

THE  
EUNUCH'S CONFESSION;

OR,

SCRIPTURAL VIEWS

OF

THE SONSHIP OF JESUS CHRIST.

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BY JOHN M. DUNCAN,

Pastor of the Associate Reformed Congregation of Baltimore.

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THERE is no subject on which the scriptural writers employ more positive terms, than that of the Sonship of JESUS CHRIST. They are full, precise, distinct—they press it on the consideration and faith of their readers, with the most uncompromising firmness; and seem to estimate it to be “the precious corner stone” of the whole system, which the Spirit of God consecrated them to develop. Their readers must “believe”—must “believe with all their hearts”—that Jesus is THE SON OF GOD; and, as in the case before us, on the candid and ingenuous profession of this great truth, any one might be baptized.

How unanimous and explicit is the testimony thence to be derived, which may be readily collated by the biblical student! John declares, that the object which he had in view in writing his “gospel” was, to satisfy the minds of those whom he addressed, that Jesus Christ is THE SON OF GOD. The other evangelists consequently, must have furnished their biographical sketches with the same intention. Nor only so; but Jesus himself, when he said and did the things which they declare him to have said and done, must have been actuated by the same official purposes. Accordingly you find, that after having carefully explained to his disciples in private, the subjects which he had presented to the public under

the veil of parables, he catechised his chosen servants as to the impression his preaching had made.—“Whom do men say that I, the Son of man am?” On being answered, he pressed the disciples themselves, in relation to their own views concerning him.—“Whom say ye that I am?” And when Peter replied, “Thou art the Christ, **THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD,**” their attention was thenceforth turned to another subject. Having distinctly and intelligently recognized the official personage, or being able to declare who he was, they were next instructed concerning his works.—“From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.”

When Martha, mourning over her bereavement, was asked by her beloved Master, whether she believed that he was “the resurrection and the life?” she answered, “Yea, Lord; I believe that thou art the Christ, **THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD,** which should come into the world.” Nothing farther was required. John the Baptist, after he had seen the Holy Spirit descend on Jesus, “bare record that he was **THE SON OF GOD.**” Saul, after he was baptized, and when he had entered on his apostolic course, “straightway preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is **THE SON OF GOD.**” And now the Eunuch, after Philip had compared the prophecy, which his ingenuous pupil was reading, with the facts of the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, immediately declared—“I believe that Jesus Christ is **THE SON OF GOD;**” and was, on this profession, unhesitatingly baptized.

Without troubling ourselves to collect more various testimony, we feel warranted to say, that the belief of this great truth, is the distinguishing characteristic of the Christian, and constitutes his qualification to enjoy all the ordinances of Christ's church. Here we have, so to speak, that sacred spot, where the great Captain of salvation plants his banner, around which all his servants should rally, and where contem-

tion and strife should cease. He who is found here is not to be reviled as a heretic, nor excommunicated as an apostate. How easily, methinks, Christians might, if they would, meet here in delightful harmony, and sweet accord! What doth hinder?

But hold,—the reader would say,—and ask whether we do not know, that those who profess to believe that Jesus is **THE SON OF GOD**, yet differ about the import of this peculiar phrase? that one says he is the Son of God by eternal generation? that another rejects the doctrine of eternal generation as contradictory and absurd, while yet he firmly believes that the Saviour is divine? and that a third refers the whole matter to a mere official distinction, and avers that Jesus is a mere man? But then, is it not strange, that Jesus, the evangelists, the Baptist, and all the apostles, should have so uniformly and unhesitatingly used this phrase, without ever hinting at these embarrassing distinctions? Is it not strange, that a Roman centurion should speak so positively, that an Ethiopian eunuch should be convinced so readily, and that even devils should concede so freely when the simple proposition announced was one, that has so long and so greatly embarrassed the learned and the philosophic among Christians themselves? Whence do these difficulties arise! Will the orthodox explain? Will heretics solve this problem?

The eunuch, like every other man to whom the gospel is preached, was required to **BELIEVE**. But how can a man believe a proposition which he does not understand? The readiness of the Ethiopian's belief would evince, that he felt no difficulty; and yet, judging from his inquisitive and attentive study of the prophecy which he was reading, he would promptly have perceived a difficulty if any had existed. Indeed the proposition is never advanced by any scriptural writer, as though its terms were hard to be understood. The *fact* is carefully, variously, abundantly demonstrated; but the *terms* are uniformly taken in their usual scriptural sense; and when, at any time, a difficulty was supposed or suggested, it

was quickly removed by some scriptural quotation, which unequivocally established the technical import of the term employed.

Nor is this all; but Philip required this Jewish proselyte to "believe *with all his heart*;" or, with the full, clear, intelligent and affectionate consent of his whole mind. And what class of truths, may I not ask, can a thinking man thus cordially and unequivocally receive? those which are plain, or those which are obscure and incomprehensible? Or farther, may I not ask, amid the controversies which sectarians have so ardently and obstinately maintained, can any be said clearly and accurately to represent the SONSHIP of Jesus Christ? Does he who builds his theory on the simple *humanity* of the Saviour, feel no misgiving when he hears Paul declare, that his Master is THE LORD FROM HEAVEN? Does he, who boldly stands forth for the *divinity* of the great Redeemer, betray no tremulousness or uncertainty, when asked, what is meant by "eternal generation," he answers that it is a *mystery*? In fine, have the community at large any clear or well defined ideas of the SONSHIP of Jesus? And yet the scriptural proposition announcing it, must be BELIEVED WITH ALL OUR HEARTS—most intelligently, most cordially.

Cannot this subject be explained satisfactorily to the common mind, and so as to leave no room for controversy; or at least in such a form, as that the objector shall appear querulous and captious, like the Jews, when answered by the Master himself? Did not Jesus and the evangelists present it in such a familiar manner? And are we not explicitly commanded to "search the Scriptures," and that for the simple reason that they afford the necessary testimony?

But then it may be said, that acute and learned men have examined the Scriptures a thousand times; that they have adopted and developed every principle of exposition; and yet that all have failed to remove the mystery. With such a fact before us, it would be vain, for the less talented men of these times, to do any thing more than repeat the doctrines and rea-

sonings of those who have gone before them. But, is this protestantism? or, giving up "private interpretation," and abandoning the first doctrine of the reformers, have we gone back to the dogmas of the catholic church? Had not learned men perverted the Scriptures, misrepresented the character of the Messiah, and introduced a thousand technical terms of their own, in the days when the Son of God appeared? And yet, did he not command the public at large to "search the Scriptures," and read the testimony concerning him for themselves? Did not the apostles, when they would plainly "preach Christ crucified," "unto the Jew stumbling block, and unto the Greek foolishness," throw aside the words which man's wisdom had taught, and substitute those which the Holy Ghost had sanctioned; and frame their arguments, by "comparing spiritual things with spiritual?" And what shall hinder us, now that theological science is so heavily loaded with scholastic terms and phrases, from throwing aside these technicalities which human wisdom has invented, and, imitating the example of the apostles, by "comparing spiritual things with spiritual," do as our Lord has directed us? Why talk so incessantly about "three persons in the Godhead—eternal generation—trinity—Christ the first and noblest of God's creatures—Christ a god, but a mere man,"—when we all know that these are not scriptural phrases, but "words which man's wisdom teacheth."

Still further: why should not the inquiry be instituted, and the scriptural analysis fearlessly pursued, now? The age in which we live is one, in which "many are running to and fro, seeking after knowledge." Politicians as well as ecclesiastics, are compelled to throw out their doctrines and principles to be canvassed by the public mind; and, whatever may be the result, whether favorable or unfavorable to the cause of truth and liberty, these interesting matters will be examined. Under an impulse, thus varied and powerful, theologians should not decline the investigation, and force on mankind doubtful terms and unsatisfactory views, which they refuse any longer

to receive. Indeed the investigation should be most promptly undertaken; and the more so, as theologians are perfectly aware, not only of the condition of the public mind, but of the difficulties in which scholastic exposition has involved their own science. We have before us a late work, in which the writer, belonging to the Unitarian ranks, observes:—"It has always appeared to me, that the true scriptural theory with respect to the office and character of Jesus Christ, has not yet been plainly expounded." Nor is it very long since another writer, occupying a much higher position in the scale of orthodoxy, in one of the evanescent publications of the day, boldly averred that the doctrine of the trinity could not be proved by *scripture*, nor in any other way but by *tradition*, or the testimony of the *church*.

All things considered—the master's commandment—the example of the Apostles—the resemblance of our difficulties to those which characterized the period of the Saviour's advent—the condition of the public mind, so powerfully agitated by a spirit of uncompromising scrutiny—the multiplied controversies of dissolving associations—the analogous state of political science and literary systems—why may we not, without being reprobated as heretics or apostates, originate and firmly pursue an inquiry into the scriptural doctrine of the **SONSHIP** of Jesus Christ? and particularly, when it is simply proposed to follow the apostolic rule, and "compare spiritual things with spiritual? Such is the object of the following remarks. In so far as there may be a deviation from the straight line of biblical exposition, or wherein scriptural analogies are not appropriately used, the reader is earnestly entreated to receive with caution and judge with candor; for, who is it, that in forsaking, or betraying his ignorance of the Scriptures, has not declined into error? and "darkened counsel by words without knowledge?"—And

1. It is a fact, unequivocally stated by the evangelists, and which is of the utmost importance in our present inquiry, that Jesus Christ had no earthly father. The angel said to Mary—



“The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; *therefore* that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be CALLED THE SON OF GOD.” “The spirit of prophecy” too, “which is the testimony of Jesus,” had long before the evangelists, and as quoted by themselves, announced this peculiar fact;—“Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which, being interpreted, is God with us.” Nay even at the beginning, and when God would adjudicate the case of our erring parents, the promise which he gave, contained the same fact.—“I will,” he said, “put enmity between thee and the WOMAN; between thy seed and HER SEED; HE shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise HIS heel. And then Eve, upon the birth of Cain, made a remark, which, by showing her own apprehension of the import of the first promise, seems to intimate that the promise was illustrated by some visible exhibition, perhaps a TRANSFIGURATION like that which occurred on mount Tabor. “I have,” said she, “gotten a MAN, Jehovah his very SELF.” The SONSHIP of Jesus, in this respect, therefore, or that he should be “the seed of the woman,” and yet be JEHOVAH, was taught by divine revelation, from the beginning.

This fact, which stands so prominently on the scriptural page, and to which inspired writers so unequivocally trace up the whole mediatorial scheme, may be recognized as equally conspicuous in the heathen mythology. It is there, indeed, surrounded by a variety of circumstances, which are foreign to itself; or, as Paul declares, “the GLORY of God was *changed* into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.” But still the fact, misinterpreted as it was, formed the basis of all the heathen corruptions. An INCARNATION, it was said, had taken place—had often taken place—would again take place—the great Father had triplicated himself—the gods had often come down, in the forms of men, to reform and bless mankind. At

the very time that Jesus of Nazareth was born, the heathens, as well as the Jews, were looking for the appearance of some extraordinary personage; for "Virgil, in his *Pollio*, announces the approaching birth of an extraordinary child, whom he decorates with all the attributes of the Messiah of the Hebrews. This child was to be the high offspring of the gods, the great seed of Jupiter. When Julius Cæsar wished to crown his greatness by assuming the title of king, one of his creatures adduced a prediction from the books of the Sibyl; in which it was foretold, that a prince was to arise about that time, whose monarchy should be universal, and whose government would be essential to the happiness of the world. Cicero freely admits that the prophecy in question was to be found in the Sibylline oracles."

A fact thus proved, any man, acquainted with the testimony, may *believe*—*may believe with all his heart*. Nor can any very serious, or plausible, objection be advanced against its truth. It is not incompetent for God to *manifest* himself to his creatures, in a form and manner consistent with their own nature. It is not inconsistent with what had occurred at first, when, as Moses informs us the Lord God\* made the heavens and the earth; or when, as the apostle John declares "the word was." Nor is it out of keeping with other subjects on which the scriptural writers most freely descant: for if the senses of man must be exercised to "discern between good and evil," because that by these he acquires his ideas, and if he can have no conception of pure *spirit*, then God, who is a pure SPIRIT, must MANIFEST himself, or man must be ignorant of him; and if the fall has taken place, and the human race has become so degenerate, that they can no longer appreciate or enjoy that personal display, then surely a second and now more appropriate, exhibition is neither unnatural nor incomprehensible.

\* ELOHIM is the official term, belonging, as the Redeemer explains it to those "by whom the word of God came: and thus Moses appends the term to the name of Jehovah, intending to designate him as MANIFESTING HIMSELF; or terms him Jehovah—ELOHIM, which we have translated the Lord God.

It is true that some have affected to throw a doubt over the whole, and to assert the impossibility of the fact. But certainly it was no more impossible for God to create this "holy thing, born of the virgin," than it is impossible for him, by any secondary agency he may employ, or by any series of physical laws, of which he himself is the author, to create other beings. For aught I see, these objectors must go back, and deny that God created Adam out of the dust of the ground, or in any other manner indicative of his immediate power; and thus, while it is evident that each individual of the race had a beginning, it would follow, that the race itself had no beginning—that matter is eternal—that there is no God. But if it be admitted that God did create Adam, a similar act of power on his part, cannot be *itself* irrational or impossible. The only question, that could arise about it, would be, whether an occasion had occurred, which required such an act? That occasion occurring the improbability of the act is entirely removed, and, in the transactions of a God of mercy, it would be the most probable, the most dignified, and the most rational course to be pursued. It would be the very thing which man could not do, and would constitute the best credential of the divine authenticity of the system, that should be based upon it. Accordingly the scriptural writers adopt this very parallelism. Christ, they say, is the second Adam—by the offence of the first, all men became sinners, and by the righteousness of the second all men have become righteous. In Adam all die, in Christ all shall be made alive—and, in tracing up the generations of the Redeemer, they carry on their genealogical inquiry, until they arrive at Adam; of whom they say, as they have said of Christ, he was **THE SON OF GOD**.

Thus far any man may *believe*, and *with all his heart*, in the Sonship of Jesus Christ, nor feel that he has any greater difficulty to surmount, than when he is called upon to believe that God created man at first, and that we are all the children of the Most High.

2. Official men are often styled in Scripture **THE SONS OF GOD**. Moses thus denominates the descendants of Seth, in contrast with those of Cain, and speaks of the Sons of God, marrying with the daughters of men. In the book of Job, the angels, as they are described, when encompassing the divine throne, are called **THE SONS OF GOD**. Thus also, it is beautifully said, that when the foundations of the earth were laid—"the morning stars sang together, and all **THE SONS OF GOD** shouted for joy." Israel, or the Jewish nation, in God's demand to Pharaoh, is, in view of the official purpose for which that people were chosen, called God's **SON**—his **FIRST BORN**. David calls all official men\* **GODS**, or **SONS OF THE MOST HIGH**; and by the interpretation which Jesus gave of these titles, they were applied to those "by whom the word of God came," or those whom he employed as his ministerial organs for the communication of truth. As then "the word of God came" to men by Jesus Christ, as he was a prophet—a priest—a king, the title is legitimately given to him. In this respect, no man may hesitate to *believe*—any man may believe with *all his heart*, the scriptural proposition—"Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

In taking this second view, we have not deviated from the straight scriptural line, which we proposed to pursue. For, on a certain occasion, when "the Jews took up stones to stone him," he said to them, "Many good works have I showed you from my Father, for which of these works do you stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself **GOD**. Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are **GODS**? If he called them **gods**, unto whom the word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken; say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world—Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am **THE SON OF GOD**?" The quotation which the Saviour employs in justification of his

\* Psalm lxxxii. 6.

pretensions as the **SANCTIFIED ONE**, is taken from the book of Psalms.\* At first sight his reply may seem to evade the difficulty; but a little examination will show, that he met it in full front, and left the Jews unable to answer. The whole verse as it stands in the Psalm, from which the clause is taken, reads thus: "I have said, Ye are **GODS**: and all of you are children of the Most High." Thus we have a poetical couplet so common in Hebrew poetry, in which the same idea is repeated, though in different phrase. The titles **GODS** and **SONS OF THE MOST HIGH** are equivalent to each other; and the Redeemer uses these terms, not as having a different signification, but as being interchangeable with each other. If then, we should suppose him to have used one, and either, of these official titles, in both parts of his answer, his meaning would be very plain, and his reply would appear to have been as explicit, as any one could desire. Thus: "It is said in the Scriptures—I said ye are **GODS**. If he called them **GODS**, to whom the word of God came, say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, thou blasphemest, because I said, I am **GOD**?" Or thus: "It is said in the Scriptures—I said all of ye are **SONS OF THE MOST HIGH**. If he called them **SONS OF THE MOST HIGH**, to whom the word of God came, say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am **THE SON OF THE MOST HIGH**?" The answer is both plain and direct.

But when we have the meaning of this, apparently equivocal, passage thus made evident and clear, you cannot fail to perceive, that Jesus proves and justifies his pretensions, by the simple scriptural fact, that all official men, by whom the word of God came, made the same or like pretensions, and that the Scriptures, which cannot be broken, and which commit no mistakes, called them **THE SONS OF GOD**. Most justly, therefore, may he, as God's sanctified one, call himself **THE SON OF GOD**. Thus far, I again remark, we stand on sure

\* Psalm lxxxiii: 6.

ground; and may be perfectly confident, that we have a distinct and accurate understanding of our subject.

But now it may be asked, is not Jesus immeasurably superior to the prophets—to the priests—and to the kings, whom Jehovah in old times employed as his servants? The question is proper and important; but then, let it be remembered, it must be answered from the Scriptures; and is not to be arbitrarily determined by councils, who may assume the power to condemn heresies, and define articles of faith. Therefore, we may go on to observe,

3. That in the Bible, a comparison is instituted between Christ and these ancient “children of the Most High;” and that with the avowed purpose of showing him to be “anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows.” If then we would satisfactorily answer the question, which has been stated, we must carefully and diligently attend to the comparison thus afforded by “the Scriptures,” which “cannot be broken.”

There have been, “there are differences of ADMINISTRATIONS, but the same Lord.” Among these the two dispensations, or, as Paul calls them, “the two covenants,” stand prominent; and their respective relations and constitutions, the Redeemer frequently endeavored to illustrate. With this view he proposed to the Jews the following parable: “There was a certain householder which planted a vineyard, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country. At proper seasons he sent his SERVANTS to receive of the fruits of it. These the husbandmen shamefully abused, beating one, killing another, and stoning a third. This was done more than once. And finally the householder determined to send his SON, presuming that he would command all reverence and respect. But when the husbandmen saw him they said, “this is the HEIR; come, let us kill him, and seize on his inheritance.”\* There is no mistaking the import of this parable, for Jesus has himself explained it; and the chief priests and Pharisees

\* Matt. xxi. 33—46.

perceived that his allusions were to themselves. In this instance the difference, after which we are inquiring, is very evident. All other official individuals, when a contrast is designed, are called **SERVANTS**; and the distinguishing title of **SON** is appropriated to Jesus Christ.

When Paul wished to explain to his kinsmen, according to the flesh, the official pretensions of his Master, he observed—“God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the **PROPHETS**, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his **SON**, whom he hath appointed **HEIR** of all things.” The secondary title of **PROPHETS** is, in this comparative statement, applied to those who had been called “the children of the Most High;” while the primary one of **SON** is reserved for Jesus Christ. Afterwards, when the apostle would be more distinct and specific, he selects Moses, the highest in official standing among old testament prophets, and remarked—“Moses was faithful in all God’s house as a **SERVANT**; but **CHRIST** as a **SON**, over **HIS OWN HOUSE**—over his own community of saints—his chosen people—his holy nation.” Here again, in comparison, Moses sinks into the **SERVANT**, and Christ appears as the **SON**.

But why this distinction? All the prophets were called sons; and why should the title be dropped, under the circumstances stated? What superiority is thereby indicated? and on what scriptural principles is that superiority awarded to the Redeemer? It has no doubt been perceived, in the cases quoted, that he who is styled the **SON**, is also said to be the **HEIR**. And this is the point of distinction which Paul called upon his brethren to notice—“**Being**,” says he, “made so **MUCH BETTER** than the angels, as he hath by **INHERITANCE** obtained a more excellent name than they.”

But what is the value of the distinction? Be it remembered, that we are discussing a question of divine *government*—the subject of **LORDSHIP** in the house of God—or “the differences” of those divine “administrations,” in all of which there is “the same **LORD**.” As such subjects are to be illus-

trated to the human mind, the terms which are used, and the similes which are employed, must all be borrowed from human things, or the visible institutions which God himself established among men. Going back, then, to the primitive form of government, which God had erected, we readily perceive that it was carried on in the line of the natural relations; and to this, as authorized by a divine ordinance, the world must at some future period return. The FATHER WAS HEAD, or LORD, in his own family; and the oldest SON was his official HEIR. All authority, and the means necessary to sustain that authority, were transmitted to the FIRST-BORN. Adam was prophet, priest and king, in his own family; and Cain, who eventually forfeited his birth-right, was the HEIR of these official honors. Hence it is, that Christ is said to be "the FIRST-BORN among many BRETHREN"—"the image of the invisible God, the FIRST-BORN of every creature"—"the beginning, the FIRST-BORN from the dead, that in all things he might have the PRE-EMINENCE."

And what would be the extent of this political authority, or the amount of these official honors? A very important question, and one which goes to the very heart of the subject; but one which cannot be answered, without first ascertaining who the FATHER is. If the Father be a mere man, the constitution which endows him with supremacy will readily determine the extent of political rule which that term implies. But if God be the FATHER, what then is the extent of the inherited authority? And surely every one knows, that there is no truth more promptly, more frequently, or more unequivocally asserted in the Scriptures, than this, that God himself is the FATHER of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It is, therefore, as clear as any inference can be, that all the authority which belongs to God the Father, as the great governor of the world, is thus transmitted to Jesus Christ, his SON and HEIR.

The conclusion, which we have reached, is most clearly and abundantly sustained in the Scriptures themselves. "What-



soever things the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.—As the Father raiseth the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.—The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son: that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father.—All things that the Father hath are mine.—All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.—It pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell.—In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.—He is the head of all principality and power.” These, and many like passages of the Scriptures, most clearly and incontestibly ratify the inference we have drawn; and exhibit Jesus, in the character of the SON, exercising all the power, and consequently displaying all the attributes, belonging to God himself, as the creator and governor of the heavens and the earth. Surely, then, Jesus cannot be characterized by simple humanity, or be a mere man. No prophet nor apostle, no SERVANT of God from Adam down, has been distinguished in this way. The FATHER and the SON alone, are described as possessed of, and as capable of wielding this vast political power; and it proves that both, or it proves that neither, is the ever living and eternal God.

But still further. The Bible avers their oneness, in view of their divinity. “I and the Father are ONE,” said the Redeemer. “The Father dwelleth in me.”—“GOD IS IN CHRIST.”—“In the beginning the Word was,” or subsisted as a personal manifestation of God: this “Word was *with* God, (Jehovah) and the Word was GOD.\* And the WORD was made FLESH, and dwelt among us.—Christ Jesus, being IN THE FORM OF GOD, thought it not robbery to be equal with (like unto) God, but made himself of no reputation, and *took upon him* the form of a servant, and was found in the likeness of men.—The second man is the LORD FROM HEAVEN.—There are differences of administrations, but THE SAME LORD.” Evidently, he who was the Creator is also the the Redeemer;

\* Moses calls him Jehovah—ELOHIM.

the same great and glorious being is the author of both law and gospel.

But, the reader will ask, how can this be? Does not this oneness destroy all distinction? and will it not convert the whole subject into a mere collection of words? By no means. On the contrary this oneness is indispensably necessary to the existence of the distinction. The reader will please to remember, that, in following this argument, he is canvassing a portion of political philosophy. The official epithets FATHER—SON—HEIR—HEAD—LORD, are all political; and, in the present case, they are employed to exhibit and explain to us the divine GOVERNMENT. Man himself, in his political relations, as well as in his personal constitution, is, in biblical phrase, "the image of God." The only way by which we can therefore acquire clear and accurate ideas of this supposed MYSTERY, is to compare it with the political relations of man; for in these we have the image, and the highest image, which God has selected; which, so far as our knowledge goes, to whom the revelation is made, could be selected; and which the most fastidious may not abandon without committing folly.

The nation—any corporate body—may change its individual members, or its exterior forms, and yet the nation or corporate body, *as such*, will remain the same. The Jews, during the different reigns of David and Solomon, were not two different nations; but were precisely the same political person. The *kingship*, as a political power, was not destroyed, when it changed the exterior form of the king, and Solomon was substituted in the room of David. The *spirit* of the nation or community, so to speak, did not expire when the supreme power was transmitted from the FATHER to the SON; or when one generation passed away, and another succeeded. This, every man, who has thoughtfully investigated the principles of political society, readily comprehends; and finds in the idea of the *spirit* of the community a solution for every problem involved in political ope-

rations, and which enables every man to enjoy the benefits, or subjects him to feel the evils, arising from official acts.

Such is the *image*, by which the Scriptures would explain to us the operations of the divine government. If we can trace the resemblance, we shall then acquire the ideas, which God intended to teach us. Accordingly, the first great principle is this—"God is a SPIRIT." And the cardinal fact is—"There are diversities of gifts, but THE SAME SPIRIT—there are differences of administrations, but THE SAME LORD—and there are diversities of operations; but it is THE SAME GOD which worketh all in all." If then, the inquirer after the peculiarities of Godhead, can conceive the idea in relation to it, which is forced upon him by the political organization of society, and to which God himself refers for explanation; and that is THE MULTIFORM MANIFESTATION OF SPIRIT—he has the whole subject before him, in its own simplicity and clearness.

The principle, on which this whole exhibition is founded, is simply this; that man by the constitution of his nature, cannot perceive, or have any knowledge of pure spirit. We know nothing each of the other's spirit, but as it is clothed with personal form, and thence becomes qualified for personal action. Such was the fact with Adam before, as well as after, he sinned. There was, therefore, in the constitution of his nature, an indispensable necessity for a personal manifestation of his Creator. This personal manifestation Moses introduces to our notice as THE LORD GOD—John refers to it as the WORD, which was *with* God—Paul alludes to it in the phrase, "being in THE FORM OF GOD;" and again, when he speaks of Christ as being "the exact image of God's PERSON."

When Adam fell, and his nature suffered that greatly deteriorating change, emphatically denominated "the weakness of the flesh," this personal manifestation became too glorious for man to behold. God informed Moses that "no man should see him and live." Yet the necessity for such a

personal manifestation remained; and accordingly, in the remedial system, Jehovah, by "being found in the likeness of man," afforded to us "an exact image of his Person," which should subserve his mediatorial purposes, and fully meet the emergency introduced by the fall. And this second display, not intended to be a second divine Person, but "the exact image of the divine person," being afforded by the word manifesting himself in the flesh, we have revealed to us, him, who, according to the uniform scriptural use of political terms, is called **THE SON OF GOD**. In his face we contemplate "the glory of God," shining forth in resplendent "brightness;" the nearest, the most distinct view of God, which we can have in our fallen state. And the great remedial fact, or the high official display—the manifestation in the flesh—would be thus accurately and fully stated:—"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath *declared him*."

Perhaps it may be objected, that Jesus himself says,—"**The Father is greater than I**." And by this some would understand, that he unequivocally disclaimed divinity, and frankly avowed simple humanity; while others would say, that he refers to his human nature, but to that nature in connection with the divine nature, the union of which two natures constitutes the mediatorial person. Neither of these commentators can satisfy the other, that his interpretation is true; and the declaration still remains a difficulty, which no exposition has fairly removed.

If the preceding views, which have been taken simply from the Scriptures, and without any regard to sectarian glosses, be true, the fact must be just as the Redeemer declares it to be. The term **FATHER**, like the term **SON**, in the political arrangements to which reference is made by scriptural writers, and whence they derive their *images*,—the term **FATHER** is official. Then the declaration, which we are considering, would not utter the apparent incongruity, that God is greater than *himself*; but that one manifestation of God is greater

than another manifestation of God ; one external exhibition of the supreme power is superior to another external exhibition of the supreme power. And surely there is nothing very marvellous or inexplicable in such a fact. All God's works exhibit himself, and show forth his glory ; but in these works there is a multitude of different systems—one rising above another in beautiful gradation, and one, of course, superior to, and greater than another.

Referring to political arrangements among men, if a case can be supposed, in which plenary power would be entrusted to the SON, while yet the FATHER is not removed, the fact would be perfectly analogous to that which the Redeemer affirms. Nor would it be wild to suppose such a case ; for it is precisely the very one which the Redeemer himself details in the parable of the householder and the rebellious husbandmen. The SON is supposed to be sent, with all the official symbols of plenary power, which would belong to him by *inheritance* ; while yet the FATHER is still represented as possessing like power, and finally coming to avenge the indignity offered to his Son. Which would be, in the estimation of the biblical expositor, or the student of political science the GREATER? No man of candor would hesitate. But in that parable, the Redeemer intended to exhibit his own official position, as being “sent by the Father,” and as having “all power in heaven and in earth given unto him.” “Have you never read,” said he to those whom he was addressing at the time, “have ye never read in the Scriptures—The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner : this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken : but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.”

The apostle Paul gives us essentially the same view, when speaking of the kingdom of Christ, he remarks—“Then

cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the KINGDOM to God, even the FATHER; when he shall have put down all RULE and all AUTHORITY and all POWER. For he must REIGN, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, all things are put under him, *it is manifest that he is excepted, who did put all things under him.* And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the SON also himself be subject unto him who did put all things under him, that GOD MAY BE ALL AND IN ALL." All the terms, which the apostle employs, are political; as is the subject on which he writes. And, in such cases, the superior GREATNESS of the FATHER is a very *manifest* and consistent matter, as he intimates, which any one may clearly see.

The nature of the whole subject, in connexion with the views stated with regard to man himself, requires that the fact should be as the Redeemer declared it was. For the first manifestation of Jehovah, "the form of God," or the divine PERSON, is too glorious for our fallen state. No man can see God, thus manifested and live. It is on this incompetency, that the whole remedial plan is based; yet that same remedial plan incorporates in itself original principles, and is professedly LIKE the first institute. A second manifestation had become necessary, in consequence of this human infirmity; and when afforded it must be LIKE, or as Paul says, "the exact image of," the first. And when the remedial system shall have accomplished its object, or when the redeemed shall be brought by faith to that state, to which Adam's children would have been brought by works, the original powers shall then exist in their own integrity and contemplated perfection; and consequently the original manifestation, "the form of God," the divine Person, shall be the appropriate exhibition of the great God; or, as Paul says, God, even the FATHER, shall be all in all. We shall see God AS HE IS. The original manifestation of God, which was suited to man in his state

of innocence, and shall be suited to him in his state of perfect blessedness, is superior to, or greater than, the second manifestation; inasmuch as this second manifestation is suited to man, only as in a state of infirmity. And all this is perfectly consistent with the fact that in both cases we have a manifestation of God HIMSELF.

Much of the confusion, on this subject, arises from the common idea that redemption is a greater work than creation, and that the gospel is greater than the law. If this idea be correct, then the SON should be greater than the Father; the second manifestation should be superior to the first; or the image of a PERSON should be more transcendently excellent than the person. And then what notion could we have of the FALL? or what would be the amount of the fact, that mankind are SINNERS? Even on general considerations, it might be asked, can a *remedy* be superior to that which it is intended to relieve? Can a medical agent be superior to the power of a sound constitution? Can chastisement be better than good character? or legal penalty be more excellent than legal righteousness? And in morals, where is the supposed greater glory, when man at last, shall be brought to the very same issue, to which he would have been brought, had the law been preserved in its own integrity? Or is the Redeemer called upon to do any thing more than the first Adam was required to do, i. e. to work out the righteousness of the law? Nothing else is necessary; nor was any thing else done. For the death of Christ formed a part of his righteousness; inasmuch as the law could not have been fulfilled, until its penalty, after having been incurred should have been executed. Hence Jesus is scripturally said, to have been "obedient unto death."

It may now be inquired, what, according to the preceding principle of exposition, are we to understand by the HOLY GHOST? Political philosophy does not, as it was embodied in the original form of government, which God had identified with the natural relations, hold forth to our view any *third*

superior officer. The official epithets, at first, were simply Father and Son. But there is an idea, perfectly consistent with that philosophy, and very common in a thousand forms, among thinking and intelligent men; and that is, a man's *spirit* may be supposed to be, where he is not personally present; and those who should be under his dominion, would feel a controlling influence, as though he were personally present. In this way the *spirit* of a prince would be felt to pervade his whole empire; would proceed alike from the Father and the Son; and would never destroy, or in the least degree impair, the free agency of their subjects.

This political idea, however, it might be said, would suggest no more than mere influence or energy. And so far as man is concerned, this would be true; because no man, under the circumstances stated, could be really present. But let it not be forgotten, that man, in his personal and political relations, is merely said to be the *image* of God. The two subjects are *alike*. Now, when God retired to his throne, "entered his rest," became invisible in his own blaze of light and glory, or was no longer *personally* present, his SPIRIT, as he can be really present every where, would not be mere influence, but HIMSELF, invisibly superintending his own works; and would be considered as "proceeding" from the Father, or from the Father and the Son, according as law or gospel, creation or redemption would be the subject of discussion. But there would be no *personal* exhibition; and "the manifestation of the Spirit given unto man to profit withal;" if the apostolic phrase has any reference to that which is denominated the Holy Ghost, would simply refer to God's own invisible and sovereign operations in bestowing his various gifts; and the manifestation itself, instead of being *personal*, would be rendered evident only by the instrumentality of secondary agents. He might descend "as a dove," or "as fire," or be felt as "a rushing mighty wind," but never could be recognized as a PERSON. The various doctrines, or conclusions, which are based upon the idea of his being a distinct person, are therefore necessarily fallacious.



In the fondness, which unfortunately is but too prevalent, to identify a modern speculation with some old and hateful heresy, which may be buried from the public eye among ecclesiastical antiquities; or which, existing still, may perplex the generality of religious professors, by the multitude of phases it may present, the foregoing views may be by force identified with Unitarianism, or Sabellianism. This disingenuous course deserves to be severely rebuked, as altogether unworthy of Christian and intelligent moralists. But still, it is unhappily, so common, that it must be met in full front, and be fairly exposed.

What is Unitarianism? Are we to understand by it, that there is but one living, true, and eternal God. All trinitarians believe this doctrine. In this view all, without any exception, are, therefore Unitarians. They, who are acquainted with controversial writings on this subject, know, that this remark has been often made, and that Unitarians, as such, have been severely censured for appropriating this lofty and expressive appellation to themselves. It is true that trinitarians have been accused of holding a doctrine which necessarily leads to tritheism; and it may be that there is abundant room for the imputation. But they deny the supposed conclusion, and should be honorably treated, as sincere and honest men.

Moreover, this charge presses trinitarianism beyond the proposition just stated. Let us also press unitarianism, popularly so called, beyond that proposition, and observe the first step that is taken. One party, with Arius, a controvertist of the fourth century at their head, maintain, it is said, "that the Son is *essentially* distinct from the Father; that he was only the first and noblest of God's created beings, whom God the Father formed out of nothing, and the instrument which the Father used in creating this material universe; and therefore, that he was inferior to the Father, both in *nature* and in dignity." And if this be unitarianism, then is there all the difference between it, and the views presented in the pre-

ceding pages, that there is between God *himself*, and a mere creature.

Some others have advanced the idea of the simple humanity of Christ, and have declared that he was a good man, and an excellent prophet, who set us an example of every moral virtue; but still he was a mere man. Neither can this statement be identified with the previous discussion. There is between the two, all the difference that there is between God *himself*, and a mere man. It is not worth while to pursue this contrast any further; as, into one or the other of these views, all the modifications of unitarianism, popularly so called, it is presumed, may be resolved. And he, who undertakes to identify Jesus Christ with God *himself*, in the political principles advanced and adopted in the Scriptures, has, it is conceived, abandoned unitarianism.

Then again, we may proceed to inquire, what is *Sabellianism*. No two writers seem to give the same account of this supposed heresy. Those, who appear to have examined the question most critically, are equally embarrassed, when they undertake to define the reputed error. The best view, which we can make up from the examination of the means within our reach, would be the following: Sabellius lived in the third century. Arius and Alexander, the two great disputants on the subject of trinity in the fourth century, may then be supposed to have been fully qualified to tell what Sabellianism was; unless indeed, controvertists then were as unable, or as unwilling to understand each other, as they appear to be now. If they were thus disingenuous and unreconcilable in their feelings, while we should have a very melancholy fact disclosed to us, we should also be constrained to abandon the use of an opprobrious epithet, whose precise import cannot be stated; and which can, under such circumstances, be employed, only to frighten the ignorant, or cover an indolence to examine the Scriptures;—which indolence it would be thought more honorable to conceal.

But to proceed. Arius accused his bishop Alexander, who

strenuously maintained that there are *three persons in the Godhead*, of advocating the doctrines of Sabellius; and Arius was an acute, intelligent and influential man. At this early period their trinitarianism itself was considered to be *Sabellianism*.

Alexander, in order to repel this charge, in a letter addressed to another Alexander of Byzantium, states that Sabellius taught "the separation and effluxes of parts in God, after the manner of material bodies." Of course, according to this doctrine, Sabellius made out that the Father was one *part*, the Son a second *part*, and the Spirit a third *part* in God. And surely nothing that even looks like this, can be affirmed of a statement, which simply proclaims the multiform manifestation of the same intelligent and eternal Spirit, whom we call Jehovah, and by whom all things were made.

And what do trinitarians believe? That there are three persons in the Godhead—do they not? But what is a **PERSON**? A living, thinking, acting being—is it not? Hence it is that they are accused of maintaining that there are three thinking beings in Godhead, and consequently three Gods. This, however, these brethren deny; and explain by saying, that they use the term person in an anomalous sense; and that finding personal attributes and actions ascribed to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, they know of no better term, by which to express the peculiar fact; though, in its strict sense, that term is inappropriate. And has the Holy Ghost used no terms sufficiently competent to express the great truths he would reveal? Or, has he not warned us against employing words, which man's wisdom has taught? and counselled us "to hold fast the form of **SOUND WORDS**," which inspired lips have uttered? Sabellius himself could not have denied that attributes and actions, betokening an intelligent agent, were ascribed to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Neither could he have explained his "separations and effluxes of parts." Between these two undefinable terms then—**PERSONS** and **PARTS**—so inexplicable and embarrassing, there would not appear to be much difference.

Arius, of course, judged right. If there be any Sabellianism in the church, and if it be a reproachful heresy, which intelligent readers of the Bible should reject, trinitarians are themselves the Sabellians.

The popular idea of Sabellianism, however, is, that its author supposed the Scriptures to teach simply three different *relations*, in which God is represented to act towards man. And how came the public so quickly to settle a question, which yet remains a matter of discussion on the pages of ecclesiastical history? And if Sabellius did give his doctrines this peculiar form, has that been the import of the foregoing argument? Or, if such has been the doctrine advanced here, will the trinitarian disown his own interest in such a view? and decline admitting that he too would discourse of *divine relations*? Does he not speak freely of the economic *character* of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost? and can he point out any greater difference between economic *character* and economic *relation*, than he can between *person* and *part*? Or, if we should consent to the idea of God's relation to us as Creator, and his relation to us as Redeemer, thus applying the term to the two *manifestations* which God has made of HIMSELF to man, and in view of the two forms of government—law and gospel—which have been successively established, could any trinitarian have aught to object?

But to conclude. The doctrine, intended to be here set forth, is simply this—the multiform, or rather the double form, of the manifestation of the same eternal SPIRIT, which was intended to meet the circumstances of man, as, by the constitution of our nature, both before and after the fall, acquiring his ideas by means of his corporeal senses. As Paul says:—“There are diversities of gifts, but THE SAME SPIRIT. And there are differences of administrations, but THE SAME LORD. And there are diversities of operations; but it is THE SAME GOD, which worketh all in all.” And this, without any difficulty or misgiving, any man who reads, thinks, and prays, may BELIEVE, may believe with ALL HIS HEART.