

**THE SUPREME GODHEAD
OF CHRIST, THE CORNER-
STONE OF CHRISTIANITY**

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The Supreme Godhead of Christ, the Corner-Stone of Christianity by William R. Gordon

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BY

WILLIAM R. GORDON, D.D.

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P R E F A C E .

THIS small volume was published six years ago. The author has received repeated applications for another edition, and in compliance with written and verbal requests, now reissues it, differently arranged and somewhat enlarged. He has abridged some arguments, omitted others for substitutes, more directly coming under the general heads of the discussion as here presented, expanded some, and added new matter; but not seriously to affect the original design of "multum in parvo." In its present revised form, he thinks it will be more acceptable to his readers, because presenting more prominently the peculiarity of discussion he deems of importance, in this all-important controversy.

The opponents of the Divinity of Christ, are ever appealing to REASON. The drift of their writings is to show, that the advocates of this doctrine have "most uncommon skulls;" that the imbecility, irrationality, irrelevancy, incompatibility, inanity, absurdity, etc., of our arguments, really impeach us before the tribunal of Reason; that our doctrine is contraband by the laws of common-sense; and impracticable to a philosophic faith. Just here, are we ready for defense; prepared to show, that as they professedly *admit* the veracity of the writers of the Bible, their

faith places them in a wilderness of dilemmas, all of vigorous growth from the soil of Reason. And if it can be done, they can have no reasonable objection that,

Each strong dilemma, in its turn and place,
Shall show their system in a desperate case.

At the same time, we disavow all intention to place them in any thing like a false position. The subject is too serious, and the interests of truth too weighty, to allow any such attempt, had we the disposition to be unfair in this respect. Our aim is to convince by well-founded argument, by assuming the very ground which we have often been represented as avoiding, and by pursuing a line of discussion with which they ought to be the last to find fault, who deal in *logical* expedients, to overwhelm our view of truth with an avalanche from the lofty summit of human reason. Taking our turn in this way, we sincerely hope may not be a matter of complaint to any of our readers, who may bestow reflection upon what has here been presented.

A writer, who has given a very lucid account of the system we oppose, informs us, that "Unitarians take the Bible in their hands, and sit down to read it, as plain unlettered Christians, and with prayer for divine illumination." We feel quite sure such is the most likely way of arriving at the truth; and for this very class of minds, disposed to receive the truth, with the simplicity and honesty of little children, from the sacred page, we write. We wish to show that our doctrine is fairly deducible from plain statements of Revelation, and that the admission of its opposite is incompatible with the reception of the Bible, as a rule of faith and practice; because the faith it enjoins and the practice it inculcates require us, as we think, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ, as an

original Being, uniting two natures in one person, the divine and the human, to effect the great purpose of our redemption. We think it quite unwise, *à priori*, to limit God, by saying this involves an impossibility; it is assuming the very thing to be proved. Now, if we take the Bible and "read it as plain unlettered Christians," and find *two* classes of didactic affirmations teaching us that Christ is both God and man; and if it involve no intrinsic absurdity, should God please to form such a union for a specific purpose, why should our doctrine be "a stumbling-block" or "foolishness" to any man, thus actuated by a sincere desire to know what directions are given in the way of elucidating the *answer* to that question, "What must I do to be saved?"

The mode of proving the divinity of Christ is the same employed to prove the divinity of the Father. It can be done in no other way. The arguments in the one case, from the Scriptures, are the same as in the other; and they are equally conclusive. They are *positive*, and can never be answered by *negative* ones. If we prove that Christ is *God*, that proposition is not disproved by the evidence that he is *man*.

The system we oppose is *Socinianism*. But although we prefer to call things by their right names, lest the use of this term should prove offensive, we have taken another as a matter of convenience, namely, *Unitarianism*; because it has been appropriated by the largest Body denying the divinity of our Lord, and is now by common consent understood to designate all who repudiate this point of Christian faith. We use it, however, under protest; for the writer, and all those who think with him, are in the strictest sense Unitarians, as they most firmly believe in the unity of God, and in the subordinate relation of Jesus Christ, as Messiah, Mediator, and Man, to the Father. Hence we yield that to which they are not exclusively entitled.

But there are other Bodies, besides the one referred to, who embrace Socinian doctrine, and are not ecclesiastically known by the term Unitarian, namely, *Christians*. One of their writers says in the history of this Sect : " With very few exceptions, they are not Trinitarians, averring that they can neither find the word nor the doctrine in the Bible. They believe 'the Lord, our Jehovah, is one Lord and purely one.' That 'Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God.' That the Holy Ghost is that divine unction with which our Saviour was anointed, the effusion that was poured out on the day of Pentecost ; and that it is a divine emanation of God by which he exerts an energy or influence on rational minds. While they believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, they are not Socinians or Humanitarians. Their prevailing belief is, that Jesus Christ existed with the Father before all worlds." In other words, they are *Arians*.*

Friends, (Hicksites.) One of this Body thus writes : " We believe in the divinity of Christ—a divinity not self-existing and independent, but derived from the Father, being the Holy Spirit, or God in Christ."†

Restorationists. " In relation to the *trinity, atonement and free will*, the Restorationists' views harmonize with those of the Unitarians."‡

Universalists. " Very generally, Universalists have come to entertain, what are commonly called Unitarian views of God, of Christ, of the Holy Spirit, and of Atonement : at least there appears to be a very general similarity between us and the English Unitarians, not only on those subjects, but also on the nature and duration of punishment, on the subject of the devil," etc.§

* Rupp's *History of Religious Denominations*, (1244,) p. 169.

† *Idem*, p. 328.

‡ Rupp's *History*, p. 653.

§ Rupp, p. 733.

From these extracts, it will be seen that our system is opposed to Arianism and Socinianism, each of which embodies the great characteristic of Unitarianism, as thus expressed by one of their writers: "Unitarians maintain that God is one mind, one person, one undivided being; that the Father alone is entitled to be called God in the highest sense; that he alone possesses the attributes of infinite, underived divinity, and is the only proper object of supreme worship and love. They believe that Jesus Christ is a distinct Being from him, and possesses only derived attributes; that he is not the Supreme God himself, but his Son." "This must be the great leading doctrine, the distinguishing, and, properly speaking, the only distinguishing feature of Unitarianism,"* namely, the *negative* doctrine, that Christ is not the Supreme God. Inasmuch as we aim to specify all these Sects as involved in the same fatal error, the *term* we use, must be understood to include all, though it expresses a doctrine peculiar to neither. We use it, as has been said, for the sake of convenience, and to save circumlocution; and respectfully ask all of them, candidly to consider whether reason and consistency do not require them to accept our doctrine, or reject the Bible, and thus become Deists? Because we think they can not, will not do the latter, we hope some at least will do the former, "that they may find mercy of the Lord in that day."

* Rupp's History, p. 704.