

The Deity of Christ

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If the argument presented in the foregoing chapter is conclusive in favor of the doctrine of the Trinity, the Deity of Christ must be admitted. That is, if Christ is the second person of the Godhead, he is divine, the same in essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit, to whom he is by a blessed necessity equal in power and glory. This being the case, some suppose that a special discussion of Christ's Deity is needless. This is a very plausible opinion, to which I should yield if the subject was not of transcendent importance. Being fully satisfied, however, that the supreme divinity of the Lord Jesus is the basis of the system of Christianity, and that without this basis the system has no saving value, I deem it proper to assign to the Deity of Christ a distinct prominence.

Before adducing proofs that Christ is God, I wish to present a few considerations to prepare the way for these proofs, and to induce a higher appreciation of them:

1. Christ both in the Old Testament and the New is represented as acting the part of Substitute for those he came to save. We therefore read, "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed...The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." (Isa. 53: 5, 6) "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." (Matt. 20:28.) "The good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." (John 10:11) "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." (Gal. 3:13)

These are but a specimen of the passages which teach that Christ took the place of those whom he saves, and died in their stead. I might refer to other passages from which we learn that we are forgiven and saved for Jesus' sake, but it is not necessary it will be conceded that the gospel teaches that sinners are saved because Jesus has done and suffered something for them. As to the specific nature of what he did and suffered, I do not now inquire. I only assume that he was the Substitute of those who are saved

by him, and that they are saved through his mediation.

2. If Christ is not divine, he could not have taken the place of sinners, so as to make atonement for their sins. One creature cannot, in the government of God, take the place of another. An angel cannot act in the room of a man. Why? Because all that an angel can do is on his own personal account due to God. This is the universal law of creatureship. It

asserts its claims in all worlds, and will assert them forever. Now, suppose Christ to have been a created being. Take the Arian view, first espoused in the fourth century. Arius conceded that Christ was the most exalted of beings, next to God, but he said also, "There was a time when the Son was not." Thus he refused to accord to the Son the attribute of eternity, and there cannot be Deity without eternity of existence.

If we suppose, for argument's sake, the doctrine of Arius to be true, and that Christ, however highly exalted in the scale of being, is not God, but a creature, then it follows that he was personally bound to serve God the Creator. His creatureship must have imposed on him personal obligations, rendering it impossible for him to act in the room of others. Creatureship and substitution are not consistent with each other. They cannot stand together. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy strength." (Mark 12:30), is the law which extends its jurisdiction over the whole realm of creatureship.

If all the creature's strength is to be exerted in the love and service of God on account of the creature's personal relation to the Creator, then there is no remaining strength to be used in any other way or for any other purpose. If Jesus was merely a created being, he must, like other creatures, act for himself alone. It is plain, therefore, that if Christ is not divine, he could not have taken the place of sinners, so as to die for them and make atonement for their sins.

3. If Christ as a created being could have taken the place of sinners, suffering in their stead, there would not have been saving merit in his sufferings. We speak of the different orders of rational creatures, but they are substantially one. As compared with God, their diversity as to each other disappears. If one creature fails to meet his obligations to God, how can another creature atone for the failure by satisfying the law which has been violated? There must be merit to satisfy the claims of God's law. But where is merit to be found in anything a creature can do?

When creatures have done all required of them, Jesus teaches them to say, "We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do." Luke 17:10. On the supposition that Christ, as a mere creature, died for sinners, what saving merit could there be in his blood? When creatures deserved perdition, could the death of a creature effect their salvation? The law of God can recognize merit in that only which does honor to its preceptive and penal claims. Nothing that a creature can do or suffer can confer this honor. There is an absence of merit, and there can be no merit unless it is found in a Being in whom the divine element supplies it.

In view of these considerations it is perfectly clear that Christ, unless divine, could have done nothing in the matter of human salvation. It would not have been possible for him to act in the room of others; and had it been possible, he could not have saved them. There is absolutely no hope for any sinner of Adam's race unless the Word who in the beginning was with God was God. (John 1:1) This eternal Word, the second person in the Trinity, being above law, free from the obligations of creatureship, was at his own disposal, and could, if so inclined, place himself under a law enacted for the government of creatures.

This, the advocates of Christ's Deity believe, he has done, and that the fact is recorded in these words: "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." (Gal. 4:4, 5) Obeying the precepts of the law in his life and suffering its penalty in his death, the divine nature in the twofold constitution of his person imparted infinite worth to his obedience and sufferings. The law was magnified and made honorable, while a way was opened for the consistent exercise of mercy in the salvation of the guilty. This was done if Christ was divine, but on no other supposition. We may now proceed to consider in order some of the more prominent proofs of Christ's Deity. They are such as these:

I. DIVINE NAMES ARE GIVEN TO HIM. Before establishing this by direct quotations from the New Testament, I will name some passages in the Old Testament which without doubt refer to God in the supreme sense of the term, and are by the New Testament writers applied to Christ. In Ps. 45:6 it is written, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre." In Heb. 1:8 we read, "But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." It is worthy of special notice that these words, as used in the Epistle to the Hebrews, are found in the midst of an argument to prove the pre-eminent dignity of Christ by showing his superiority to angels. It would be difficult to explain why the inspired writer wished to prove Christ's superiority to angels if he did not intend to teach his equality with God. It is indisputable that the Father in addressing the Son applies to him the term God: "Thy throne, O God."

Isaiah in the sixth chapter of his prophecy records a wonderful vision, in which he saw the Lord "high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple." He saw the six-winged seraphim, and heard them cry with reverential awe, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory." (Isa. 6:3) No one will deny that the Lord Jehovah of hosts is the Supreme God. But in the twelfth chapter of the Gospel of John we are referred to this vision of the prophet; and the evangelist, with Christ as the theme of his discourse, says, "These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory and spake of him." (John 12:41) Nothing is plainer than that Isaiah, in seeing the glory of the Lord of hosts, saw the glory of Christ; and why? Because Christ is Jehovah of Hosts.

We have in Isaiah 40:3 these words: "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." John the Baptist said of himself, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias." (John 1:23) As the harbinger of Christ, John the Baptist was his messenger, as we learn from Mal. 3:1; Mark 1:2, 3, and came to prepare his way. In the Old Testament the way of the Lord is the way of Jehovah, and in the New Testament the way of the Lord is the way of Jesus. The conclusion is irresistible that the Jehovah of the Old Testament is the Jehovah-Jesus of the New Testament.

I now proceed to quote from the New Testament a number of passages which obviously teach the Deity of Christ. It is natural to refer first to John 1:1, 2: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, And the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God." That by "the Word" is meant the Being who became incarnate. We are taught in the fourteenth verse of the same chapter: "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."

The words "In the beginning" no doubt mean what they do in Gen. 1:1. The reference is to the period at which "God created the heaven and the earth." The Word was then with him, and as God existed before he performed the work of creation, and as the Word was with him, it follows that the Word existed before creation, which is equivalent to eternity of being. Jesus, therefore, in one place refers to the glory which he had with the Father before the world was. John 17:5. "The Word was God" is the declaration to which special attention should be called, and which deserves the strongest emphasis. What could be more unequivocal? How could testimony in favor of Christ's Deity be more positive?

The language of Thomas in John 20:28 deserves consideration. This apostle had expressed his incredulity in terms unreasonably strong, but when Jesus presented infallible proofs of his resurrection Thomas said, "My Lord and my God!" I am aware that some who deny Christ's divinity insist that the words of Thomas are those of exclamatory surprise, and do not attribute Lordship and Deity to Christ. To adopt this view it would be necessary to believe that the apostle expressed his surprise in a very irreverent, not to say blasphemous, manner. Whatever surprise Thomas felt, his words were declarative of his faith in Christ as his Lord and his God, and the avowal of his faith was pleasing to Christ. It is manifest that Jesus did not disclaim the titles that Thomas gave him, but recognized their propriety. He is, then, Lord and God.

In the ninth chapter of Romans, Paul refers to the advantages enjoyed by the Israelites, "of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever." (v. 5) The words "as concerning the flesh," though they almost seem to have been thrown in incidentally, are very significant. They teach the descent of Christ, how he came, as to his human nature, but the language which follows shows him to be divine, for he "is over all, God blessed for ever." It can only be said of a Divine Being that he is over all, and it is therefore perfectly natural that the term God should be applied to him "who is over all."

It is evident, then, whichever view we take, that there was a manifestation in the flesh and the manifestation of a being. Mr. Spurgeon, in his sermon on this verse entitled "The Hexapla of Mystery," has placed the matter in controversy in so clear a light that anyone can understand it. He says:

"There is very little occasion for fighting about this matter, for if the text does not say 'God was manifest in the flesh,' who does it say was manifest in the flesh? Either a man, or an angel, or a devil. Does it tell us that a man was manifest in the flesh? Assuredly that cannot be its teaching, for every man is manifest in the flesh, and there is no sense whatever in making such a statement concerning any mere man, and then calling it a mystery. Was it an angel, then? But what angel was ever manifest in the flesh? And if he were, would it be at all a mystery that he should be 'seen of angels'? Is it a wonder for an angel to see an angel? Can it be that the devil was manifest in

the flesh? If so, he has been 'received up into glory,' which, let us hope, is not the case. Well, if it was neither a man, nor an angel, nor a devil, who was manifest in the flesh, surely he must have been God; and so, if the word be not there, the sense must be there, or else nonsense. We believe that if criticism should grind the text in a mill, it would get out of it no more and no less than the sense expressed by our grand old version: God himself was manifest in the flesh."

To this striking interpretation of Mr. Spurgeon not a word needs to be added, and every objection will assail it in vain.

I refer to one passage more in which Christ is called God: "And we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." (I John 5:20) Here Christ is not only designated God, but the true God. As there can be but one true God, the epithet true, in its application to Christ, makes him one in essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit, while it lays the axe at the root of polytheism and shows all idol gods to be vanity. The phrase "eternal life" claims attention.

If full force is given to the article in the original, we must read, "This is the true God, and the eternal life." In this case there would be a repetition of the idea in chapter 1:2: "For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." Here eternity of life or being is ascribed to Christ, and he must be God. Or if we take the words as we have them, without the force of the article—"This is the true God, and eternal life"—then we must understand the beloved disciple to teach, by a figure of speech, that Christ is the Author of eternal life. If so, he is divine, for God alone can give eternal life to creatures. The argument from the ascription of divine names to Christ in favor of his Deity is by no means exhausted, but I pursue it no further. The Scriptures call him God, and he is God.

II. DIVINE ATTRIBUTES BELONG TO CHRIST. The preceding argument derives its power from the fact that names which in the highest sense are applied to God are also applied to Christ. The force of the present argument will be seen in Christ's possession of attributes unquestionably divine. I shall not attempt to give an exhaustive catalogue of these attributes, but merely name the following conspicuous ones:

1. Eternity. That the Word, who in the beginning was with God, had an eternal existence is proved by the following Scripture: "But thou, Bethlehem-Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." (Mic. 5:2) That this language refers to Christ is manifest from (Matt. 2:6) It will be observed that while the "ruler in Israel" was to come out of Bethlehem—that is, be born there—it is said that his "goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." While the passage contains a clear intimation of the two-fold constitution of the person of the Messiah, it is here quoted to show that he who was born in Bethlehem had existed from eternity: "His goings forth had been from everlasting." When it is said in Psalm 90:2, "From everlasting to everlasting thou art God," it is universally understood that God has existed from eternity. Why, then, do not the words "from everlasting," when applied to the Lord Jesus, mean the same thing? They must have the same meaning.

I refer to one other passage in proof of the eternity of Christ's existence. It is found in John 17:5, and has been mentioned in another connection: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self; with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." The words "before the world was" are identical in import with "before the foundation of the world," as in Eph. 1:4. Bringing the world into existence is referred to as one of the creative acts of divine power, and there is no intimation that it was subsequent to any other creative act.

Between the remotest depths of eternity and the creation of the world there is no epoch from which to date, and therefore whatever was before the foundation of the world was eternal. "Glory before the world was" must have been eternal glory, and as the glory of a being implies his existence, his eternal glory implies his eternal existence. That Christ existed "before the world was" is a strong argument for his eternity; and if the possession of unbeginning existence is not proof of Deity, there is no proof of anything.

2. Omniscience. To know all things is a divine prerogative. It is God who "searches all hearts and understands all the imaginations of the thoughts." (I Chron. 28:9) He is referred to in Acts 15:8 as "knowing the hearts"—literally, "the heart-

knower;" and in I John 3:20 he is said to "know all things." If these things are true of God and also of Christ, it follows that Christ is God. Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest, that I love thee." (John 21:17); and if in Acts 1:24 the term Lord, as in most places in the New Testament, refers to Christ, he is designated "heart-knower." However this may be, we know that it is he who in Rev. 2:23 says, "And all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts." Probably the strongest proof of Christ's omniscience is to be found in his own words in Matt. 1:27: "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son." A literal translation requires the substitution of one for man—no one, any one. It is not only said that man does not possess the knowledge referred to, but that no one, in any class of rational beings, possesses it. The knowledge is peculiarly divine, and as Christ is in possession of it in common with the Father, the Deity of the Son is as undeniable as that of the Father.

3. Omnipresence. In the chapter on the attributes of God it was shown in the light of Ps. 139:7-12 and other Scriptures that God is everywhere. Omnipresence is obviously a divine perfection. If, then, this perfection belongs to Christ, his Deity is unquestionable. What did he himself say in his conversation with Nicodemus?—"No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is it heaven." John 3:13. Here we are plainly taught that he who came down from heaven was in heaven. The only explanation is that while his bodily presence was on earth, his essential presence was in heaven. Christ also said, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. 18:20)

It is quite observable that Jesus does not refer to large numbers of his disciples, but to two or three met in his name. However numerous and however widely separated these little companies may be, the Saviour's presence is with them all. If it is said that his gracious presence is specially meant, I grant it, but his gracious presence wherever two or three meet is possible only because he is omnipresent. For the same reason his words are true: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matt. 28:20) His presence everywhere is of necessity implied. The omnipresence of Christ is proof of his Deity.

4. Omnipotence. If omniscience and omnipresence are divine attributes, it is certain that omnipotence must be classed among the perfections of God. If, therefore, it can be shown that Christ possesses almighty power, there will be another argument in support of his divinity. It is manifest that in the exercise of power he claimed equality with God the Father. Referring to the Father, he said, "For what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." (John 5:9) Prophecy spoke of him as "the mighty God." (Isa. 9:6) Even while on earth, in the days of his humiliation, his superhuman power was recognized. Winds and waves obeyed him, disease loosed its grasp at his bidding, while death and the grave were in haste at his word to yield up their prey. So great and so beneficent is the power of Christ, that Paul considered it a special favor for this power to rest on him, and he rejoiced in his ability to do all things through Christ strengthening him. Surely Christ is almighty, and he is therefore divine.

5. Immutability. When God says, "I am the Lord, I change not" (Mal. 3:6), the form of expression denotes that his unchangeableness is proof of his divinity. This being the case, it must be admitted that, if Christ is immutable, he is God. In Heb. 1:10-12, Christ seems evidently referred to as the Maker of the heavens and the earth, which are to perish and be changed, but it is said, "Thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail." In the last chapter of the same Epistle we have the words, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." (v. 8) Changes belong to things and creatures. Immutability belongs to God alone, and Jesus Christ is invariably the same, because he is God.

Thus does the Deity of Christ appear from the ascription of divine attributes to him:

III. CHRIST IS REPRESENTED AS PERFORMING DIVINE WORKS. No physical act displays omnipotence more strikingly than creation. The production of something out of nothing is everywhere in the Scriptures considered the exclusive work of God. I concede, therefore, that if Christ has not exerted creative power, one of the strongest, if not the strongest, proofs of his Deity is wanting. But what say the Scriptures?—"All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made." (John 1:3) I do not see how the universal and the particular can be more fully expressed than in this verse. "All things were made by him"—this is the universal; "without him was not anything [literally, one thing] made"—this is the particular. There is nothing that rises above "all things and there is nothing that falls below the "one thing." Every created object is embraced in this inspired account of creation, and the omnipotent work is ascribed to Christ.

We have similar language in Col. 1:6: "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him." Here, too, the existence of all things is ascribed to the creative power of Christ. The statement of the apostle is so positive and so forcible that all words of paraphrase would weaken it. I therefore leave it without comment. Nor shall I quote other Scriptures to prove that the work of creation is attributed to Christ. The two passages now before the reader are amply sufficient. Who but a Divine Being has created all things? Christ is therefore God.

The work of preservation is also the work of Christ. Of him it is said, "And he is before all things, and by him all things consist." (Col. 1:17). Being before all things, he existed prior to the creation of all things by his power, and since their creation he has preserved them by the same power. "All things consist"—that is, they stand together, are kept in place—by him who made them. They would fall to pieces, there would be disintegration if Christ were not Conserver as well as Creator. In Heb. 1:3 are these words: "Upholding all things by the word of his power." Here the kindred idea of sustaining is presented. The imagery employed supposes the universe to rest on the word of Christ's power, and he is infinitely able to uphold the "all things" he has created. Does not his work of providence prove his Deity?

The resurrection of the dead will be a glorious display of the power of God. No sane mind can suppose that anything but omnipotence can reanimate the dust of the countless millions in the empire of the grave. Indeed, some in apostolic times seem to have thought it "incredible that God should raise the dead." Certainly, no one supposed that any being but God could perform such a work. There is, however, a special ascription of this work to Christ. He says himself: "The hour is coming in the which all that are in the grave shall hear his voice, and shall come forth." (John 5:28, 29).

What amazing power will this be, accompanying the voice of the Son of God, and causing all the dead to hear that voice! They will do more: "They will come forth." These are the words of "the faithful and true Witness." Paul says of Christ, "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." (Phil. 3:21) This passage refers to the resurrection of the saints, and teaches three things: that the vile body—literally, the body of our humiliation—is to be changed; that it is to be conformed to the glorious body of Christ; and that this is to be done by the power of Christ—a power so great that in its exercise he is able to subdue all things. It is needless to quote further to show that Jesus will raise the dead.

Now, I ask if divine works—creation, preservation, and the resurrection of the dead—are not ascribed to Christ, and do they not prove his Deity? But there is other proof:

IV. CHRIST IS THE OBJECT OF WORSHIP. What is worship? When our translation of the Bible was made the term was used in two senses: in the lower sense of the word it meant civil respect and deference, as in Luke 14:10: "Then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee." The term in this sense is now obsolete, but it is used in its highest scriptural sense to denote adoration paid to God because he is God. We have the authority of Jesus himself on this point. In repelling one of Satan's temptations he said. "For it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Matt. 4:10. Here we are taught that worship belongs exclusively to God.

If, then, it can be shown that, according to the Scriptures, Jesus Christ is the object of worship, the doctrine of his Deity will be established. In John 5:23 it is written, "That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." No one will deny that supreme honor is claimed for the Father, and equal honor is claimed for the Son. This honor surely implies worship. The first Christians were designated as those who called on the name of the Lord. Paul wrote, "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." (I Cor. 1:2)

To call upon the name of the Lord is to invoke his name, and this implies prayer, whatever else it may imply. Prayer is an act of worship. Nor is this all. Calling on the name of the Lord is inseparably connected with salvation. "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Rom. 10:13) It is here taken for granted that the Lord has power to save. I need not say that it requires the power of God to save. The Lord Jesus must be God. Not only did the first Christians call upon the name of the Lord in their worship and service during life, but in death they invoked his name and committed their departing spirits into his hands.

Of the latter truth, Stephen is the most conspicuous illustration: "And they stoned Stephen, calling upon and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." (Acts 7:59) This is the correct translation. There is no word in the Greek text corresponding to God, and there is no pause between the calling upon and the saying. The Redeemer was invoked, and the words of invocation were, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." This was the first Christian martyr. With eternity just before him he called on his Lord, commending to him the spirit struggling to escape from the murdered body. Did Stephen labor under a mistake in believing that Jesus, because divine, was able to receive his disembodied spirit? Strange time to make a mistake when he saw the glory of God shining brighter than ten thousand suns! There was no mistake. The dying martyr recognized the Deity of his Lord.

In Heb. 1:6 it is said, "And let all the angels of God worship him." This is the command of the eternal Father—a command implying the divinity of the Son and the equality of his claims to angelic adoration. If the Lord Jesus is worshipped by saints and angels, is not this a conclusive proof of his Deity? Saints on earth worship him, and saints in heaven sing a new song, saying, "Thou art worthy...for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." (Rev. 5:9) John heard this exalted song, and then he heard the angels, "and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." (Rev. 5:12)

It will be observed that while the angels make no reference to personal redemption, as do the saints, they fully recognize the worthiness of the Lamb slain. Christ is worshipped by saints and angels, on earth and in heaven. He accepts the worship. Peter was utterly unwilling to receive worship from Cornelius, but raised him up from his prostrate position, "Saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man." (Acts 10:26) Paul and Barnabas "rent their clothes" at the very intimation that sacrifices were to be offered to them. (Acts 14:14, 18) When John was so impressed by the glory of the angel who made known to him the wonderful things which he saw that he fell down to worship, mistaking the angel for the Lord of angels, the heavenly messenger rebuked him, saying, "See thou do it not...worship God." (Rev. 12:9) Thus we see that apostles on earth would not receive worship, nor would angels in heaven. But Jesus accepted worship on earth and in heaven. Why? Because he knew himself to be the proper object of adoration. This he could not know without a consciousness of Deity. Christ is God.

In closing, it is proper to notice a strange declaration, sometimes made by those who deny the supreme divinity of Christ. It is in substance this: "That, though Jesus is not God, he is the best man the world ever saw." Nothing can be further from the truth than such a statement. The alternative is not that Jesus is God or the best of men. No! The alternative is that Jesus is God or the worst of men. If he was not God, he was such an impostor, such a blasphemer, as the world never saw.

He claimed for himself divine honors and divine worship. He said, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." (Matt. 10:37); "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:26) It is proper to say that in the latter passage the word "hate" means to love less, and the spirit of both passages is that love to Christ must be superior to that exercised in any of the relations of life.

Think of it. Here is a man—if Jesus is only a man—who requires the husband to love him more than he does his wife, and the wife to love him more than she does her husband; who requires parents and children to love him more than they love one another, and who requires everybody to love him more than life itself! On the supposition that Jesus is a mere man, there is no language that can define the presumption that presents such claims. He gives orders that in baptism his name shall be used between that of the Father and of the Holy Spirit; that his death shall be commemorated till the end of the world; that repentance and remission of sins shall be preached through him; and says that he will come in the clouds of heaven on the last day, raise the dead, judge the world, welcome the righteous into the kingdom of glory, consign the wicked to eternal perdition, and will then be the light and the joy of the New Jerusalem. Imagine prophet or apostle as asserting such claims and saying such things: Would not the presumption and the blasphemy be intolerable? They are just as intolerable in the case of Jesus Christ if he is not divine.

I present these views to show how absurd it is to deny the Deity of Christ and insist that the world never saw so good a man. No, he is the worst of men if nothing more than man. But he is God. This is the glory of the system of Christianity, that its Author is divine. His Deity is essential to the value of his atoning sacrifice—essential to his ability to save. In view of the

proofs of his divinity presented in this chapter, every Christian may say with Thomas, "My Lord and my God!" and with Paul, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (II Tim. 1:12) and in the dying hour the words of Stephen may well come into the heart and find expression through the quivering lips: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." (Acts 7:59)



The Church Constitution is Derived from the Scriptures

Hezekiah Harvey

From *The Church: Its Polity and Ordinances*, 1879

The constitution of the church, as here explained, is derived from the Scriptures, the only and sufficient authority in matters of faith and practice. The highest Patristic and historical authorities, however, confirm this view.

Mosheim says of the primitive churches:

"Every church was composed of three constituent parts:

1. Teachers, who were also invested with the government of the community according to the laws;

2. Ministers; and

3. The multitude or people. Of these parts the chief in point of authority was the people, for to them belonged the appointment of the bishop and presbyters, as well as of the inferior ministers; with them resided the power of enacting laws, as also of adopting or rejecting whatever might be proposed in the general assemblies, and of expelling, and receiving into communion, any depraved or unworthy members. In short, nothing whatever of any moment could be determined or carried into effect without their knowledge and concurrence."

He adds:

"With regard to government and internal economy, every individual church considered itself as an independent community, none of them ever looking, in these respects, beyond the circle of its own members for assistance, or recognizing any sort of external influence or authority." (*Commentaries on First Three Centuries*, pp. 179, 196, Burdock's Ed.)

Neander, when speaking of the terms episcopos and presbuteros, says:

"Originally both names related to the same office, and hence both names are frequently interchanged as perfectly synonymous...Every church was governed by a union of the elders or overseers chosen from among themselves, and we find among them no individual distinguished above the rest who presided as primus inter pares [first among equals], though probably, in the age immediately succeeding the apostolic, of which we have, unfortunately, so few authentic memorials, the practice was introduced to apply to such an one the name of *episcopos* by way of distinction.

"The government of the church was the peculiar office of such overseers. It was their business to watch over the general order, to maintain the purity of the Christian doctrine and the Christian practice, to guard against abuses, to admonish the faulty, and to guide the public deliberations, as appears from the passages in the New

Testament where their functions are described. But their government by no means excluded the participation of the whole church in the management of their common concerns, as may be inferred from what we have already said respecting the nature of Christian communion, and is also evident from many individual examples in the apostolic church." (*Planting and Training of the Church*, book iii, Ch. 5)

Gibbon, who on this subject may surely be regarded as an impartial witness, says of the early churches:

"The societies which were instituted in the cities of the Roman Empire were united only by the ties of faith and charity. Independence and equality formed the basis of their internal constitution...The public functions of religion were solely entrusted to the established ministers of the church, the bishops and presbyters—two appellations which in their first origin appear to have distinguished the same office and the same order of persons...In proportion to the respective numbers of the faithful, a larger or smaller number of these episcopal presbyters guided each infant congregation with equal authority and united counsels."

After describing the subsequent appropriation of the term bishop to the presiding officer among the presbyters, and the powers committed to him, the historian continues:

"These powers, during a short period, were exercised according to the advice of the presbyterial college, and with the consent and approbation of the assembly of Christians. The primitive bishops were considered only as the first among equals, and the honorable servants of a free people. Whenever the episcopal chair became vacant by death, a new president was chosen from among the presbyters by the suffrage of the whole congregation, every member of which supposed himself invested with a sacred and sacerdotal character.

"Such was the mild and equal constitution by which the Christians were governed more than a hundred years after the death of the apostles. Every society formed within itself a separate and independent republic; and although the most distant of these little states maintained a mutual as well as friendly intercourse of letters and deputations, the Christian world was not yet connected by any supreme authority or legislative assembly." (*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Ch. 15)

Archbishop Whately, in his *Kingdom of Christ*, speaking of the early churches, says:

"Though there was one Lord, one faith, and one baptism for all of these, yet they were each a distinct, independent community on earth, united by the common principles on which they were founded, by their mutual agreement, affection, and respect, but not having any one recognized head on earth or acknowledging any sovereignty of one of these societies over others. Each bishop originally presided over an entire church.

"A church and a diocese seem to have been for a considerable time coextensive and identical, and each church a diocese, and consequently each bishop or superintendent, though connected with the rest by the ties of faith, hope, and charity, seems to have been perfectly independent so far as regards any control, occasionally conferring with brethren in other churches, but owing no submission to any central authority."

The apostolic and Christian Fathers are full and distinct in their testimony respecting the primitive church organization. Clement of Rome, at the close of the first century, says: "The apostles, preaching in countries and cities, appointed the firstfruits of their labors bishops and deacons, having proved them by the Spirit."

Polycarp, in the middle of the second century, exhorts the church at Philippi to "be subject to the elders and deacons," and makes no allusion to other officers.

Jerome says: "A presbyter, therefore, is the same as a bishop; and before there were, by the devil's instigation, parties in religion, and it was said among the people, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, the churches were governed by the common council of presbyters." (*Commentary on Titus*)

Respecting the election of officers, Clement of Rome cites as an apostolic rule in regard to church offices "that they should be filled according to the judgment of approved men, with the consent of the whole community."

Cyprian, in the middle of the third century, required that the bishop be invested with his office "by the suffrage of the whole brotherhood and of the bishops present," and he urges the people to care in the selection of officers, for the reason that "they especially have the power either of electing worthy presbyters or of rejecting unworthy ones," and affirms that this right of choice by the people was observed in his day as resting on divine authority and apostolic usage. (*Ep.* lxxviii. 5)

Origen asserted that the presence of the people was required in the ordination of a presbyter to secure the election of the most worthy. (*Hom.* vi.s on Lev.)

The Apostolical Constitutions, belonging probably toward the end of the third century, declare that the bishop is a "select person, chosen by the whole people." (*Book* viii. 8; 4 cf. 16)

The clearest proofs exist that many of the distinguished bishops of the Patristic period were chosen by the voice of the people, as Cyprian, of Carthage, Ambrose, of Milan, Martin, of Tours, Eustathius, of Antioch, Chrysostom, of Constantinople, and others. Even the Roman Pontifical, in the order for the ordination of a presbyter, recognizes the principle of popular suffrage, the bishop saying:

"It was not without reason that the Fathers ordained that the advice of the people should be taken in the election of those persons who were to serve at the altar; to the end that, having given their assent to their ordination, they might the more readily yield obedience to those who were so ordained." (*Pontific. Rom. in Ordinatio Presbyteri*, fol. 38)

That the church, as a congregation, was the ultimate appeal in matters of discipline during the first three centuries rests upon equally clear testimony. Cyprian, speaking of the trial of certain offenders, declares that they "shall be tried, not only in the presence of his colleagues, but before the whole people;" (*Ep.* xxxiv) and he quotes an African synod as ordaining that, "except in danger of death or of sudden persecution, none should be received to the peace of the church without the knowledge and consent of the people." (*Ep.* lix)

Du Pin, an eminent Roman Catholic writer, after citing at great length the language of Cyprian addressed to Cornelius, Bishop of Rome, says: "From whence it is plain that both at Rome and at Carthage no one could be expelled from the church, or restored again, except with the consent of the people." (*De Antiqua Disciplina*) Origen, at Caesarea, and Chrysostom, at Constantinople, speak with equal distinctness on the right of the people to determine matters of discipline.

The fact is, moreover, everywhere obvious that the charge of a primitive bishop was, not over a diocese as now understood, but over a single church or congregation. This is shown by undoubted authorities. Campbell, an eminent Episcopalian historian, after quoting many Fathers of the second and third centuries, among others Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Tremens, Tertullian, and Cyprian, conclude:

"Now, from the writings of these Fathers it is evident that the whole flock assembled in the same place, *epi to auto*, with their bishop and presbyters, as on other occasions, so in particular every Lord's Day—or every Sunday, as it was commonly called—for the purpose of public worship, hearing the Scriptures read, and receiving spiritual exhortations...Again, as there was but one place of meeting, so there was but one communion-table, an altar, as they sometimes metaphorically called it. 'There is but one altar,' said Ignatius, 'for there is but one bishop,' and accordingly but one place of worship."

A further evidence that the primitive bishop presided over only a single congregation is seen in the fact that in the comparatively small territory of North Africa there were six hundred and ninety bishoprics, many of them known to embrace only a small town or village. Diocesan episcopacy did not become common till the fourth century, when the church was modelled after the empire. Ignatius is the only authority for the episcopacy during the first three centuries, and even he everywhere speaks of the bishop as over only one congregation, or parish.

Of the fifteen epistles attributed to the Father, Archbishop Wake accepts seven as genuine, and Archbishop Usher only six; all the rest are unanimously rejected by Protestants as spurious. Of the seven accepted by Wake, the Chevalier Bunsen has proved four to be forgeries and the remaining three to be badly interpolated.

The fair-minded Neander, the profoundest student of this Father, regards one only as having decided marks of genuineness.

Bishop Stillingfleet, in his *Irenicum*, says: "Of all the thirty testimonials produced out of Ignatius in his epistle for episcopacy, I can meet with but one which is brought to prove the least semblance of an institution of Christ for episcopacy; and if I be not much deceived, the sense of that place is clearly mistaken."

A multitude of other authorities might be adduced, but these, which are the highest in church history, suffice to show that the profoundest historical investigations confirm the view of the divine constitution of the church here derived from Scripture.

And we close the subject with the words of Dr. Schaff:

"The spirit and practice of the apostles thus favored a certain kind of popular self-government and the harmonious, fraternal co-operation of the different elements of the church. It countenanced no abstract distinction of clergy and laity. All believers are called to the prophetic, priestly, and kingly offices in Christ. The bearers of authority and discipline should, therefore, never forget that their great work is to train the governed to freedom and independence, and by the various spiritual offices to form gradually the whole body of believers to the unity of faith and knowledge, and to the perfect manhood of Christ." (*Church History*, vol. i., sect. 43)



Are Baptists Independent Because They Oppose The Conventions? _____

Norman H. Wells

From *The Church That Jesus Loved*, 1973 (Chapter 11)

As used by Baptists, the word "independent" comes in for a lot of abuse. The dictionary tells us the word independent means, "Not subordinate or subject to nor dependent for support upon another government, person, or thing."

Practically All Baptist Churches Claim To Be Independent

Churches in the American Baptist Convention claim to be independent. Churches in the Southern Baptist Convention claim to be independent. The same can be said of all other organizations, conventions, associations, fellowships, etc. of Baptists. Churches in the World Baptist Fellowship and the Baptist Bible Fellowship all claim to be independent and they use the same arguments as the other Conventions and Associations.

All these churches claim they can be a part of these organizations and still be independent. All Baptists Agree — A Church Should Be Independent! All Baptists agree that a church should be independent. They use such words as, self-governing, autonomous, democratic, free, etc., to describe themselves.

Bitterly Resented

I don't suppose there is anything that a Baptist pastor resents more than to be told his church is not independent. He knows it should be!

False Ideas of Independence

Some Baptists believe they are independent simply because they do not belong to man-made systems of church government such as those of the Roman Catholic or Episcopal system. Some Baptists believe that they are independent because they are fundamental in their doctrine. Some Baptists believe they are independent simply because they oppose the Southern Baptist Convention or some similar group. Others believe they are independent because they have pulled out of some Convention or organization in protest against modernism, liberalism, corrupted literature, etc. And so it goes!

What Does It Mean To Be Independent?

The word has been allowed to degenerate into meaning any Baptist that is not lined up in one of the main Convention or Organizations of Baptists. At about the time I was saved the revolt was on among Baptists in the south. Churches, in large numbers, were pulling out of the Southern Baptist Convention because of its modernism, liberalism, corrupted literature, compromise, etc. This revolt continues till this day. The same thing happened in the north to the old Northern Baptist Convention. These churches that pulled out were called independent because they were not lined up with the main group.

By and large these churches that pulled out of the 'Southern and Northern Conventions were not necessarily opposed to the organization itself but just what the organization was doing. They were protesting the action of the organization — not the organization.

Organized Again!

These churches, because they were not really opposed to the organization of these conventions, found it easy to join or form similar organizations. Thus came into being such groups as The Conservative Baptists, The World Baptist, The Baptist Bible Fellowship, etc.

There Is No Difference

As far as organization is concerned there is little if any difference in these groups. The Southern Baptist Convention, The American Baptist Convention, The General Association of Regular Baptists, The Conservative Baptist, The American Baptist Association, The World Baptist Fellowship, The Baptist Bible Fellowship, etc., all look alike as far as organization is concerned. If a church in the Baptist Bible Fellowship is to be considered independent then a church in the Southern Baptist Convention is to be considered independent!

These groups all have their National Organizations with National presidents. These groups all have their by-laws that govern the churches. They all have their National Papers that speak for the churches. They all have their State Organizations. They all have their Mission Boards, and in varying degrees, many other official boards. They all, as an organization, own property.

All Started The Same Way

Every existing organization of Baptists started the same way. The idea was to have a fellowship of independent Baptist Churches that could cooperate in a worldwide effort. Every one of them is in some stage of the development of a hierarchy that will rob the churches of their independence!

Organization Involves Compromise

Recently, in the Baptist Bible Fellowship, a large number of the cooperating churches found it necessary to compromise what they believed about baptism! They now find themselves identified with those who have departed from the Baptist

position — but they have to compromise their belief for the sake of unity in the organization! Soon they will have to do the same thing on the Lord's Supper. And so it goes, little by little, these organizations all follow the same path! History establishes the fact.

Excuses! Excuses!

Many excuses are given by good pastors in these groups as to why they stay in them even when they do not agree with the organization. I've been listening to the same excuse for twenty years from Southern Baptists, American Baptists, etc., and now from World Baptists, Baptist Bible Baptists, etc. They are always the same.

Independent? Yes!

We are happy to be independent Baptists. We do not belong to any organized group of Baptist of any kind. We have fellowship with Baptists and their churches all over this country (and other countries too). We send out missionaries! We start new churches! The Lord is blessing! Yes, we are independent! We stand opposed not only to the compromise, modernism, etc., of the organization but to the unscriptural organizations themselves!



The Dignity of Mothers

Jabez Burns

From *Mothers of the Wise and Good*, 1860

"Mother!" The name which is associated in every virtuous mind with all that is amiable and delightful

"Mother!" Most tender, endearing, and expressive of all human appellations!

A title employed equally by the royal prince, the sage philosopher, and the untutored peasant—by the savage and the civilized in all nations, and through all generations. A relation mercifully founded in the constitution of our nature—universally felt, and uniformly acknowledged. And who among all the children of men, except those who in early infancy were bereaved of their anxious parents, has not happily experienced the inexpressible influence of its charming and delightful power; who, of all the great and the mighty upon the earth, does not recognize the unnumbered blessings which he has enjoyed through this endeared relation?

His own infinite wisdom and boundless good-ness prompted the Almighty Creator to ordain this beneficent relation, with all its sweet attractions and happy endearments. Must he not, therefore, have made it honorable, noble, and dignified? And ought its elevation and importance to be forgotten and neglected? Surely it demands our most intelligent consideration and devout acknowledgment. But what mind has ever possessed a capacity enlarged and matured to comprehend fully the true dignity of a Mother?

Woman was formed by the glorious Creator as a "help-meet for man" whatever dignity, therefore, attaches to him as a rational being, and the representative on earth of his Maker, is shared by the partner of his life, his other self. Woman is the equal participator of all the honors which pertain to human nature. But woman's highest dignity and her greatest honors are found in contributing to the perfection of the divine purpose of her Creator in her peculiar character of mother.

A mother's dignity, however, will but imperfectly appear unless she is considered as bringing into the world a rational offspring, whose existence will affect others, and will continue through eternal ages. Adam, by intuitive wisdom imparted

from God, perceived this surpassing excellence when "he called his wife's name Eve," because she was the mother of all living. (Gen. 3:20) Woman must be contemplated as giving birth to those whose principles, characters, and labors will deeply and permanently influence individuals in the domestic circle, and which will be felt by large communities, and in some instances, at least, by the whole population of the world.

Our blessed Lord acknowledges this sentiment, expressed by the woman respecting himself, when having seen his mighty works, and heard his wise discourses, she exclaimed, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked." (Luke 6:27) On this rational principle we cannot separate the greatness which distinguished the worthies of ancient and modern times, from the characters of their favored mothers. Watts, Doddridge, Wesley, King Edward, King Alfred, and many others, have immortalized their names by their personal virtues, and by their imperishable works to benefit their country; but while we contemplate and enjoy the fruits of their extraordinary labors, we cannot fail to reflect upon, the influence of their excellent mothers. We cannot refrain from tendering to them the honor which is their due, on account of their noble endeavor to discharge their maternal obligations, rendering them public blessings.

Divine inspiration has directly sanctioned this principle in the case of Mary. Congratulated by her venerable relative Elizabeth, mother by miracle of the herald prophet of Messiah, and filled with the Holy Spirit, who directed her to look forward to the future greatness of her mysterious Son, her enlightened and pious mind burst forth in devout admiration at the honor which would be ascribed to her on account of his unspeakable blessings to mankind. She gave expression to her elevated thoughts and said, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the lowliness of his hand-maiden. For behold from henceforth, all generations shall call me blessed." (Luke 1:46-48)

Mothers in our time, though not dignified in the manner of the Mary, and not warranted to anticipate a similar honor to that which attached to her name, may yet contemplate the influence which their children will have upon society, and their own honor will be secured and promoted by laboring to form their infant minds to religion, to virtue, and to love of their country.

Immortality especially gives dignity to its subjects, and hence arises, in no inconceivable degree, the exalted honor of a mother. By the sovereign ordination of the Almighty, she gives birth, not to a being of a mere momentary existence, and whose life will perish as that of the beasts of the field, but to an immortal! Her sucking infant, feeble and helpless as it may appear, possesses within its bosom a rational soul—an intellectual power—a spirit which all-devouring time cannot destroy—which can never die—but which will outlive the splendors of the glorious sun, and the burning brilliancy of all the material host of heaven! Throughout the infinite ages of eternity, when all these shall have answered the beneficent end of their creation, and shall have been blotted out from their positions in the immense regions of space, the soul of the humblest child will shine and improve before the eternal throne, being filled with holy delight and divine love, and ever active in the praises of its blessed Creator.

Likeness to the infinitely glorious Creator constitutes the chief dignity of our nature. And the intelligent, pious mother looks upon her infant offspring with adoring gratitude to God, as possessing that likeness. Originally, "the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." (Gen. 2:7) By the same omnipotent and gracious will, God has given being to human souls through all generations as at the first creation, but the mother is honored as the medium of this mysterious creation in the case of every child. And though the moral likeness of its blessed Maker is defaced by the fall of our first parents, still, in thousands of instances, by means of early tuition and the prayers of the faithful mother, the child is "created in Christ Jesus in righteousness and true holiness." (Eph. 2:10; 4:24)

What, then, can be the greatness, dignity, and honor of her who is the appointed medium of such amazing powers and blessings! Must not mothers feel their high distinctions? Should they not frequently be invited to contemplate them? In this the security, the prosperity, and the happiness of our country, and even the welfare, the regeneration of the world, are involved; he, therefore, who is most successful in leading their minds to a proper, a rational and Scriptural view of this greatest of earthly relations, will most effectually engage, as he will most worthily merit, the gratitude and esteem of dignified, happy, and Christian mothers.



On the Mother's Difficulties

Jabez Burns

From *Mothers of the Wise and Good*, 1860

It not unfrequently happens that a judicious and faithful mother is connected with a husband whose principles and example are anything but what she could desire. In such cases, not only does the whole government of the family devolve upon the mother, but the influence of the father is such, as, in a great degree, to counteract all her exertions. This is indeed a trying situation. It is, however, far from being a hopeless one. You must not give up in despair, but let the emergencies of the case rouse you to more constant watchfulness, and more persevering and vigorous effort.

If a wife be judicious and consistent in her exertion, a father, in almost all cases, will soon find confidence in the management of the family, and will very gladly allow her to bear all the burden of taking care of the children. Such a father is almost necessarily much of the time absent from home; and when at home, is not often in a mood to enjoy the society of his family.

Let such a mother teach her children to be quiet and still when their father is present. Let her make every effort to accustom them to habits of industry. And let her do everything in her power to induce them to be respectful and affectionate to their father. This course is, indeed, the best which can be adopted to reclaim the unhappy parent. The more cheerful you can make home to him, the stronger are the inducements which are presented to draw him away from scenes into which he ought not to enter.

It is true, there is no situation more difficult than the one we are now describing. But that even these difficulties are not insurmountable, facts have not unfrequently proved. Many cases occur in which the mother triumphantly surmounts them all, and rears up a virtuous and happy family. Her husband is most brutally intemperate; and I need not here depict the scenes through which such a mother is called to pass. She sees, however, that the welfare of the family is dependent upon her, and accordingly nerves her heart resolutely to meet her responsibilities. She commences in the earliest infancy of her children, teaching them implicit obedience. She binds them to her with those ties from which they would never be able or desirous to break. The most abundant success rewards her efforts.

The older her children grow, the more respectful and attentive they become, for the more clearly they see that they are indebted to their mother for salvation from their father's disgrace and woe. Every sorrow of such a mother is alleviated by the sympathy and affection of her sons. She looks around upon them with feelings of maternal gratification, which no language can describe. They feel the worth and dignity of her character. Though her situation in life may be humble, and though her mind may not be stored with knowl-edge, yet her moral worth, and her judicious government, command their reverence.

In a family of this sort, in one of the States of America, one cold December night, the mother was sitting alone by the fire, between the hours of nine and ten, waiting for the return of her absent husband. Her sons, fatigued with the labors of the day, had all retired to rest. A little before ten, her husband came in from the neighboring store, where he had passed the evening with his degraded associates. He insisted in calling up the boys at that unreasonable hour, to send them into the wood-lot for a load of wood. Though there was an ample supply of fuel at the house, he would not listen to reason, but stamped and swore that the boys should go.

The mother, finding it utterly in vain to oppose his wishes, called her sons, and told them that their father insisted upon their going with the team to the wood-lot. She spoke to them fondly; told them she was sorry they must go; but, said she, Remember that he is your father? Her sons were full-grown young men. But at their mother's voice, they immediately arose, and without a murmur, brought out the oxen and went to the woods. They had perfect confidence in her judgment and her management. While they were absent, their mother was busy in preparing an inviting supper for them on their return. The drunken father soon retired. About midnight, the sons finished their tasks, and entering the house, found their mother ready to receive them with cheerfulness and smiles. A bright fire was blazing upon the hearth. The room was warm

and pleasant. With keen appetites and that cheerfulness of spirits which generally accompanies the performance of duty, those children sat down with their much-loved parent to the repast she had provided, and soon after, all were reposing in the quietude of sleep.

Many a mother has been the guardian and saviour of her family. She has brought up her sons to industry, and her daughters to virtue. And in her old age, she has reaped a rich reward for all her toil, in the affections and attentions of her grateful children. She has struggled in tears and discouragement for many weary years, till at last God has dispelled all the gloom, and filled her heart with joy in witnessing the blessed results of her fidelity. Be not, therefore, desponding. That which has once been done may be done again.



Early Religious Impressions the Appropriate Work of Mothers

Jabez Burns
From *Mothers of the Wise and Good*, 1860

The subject of parental responsibility, which has formerly been so imperfectly appreciated, and still more imperfectly practiced, is at the present day, frequently and powerfully presented for consideration. Yet there is no danger of exhausting the subject. To reflecting minds, and especially those of parents, it must rise in importance in proportion as it is dwelt upon.

No parents, then, need hesitate in bringing forward the fruits of their observation and experience. Although I have read much, thought much, and heard much; yet the subject now presents itself with the firmness and force of a new idea, particularly on the point of maternal responsibility. When I look at it, it seems as if the character, the present and eternal welfare of the rising generation, were placed almost exclusively and unqualifiedly in the hands of mothers.

This conviction is not the result of abstract reflection, but of actual observation. God has, indeed, been pleased to recover to himself some who have not been brought to him in his appointed way. With regard to those who, we have reason to fear, have been lost, and to those who we now see in the broad way to destruction, we may challenge the scrutiny of an accurate inquirer; and we would not fear for the ground which we take, that among that unhappy number, few will be found who were blest with judicious, pious, praying mothers, who had the training of the first years of their children's life.

In reply to this, it may be said, we have known or heard of many of the children of pious parents who have lived and died irreligious. But if these cases were to be individually and faithfully investigated, a very different impression would remain on the mind. Among those who are nominal professors, how many realize as they ought their duties and responsibilities?

Sometimes these examples, which are held up to disprove the argument, may have been the children of a pious father, but not of a pious mother; or the mother may have become pious after the children had passed that early and impressible period, within which the rudiments of the character are formed. And there are also pious parents who have not suitably estimated or fulfilled these duties, and so far have committed sin.

Again, there are some who have appeared, in their childhood, to have enjoyed faithful religious instruction, and pious prayers and example, and yet have been among those who are wandering far from God, and throwing off all the restraint of

education and conscience. But if you will observe their course, you will find that among the converted and recovered wanderers, those who have had these advantages form much the greater proportion.

I am led to trace the history of such an individual. Little E. had the misfortune of losing his excellent mother before he reached his sixth year. Although, during his infantile years, her health had been so imperfect as to interfere with the discharge of her maternal duties, yet she had offered her children in faith to God. She had aimed to instill into their minds, on the first dawning of reason, a sense of their obligations and duties to their Creator, of whom she spoke to them as their Heavenly Father — their kind Preserver, and bountiful Benefactor.

She cultivated sentiments of devotion by storing their minds with forms of prayer, and instructive hymns suited to their comprehension. And these instructions seemed to fall on good ground, and promised to bring forth fruit; and were not only thus implanted, but were watered with importunate prayers and tears. It pleased God, whose ways to us are inscrutable, to bereave this child of this precious blessing; and he was left, as it were, at the mercy of a wicked world, or as a helpless lamb without a shepherd.

Little E. was left very much to the society and baneful example and influence of unprincipled servants. Soon all the gentle admonitions and pious instructions of his mother were effaced from his volatile mind. His conscience, which was once alive and tender, was soon seared; and when he was led into evil, he had no compunctions. As might be expected, as he advanced in years, he advanced in sin, from wanton indulgence, unchecked and unrestrained. As he progressed toward manhood, snares thickened around him, and he was thrown among evil companions. He advanced from one stage of wickedness to another, and still another, with fearful strides.

The cavilers enjoyed the triumph of saying, "There is the child of a pious mother." They may enjoy this triumph. But in after years, if they beheld this youth in his headlong career arrested—if they could see the tears of contrition which he was brought to shed, and hear him recall his early impressions received from the lips of his tender mother, especially her dying advice, which, amidst all his wanderings, would sometimes recur—would they not yield their prejudices, and acknowledge that early impressions may radically affect the character and destiny of man?



The Mother's Charge

W. B. Sprague

From *Mothers of the Wise and Good*, 1860

Let me briefly illustrate the nature of a mother's charge. That charge is nothing less than a physical, rational, accountable, immortal, sinful, and amid being.

It is a physical being. The babe that she embraces is curious piece of the divine workmanship. Its little frame bears the stamp of infinite wisdom and goodness. It is exactly fitted to answer the purposes for which it is designed, is wanting in nothing, is superfluous in nothing. But yet it is only the germ of a man or a woman, destined, if it lives, to a natural process of expansion. That body is, indeed, nothing but finely-organized clay, and there does not essentially belong to it either the principle of immortality, or the principle of thought; but it is designed to be the organ of the soul's operations, and is to exert no unimportant influence upon the soul's character and destiny.

If the body dies, the soul will still live, but if the faculties of the body are not suitably developed, the mind that inhabits it will find itself proportionally cramped, and contracted in its operations. Let no one say, "It matters not for the physical nature, if the higher nature be provided for," so long as the one is the medium through which the other acts. God hath

joined them together in the economy of his creating wisdom; and man must have respect to the connection, as he would accomplish the end of his existence.

The mother's charge is a rational being. True, indeed, you see nothing in its earliest infancy to indicate that it possesses any higher faculties than the lamb, or the lark, or any other of the animal creation. But, helpless as it seems, unconscious as it seems, there is a glorious principle of intelligence belonging to it which time will ere long reveal, and which, if rightfully developed and directed, may render it a fit companion for an angel. Where all seems blank and dark, the light will ere long shine, and a mind that can discriminate, that can reason, that can feel, will be seen coming up in its strength and glory.

Who knows but that it may be the mind of a Newton—who shall measure the heights and fathom the depths of the material creation? Who knows but that it may be the mind of a Locke, that shall bring out the mysteries of thought, and reveal to man the secret springs of his own conduct? Who knows but that it may be the mind of a Milton, attuned to heavenly melodies, and touched with a seraph's fire? What the particular character of her infant's mind is to be—whether of high degree or of low degree, the mother knows not—cannot know—enough that she knows that it is a spiritual, thinking, active principle, destined, by the decree of Heaven, to an indefinite expansion.

But to the power of thought is also joined the susceptibility of feeling; the infant is born with a moral, as well as a rational nature. In it are the elements of passions and affections, of desires and aversions, in which its happiness or unhappiness will chiefly be found, and which must decide, in a great degree, the complexion and destiny of the soul. Here, too, is concealed that noble principle of conscience, which, perhaps more than any other, bespeaks the dignity of human nature which is destined to occupy the judgment seat in the soul, and to bring peace and joy, or remorse and terror, according to the decisions which it renders.

In the earliest periods of infancy, there may be no higher happiness, or, at least, none apparent than freedom from bodily pain; and there may be no other suffering than what consists in bodily pain; but there is a hidden nature there susceptible of enjoyment or suffering, that outruns all human comprehension. There is that which may kindle into a consuming fire, and show itself great in wrath, in desolation, in self-torture; or which may glow with a genial fervor, diffusing serenity within, and shedding' light and joy over the whole field of its influence.

And this leads me to say that the mother's charge is an accountable being. I do not mean to say, nor do I believe, that it is a moral agent from the beginning; nor would I venture to mark the point of intellectual development, when moral agency commences, believing, as I do, that that is one of the secret things which the Creator has retained in his own keeping—I only mean, that, as the infant is constituted with a rational and moral nature, and is placed under the government of God, so accountableness is an essential attribute of that nature; and that before the accountableness can cease, the power of distinguishing and choosing between good and evil must cease. What a reflection to a mother, that the unconscious babe in her arms is constituted in such a way, that its actions shall ere long sustain a moral character; and that the whole history of its life shall be reviewed as a ground of approbation or of condemnation at the bar of the Eternal Judge!

The mother's charge, too, is immortal. The body will, indeed, last but a few short years; now she folds it in her arms, and dandles it upon her knee; but soon it will have expended to the measure of a youth; and at a period a little more distant, it will have reached its mature growth; and a little later, if, indeed, it has not been earlier, it will return to the dust whence it came. But the spirit that gives the babe its chief interest, the soul that thinks, and speaks, and burns with celestial fire, is rendered imperishable, if not by the necessity of its nature, at least by its Creator's decree. The arms that enfold your babe will become clods, the sir that shines upon your babe will be extinguished, and the skies that attract its infant gaze will be rolled up as a burning vesture, and yet, all that is great and spiritual in that babe shall survive, not only in unimpaired, but constantly increasing energy.

And for aught we know, other suns and worlds may take the place of these which we now behold, and, having fulfilled their end, may pass away as a midnight dream; sad others still may come up at the Creator's bidding to replenish immensity, and in obedience to a like decree, these may retire and be lost in the abyss of annihilation, and yet that infant mind, whose operations are now so feeble that you can scarcely detect them, will live through all this wreck of worlds, and even then will feel that its existence is only began. When the Christian mother resigns her babe to the tomb in the budding season of its faculties, let her not look despairingly at the narrow home, as if her infant had perished there; but let her rather think of the

grave as the temporary dwelling-place of the corruptible, and be thankful that God has permitted her to make such a contribution to the immortal population of heaven.

The mother's charge is a sinful being. What! That milling, unconscious babe, whose eyes have so lately been opened upon the light, a sinner! Not an actual transgressor of God's law—for of that we cannot suppose that its faculties render it capable—but a sinner in precisely the same sense that it is a rational being—there is that within it that will by-and-by kindle up and show itself a rational soul; and there is that within it also, that will by-and-by kindle and show itself a sinful disposition. I will not refer to God's Word now for the only satisfactory explanation of this fact; but the fact itself is proved by universal experience.

Show me, if you can, an instance in the world's history, awe that of the immaculate child Jesus, in which what has seemed innocent infancy did not prove itself the gem of sinning childhood. And, besides, if no hereditary stain has reached an infant's mind—in other words, if the infant be regarded as holy under the government of God, let us have the explanation of that bodily suffering under which it shrinks, and writhes, and sometimes, even dies.

Yes, mothers, talk as much as you will of your innocent babes, every one of them is the heir of an unholy nature, which will as certainly develop itself in unholy action, as that it develops itself at all. The new-born leopard may seem beautiful and harmless, and you fear not to take it up in your hands, or to press it to your bosom; but wait a while, and you dare not look at it except some barrier intervene to protect you; for it has shown itself possessed of a nature the promptings of which would be to tear you to pieces.

There was an infant born between thirty and forty years, ago that, doubtless, smiled upon its mother with the same apparent innocence with which other infants, are wont to smile; and, possibly, some advocate for the original purity of human nature may have drawn an argument from what it seemed to be in its helpless, unconscious state, to disprove that severe-creed which recognizes infants as inheriting a moral taint from Adam.

But that infant had not lived long before he began to give proof that the orthodox creed was sound. In his boyhood he was revengeful and wicked; in his manhood he was a murderer; and the other day, when it was expected that the sun would have gone down upon his body hanging in ignominy between earth and heaven, it went down upon his body self-bathed in his own blood. Your children may not, we trust will not, prove like him; but you deceive yourselves if you imagine that, with all their loveliness, they have not the same sinful nature which made him a murderer.

The mother's charge has also a social nature. As it is not destined to exist in a state of solitude, so it is endowed with a social propensity—with a disposition to mingle with other beings, to whom it will impart more or less of its own character. No man lives for himself alone. As he is bound to society by various ties, so every relation that he sustains is a channel of influence for good or evil, that is operating constantly upon his fellow-men. It is a most serious thought that the infant in your arms, if it lives but a few years, will be an active member of society, and will not only be himself forming a character for eternity, but will be contributing an influence that will tell on the destinies of other minds through the whole period of their existence.

Such is the mother's charge; and where is the mother who can contemplate it without being ready to sink under the burden of responsibility which it imposes?



There Is But One God

J. L. Dagg

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There is but one God. The heathen nations have worshipped many gods, but the inspired volume throughout inculcates the doctrine, that there is but one God. Moses said, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." (Deut. 6:4) and, in the New Testament, the same truth is taught: "There is one God, and one Mediator..." (I Tim. 2:5); "To us there is but one God." (I Cor. 8:6)

It is not clear that the unity of God can be proved by natural religion. In some of the reasonings which have been relied on, the thing to be proved is assumed. The most satisfactory argument is derived from the uniformity of counsel, which appears in the works of creation and providence. The same laws of Nature prevail everywhere so that, in passing from one region to another, we never feel that we have entered the dominion of another Lord. Light which emanates from the remote fixed stars, possesses the same properties, and obeys the same laws, as that which comes from the sun of our own system.

The proof from revelation is clear and decisive. It is true, that plural names of the deity are frequently used in the Old Testament; but it is manifest that they were not designed to teach the doctrine of polytheism. In Deut. 6:4, the word "God" is plural, in the original Hebrew; but the whole passage contains the most unequivocal declaration of the unity of God.

In Gen. 1:1, the name a God is plural, but the verb "created" is singular, and therefore bars out all inference in favour of polytheism. In several passages, plural pronouns are used when God speaks of himself. "Let us make man" (Gen. 1:26); "Let us go down" (Gen. 11:7); "The man is become as one of us" (Gen. 3:22). These passages, and especially the last of them, cannot well be reconciled with the doctrine of God's unity, so abundantly taught elsewhere, without supposing a reference to the doctrine of the trinity, which will be considered hereafter.

The unity of God renders his moral government one, uniting the subjects of it into one great empire. It leaves us in no doubt to whom our allegiance is due, and it fixes one centre in the universe to which the affections of all hearts should be directed. It tends to unite the people of God as we have "one God," so we have "one body, and one spirit."



To My Mother

And canst thou, mother, for a moment think
That we, thy children, when old age shall shed
Its blanching honors on thy weary head,
Could from our best of duties ever shrink?
Sooner the sun from his high sphere should sink,
Than we, ungrateful, leave thee in that day,
To pine in solitude thy life away,
Or shun thee, tottering on the grave's cold brink.
Banish the thought!—where'er our steps may roam,
O'er smiling plains, or wastes without a tree,
Still will fond memory point our hearts to thee,
And paint the pleasures of thy peaceful home;
While duty bids us all thy griefs assuage,
And smooth the pillow of thy sinking age.

H. Kirke White