

**Character of Jesus Christ.**

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A

**SERMON**

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# SERMON.

## PHILIPPIANS II. 6—11.

WHO, BEING IN THE FORM OF GOD, THOUGHT IT NOT ROBBERY TO BE EQUAL WITH GOD: BUT MADE HIMSELF OF NO REPUTATION, AND TOOK UPON HIM THE FORM OF A SERVANT, AND WAS MADE IN THE LIKENESS OF MEN: AND BEING FOUND IN FASHION AS A MAN, HE HUMBLLED HIMSELF, AND BECAME OBEDIENT UNTO DEATH, EVEN THE DEATH OF THE CROSS. WHEREFORE, GOD ALSO HATH HIGHLY EXALTED HIM, AND GIVEN HIM A NAME WHICH IS ABOVE EVERY NAME; 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.

IN the commencement of this chapter, the apostle exhorts the Philippians to a spirit of candor and unanimity. And as he well knew that pride and vain glory constitute the very elements of contention, he charges them to cultivate an unaffected lowliness of mind, *each esteeming other better than themselves*. To enforce their obedience to this exhortation, he refers them to the example of Jesus Christ, *who, though he was rich, yet for their sakes, became poor*; and who, in consequence of his humiliation, succeeded to a state of exaltation and glory. He would have them imitate Christ in his lowliness and condescension, that, like him, they might be admitted to a proportionably glorious reward.

The subject which the text presents for consideration is the CHARACTER OF JESUS CHRIST. But, before entering directly upon it, I wish to offer two or three remarks.

1. The first is, that, *for all our knowledge on this subject, we must be indebted to Revelation.* Reason could not decide that God would forgive sin at all ; or if he did, in what way forgiveness should be bestowed : and if she could not even decide that a Saviour would appear in the world, much less could she form any legitimate conclusion in respect to his character. The truth is, that it is a subject altogether without her range ; and though she might exercise her powers upon it forever, the result could be nothing but mere conjecture. That reason may discover a wonderful adaptation of the character of Christ, when it is once revealed, to the work which he came to perform, admits of no question ; but she knows nothing in relation to it, antecedently to, or independently of, Revelation. In all our inquiries on this subject, then, we must check the aspirings of reason and curiosity, and rest simply on the testimony of God.

2. My second remark is, that **ALL SCRIPTURE IS GIVEN BY INSPIRATION OF GOD ; and therefore, whatever that teaches is true.** There are indeed some things recorded in the Bible, which were spoken by wicked men, and even by the adversary himself ; but when we apply the attribute of truth to these, we mean only that they are historically true ;—it is true that these evil beings thus spake ; and God directed, for wise purposes, that what they spake, should be written in the volume of inspiration. When we say that the Bible is an inspired book, and that whatever it teaches is true, we mean that such a divine influence pervaded the minds of those who



wrote it, as was necessary to preserve them from all error, and to lead them into all necessary truth. If they wrote history, they recorded facts precisely as they occurred. If they communicated doctrines, they exhibited the truth without the least admixture of error. And so in respect to every other part of the Bible. We take for granted, then, that, while reason can shed no light on our subject, and we must be indebted for all our knowledge to Revelation, the Bible actually is a Revelation, or an inspired book ; and that our opinion of the character of Christ, must be formed entirely from the light which this book reveals.

3. I observe, once more, that *the obvious sense of scripture is generally the correct one.* I say *generally*, for I well know that this remark has its exceptions ; and that what one apostle says of the writings of another, may be applied to the whole Bible, that it contains **SOME THINGS** *hard to be understood.\** But there is one short argument which proves decisively that, in general, it is a plain book. If it is a Revelation from God, doubtless it is a Revelation for the world ; for the truths which it contains, are equally important to all. Now, by far the larger part of the world consists of the poor and the ignorant, who would be utterly incapable of ascertaining the meaning of scripture, if the obvious meaning were not the true one. Upon the supposition, therefore, that much learning and critical labor are **necessary to ascertain the leading truths of the Bible,**

you perceive that to much the most numerous class for whom this Revelation is intended, it is actually no Revelation ; because they cannot understand it. Unless, therefore, we will dare to charge the author of the Bible with trifling with his creatures ; nay, unless we will impute to him the grossest injustice and cruelty, in threatening them with eternal death for not believing his word, when many of them know not, and have not the means of knowing what his word is, we must admit that the leading doctrines of the Bible are so clearly revealed as to be ascertained by those in the common walks of life. We say, then, that while there are obscure passages in scripture, for the elucidation of which learning may very profitably be employed, yet there is no doctrine that is made to depend upon them ; and even if they were expunged, the grand truths of the gospel would remain written in sun beams. We say too, without disparaging the labors of critics or commentators, that there is no person whose opinion in respect to the general system of truth contained in scripture we should more highly estimate, than the plain christian of good common sense, who has brought to the study of the Bible an humble temper, and an earnest desire for the teachings of God's spirit.

These few remarks being premised, we proceed to the direct consideration of our subject—viz. *the character of Jesus Christ.*

It is not my purpose, at this stage of the inquiry, to offer any opinion as to the ~~truth~~ *truth* on this subject.



All that I assert, at present, in respect to the text, is, that it exhibits, or if you please, *seems* to exhibit Christ in three distinct characters or conditions. The first is noticed in the sixth verse:—*Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.* The second, in the seventh and eighth verses:—*But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.* The third, in the ninth, tenth and eleventh verses:—*Wherefore, God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; 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.* Now, whatever difference of opinion there may be in respect to *what is implied* in these several characters or conditions, none surely can question, without doing the utmost violence to human language, that three distinct characters or conditions *are here spoken of.*

I shall endeavor—

I. To present before you *some of the more prominent scripture passages and statements in respect to the character of Christ, arranged according to the order marked out by the apostle in the text; and by these to test three different doctrines which prevail in relation to this subject:* And

II. To shew that *the objection often urged against one of these doctrines, that it is mysterious—may also be urged against both the others; and that if one is to be given up on this ground, neither of the others can be consistently retained.*

I. I am first to present before you *some of the more prominent scripture passages and statements in respect to the character of Christ, arranged according to the order marked out by the apostle in the text; and by these to test three different doctrines which prevail in relation to this subject.*

Under the first and second divisions of the text, I shall quote several passages which belong also appropriately to the third; for whatever is included in the two first divisions, the third also implies: in other words, whatever the personal nature of Christ may be, he is acknowledged by all, in that nature, to sustain the mediatorial office.

1. The first part of the character of Christ, as presented in the text, is described in these words: *Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.* The following are some of the passages, which, in their general bearing, seem parallel with these words of the apostle.

*And the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace.\*—In the beginning was the Word, and the word*

\* Isaiah ix. 6.



was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made.\*—And Thou, Lord, in the beginning, hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: they shall perish, but thou remainest; and they shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.†—Whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever.‡—And 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.§—And Jesus, seeing their faith, said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee.||—And I give unto them eternal life.¶—For as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.\*\*—For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.††—Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.‡‡—I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord; which is,

\* John i. 1—3.

§ 1 John v. 20.

\*\* John v. 21.

† Hebrews i. 10—12.

‡ Matthew ix. 2.

¶ 1 Cor. v. 19.

‡ Romans ix. 5.

¶ John x. 28.

‡‡ Matt. xviii. 20.



*and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.\*— And all the churches shall know that I am He, which searcheth the reins and hearts; and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.†—Every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, honor, glory and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, forever and ever.‡—And they stoned Stephen invoking and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.§*

2. Such are some of the passages which seem to refer to that part of the character of Christ, which is described in the first verse of our text. Let us now institute a similar inquiry in respect to that part of his character which is described in the two following verses.—*But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

The apostle Paul says, *Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself, likewise, took part of the same:—and again, He took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham:—and again, Wherefore, in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren.||*

In accordance with these declarations, he is called *man* and the *Son of man* in a multitude of instances.

\* Rev. i. 8. † ii. 23. ‡ v. 13. § Acts vii. 59. || Heb. ii. 14, 16, 17.

The number of instances in which he has this latter appellation, is more than seventy; and in more than sixty of these it is given to him by himself.

The scriptures represent that he was a child, the son of Joseph and Mary, *born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the King*; that when he was born, his mother *wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn*; that, as a child, he *was subject unto his parents*; that he *increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man*; that *for our sakes he became poor—a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief*; that, while the *foxes had holes, and the birds of the air, nests, he had not where to lay his head*; that he was betrayed by Judas; arrested by the Roman soldiery; condemned by Pilate; scourged; crowned with thorns; nailed to the cross; and finally that *he bowed his head and gave up the ghost*.

There are several other classes of texts which may properly be referred to this part of the character of Christ—such as those which represent him as a being whose knowledge is inferior to that of the Father:—*Of that day and that hour knoweth no man; no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father* :\* those which represent him as praying to the Father:—*Who, in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save him from*



death, and was heard, in that he feared :\*, those which represent him as dependent on the Father:—*I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.*†

3. I come now to the last division of the text, which is in these words :—*Wherefore, God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; 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.*

The following passages, among many others of a similar kind, may be quoted, as substantially parallel with the **one** now read.

*And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.‡—For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.§ 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 enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, All things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted which did put all things under him.¶ According to the working*

\* Hebrews v. 7.

† John viii. 28.

‡ Matth. xxviii. 18.

§ John v. 26, 27.

¶ 1 Cor. xv. 24—27.

*of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.\* Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath, by inheritance, obtained a more excellent name than they.† Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject unto him.‡*

Such we believe to be a fair specimen of scripture passages and statements in respect to the character of Christ, arranged according to the order marked out in the text. But before we proceed, it may be proper to remark that the latter class of texts, is admitted by all who profess a belief of Christianity, to refer to the mediatorial character of Christ; and all agree that, in this character, he is subordinate to the Father. The difference of opinion with which we are at present concerned, respects his *nature*—not his *office*. When we speak of an earthly King, we designate an official character; and always understand that he, who, as to his office is a *King*, is, as to his nature, a *man*. Precisely so in respect to Jesus Christ. He sustains the office of Mediator; and this supposes that he has a nature independent of his office,

\* 1 Eph. i. 19—23.

† Heb. i. 4.

‡ 1 Peter iii. 22.



just as much as the idea of an earthly King includes in it the idea of a man.

Let us now proceed to test by this exhibition of scripture three different doctrines which prevail in relation to our subject. The first is, that Jesus Christ is a *mere man*, who had no existence previous to his being born into the world. The second is, that He is *something more than a man, and something less than God*. The third is, that He is *truly and properly God, and truly and properly man*.

1. Is Jesus Christ a *mere man*, who had no existence previous to his being born into the world? I answer, No; because this theory leaves the whole of the *first* class of texts which I have adduced—not to say many of the *third*—entirely unaccountable.

If you say that Jesus Christ is a mere man, I inquire how a mere man comes to be called, and by inspiration too—*the true God—the mighty God—the first and the last—the Almighty—God over all blessed forever*? Did a mere man *create all things visible and invisible*? And does he *uphold all things by the word of his power*? Does a mere man *search the reins and hearts, and hold the keys of hell and of death, and forgive the sins of the penitent*? Is it a mere man who shall hereafter fold up the heavens and the earth as a vesture, and call the dead from their graves, and assemble the universe before the throne of judgment, and bring out every thought of every heart, and decide the retribution of each for eternity? And is it a mere man to whose keeping the first martyr committed his soul in death; and before whose throne the

redeemed are hereafter to unite with angels in ascriptions of *power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing?*

But, you say, perhaps, that these passages and others of a similar kind, are not to be understood *literally*, and that they admit of a construction consistent with the simple humanity of Christ. For instance, when the apostle says, *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,\** it is said that all this is figurative language, and means nothing more than the introduction of the gospel dispensation. But, whether, upon all fair principles of interpreting language, it might not mean any thing else as well as that, judge ye. Again, when John, in the commencement of his gospel says, *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*—it is said that he merely personifies a divine attribute. It follows, then, from the connexion, that a divine attribute *was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld its glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.* The truth is, that that mode of interpreting scripture, which makes it teach the mere humanity of Christ, may be successfully employed to make it sanction the wildest vagaries, which the human imagination ever conceived; and if it has come to this, that the Bible has no certain meaning, wherein is it of more value than a heathen oracle?

\* Colossians i. 16.



But, perhaps, you have a more summary way of disposing of that class of passages which oppose the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ, *by expunging them from the Bible* as making no part of scripture. Here then we must part: for you have taken your stand on infidel ground. In asserting that that class of texts to which I have referred, or any considerable portion of them, are not given by inspiration of God, you virtually deny the inspiration of the whole Bible; for these passages are so interwoven with the other parts of scripture, that the whole must stand or fall together. Besides, there is clearly no reason why the genuineness of these texts should be doubted, except that they oppose a favorite theory; and what is inspiration in respect to *any* part of scripture, with him who can deny that *one* part of it is inspired, because it teaches a doctrine which he wishes it did not teach? With the man who refuses to acknowledge the Bible as his rule of faith, we have in this discourse nothing to do; for you remember that it was one of the principles on which we commenced the discussion, that *all scripture is given by inspiration of God*.

2. Is Jesus Christ *something more than a man, and something less than God?*

Here again, I answer, No; and the objection to this theory is twofold: it accounts neither for the *first*, nor the *second* class of passages, which have been adduced.

Like the doctrine which we have just considered, it does not account for the *first* class of these passages.

He is here, as we have seen, declared to be *the true God, the mighty God, and over all God blessed forever*, or the Supreme God. But such a being as this theory contemplates, however exalted, is a mere creature ; and there is all the difference between the highest created being, and the uncreated God, that there is between finite and infinite. Of course, it can never be true that such a being as is here contemplated—a being infinitely less than God, is *the true God, the mighty God, or the Supreme God*.

But you will say, perhaps, that Jesus Christ is called God only *in an inferior sense* ; as the scripture sometimes applies the title even to men. I answer, this is a mere gratuitous assumption, and is contradicted by the absolute and unequivocal manner in which the title is applied. Whenever *Christ* is called God, the appellation either stands alone, or else it is connected with some attribute of divinity which clearly shows that he is called God in the highest sense. Thus when John, in the commencement of his gospel, had said, *the Word was God*, he immediately adds, *all things were made by him*. The exact opposite of this is true in respect to the scriptural application of this title to *men* ; it is connected with some attribute or circumstance of humanity, which proves decisively that it is used in an inferior sense ; as when the Psalmist speaking of Judges says, *I said ye are gods* ; but adds in the next verse, *ye shall die like men*. It is not merely the fact that Christ is *called* God, then, which the advocates of this theory have to dispose of, but the fact that he is exhibited as possessing divine



attributes, as performing divine works, as receiving divine worship. So true is it that every proper characteristic of divinity is ascribed to Jesus Christ, that the very same mode of interpretation, which would make the scriptures teach that he is not God, would make the same scriptures teach that the Father is not God; and thus the very first principle of natural religion would be blotted from the Bible.

But, on the other hand, this theory does not any better account for the *second* class of texts which have been quoted. How is it that a being, who is not a man, is so often called *man*, and the *Son of man*? How is it that when a child, he is said to have *increased in wisdom and stature*, as other children are wont to increase; that he performed the same actions which other men perform; and suffered and died as other men suffer and die? I ask again, if he were not a man, what shall we do with that class of passages, which not only, in a great variety of instances, give him the title, but which clothe him with all the attributes of proper humanity?

3. Is Jesus Christ *truly and properly God, and truly and properly man*? I answer, Yes; for this is the only doctrine which harmonizes and satisfactorily accounts for, the different classes of texts which have been adduced. Is it said, on the one hand, that, *forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same*;—that he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham; and that *in all things, it behooved*

*him to be made like unto his brethren?* Is it said of him that he knew not the time of the general judgment; that he *offered up prayers and supplications to God*; that he could *do nothing* of himself? All these passages are perfectly consistent with this doctrine; for it teaches that he is truly and properly man. And on the other hand, are all the distinctive characteristics of divinity ascribed to him in the most unequivocal manner? Here again, no difficulty is presented: for the other part of our doctrine is, that he is truly and properly God. Admit this union of the divine and human natures in the person of Christ, and all that the scripture says of him, is susceptible of a natural and easy interpretation. But if you adopt any other theory, there will be, at least, one class of texts, which upon all acknowledged principles of interpreting language admit of no rational explanation. It is a principle of all sound construction to make every instrument *consistent with itself*. And on no other principle than that which we have defended, is there consistency in the Bible. Were a Judge to interpret the scriptures, what construction would he give to the record without recognising both the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ? Obviously none, without doing that which no sound lawyer would do—annul the record itself.

Methinks I hear some one say, in the spirit of an objector, ‘this doctrine of two natures in Christ does appear to be revealed, but *it is mysterious*.’ Admit it; **and what then? Is the fact that a doctrine is mysterious,**



a sufficient warrant for expunging it from the written Revelation? If you say, 'Yes,' then you have stepped over again upon infidel ground; for it is the essence of infidelity to assert the supremacy of reason above the authority of the Bible. The objection in the mouth of a deist who professedly rejects Revelation, might seem to have some more show of reason; though even the deist is obliged to admit the doctrine of mysteries;—but to acknowledge the divine authority of the Bible, and to reject any doctrine which it contains, on the ground of its being mysterious, implies an absolute contradiction. But, perhaps, you will say that, though neither of the other two doctrines can derive so much support from *scripture* as this, yet as the Bible seems to say *something* in favor of them, and there is so much advantage in that which is intelligible above that which is mysterious, you choose to adopt a theory, which, while it is not altogether unsupported by Revelation, is perfectly level to human comprehension. On this ground, then, we shall now meet you, as we proceed to the

II. Second general division of our discourse; in which we are to show that *the objection often urged against the doctrine of the union of the divine and human natures in Christ—that it is mysterious, may also be maintained against the doctrine that he is something more than a man, and something less than God, or even that he is a mere man; and that, if the first of these doctrines is given up on this ground, neither of the two last can be consistently retained.*

When we acknowledge the fact implied in this objection against the union of two natures in Christ,—viz. that it is mysterious, we wish to be distinctly understood. *Mystery*, in its strict and original sense, implies something hidden—something not revealed; and in this sense, a mystery cannot be the object of faith. What is revealed in respect to this subject is simply the fact that Jesus Christ has a divine nature and a human nature. This fact, therefore, being revealed, is not, in the proper sense of the word, a mystery. What constitutes the mystery, is the manner of the fact;—the manner in which this union is constituted; for concerning this the Bible has told us nothing. When we say, therefore, that this doctrine is mysterious, we only mean that while the fact implied in it is clear, being revealed by divine authority—and that is all to which our faith is required—it involves many things which God has not been pleased to reveal, and which are altogether beyond the reach of human reason.

Let us now see whether the same objection cannot be maintained against the other doctrines, which so triumphantly claim to be free from mystery.

1. How is it with the doctrine that Jesus Christ is *something more than a man, and something less than God*? Is this free from mystery? This doctrine, you will recollect, is, that Jesus Christ has but one nature; that a pre-existent exalted spirit assumed a human body, and was thus in the place of a human soul.

**Now, if there be no mystery in all this, answer me**



the following questions:—How was this union between an exalted spirit, which had existed in heaven for ages, and a human body, formed? And what sort of a being is he, who is constituted by this union? Not divine, for that is excluded by the supposition. Not human; for to this a human soul would be necessary. Not angelic; for angels have not bodies. How was it that this exalted spirit, who had created the world, (for this theory attributes the work of creation to Christ) had his conceptions narrowed down to those of an infant; and increased in wisdom and stature, as other children do; while yet, in the very same nature, and at the very same time, he was sustaining all things by the word of his power? How was it that for more than thirty years, he exhibited, in every respect, the appearance of a man, and yet was not a man? If there is not mystery here, I assert with confidence, there is mystery no where; and if you have faith enough to receive this doctrine, you have more than enough to receive the doctrine of the union of two natures in Christ.

2. Is there any mystery in the doctrine of the *simple humanity of Christ*? Here, you will doubtless be ready to say, ‘No.’ Admitting that he is a mere man, constituted with a human body and a human soul, like ourselves, there is nothing in respect to his person, but what is intelligible? But, take heed that you be not here deceived by the illusions of sense or of habit. You say that the union between soul and body, which this doctrine attributes to Christ, in common with the whole

human race, is what every man knows to be true in his own experience. I admit it: but experience in *this* case, reaches no farther than the testimony of God in the other:—it merely teaches the fact; in respect to the manner of the fact, it leaves us in absolute ignorance. You tell me, on the authority of your experience, that you are constituted by a union of body and spirit: I tell you, on the authority of God's testimony, that Jesus Christ is constituted with a divine and human nature; so that you advance no farther than I do; and there is a mystery left in your doctrine as truly as in mine. When you will tell me how the union is constituted in the one case, I may safely engage to tell you how it is constituted in the other. When you will explain to me the manner in which mind acts upon matter; when you will let me into all the secrets of your own nature, and show me the very point of contact between that thinking, undying principle, and the clod with which it is connected, I hazard nothing in saying that I will explain to you the union of the divine and human natures in Christ. It was a remark of the late Doctor Joseph Lathrop, that 'though the doctrine of divinity and humanity united in the person of Christ, is a *grand* mystery than that of the union of soul and body in a human being, yet the latter is as *truly* mysterious as the former.'

There is another consideration which applies equally to this doctrine, and that of the intermediate nature of Christ, and which invests them both, as doctrines of



*scripture*, with the character of mystery:—It is that, admitting either of them to be the true doctrine, a God of perfect wisdom, and truth, and goodness, should have chosen such a mode of communicating it. If Jesus Christ is a mere man, how mysterious that such a Being as the author of this Revelation, should have ascribed to him the perfections, the works, the worship, which belong to Jehovah, and exhibited him in such a manner as almost irresistibly to lead to the conclusion that he possesses a divine nature. If he is something more than a man and something less than God, how mysterious that he should have been exhibited in such variety of forms, both as God and man, when he was actually neither. Especially, how mysterious does all this appear, when it is remembered that one of the leading objects of the Bible is to guard men against idolatry; and moreover, that it is designed for the poor and illiterate, to whom, if its meaning be not obvious, it must forever be a sealed book. It is not the manner of our God to trifle with his creatures; but if, from the scripture representation of the character of Christ, we are to make out the doctrine that he is a mere man, or a mere creature, sure I am that, to say the least, it wraps up this part of the divine conduct in impenetrable mystery.

But, perhaps some one is ready to say, ‘if the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ, or what is the same thing—the union between soul and body in ourselves, is mysterious, then there is mystery in every thing.’ Nor would the declaration be materially incorrect. Yes,

Brethren, there is mystery in the beating of that pulse ; there is mystery in the heaving of these lungs ; there is mystery in the lifting of that arm ;—mystery precisely analogous to that which pertains to the doctrine of two natures in Christ ; not in the fact in either case, but in the manner of the fact in both. In short, if you will put away the delusions of sense, and look around you, you will find ‘mystery’ inscribed on every object that meets your eye ; and if you call philosophy to your aid, she will conduct you but a little distance into the intricacies of nature, before you will discover that she is as blind as yourself. Are we not warranted, then, in saying that, if the doctrine of two natures in Christ be given up on account of mystery, neither of the other two doctrines which we have considered, can be consistently retained ? Nay, are we not warranted in an immensely broader conclusion than even this : if a doctrine of Revelation is to be given up, because it involves things which we cannot comprehend, must we not, on the same principle, resign ourselves to universal skepticism, and doubt the reality of what our eyes see, and our ears hear, and our hands feel, merely because these objects of sense present phenomena which human reason cannot explain ?

1. On a review of our subject, we remark, first ; *how inconclusively they argue, who attempt to disprove the proper deity of Christ, by maintaining his inferiority to the Father.* How common is it to hear passages quoted for this purpose, in which Christ is represented as dependent upon the Father ; as praying to the Father ;



as doing the will of the Father ; and then to be triumphantly asked, whether all this could be predicated of the Supreme God. To such inquiries we should unhesitatingly answer, 'No ;' nor do the advocates of our doctrine ever think of applying them to the divine nature. But these passages, instead of opposing the doctrine which we maintain, constitute an important branch of the proof by which we establish it ; for part of the doctrine is, that Christ possesses a proper human nature. If we maintained that he has a divine nature *only*, as some ancient heretics did, then indeed, those passages which prove his inferiority would be in point against us ; but as the case stands, they are as essential to our doctrine, as they can be to any other. When, therefore, you have proved that Christ is inferior or subordinate to the Father, whether as man or as Mediator, you have only proved what we believe ; and though it is but part of our faith on this subject, it is a part which we hold exceedingly precious. Your argument, to be of any avail, must prove that Christ is inferior to the Father, not in *some* respects only, but in *all*.

2. Our next inference from the view which we have taken of this subject, is, that *if the doctrine of two natures in Christ, is not revealed in scripture, then it CANNOT be.* If the declarations that he is *the true God*, and *the mighty God*, that *all things were created by him*, that he *searches the heart*, and is present with his disciples every where to bless them, and is to decide the final retributions of men ;—if these declarations do not prove him

divine, I ask you for a more full and intelligible description of divinity. Is Omnipotence a perfection of God? How will you ascribe it to him better than by saying that he is Almighty? But this the Bible declares concerning Christ. Is Omniscience a perfection of God? How will you ascribe it to Him better than by saying that He searches the heart, and is to judge the world? But this the Bible declares concerning Christ. Is Creation a divine work? (And if you say that it is not necessarily so, I ask you for evidence that divine power has ever been exerted :) But this the Bible ascribes to Christ. And so of every other divine attribute and work. And on the other hand, what single attribute of humanity is there, which the Bible does not distinctly ascribe to Christ? I venture to say, not one. Let any person describe in his own language such a being as we hold Jesus Christ to be, and use all the explicitness of which language is susceptible, and I think I may safely engage to furnish a description of the same character, in the very language of inspiration, equally minute and equally explicit. A student of theology once remarked to his instructor, that 'he could not believe in the deity of Christ, for if the doctrine were true, it was so important, that he was sure it must have been revealed so clearly that nobody could have mistaken it.' 'And what language would *you* have chosen?' said the instructor. 'I would have had him called *the true God*,' replied the student. 'Right,' said the venerable clergyman—'the very language of the apostle.'



3. Our subject *exposes the error of those, who maintain that it is of no importance what we believe concerning the character of Christ, provided only we acknowledge him as Mediator.* Whatever God has revealed to us in his word, it is no doubt important that we should believe ; for no truth can be of any advantage to us unless it is believed ; and He is too wise a Being to reveal any thing that is useless. Now, that something has been revealed concerning the character of Christ, distinct from his mediatorial office, none will deny : that the doctrine of the union of divinity and humanity in his person is revealed, *we think is abundantly evident* : doubtless, then, it is of as much importance that we should believe it, as it was that God should reveal it ; for unless we do believe it, the object of its being revealed, so far as respects us, is entirely defeated. If a belief in the *fact* that Christ sustains the office of Mediator, had been all that was necessary, nothing more would have been revealed ; but since the revelation is more extensive, the obligation of faith is extended proportionably.

But we need not rest our conclusion in respect to the importance of believing what the scripture has told us concerning the *whole* character of Christ, merely on the fact that it has been revealed : for, if I mistake not, the same thing appears still more manifest from the *connexion between his personal character, and his official or mediatorial character.* Will you say that it is no matter what the personal character of Christ may be, so long as he sustains the office of Mediator or Redeemer ? But

would you say that it was no matter what the talents, and attainments, and general character, of the chief magistrate of a nation might be, provided only that he were appointed to the office? All that is committed to Christ as Mediator, is authority: and is it of no importance that he possess the requisite personal qualifications for the proper use of this authority? For instance, Christ, as Mediator, is appointed to judge the world: But would he be qualified to fulfil this high appointment, if he were merely a man? As Mediator too, he was appointed to make atonement for sin by his death on the cross: But could he have done this, if he had possessed merely a divine nature? I know indeed that reason could not decide, independently of the testimony of God, what qualifications were requisite to constitute a Mediator. But since those qualifications are revealed to be the divine and human natures existing in union, where is our warrant for believing that these qualifications are not essential? The apostle, speaking of the priesthood of Christ, which is one important part of the mediatorial office, is not satisfied with stating the fact that he is a high priest, but he says, *SUCH an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.\** And again, speaking of his regal office, not satisfied with asserting the fact that he holds that office, he alludes to that part of his character which especially qualifies him for it:—*Thy throne O God, is forever and ever.†* Is it not manifest, then,

\* Heb. vii. 26.

† Heb. i. 8.



that in order to have an adequate view of Christ as Mediator, we must regard the personal qualifications for that office which the scripture attributes to him? And is it not equally manifest that the feelings with which we regard him as Mediator, must be greatly affected, nay, absolutely determined, by our views of his personal character?

And here, my Brethren in the ministry, let me say that this subject suggests some important instruction to us in respect to our preaching. The burden of that gospel which we preach—its very substance, and life, and glory, is Jesus Christ. Just so far then as we fail to present the scriptural view of Christ, we distort the whole system of evangelical truth: We do more than mar the superstructure; we strike a blow at the foundation. Let us take heed then that we fail not in this fundamental particular. We must not indeed conduct our hearers into the barren wilds of speculation, where there is food for conjecture only—not for faith. But we must regard nothing on this subject unimportant which God has revealed; and if there be those, who, when we exhibit Christ on the throne, and Christ on the cross, pronounce our preaching to be foolishness, we must fearlessly and calmly encounter their derision. Go forth, then, herald of the cross, preaching Christ in every character which he bears; in every office which he holds. Let “devotion to Christ” be thy motto; the grace of Christ thy support; the glory of Christ thine aim; then shall a crown of life purchased by Christ be thine everlasting reward.

Once more : *How worthy to be loved, trusted, and obeyed, is Jesus Christ!* Do you look for whatever is great, and glorious, and venerable, in divinity? *In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead.* Do you look for whatever is amiable, and condescending, and attractive, in human nature? In him every virtue shines forth with an unearthly lustre. Would you fix your views on an infinite benefactor? *Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor.* Is there not every thing in his character, then, to awaken gratitude, to inspire confidence, to call forth obedience? There is : and let it be rung in the ears of the careless sinner, as a rebuke to his rebellion, and a call to repentance. Let it be carried home to the heart of the anxious sinner, as an encouragement to commit without delay his immortal interests into his Redeemer's hands. Let it go to the bosom of the Christian, and give new life to his good resolutions and devout affections. Let it circulate joy through his whole soul, let it waken every energy in his Master's service, to reflect that this same Jesus, who is now the object of his confidence and of his praise, will ere long receive him into his own immediate presence, and that there, with ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, he shall bow before the throne, and unite his heart and voice with theirs in the loud and thrilling acclamation, *Blessing, honor, glory and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever.*