ideas of the first fathers of the Christian church.

This is our third part.

One of the most celebrated members of the Romish communion has been the astonishment of the learned world, for declaring, that after he had made profound researches into antiquity, it appeared to him the doctrine of Christ's divinity was not generally received in the church, till after the council of Nice. Suffice it, however, to say, that this author has been a thousand times answered, both by our own divines, and by those also of the church of Rome. A treatise on this subject, by an able prelate of our own church, is in the hands of every scholar. There the author proves that the fathers, who lived before the council of Nice, did maintain, first, that Jesus Christ subsisted before his birth; secondly, that he was of the same essence with his Father; and, thirdly, that he subsisted with him from all eternity. To repeat the passages extracted from the fathers, by this author, is not the work of a sermon. Let us hear the following:

FIRST.

The fathers, who followed the doctrine of the Nicene council never pretended to teach new divinity. The Arians, on the contrary, boasted of being the inventors of their own system. The following passages of St. Athanasius proves the first member of this proposition. We demonstrate that our doctrine descended from teacher to teacher, down to us. But what father can you cite, to prove your sentiments? You find them all opposite to your opinions, and the devil only, who is the author of your system, can pretend to authenticate it.

The following passage of Theodorit proves the second member of the proposition.

They boast of being the first inventors of their doctrine; they glory in affirming, that what never entered into the mind of man before, has been revealed to them.

SECOND.

The Jews accused the primitive Christians of idolatry, for worshipping Jesus Christ as God. Here is a passage from Justin's dialogue with Trypho. The Jew - says to him, Your affirmation, Christ is God, appears to me not only an incredible paradox, but downright foolishness. Justin's answer will prove the second member of the proposition. I know,—replies he,—this discourse appears incredible, particularly to people of your nation, who neither believe nor understand the things of the Spirit of God.

THIRD.

The Heathens, also, reproached the Christians with adoring Jesus Christ; nor did the Christians deny their 'worshipping Jesus Christ as God.

Let us weigh these words of Arnobius. A Pagan makes this objection to him; You adore a mere man. If this were true,—replies Arnobius,—would not the benefits which he has so freely diffused, acquire him the title of a God? But as he is really God, without any ambiguity, do you think we will deny our paying him supreme honors? What, then, will some furiously ask, is Jesus Christ God? Yes: we answer, he is God; he is God over all heavenly powers.

FOURTH.

When any teachers rose up in the church; to injure the doctrine of Christ's divinity, they were reputed heretics, and, as such, rejected. Witness Artemon, Theodosius, Paul, of Samoseta. The latter lifted up a standard against the divinity of the Savior of the world; and six of the most celebrated bishops were chosen by the synod of Antioch, to write him a letter, in which they profess to believe that Jesus Christ subsisted from all eternity, with his Father.

FIFTH.

The fathers of the three first Centuries made an invariable, profession, of adoring but one Gods Yet the primitive Christians adored Jesus Christ. Witness Pliny's letter, which says, they Sang hymns to Jesus Christ, as to God. Witness Justin Martyr, who says, Christians religiously worship Father, Son, and Spirit. Witness that famous letter of the faithful, at Smyrna, whom the Heathens accused of paying divine honors to Polycarp.

It is impossible,—say these believers,—that we should abandon Jesus Christ, or worship any other but him.

We worship Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God: but in regard to the martyrs, disciples of Christ, and imitators of his virtues, we respect them for their invincible love to their Master and King. Hence it was that Paul, of Samoseta, who denied the divinity of Christ, would not allow the custom of singing hymns to his honor; and Eusebius uses this argument to prove the doctrine we are maintaining. The psalms and hymns,—says he,—composed a long time ago by the faithful, do they not proclaim that Jesus Christ is the Word of God, that he is God.

SIXTH.

Finally, let us weigh these words of Tertullian: Jesus Christ had the substance of the human nature, and the substance of the divine nature; on which account we say, he had a beginning, and he' had no beginning; he was natural and spiritual, weak and powerful, mortal and immortal; properties—adds this father,—which distinguish his human and divine nature.

Let us weigh these words of Hyppolitus, the martyr. Thou art he who exists always. Thou art with the Father, without beginning, and eternal, as well as the Holy Spirit. Again: let us weigh these words of Origen. In examining what doctrines are necessary to salvation, he puts this in the first class; Jesus Christ, who, being God, and becoming incarnate, did not cease to be God. Again: let us weigh these of Justin Martyr. They call us Atheists, because we do not adore their demons. We grant we are such, in regard to their gods; but not in regard to the true God, with whom we honor and worship the Son.

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