

Unitarianism Defined*

Lecture Five: Inferiority and Subordination of Christ Concluded

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There remain some other passages of the New Testament Scripture to be examined before leaving the topic of the Inferiority and Subordination of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the epistle to the Hebrews we read, “But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever” (1:8); and therefore it is alleged that this proves the proper Deity of the Son. One would think it were only necessary to read the context to see that it proves no such thing, but only that the Son is addressed as God in the lower sense in which they were so addressed “to whom the word of God came.” Mark the language. “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever. . . . Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; *therefore* God, even *thy* God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness *above thy fellows.*” Whatever rank or office the title *God*, in the first instance, implied, it was plainly subordinate to that of the Supreme. He to whom it is applied has himself a Superior, nay, a God — which could not be said of the Supreme; is rewarded for his fidelity, his love of righteousness — being “*therefore* anointed,” etc. — (but who could “reward” the Supreme?); has “*fellows,*” equals — which it were simply absurd to predicate of the Supreme. The passage is a quotation from one of the Messianic Psalms, or those which the Jews believed to be prophetic of their king Messiah (Ps. 45:6, 7); and nothing is more beyond dispute than that the Jews

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expected in their Messiah, although a King, a mighty leader, deliverer, conqueror; still, only “a man born of human parents”;¹ with which ideas, assuredly, the entire passage is simply consistent.

When we turn to the critics, even prominent Trinitarian critics, our view of the passage is confirmed. Grotius, and many others before and since the time of Griesbach, read the passage conformably to the text of the latter, “God is thy throne” in the first clause. So Calvin, so Nösselt. Dr. Mayer, in the *Biblical Repository*,² says: “Here the Son is addressed by the title *God*; but the context shows that it is an official title, which designates him as a King; he has a kingdom, a throne, a scepter; and in verse 9 he is compared with other kings, who are called his fellows; but God can have no fellows.” Prof. Stuart, in his commentary on the epistle, says: “That the whole Psalm relates to the Messiah as *Mediatorial King* can scarcely be doubted by anyone who compares together all its different parts.” And although he had, “in a former publication,” contended that the title *God*, by which he (the Son) is here addressed, denoted his “divine nature,” he finds grounds to doubt. In the *Biblical Repository*,³ however, his doubt is resolved, for there he says: “As to the quotation from Ps. 45, it seems to me a clear case that it does not fairly establish the truly divine nature of him to whom it is applied.”

I pass to another passage in the first epistle of John: “We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true: and we are in Him that is true, *even* in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols” (5:20, 21). In the first place, the Trinitarian mistake upon this passage is perpetuated without just reason from the introduction most improperly of the word “even” into the text, there being no word in the original answering to it, as is shown by the use of the italic type. In the next place, the chief difficulty arises from the pronoun rendered “This,” often made to refer to the nearest antecedent or “Jesus Christ.” But Grotius says: “The pronoun *this* not infrequently relates to a remote antecedent, as in Acts 7:19 (where it is rendered ‘the same’) and 10:6” (where it is rendered “he”⁴); and Vater: “There is no

¹ See Justin Martyr’s *Dial. cum Trypho*, 235, *et alibi*, cited by Prof. Norton, *Reasons*, 204-5.

² January, 1840, 149.

³ No. for July, 1835, 105, 106. *Comm. in Hebr.*, 2nd ed., 294. The whole note is remarkable for its candor.

⁴ Another example of reference to *the remote antecedent* occurs in Acts 4:11; and a very remarkable one in 2 John 7.

reason why the words *this is the true God* should not be referred to the same (*Him that is true*) though grammatically they belong to the proximate antecedent Christ.” Both these are Trinitarian authorities; but I cannot omit citing from another of the same class more at length. Lücke, in his comment on the passage, says:

1. The emphatic tone of the preposition renders it necessary to refer “this” to the prevailing chief subject of the preceding preposition. But this is God, “Him that is true,” and not Christ, who only is mentioned parenthetically, as he through whose mediation the being in Him that is true is effected. 2. Further, as God above is by excellence, and without any word additional, called “The True” (compare John 17:3⁵), and Christ never is so styled by St. John; “this” can, according to all rules of logical interpretation, not be referred to Christ, but to God, unless we are determined to charge St. John with an intentional confusion of ideas. 3. The authors of the New Testament never use the same predicate and name for the Father and the Son of God, when they speak of each distinctly. Here it is plain that they are distinctly spoken of. If, then, “this” here ought to be referred to Christ, we should have a confusion of names and predicates, to which there would be no parallel in the New Testament. Finally, 4. St. John indeed calls the Logos of God in Christ, God, in John 1:1; but the historical Christ he never does so designate, but always as Son of God. But let us suppose that St. John intended to designate Christ as the True God; for what reason does he introduce that designation in this particular place? Are we to suppose that without demonstration, without preparation of any kind, nay, even contrary to the nearest context, he introduced such an important, and with him unusual proposition [I beg my readers to note the strength of these expressions by a Trinitarian writer] in such an equivocal form as a straggler at the end of the epistle — that he did so introduce a proposition, to which nothing resembling it occurs in the whole epistle, and to which no satisfactory clue is to be found in the Gospel which mentions as God only the Logos or Word in Christ — always speaks of the Christ who appeared in the flesh as Son of God — and says of the Father of Jesus Christ, John 17:3, that He is “the Only True God”? Never! And the warning against idols, plain and well grounded as it appears if “this” is

⁵“This is life eternal, to know Thee, *the only True God* . . .”

referred to God; how obscure and unconnected, nay, how confused must it appear to the reader when, besides God, Christ also is mentioned as the True God! These are sufficient grounds for declaring that the only right construction is to refer “This is the True God” to God.⁶

With such ample support from men eminent in the Trinitarian ranks, not to cite from Erasmus, Wetstein, Michaelis, Archbishop Newcome, Neander, and many others, to the same effect, there can be little difficulty in understanding the text. Newcome says, in his notes upon it in his translation: “He that is true must be different from the person who gave man an understanding to know him.” And he thus translates it — “that we may know Him that is true: and we are in Him that is true, through His Son Jesus Christ” — that is, as he says again — “by means of, by the manifestation of, his Son Jesus Christ. This rendering occurs in our old English Bibles”; and he refers to the editions of 1549, ’51, and ’68. Still farther, in a note on the last clause of verse 20, he thus expounds it: “By Him that is true, I mean the true God, and the Giver of everlasting life.” With Newcome, substantially, agrees Prof. Norton, who thus translates: “And we are assured that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding to know Him who is True, and we are with Him who is True, through His Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God, and eternal life. Children, keep yourselves from idols.” He adds:

The meaning is that he with whom Christians are, He who is True, is the True God, and the Giver of Eternal Life. In the former part of the passage, St. John expresses the Jewish conception of the personality and power of Satan. To him, the wicked one, he regarded the heathen world as subject; while believers were through Christ with Him who is True, the True God. They were, therefore, to keep themselves from idols.⁷

There is another text in this epistle: “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us” (1 John 3:16). It is enough to say of this that the words “of God” — italicized, remember, by our own

⁶ Lücke’s Comm. on St. John’s Epistles, in h.l. Edinburgh ed., 1837.

⁷ Norton’s *Reasons*, 197-8.

translators as not in the Greek, are absolutely rejected by Wetstein, Griesbach, Mill, Bengel, and a host of other distinguished critics. The reference is unquestionably to Christ.

Then as to the declaration of our Lord, recorded in the Gospel of St. John: "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58). Why, it may be asked in the outset, why, except for a purpose, have our translators departed here from their usual mode of rendering the exact Greek word so often used by our Lord? Here it reads, "I am" — literally, and without supplement; in other places, "I am he."⁸ Why not here as there — "I am he" — the Messiah purposed in the counsels of God long before Abraham had being? This is the interpretation of Grotius, and I believe the true one. Trinitarians are accustomed to insist that our Lord meant to declare that he was the "I AM" of the Old Dispensation, who revealed himself to Moses by the name or appellation "I am that I am"; but Dr. J. Pye Smith tells us that "the words" there "are in the future tense, 'I will be that which I will be,' Exod. 3:14; and most probably it was not intended as a name, but as a declaration of a certain fulfillment of all the promises of God."⁹ While Mr. Carlile of the Scotch Kirk says: "I do not mean to rest any argument on the expression I am, taken by itself. It occurs repeatedly in this chapter, and is translated I am he."¹⁰

If then the use of the word was no assumption, as of inherent right by our Lord, of the alleged name or appellation of Jehovah, the rendering of the Common Version is meaningless. What our Lord meant was that before Abraham was born, God had purposed that he should be the Messiah. So to speak, in allusion to the Divine purposes, was familiar to the Jews. In Jeremiah, God says to the prophet: "Before I formed thee in the womb I knew thee; before thou camest forth at birth I sanctified thee; and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations" (1:5). Repeatedly in this very chapter he had used the same phrase, "I am"; and as repeatedly our translators render it, as essential to the sense, "I am *he*," that is, the Messiah, for whom the Jews had been long looking. That was what they, he had said, must believe, or "die in their sins"; that was, as he had just before told them, what they would "know" when they had "lifted him

⁸ See, in this same chapter, vv. 24, 28; also John 4:26; 13:19. Compare also Matt. 24:5; Mark 13:6; and Luke 21:8; also John 3:28 and Acts 13:25.

⁹ *Scripture Test.*, Vol. 2, 161.

¹⁰ *Jesus Christ the Great God Our Savior*, 174.

up”]; and that was what he now declared himself to have been in the omniscient counsels of God, long before the era of the great Patriarch.¹¹

Again we are referred to the following passage in proof of the proper Deity of our Lord: “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God” (Phil. 2:6). Assuredly the Trinitarian exposition of this text is a mere *reductio ad absurdum* of the apostle’s argument, since it makes him say that Christ, being God, thought it no robbery to be equal with himself! It would indeed be absurd to say that of any thinking being. St. Paul would hold up to the imitation and admiration of the church at Philippi our Lord’s example of humility and obedience. “Be the same mind in you,” he says, “which was also in Christ Jesus; who, being as God, inasmuch as he was the brightest manifestation of God, His chosen messenger and Representative, the ‘beloved Son,’ the ‘only-begotten of the Father,’ did not think this glorious similitude a thing eagerly to be clung to or retained; but rather laid it aside, became a servant, assumed the condition of a man; and being in that condition, humbled himself and was obedient even unto death, the death of the cross.” Such I take to be the apostle’s meaning, according to the idiom of our own language. And the whole life and history of our Lord well warrant what he says. Speaking the words of God — wielding miraculous power by His Gift, and thus doing the works of God — possessed of Divine wisdom and authority by the will of the Father, he did not eagerly grasp at the grandeur of his high office, or hold or use its great powers for personal advantage; but in the condition of an humble and faithful servant labored on in poverty and contempt for the good of others; — in that of a man, though despised, rejected, reviled, insulted, persecuted, hunted down even to a cruel and ignominious death — yet through all and to the last, obedient and submissive to Him that sent him.

In this view, what follows is symmetrical and harmonious. “Wherefore” — because of this humility and obedience — “God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.” Mark you: Jesus hath not that name of himself, but it is the gift of God; how then can he be that God? “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Had the apostle intended to guard us against this very error of supposing that he meant, when he said that Jesus was, as our

¹¹ Verses 24, 28, 58.

version reads, “in the form of God,” that he was verily God — or that when he said he had received “a name which is above every name,” he was verily the Supreme — how could he have done it better? He declares that his very “exaltation” is a reward; that his “name above every name” is a gift; that the homage he is to receive from all ranks of created beings, and the confession which is to be on their lips, are to be rendered and made to him as *Lord* and not as *God*, and expressly to or for “the glory of GOD the Father.”

The highest Trinitarian authorities sustain our interpretation of this often quoted passage in all particulars. For example, as to the phrase, rendered in our English version, “in the form of God,” Dr. Robinson in his *Lexicon* says of it, “i.e. as God, like God.” As to the phrase “thought it not robbery to be equal with God,” Dr. Whitby says, “did not covet to appear a God”; Bishop Sherlock — “was not fond, or tenacious of appearing as God”; Prof. Stuart — “He regarded not the being equal with God as a thing to be eagerly coveted.” The last named critic says: “Our common version . . . seems to render nugatory, or at least irrelevant, a part of the apostle’s reasoning in the passage. He is enforcing the principle of Christian humility upon the Philippians . . . But how was it any proof or example of humility that *he did not think it robbery to be equal with God?*”¹²

Once more, we are referred to our Lord’s own words to Philip: “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou, Show us the Father?” (John 14:9, 10). Here, surely, is the highest possible and express testimony that Christ is God. To this I reply first by a flat denial. Our Lord had no reference to the Divine Essence, but only to Divine excellences manifested in himself; to “works” which he had done, and which no man could do “except God were with him.” Next, that he explains his language to Philip, in perfect consistency with language which he afterwards addressed to the “Father” as “the only True God” (John 17:3). He proceeded to say to Philip: “Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself; but the Father, that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works.” So afterwards, addressing the Father, he says: “As thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee” (John 17:21). It was his consciousness of the *indwelling* God, speaking in his words, acting and operating in his miraculous and merciful works, that warranted him saying: “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father!”

¹² *Answ. to Channing*, 84.

In a similar sense he had previously said: "He that seeth me seeth Him that sent me!" (John 12:45). Only in that sense could Jesus have so uttered himself; for the same apostle who in his Gospel records these declarations says both in his Gospel and in his first epistle: "No man hath seen God at any time" (John 1:18; 1 John 4:12). Besides all this, let anyone read this entire fourteenth chapter of St. John's Gospel, nay, with it the two which follow; let him note how pointed is the distinction which Jesus makes between the Father as the source both of his wisdom and power, and himself (vv. 10, 24, 28); let him note how careful he is to forbid his disciples praying to himself, but directs them to pray to the Father in his name (16:23, 26); let him, then, in immediate connection, read the seventeenth chapter, containing our Lord's remarkable prayer before his betrayal and arrest — yes, prayer — the very act and office expressive of inferiority and dependence; and unless his mind be wholly preoccupied by the influences of Trinitarian training, it would seem scarcely possible but that he should conclude that whatever Jesus meant when he said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," he assuredly did not mean that he was "the Invisible" God, "the blessed and only Potentate — the King of kings, and Lord of Lords — who only hath immortality; dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen nor can see." Something else, something different from that, he must have meant; and that was, that in his life and character, his words and works, they beheld God most conspicuously and gloriously manifested.

I come now to a passage which is perhaps the one most readily cited against the Unitarian view of Christ, and which demands the fuller notice. I refer to the Proem or Introduction to St. John's Gospel (John 1:1-5). That there is in it a degree of obscurity arising from our want of familiarity with the prevalent opinions of the time, may at once be admitted. To rectify and guard against the influence of these opinions was in part the apostle's object. On the one hand was the Jewish or later Platonism, the leader of which was the celebrated Philo Judaeus, of Alexandria, and a contemporary of our Lord. On the other was Gnosticism, a heresy whose headquarters were at Ephesus; where, by the concurrent testimony of antiquity, the apostle lived and wrote his Gospel. With the Gnostic opinion which prevailed throughout the regions of Greece and Asia Minor, where the new religion was spreading, the apostle must, therefore, have been familiar; and Irenaeus — a pupil of Polycarp, who was a personal friend and disciple of St. John, and who flourished early in the second century — declares that the Evangelist wrote expressly to confute

them. Between the Neo-Platonic and Gnostic systems there were some coincidences. While the former made the Logos — the Divine Reason or Intellect, in the passage before us translated *Word* — to be the great instrument in Creation, and gradually extended its significance to comprehend all Divine attributes employed or manifested in the Creation and Government of the world, the latter made it the Chief of the Eons, supposed immortal spirits holding and exercising different functions or offices, themselves created, but still independent of the Supreme God. To correct these false notions was the purpose of the apostle, by directing men's minds to God Himself, as the Great and Original Source of all things, the Creator of all being, Himself independent, they all dependent on Him. In this sense the Logos — “the Word” (the Wisdom, Power, Reason of God — Divine attributes employed in the Creation and Government of the world) “was *with* God”; inherent, that is, in Him, of course; — “was God,” because belonging to His essential nature. The syntax of the Greek language obliged him to seem at least to personify the “Logos” or Word; to speak of it figuratively as a person; because the Greek noun is the masculine gender, and therefore requires the personal pronouns in apposition with it to be in the same gender; whereas our English noun “word,” by which it is translated, is in the neuter gender, and requires the neuter pronouns. Hence in the third verse of the passage under consideration it would be more agreeable to the English idiom to read “All things were made by *it*,” etc. In another work by this same apostle, that which he has here called simply *the Word* he there, in the opinion of many commentators, calls *the Word of Life*, and *the Life* (1 John 1:1, 2). But while in the Greek *the Word* is masculine, *the Life* is feminine; consequently by neither expression could he have intended to designate a proper person, but used simply a figure of speech, a personification.

In all languages, ancient and modern, the Prosopopoeia or Personification is a figure in frequent use. In the book of Proverbs (ch. 8) there is a remarkable personification of *wisdom*; the corresponding word to which in the Greek translation or Septuagint is that in St. John's Proem, Λόγος, *Logos*. A striking example occurs in the Apocryphal book of the *Wisdom of Solomon*: “Thine Almighty *Word* leaped down from heaven from his royal throne, a fierce warrior, into the midst of a land of destruction” (18:15). The author of this book lived at or a little before the time of Christ, and wrote in Greek; and was doubtless acquainted with the

Neo-Platonism of the period. In the passage referred to and in others,¹³ the noun translated in our version *Word* is in the original, *Logos*. The same remark holds of a passage in another Apocryphal book, *Ecclesiasticus* (24:1ff.); where again we have a personification of *Wisdom* or *the Logos*, as in the passage cited above from Proverbs. In all these cases the Greek term *Logos* has been by our translators rendered *Wisdom* or *Word* interchangeably, as though these terms were synonymous or equally significant.

But look further on. In the fourteenth verse the apostle says: “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth”; “dwelt” he means of course in Christ; in whom the Power and Wisdom of God were the credentials of his divine mission, and who was filled with God’s own mercy and truth for the salvation of men. In a parenthesis he adds — “and we beheld his glory” — *undervived* glory? No: “The glory as of *the only begotten* of the Father.” Still more; with all that he has previously said, he proceeds in the eighteenth verse distinctly to affirm that “no man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared [revealed, made more clearly known, manifested] Him.”¹⁴ Multitudes had seen Christ; and in Christ, His brightest manifestation, His chosen and anointed messenger and representative, they had seen in a high sense, in the only sense possible, the God who sent him.

Yet once more. If St. John intended to teach that his Master was God, the Absolute, the Supreme God, would he not have said so plainly? Why use a circumlocution? Why all this ado about the *Logos*? Why not have continued to call him God throughout his Gospel, throughout his Epistle and Apocalypse, which he has never done? Why, on the contrary, write of him always as “the Son” — “the Son of God” — “the Son of Man” — “the Christ”? Nay, reverting again to the close of his Gospel, why did he not there, when summing up his labors, declare explicitly — “These are written that ye might *believe* that *Jesus is God*” — instead of, as he does — “These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the *Christ*, the *Son of GOD*; and that, believing” (believing that, believing so) “ye might have life through his name” (John 20:31)?

“In the beginning” of all things — we may, then, understand the Evangelist to say — this vast creating Power and Wisdom was put forth.

¹³ 9:1; 16:12, 13, 16.

¹⁴ This 18th verse illustrates two passages before commented on: John 14:9, 10 and 1 Tim. 3:16.

It “was with God”; inherently subsisting in and nothing separate from Him, the Great First Cause. “It was God”; no agent existing or acting apart from God; but essentially Himself; God exerting His active energy by and through His own Wisdom and Power, which “in the beginning” was inherent in Him, essential to His Godhead. By it were all things without exception created. It was the source or spring of all Life, the natural Light of all men. But this Light, before the Gospel was revealed, shone on a darkened world “which comprehended it not.” Thus interpreted, St. John obviously and most distinctly maintains the strict, simple, undivided Unity and Supremacy of God.¹⁵

Taking, then, these five verses of the first chapter of St. John’s Gospel by themselves, it seems plain that he makes no personal reference, direct or indirect, to his Master. He aims, rather, to correct those false philosophic notions of his day, which either clashed with the great fundamental doctrine of all true religion, the doctrine of the Unity and Sovereignty of God; or which were but a veiled Atheism. When, however, we come to the fourteenth verse, we there find him asserting that the same Wisdom and Power by which God made the universe “dwelt” in Jesus; so that he was lifted thereby out of the sphere of ordinary humanity; became Divine Teacher; wielded superhuman Power; and by direct commission and authority from God, introduced and established in the world that holy religion of which John was his apostle, and which is God’s great and surpassing gift to the race.

I hold, then, that the doctrine of Christ’s Supreme and proper Deity is directly opposed by his own express words, and by those of his apostles. By his own: “And behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but One, that is God” (Matt. 19:16, 17). “Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself. . . . I can of mine own self do nothing” (John 5:19-30). “My Father is greater than all” (John 10:29). “My Father is greater than I” (John 14:28). It is pertinent to ask here, how do these, especially the two last, citations correspond or harmonize with the alleged coequality of the

¹⁵“It is contended, indeed” says Prof. Norton, “that his words admit of a different meaning; that the Logos (Word) is here spoken of as a proper person; but that this person is, at the same time, declared to be, literally, God. But if we so understand St. John, his words will express a contradiction in terms. ‘The Logos,’ he says, ‘was *with* God,’ which, if the Logos be a person, necessarily implies that he is a different person from God. Whoever is *with* any being must be diverse from that being with whom he is” (*Reasons*, 317, 318).

Three Persons of the Trinity? By the words of his apostles: “There is . . . one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism; One GOD and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Eph. 4:5, 6). “There is *none other* God but One. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth (as there be gods *many* and lords *many*), but to us there is but *one GOD, the Father*, of whom are all things, and we in him; (or, “for him, i.e. to him our service and worship are due,” as Mr. Locke interprets; or, “to whom we, as dependent creatures, belong,” as Bp. Pearce). “And One Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom all things” (“belonging to the new spiritual *creation* or dispensation — through whom the blessings and discoveries of the Gospel have been given,” Grotius) “and we by him” (“and by whom we have access unto the Father,” 1 Cor. 8:4-6). “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 power. For he must reign till he hath put all things under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is Death. For ‘he hath put all things under his feet.’¹⁶ But when he saith,¹⁷ All things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted which 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 in all” (1 Cor. 15:24-28).

Such language, surely, needs no explanation. It is clear, explicit, intelligible to the humblest reader. It is but a specimen of what we constantly meet in the New Testament. To hold to Christ’s proper and Supreme Deity in the face of such direct testimony, nay, in the face of the whole tenor and drift of Holy Scripture, is, to say the least, amazing. It becomes nothing else, nothing more than a mere inference from some few and confessedly difficult texts. The Roman Catholic Church has always insisted, bear in mind — and if this dogma is to be held at all, she is right — that so few and difficult are the passages of Scripture from which it is attempted to infer it, that the *traditions* of the church are essential to prove it a part of Christian belief, and that it cannot be proved from Scripture without them. Nay, some of her most famous doctors have distinctly denied that it can even be inferred from Scripture, and rest it entirely on Tradition.¹⁸

¹⁶ See Psalm 110:1.

¹⁷ “When it is said,” Abp. Newcome.

¹⁸ E.g. Masenius, Melchior Canus, Witsius; cited by Wilson, *Concessions*, 51. See also H’y Taylor’s *Ben Mordecai’s Apology*, 46ff.

Who, then, is Christ? I will not dogmatize. This is not a question on which that would become me or any man. God has been pleased to keep some mystery around it. If it be not so, what can we make of our Lord's positive declaration recorded in Luke and Matthew, "No man" (or, more conformably with our English idiom, *no one*) "knoweth *who* the Son *is*, but the Father"?¹⁹ Surely there is that belonging to Christ, if words have any meaning, which no one but the Father knows.

Admit, then, that there is a degree of mystery surrounding this question, making it, perhaps, one of the things which, like "the times and the seasons" of which after his Resurrection our Lord spoke, "the Father hath put in His own power," and therefore "not for us to know" till He shall give us more light; what then? Other points, points of the highest practical moment and profoundest interest, are made perfectly plain, and stand out on the sacred page beyond all doubt or dispute by any who rest on the authority of Holy Writ. On that authority I profess to stand. On that authority I plant myself in this entire argument. I make no pretensions to being wise above what is there written. And, therefore, according to that book which is to Protestants the common standard of revealed truth, I am ready and glad of the opportunity to make full and distinct confession of what I understand and preach as the Unitarian Faith.

I believe, then, that Jesus is *the Christ*. This I would emphasize. This of itself and alone is a great point. How remarkable that passage in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke!

Jesus asked his disciples, saying, "Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" And they said, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets." He saith unto them, "But whom say ye that I am?" And Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art *the Christ*, the Son of the living GOD." And Jesus answered and said unto him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona (son of Jonah); for flesh and blood have not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven."

Our Lord is not content with simply approving Peter's declaration as true; he pronounces him specially blest in being able to make it, because resting on no mere human speculation, but on revelation from the Father. I call this a great truth; assuredly it is. If any single truth be fundamental

¹⁹ Matt. 11:27; Luke 10:22.

in our religion, this is. It involves the veracity of our Lord himself. Deny it, and you deny him. It is the point on which he always insisted; and which, after his ascension, was the turning point in the preaching of his apostles. It is the connecting link between the Old and the New Dispensation. It is the result to which the long and golden thread of ancient prophecy leads, and in which it ends. I am speaking, of course, of matters of strictly Christian faith or belief; and in such a connection recognize no hair-splitting between a *technical* and a *spiritual* Christianity. I well remember that the English Deists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, like Lord Herbert of Cherbury and others, at times spoke quite as respectfully of our Lord and of his religion as many of the modern rationalistic school in our own day. In the early part of the last century, Tindal entitled his Deistical attack upon Christianity "Christianity as old as the Creation"; because, forsooth, as he argued, all truth being eternal, if Christianity contain truth, it can be no revelation or discovery. On the other hand, to deny Jesus to be the Christ, on the ground that that is *a mere Jewish idea never to be realized*, as has been recently done in our own vicinity, is only to evade the point at issue. No matter that the gross ideas which possessed the Jewish mind in our Lord's time were disappointed. He was all the more needed to correct those ideas, and lift the people from their grossness. The question is not whether he met the worldly and coarse expectations of the masses of his day, but whether he was the Predicted, the Promised Messiah, "the very Christ";²⁰ the specially Anointed Messenger and Representative of God; which last all Christendom always has affirmed and affirms still. "That we might believe that *Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*" (John 20:31) was the great purpose for which, as we have seen, St. John declares he had written his Gospel.

I believe that Jesus is the Son of God; not merely *a* son of God, as we all may be through that "glorious freedom" which is secured to us through the Gospel; not *a* son of God, as all intelligent beings are, according to our Lord's great revelation of the Fatherhood of the Supreme; but *the* Son of God in a high, special, peculiar, unrivalled sense; a title by which he is designated as holding a singular and most intimate relationship to the

²⁰ John 7:26. The Greek adverb here rendered "very," in our Common Version, occurs previously in the same verse, and is there rendered "indeed"; and again in v. 40 of the same chapter, and is there rendered "of a truth." A good rendering would be by our English adverbs, *truly, really*. Griesbach, and after him Alford, rejects the adverb where it occurs the second time in v. 26. Then the passage would read, "Do the rulers *really* know that this is the Christ?"

Father. This is elsewhere expressed by the phrases “the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father”; “my beloved Son”; “the Son of God with power”; “him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world.”²¹

I believe him the one Mediator; according to the words of St. Paul, who declares that “there is One God,” also “One Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). I thank God that there is. I bless God that He has provided for me — frail, weak, imperfect, tempted, erring, sinner as I am — this gracious channel of communication between Him and my soul. I confess, humbly yet joyfully confess the need. I know myself too well to decline or deny it.

I believe him to be our Saviour — our compassionate, self-sacrificing, loving, all-sufficient Saviour. My soul gladly responds to that declaration of the same apostle, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Tim. 1:15) and to that of the apostle Peter: “Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). “Him,” whom “God hath thus exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5:31), I confess and rejoice in, as “His unspeakable Gift” (2 Cor. 9:15).

Finally, I believe in Jesus as the Incarnate Word — “the Word made flesh” (John 1:14). In Jesus was the Divine Word or *Logos*,²² which qualified him for his great mission, which constituted him the most illustrious Representative and Manifestation of God — in the glowing language of the epistle to the Hebrews, “the brightness of God’s glory, the express image of His person” (Heb. 1:3); which made his words the words of God, his works the works of God; which inspired him with superhuman wisdom, clothed him with superhuman powers, took him utterly out of the category of ordinary humanity, placed him far above all previous prophets and messengers from God, and gave him rank second only to the Supreme in His moral universe. I gratefully acknowledge and bow to his Authority. In my profoundest religious consciousness, I regard his words as of the same binding force as though they were uttered evidently and audibly to me from the opened heavens by the Almighty Himself.

²¹ John 1:18; Matt. 3:17; Rom. 1:4; John 10:36.

²² Vid. *supra*. 103-104, etc.

But in saying all this, remember, I “confess him” only “Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:11). I dare not say less; for there is his own emphatic declaration: “Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 10:32, 33). How confess him, if not in the very offices he claimed? — I dare not say more; assuredly, I dare not say aught which shall seem as far as words can to dethrone God, aught which shall seem to derogate from the essential, underived, unrivalled Supremacy of the Father. I know that I am required to “honor the Son, even as I honor the Father” (John 5:23); but in this connection I also know that I can honor the Father rightly and justly only by receiving and honoring the Son as His Minister and Representative, in precisely those Offices and Relations in which it has pleased God to place and reveal him. I should dishonor God, nay, I should dishonor the Son by attempting anything more.

Herein may be seen that Divinity of Christ which the Unitarian Church affirms; not his Deity, for that is another matter, and that it denies. Christ *is* Divine, but He *is not* GOD. His Divineness or Divinity is because of his intimate, peculiar, in some degree even mysterious union with the Father; because of his Offices, Powers, Gifts; because that “in him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:9); and because he is thus “Head over all to the Church” (Eph. 1:22).

Such in this respect I understand to be Unitarian *Christianity*, or *Christian* Unitarianism. It is the faith which, with unshaken, unwavering, increasing confidence that it is the truth of God, I for more than thirty years have preached; the faith in which I rejoice to live, and hope to die. Anything less in regard to our Lord Jesus Christ I do not acknowledge to be Christian Unitarianism; or, indeed, anything less to be Christianity. I accept, I hold as dearer than life, Christianity as a Revealed Religion, a direct and express Revelation “from the Father of lights.” In the limited sense of Monotheism, there are various forms of Unitarianism. It may be Deism, Rationalism, Naturalism; all virtually the same thing; and all alike rejecting the idea of Revealed Religion, and whatever puts forth the claim. It may be Judaism, resting on the Divine Legation of Moses. It may be Mohammedanism falsely alleging Mohammed to be *the* Prophet of God. It may be Hindooism, which, according to Ram Mohun Roy’s translation of the Veds, the Hindoo Scriptures, teaches the doctrine of One God. All these being, as I have said, Monotheism are so far Unitarianism. But I am speaking of and for *Christian* Unitarianism:

which not only recognizes and adores One GOD, the Father, but one Lord, Jesus the Christ (1 Cor. 8:6); bearing on its forefront the plain and explicit words of that Lord himself, addressed in solemn prayer to that Father: “This is Life Eternal, to know Thee, the Only True GOD, and Jesus the Christ whom Thou hast sent” (John 17:3).