

**THE SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE OF THE
DIVINITY OF OUR LORD JESUS
CHRIST, AND OTHER SUBJECTS
CONNECTED THEREWITH**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649699506

The Scripture Doctrine of the Divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and Other Subjects Connected
Therewith by John Mitchel

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Cover @ 2017

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JOHN MITCHEL

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THE
SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE
OF THE
Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ,
AND
OTHER SUBJECTS CONNECTED THEREWITH.
IN A SERIES OF SERMONS.

By THE REV. JOHN MITCHEL,
MINISTER OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CONGREGATION, NEWRY.



NEWRY:
PUBLISHED BY ROBERT GREER;
SOLD ALSO BY
WILLIAM CURRY, JUN. & CO., AND WENTLEY & TYRRELL, DUBLIN;
H. GREER, J. HODGSON, AND M. JELLETT, BELFAST.

1828.

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PREFACE.

THESE Discourses were not originally designed for the public eye. The first of them was preached with the hope of allaying, in some measure, that controversial spirit which has unhappily become so prevalent. That hope not having been realized, the succeeding Discourses, with the exception of the last, which was delivered before the General Synod of Ulster in the year 1823, were designed to put the Presbyterian Congregation of Newry in distinct possession of the writer's sentiments on some difficult and much disputed points of Christian doctrine. Regarding our English translation of the scriptures as generally accurate, he has not encumbered his pages with Greek criticism. It could be of no use to those who do not understand the language; and those who do, will consult the original for themselves. The Discourses were composed week after week, as they were preached; and they were sent to the press, at the request of the Congregation, just as they were delivered from the pulpit. The principal points treated of, being subjects of pure revelation, and on which we can have no information beyond what is supplied in scripture, it is unnecessary to apologise for having dealt so largely in the production of that incontrovertible authority. The Bible is the only true criterion of Christian doctrine. If the views exhibited in these Sermons

be found there, they will stand;—if not, the sooner they fall the better. They were thrown together for the use of those who have a right to know them. They are now made public, chiefly to defeat the designs of those who have discovered such a readiness to misrepresent them. This done, the writer commits them to their fate. They will, no doubt, be controverted—let them be so: the writer does not design to enter the lists of controversy; he trusts he knows how to employ his time to much better purpose. Those Christians who conscientiously entertain different views, he can sincerely respect and love;—nor should such difference be permitted to destroy, or lessen, on either side, the spirit of Christian meekness and benevolence. He has, it is true, impugned a doctrine held forth in the formularies of both the Established Churches of Britain, and professed by a majority of the church of which he is a member:—he has been, in some measure, impelled to this course by the controversial character of the times, not thinking that the doctrine in question has any solid foundation in scripture. But he should be sorry thereby to give offence to any of those churches, or of the Christian people connected with them. He has spoken of those churches with the respect and veneration which he feels. He regards the people of their communion, taken generally, as among the best Christians on earth. But none of these churches either are, or profess to be, beyond the reach of error; and it is scarcely to be doubted that the majority of their educated adherents entertain views of the scripture doctrine not very dissimilar to those laid down in the following discourses. The last of the series, addressed to an audience chiefly clerical, was designed to furnish, from the New Testament, the model of a Christian pastor; and to point out the principal subject matter, as well as the true motives and ends, of his ministrations. To that scripture model it has been the writer's desire, by the grace of God, to conform his own ministry, as regards Christian principle, public instruction, and general deportment in life.

PREFACE.

v

And however he may have fallen short thereof in the discharge of his pastoral duties, the views of Christian instruction and ministerial conduct which he then submitted to his fathers and brethren, he conscientiously entertains, and humbly endeavours to practise still; nor can he willingly relinquish them, so long as he takes the New Testament for his guide. He determines, so long as God gives him ability and opportunity, to devote himself with increasing diligence to the work of the gospel ministry; and to know nothing as the ground of his own hope, to lay down nothing as the ground of hope to others, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. He looks upon the Redeemer as the brightest display of the divine character in a visible form—as “God manifest in the flesh;” and he desires, with Howard, to have these words inscribed on his tomb,—“In Christ is my hope.”

The principal reasons for the preaching, and for the publication, of the following Discourses, will be found in the subjoined documents.

ADDRESS

*Of the Presbyterian Congregation of Newry to the
Rev. John Mitchel.*

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

WE, the Presbyterian Congregation of Newry, have heard, with approbation and with interest, the series of Discourses on doctrinal subjects, which you have been induced to deliver during the last two months. We are aware that the necessity you felt yourself under for entering on those subjects, originated in the extraordinary and unexpected proceedings of the General Synod of Ulster, at their last annual meeting; and we are farther aware, that designing persons, here and elsewhere, have since been busily employed in misrepresenting your principles, and endeavouring to excite dis-

affection to your ministry, with the obvious purpose of creating a division in our hitherto united and happy congregation.

Whilst we feel astonished that such unchristian measures have been resorted to for this purpose, we cannot forbear expressing our admiration of the candour and firmness with which you have stated and vindicated your religious sentiments, and the perfect liberality which you have uniformly expressed towards those who entertain different views.

We heartily approve of your determination in refusing to be called by any human denomination in religion, and in grounding your views of Christian doctrine exclusively on the Christian scriptures, unshackled by creeds or confessions drawn up in the words of fallible men.

Satisfied with the views of Christian doctrine which you have unfolded, we have respectfully to request, that you will give these Discourses to the public, for the purpose of vindicating your sentiments from misrepresentation, and refuting the calumnies so artfully circulated against you. We beg to assure you of our unshaken attachment and continued support; and pray that you may be long spared to us, as a faithful minister of the gospel of Christ.

Signed, in our name, and by our order,

ISAAC WILLIAM GLENNY,
SESSION CLERK.

March 2d, 1828.

R E P L Y .

To the Presbyterian Congregation of Newry.

DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN,

You will accept my warmest thanks for the kind and Christian manner in which you have addressed me. The sentiments you have expressed are worthy of yourselves, and of the cause you have espoused. You know that, during my

ministry among you, I carefully abstained from controversial theology;—but since the unlooked-for proceeding of the last Synod, to which you have alluded, there was a concurrence of circumstances rendering it necessary for me to depart from my usual course. Hints were thrown out, in conversation, of a want of candour in avowal among our ministers. I was rudely assailed by interrogatories on the subject, in the open streets. I was written to, requiring an explicit declaration of my religious sentiments. These impertinencies I might have overlooked, and despised, as they deserved. But I was at length informed, by a respectable elder of the congregation, that such rumours were spread abroad in reference to my doctrinal views, as would render it imperative on me to enter upon a special explication of them. I forthwith commenced that series of discourses, of which you have so kindly expressed your approbation. The favourable testimony of soberminded Christians, next to the approbation of God, and my own conscience, will contribute to shield me from the calumnies of designing men. Looking on the Bible as a divine revelation, it has ever been my wish to ground my faith on the holy scriptures alone; and, therefore, in matters of faith, I shall call no man master, for one is my master, even Christ;—nor shall I take up with any man's opinions, farther than as I may see them fairly grounded there. My religious views I humbly and sincerely desire to take from the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and from such as I believe were commissioned of Heaven to write and speak “as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” I, therefore, do refuse to be called by any human name whatsoever in religion. I agree in many things with Calvin—indeed, in all things which I deem essential to salvation; yet I am not a *Calvinist*. I may agree in some less important points with Arius, yet I am not an *Arian*. I firmly believe all that the scriptures teach of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, as three distinct persons; and yet I reject the unscriptural denomination of *Trinitarian*, as that

term is usually understood. I as firmly believe, what Christ himself has taught me, that the Father is "the only true God;" and yet I equally repudiate the unscriptural denomination of *Unitarian*, as that term is usually understood. These, and such names, I regard as injurious to the interests of Christian truth, and charity. Much misconception may grow out of them; much wilful misrepresentation may be built on them. But I trust, brethren, you will never permit your attention to be diverted from the truth of God, by the mere sound of the names of men. If there have been among you any misconception of my religious principles, I hope it has been removed;—and I doubt not, you possess as much sound sense, and Christian spirit, as will enable you to repel the poison of wilful misrepresentation, come from what quarter it may. I fondly re-echo your prayer, that our hitherto happy connexion may be long continued, for our mutual good. The Discourses which I have delivered during the last two months, though designed exclusively for your ear, are now given to the public, at your request, and for the purposes you have mentioned. Allow me to dedicate them, my beloved hearers, to you, in token of the respect and affection wherewith I am

Your faithful friend and pastor,

JOHN MITCHEL.

March 2d, 1828.