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A

# LETTER

TO THE EDITOR OF THE

## UNITARIAN MISCELLANY.

IN REPLY TO AN ATTACK,

BY AN ANONYMOUS WRITER IN THAT WORK,

ON A LATE

ORDINATION SERMON DELIVERED IN BALTIMORE.

— K —  
By SAMUEL MILLER, D. D.

AUTHOR OF THE SERMON.



BALTIMORE:

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1821

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# INTRODUCTION

TO THE CHRISTIAN PUBLICK.

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THE following letter was sent to the editor of "The Unitarian Miscellany," with a respectful request that it might be inserted in that work. As its pages had been lent to a *long* and violent attack on my sermon, by an anonymous writer; as that writer called upon me, in the most pointed and urgent manner, to explain, and defend myself; and as such an explanation and defence were necessary to none so much as to those who had read his strictures;—it was my wish, and surely no unreasonable one, that the vehicle which had conveyed to the publick the attack, should also convey to the same publick my reply. And when I recollected the professions of "liberality" and the severe censure of an opposite spirit, with which the "Unitarian Miscellany" abounds; the solemn pledge which had been given, in the first number, that pieces from all parties, written with moderation and candour, would be admitted; and also the utility and importance which its conductors had ascribed to the tem-

perate discussion of disputed points;—it was confidently taken for granted, that my communication would be favourably received, and promptly inserted.

In this confidence, however, I have been disappointed. The editor, on the 22d instant, transmitted to me a refusal of my request; which, that I may not, even inadvertently, do him the least injustice, I think proper to insert at large.

*Baltimore, 22d March, 1821.*

“**REV. DR. MILLER, Princeton,**

**SIR,**

“The conductors of the Unitarian Miscellany have received a communication from you, in reply to an article in their last number, signed “A Unitarian of Baltimore.” They have read it with care, and, after some deliberation, have concluded, that they cannot with propriety comply with your request. First, because they do not feel under any obligation to print articles in reply to their own: and secondly, because they do not think it would be doing justice to their subscribers to occupy so large a portion of their work, as this communication would require, with an article, the professed object of which is to impeach their morals, and to prove them not to be Christians.”

“Yet, as you think yourself aggrieved by what they have published, they are disposed to give to your reply any publicity in their power, which they conceive to be consistent with propriety and justice. If you think it important that it should be read by their subscribers,

and will have it printed in the same form as the Miscellany, they will cheerfully cause it to be stitched with all the numbers for May, in addition to its usual size. Notice shall also be given in the number for April, that this reply from you will appear in the next."

"In this way their subscribers will have no reason to complain; and it appears to them that more than this cannot reasonably be asked on your part; as your object of putting the reply into the hands of those who have read the letter, will be fully answered."

"With much respect,

"EDITOR OF THE MISCELLANY."

On the justice, the consistency, or the wisdom of this refusal, I shall offer no comment. But not choosing to commit the circulation of my letter to the agency of those who have manifested so much reluctance to lay it before their readers in the usual way; and considering the offer made as one which no man, who had the least respect for himself, would think of accepting; I have thought proper to avail myself of the only other method of coming before the publick which was afforded me. To the Christian publick, therefore, in this manner, I make my appeal; and cherish the hope that a candid hearing will not be denied me.

As it was my wish, when the following Letter was prepared for the "Unitarian Miscellany," to trespass as little as possible on the plans of its conductors, or the patience of its readers, I omitted for the sake of brevity, several paragraphs which I was desirous of introdu-

cing. That difficulty being entirely removed by the present form of publication the paragraphs referred to, together with two notes, which appeared to me of some value, have been of course added.

The attentive reader will observe, that, in my Letter, the distinctive *title* which has been assumed by those with whom I have thought myself called, in the present instance to contend, was not drawn into question. This omission was dictated, not by a conviction that the title assumed was strictly just; but by a desire to be short, and to have as few matters of controversy, or points of offence, as possible.

There is a real difficulty in giving a convenient name to these persons as a general body. If they were all *Socinians*, on the plan of either *Socinus*, or *Dr. Priestly*, it would be easy to find for them a proper name. Or if they were all *Arians*, or *Semi-Arians*, it would, of course, be equally easy. But as they differ so materially among themselves, the difficulty is in fixing on any *single term* which will be expressive of some obvious peculiarity in which they all agree. They have selected that of *Unitarian*: and I, for one, say, let them have it. But when they call themselves, and when we for the sake of avoiding circumlocution, call them, "Unitarians," it is hoped no reflecting reader will, for a moment, admit the thought, that we worship *more than one* God; or that we admit that they *alone* are worshippers of one God only. It cannot be unknown, that we contend for the unity of God as constantly, and as zealously, as they, or any other class of men, can do. When the orthodox use this title, then, they consider it as only designating those who re-

ject all belief in that mysterious, **THREE-FOLD MODE OF EXISTENCE IN THE ONE SUPREME AND ETERNAL JEHOVAH**, which the Scriptures, as we think, plainly teach; which lies at the foundation of the whole plan of Redemption; and of which the rejection always has been, and always must be, connected with a denial of every essential principle of the gospel. If the title of *Unitarian* be understood to imply no more than this, there can be no objection to its finding a place in the current language of the day. Against any other sense or use of it, I must, in common with every believer in genuine Christianity, enter my solemn protest.

I have only to add, my earnest hope, that no reader of these pages will suppose that the present is a struggle for personal display or conquest. If the question involved in this discussion were, whether the "Unitarian of Baltimore," or the author of a recent Ordination Sermon, which will soon pass into oblivion, were the abler controversialist—the more dexterous in wielding the usual weapons of "sturdy polemics," it would not be to any man worth the trouble of solution. I take for granted that this writer will think and say as long as he lives, that he has given me an exemplary "chastisement," and completely vanquished me. Be it so. Let me be under this imputation. But I beg that it may be remembered, that the questions discussed in the following letter are infinitely more momentous. They are no less than—**WHO ARE ENTITLED TO THE SACRED NAME OF CHRISTIAN?—AND WHAT IS THE SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATION OF A SINNER'S HOPE TOWARD GOD?** If I could see in the Bible the least ground of hope for

fallen, depraved man, but in the atoning sacrifice, and purifying spirit of **JEHOVAH MANIFEST IN THE FLESH**, every feeling of my nature would dispose me, to withdraw in silence, and leave the field of contention to those who might choose to occupy it. But as I cordially believe that the views of the character and work of the Redeemer which I take, are, as to substance, those "without which no man shall see the Lord," can the most unlimited latitudinarianism, that has a spark of honesty remaining, wish me to disguise or conceal them?

If I knew of any way in which the gospel of the grace of God could be faithfully preached, and men faithfully warned against those destructive counterfeits which call themselves by its name, without saying a word which would wound or grate the feelings of a human being, the great Searcher of Hearts is my Witness that I would most gladly adopt it. But as I know of no such way, I do hope, that, in pursuing the course which my conscience tells me is right, even Unitarians will favour me with a portion of that "charity" and "liberality," which they sometimes appear to consider as almost their appropriate virtues.

**S. MILLER.**

*Princeton, March 26th, 1821.*

FOR THE

**UNITARIAN MISCELLANY.**

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**MR. EDITOR,**

A writer in the last number of your work, under the signature of "A Unitarian of Baltimore," has addressed to me a letter, containing strictures on my late Ordination Sermon, delivered in your city, and calling upon me to explain and vindicate some passages in that sermon. I know not that I am under any obligation to comply with a call of this kind from a person, who, while he addresses me by my name, conceals his own. But, as some of your readers may be led by his representation, to construe silence on my part, into an acknowledgment of rashness or error; as I am not really conscious of either; and as I have no apprehension that the cause of truth and righteousness will ever be endangered by temperate discussion; I do not deem it improper to say a few words in defence of the obnoxious passages alluded to. It is by no means my intention, however, to engage in a controversy with an anonymous writer; and I can think of nothing that will induce me to take the least notice of any future communication from the "Unitarian of Baltimore."



I shall not take up your time in commenting on the *style* of this letter; which, though in some of its parts, sufficiently respectful, is certainly, in others, dictated by no small share of irascible feeling, and characterized by quite as much offensiveness of language, as the intercourse of gentlemen, to say nothing of the Christian temper, admits. With a writer who, not only, unceremoniously, classes me with those preachers from whom he looks for the “fumes and phrenzy of fanaticism, the “storms of boisterous passion, and the misrepresentations of incorrigible ignorance,” but also charges me with having gone beyond them in indecorum and outrage; with a writer who impeaches my “veracity,” who represents me as setting “truth at defiance,” and as attacking his denomination in a “rude” and “wanton” manner;—with a writer whose feelings and habits allow him to employ such language, I can never consent to have any direct communication.

The *first* charge which this writer brings against me, is, that I seized a very unsuitable *occasion* to deliver the sentiments which are contained in the offensive passages of my sermon. To this charge, I shall make a very short reply. I can assure you, Mr. Editor, that it was no desire to provoke controversy, no disposition to offend or to irritate, which prompted me to express myself as I did; but a sincere and deep conviction that what I said properly belonged to the subject which I undertook to discuss; that the discussion would be defective without it; and that fidelity to my Master in heaven required me to bear the testimony, and to give the warn-

ing, which have proved to some so unacceptable. This was my conviction when I penned that which was delivered, and it is my conviction still. If I erred in this conviction, I pray God to forgive, and enable me to see my error. You and your friends, no doubt, think I was wrong—very wrong. I think otherwise. The question must be left for decision before a higher Tribunal, at which my accuser and myself must soon stand to give an account of our conduct.

But, allow me to ask, are Unitarians in the habit of being very scrupulous about bringing forward their peculiar opinions on publick and special occasions, and even in preaching Ordination sermons? Have no Unitarian ministers ever embraced opportunities, when large and mixed assemblies were convened, to exhibit at great length, and with much point and force, the distinguishing doctrines of their sect? Several gentlemen of high reputation in that body, could answer this question. But was ever any friend of orthodoxy heard to criminate those who thought it their duty to do so? Conceding to them the truth of their principles—and I have no doubt they sincerely think them true—they acted as I would have done in their place. The points of difference between believers in the divinity and atonement of the Son of God, and Unitarians of all grades, are so radical, essential, and infinitely important, and affect so vitally every leading subject in theology, that I see not how the man who is really *in earnest* in adopting either, can ever hold his peace concerning them, or speak of them in any other language than that of the strongest and most decisive kind.

You may assure the writer, sir, whose charges I am repelling, that he is entirely correct in supposing that no feelings of personal resentment led me to this measure. He is right in supposing, that no Unitarian or body of Unitarians, had "ever shown any disposition to molest or injure me." So far from this, I have numbered some of them, as he intimates, among my valued friends; and for the talents, learning, and many virtues of not a few others, I should be very unjust, if I did not cherish a high respect. But suppose my friendships in that body were far more numerous and endearing than they are: suppose my obligations to them were of the strongest and most tender kind: nay, suppose that all the ties of consanguinity and affinity which bind me to the family of man, were so many relations to Unitarians? What then? Personal affection ought not, and I trust, by the grace of God, it will never be permitted, either to blind me to the real character of fatal error; or, when I undertake to deliver my Master's message, to bribe me into an acknowledgment that such error is either innocent or safe.

The *second* charge which this writer brings against me, is, that *I will not allow Unitarians to be Christians*. This charge I do not deny; and my only answer to it will be an attempt, not to explain, or apologize, but to *justify*.

If I were to define Christianity as it appears to me exhibited in the word of God, I should say—it is a Religion which provides salvation for totally depraved and guilty sinners; and which, for this purpose, sets before

them pardon and acceptance with God, through the atonement and righteousness of a Divine Mediator, and sanctification by the power of the Holy Spirit. In fewer words, it is a religion which secures to those who embrace it, a title to heaven, and a preparation for heaven, through the atoning blood, and sanctifying Spirit of an Almighty Surety. This, in my view, forms the *essence* of Christianity, the very life and glory of the system,—which being taken away, it is destroyed; it is no longer the same religion, but “another Gospel.” Of course, he who does not receive the doctrine of ~~man's~~ man's guilt and depravity by nature, and the doctrine of the divinity and atonement of the Son of God, and of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, does not receive the Gospel, and is, consequently, no Christian. I do not doubt that there are doctrines of the Gospel, which a man may misunderstand or reject, and yet be in the way of salvation. It is impossible, indeed, for us to say *how far* a man may be in error with regard to many parts of the Christian system, and still be a sincere disciple of Jesus Christ. This is a question which none but He who made man can decide; and which, happily, He alone *will* ultimately decide. But that he who rejects those parts of the religion of Christ which forms its *essence*, cannot be a Christian, in any scriptural sense of the word, or in any rational sense of it, I hold to be just as clear and self-evident, as that a man cannot be entitled to the appellation of a *scholar*, who does not know a letter in any alphabet.

Now, whatever others may think, I am as perfectly persuaded that the doctrines of the true and proper di-

vinity of Christ, and of his vicarious sacrifice and atonement, *are* essential doctrines of the Gospel, as I am that God has given a Gospel of peace to a benighted world. I can no more conceive of Christianity, with those precious doctrines taken away, than I can conceive of a living man, deprived of every vital organ; or of the solar system, with the Sun torn from its centre.— It follows, therefore, with irresistible force of evidence, to my mind, that he who rejects those fundamental truths, however respectable, virtuous, and apparently devout he *may* be, **REJECTS CHRISTIANITY**, as really,— though not under precisely the same circumstances,— yet as *really* as any *Deist* ever did; that he cannot, with propriety, be called a Christian *in any sense*; and that, persisting in this rejection, he is on just as dangerous ground as *Herbert* or *Hume*, and must be considered as equally far from the way of salvation.

These, I repeat, are my firm, unwavering convictions. They will, no doubt, be regarded by some with pity, and by others with contempt. But they are, to me, serious, indubitable, all-important realities. And as long as they are such, honesty, and love to the souls of men, require me to avow them. If the doctrines to which I have alluded, be really found in the Bible, and if they be,—as, if found there at all, they doubtless are—the life's core of the Christian system, then I can no more doubt that all the consequences which I have stated (however painful the thought may be) must unavoidably follow, than I can doubt that any necessary effect will spring from its cause. If a man depart *at all* from those doctrines—whatever ground he may occupy—I am still prepared

to apply to his error the epithets of "dreadful" and "soul-destroying," without any evasion or softening. *Denying the Lord that bought us*, is the very heresy which the inspired Apostle Peter has pronounced "*damnable*," and which he declares brings upon those who adopt it "*swift destruction*."

But the charge which appears most of all to provoke the ire of the "Unitarian of Baltimore" is that which he draws from the following passage in my sermon.

"How is it to be accounted for, that the preaching of "those who deny the divinity and atonement of the Saviour, and who reject the doctrines of human depravity, of regeneration, and of justification by the righteousness of Christ—how, I ask, is it to be accounted for, that such preachers, all over the world, are most acceptable to the gay, the fashionable, the worldly-minded, and even the licentious?—That so many embrace and eulogize their system, without being, in the smallest perceptible degree, sanctified by it? That thousands are in love with it, and praise it; but that we look in vain for the monuments of its reforming and purifying power?"

It was by no means my intention, in this passage, to assert, or to intimate, that Unitarians, as a body, are licentious or immoral; and I have seriously to complain of the "Unitarian of Baltimore," for giving this view of it, and taking so much pains, as he evidently does, on this ground, to excite the indignation of his readers against me. He has entirely misunderstood and misrepresented me; I do not say intentionally, but from the ardour and impetuosity of his feelings. I think any

one who, with a tolerable degree of impartiality, peruses the passage itself, will perceive that I meant to say no more than this—viz. In the *first* place,—that the kind of preaching which is general among Unitarians, gives less pain to carnal feelings, and is, every where, more agreeable to gay, fashionable, worldly minded, and licentious people, than any other kind of preaching. And, *secondly*—that Unitarian preaching is not commonly, if ever, known to be the means of converting depraved men “from sin to holiness, and from the power of Satan to God.”—This was not only my meaning; but it does appear to me that the utmost stretch of ingenuity cannot, fairly, make more of the passage than this.

Now, all this, I fully believe, and am ready, unequivocally, to avow as my opinion. I am very far, indeed, from supposing that all Unitarians are licentious or immoral. I am acquainted with a number of them who set an example of integrity, benevolence, and active virtue, which many who boast of their Trinitarian orthodoxy would do well to imitate; and have reason to believe that many more set an example no less ornamental. But may not the same be said of many *Deists*, from Lord *Herbert* down to the present day? Few will deny it; and yet very few, it is presumed, who wish to bear the name of Christian, or who take an enlarged view of facts, will allow that deistical principles have a tendency to make men virtuous.

But I *did* mean to say, that the Unitarian mode of preaching, is more acceptable to the taste of carnal, worldly men than any other kind of preaching. And

can any one who reflects a moment, or who has eyes to see, and ears to hear, doubt that this is the fact? All Unitarian preachers that I have ever heard of, teach their hearers that human nature is not so depraved as Calvinists believe; that Regeneration is unnecessary; that the various exercises of mind supposed by many to be essential to piety, are mere dreams of enthusiasm; that the strictness and seclusion from fashionable amusements—such as the theatre, the ball room, and the card-table, which some inculcate, are uncommanded austerities, and being “righteous overmuch;” and that all men, whatever may be their character, will finally be saved, or annihilated. Now if this be, as I verily believe it is, a fair specimen of the doctrine (as to the points in question) inculcated by Unitarian preachers all over the world, can any man question whether the gay, the fashionable, and the licentious will greatly prefer this preaching to that of the consistent Calvinist, or the serious Arminian? It appears to me impossible. For myself, I could just as soon question the truth of any mathematical axiom.

Nor is this a new thought. The following extract from a work of Dr. WITHERSPHORN, will show how great and good men of the last age, were accustomed to think on the subject under consideration. “There is one observation which may satisfy us, that the preaching of “the cross of Christ will most effectually promote real “reformation. It is that those preachers who (to say “no more) approach nearest to making our own merit “and obedience the ground of our acceptance with God,



“very seldom, if ever, give any alarm to the consciences  
 “of their hearers. Let them recommend ever so pure  
 “and high a standard of morals, they are heard with-  
 “out fear; and, if they preach elegantly, with pleasure,  
 “even by the most profligate. To such preachers all  
 “vain, worldly-minded people usually attach themselves;  
 “but most part of serious christians always follow  
 “preachers of another strain. It is easy to see the rea-  
 “son of this, from what has been said above. There  
 “are none who set the strictness and obligation of the  
 “law, the holiness and justice of God, in so awful a  
 “light, as those who believe there is no shelter from  
 “the sanction of the law, and the wrath of an offended  
 “God, but in the blood of Christ.”\*

I have also said, what amounts to the position, that  
 “many embrace and eulogize the Unitarian system,  
 “without being at all sanctified by it; and that we look in  
 “vain for the monuments of its reforming and purifying  
 “power.” Is this position rashly taken, or untenable?  
 I must acknowledge it does not appear so to me. Who  
 ever heard of a *sound conversion*, or of a *genuine re-  
 vival of religion*, under Unitarian ministrations? I  
 mean such a conversion, and such a revival of religion,  
 as the Bible describes, and as the history of the Church  
 exemplifies. Where those doctrines which we em-  
 phatically call the “doctrines of grace,” have been  
 faithfully preached, we have seen the most blessed ef-  
 fects conspicuously displayed. We have seen the wretch,  
 long degraded by vice, in a few days, perhaps in a few

\* Witherspoon's Works, vol. 1, p. 83.

hours, transformed into a sober, devout worshipper; the proud blasphemer, humbled, softened, and made to sit as a little child at the feet of Jesus; and the family which once set an example of more than Pagan brutality, exhibiting the happy reign of Christian purity, order and love. In short, not merely once, or twice, but many times, we have seen, under the benign influence of those doctrines, the young profligate, the hoary headed transgressor, and the decent Pharisee together renouncing their habits and false hopes, becoming obedient to the faith, and testifying the genuineness of their change by a course of exemplary obedience. Now, I ask,—not, if I know my own heart, in the spirit of vain boasting, but of serious and most respectful appeal.—Can Unitarianism show effects like these? If it can, I do with the utmost sincerity declare, that they are unknown to me. It will probably be said in reply, that Unitarians do not hold to such things as *we* call conversions and revivals; that they disapprove and discourage them as fanatical; and that, therefore, to expect them to take place under their ministrations, would be altogether unreasonable. But is not this, in different words, acknowledging the truth of my original remark? Is not this the very thing I am saying, viz—that what *we* esteem as alone genuine, practical Christianity,—as the only efficient, fruitful source of Christian morals, is opposed and vilified by Unitarians? It is, I am persuaded, even so: and of course, to expect to see such precious fruit produced by means of their labours, would be indeed to expect to “gather grapes of thorns, and figs of thistles.”

I do not intend to follow this gentleman far, in the comparison which he so zealously and confidently urges, between Presbyterians and Unitarians, on the score of *purity of morals*. I lament that when he looks into the church to which I have the happiness to belong, he may see so much over which the pious Christian has reason to weep. The question, however, is not, whether some Clergymen and laymen of the Presbyterian church, in direct opposition to all their professed principles, have proved grossly immoral; or whether similar examples of hypocrisy and profligacy may not be found among Unitarians: but what are the tendency and effects of certain principles? Now I appeal to all impartial readers, who have the least knowledge of ecclesiastical history, whether those who have embraced the general system of Christian doctrine designated by the name of Calvinism, have not been, in all ages, distinguished as "*the stricter sort*" of professing Christians? Have they not always been reproached by the laxer classes, as "austere," "puritanical," and enemies of even many "innocent indulgencies?" Such, truly, has always been my understanding of the matter; and I feel confident that modern, as well as ancient facts, will justify the impression. If there be now, in fact, among the great mass of Unitarian church-members, as much humble, self-denied, spiritual piety; as much apparent care to guard against every approach to sin, both in language and conduct; as much regard to the sanctification of the Lord's day; as much devout, reverential reading of the scriptures; as much

seclusion from the fashionable amusements, follies and vices of a "world that lieth in wickedness;" in a word, as much "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and "living soberly, righteously and godly in this present "evil world,"—as among the mass of Presbyterian "church-members, or the mass of church-members of "any other denomination, who substantially adopt our "doctrinal principles;"—then I must confess that I have taken a narrow view of facts, and have been most egregiously deceived.

But, my Baltimore accuser dwells much and pathetically on what he considers as a gross violation of Christian *charity*, in speaking as I have done of Unitarians. From what he says on this subject, I conclude that he understands the word *charity* in a sense which, though current enough in common society, among a thousand other popular crudities, is certainly not found in scripture, and ought to receive no countenance from any accurate thinker. According to him, Christian *charity* consists, in entertaining a favorable opinion of others, however widely they may differ from us, on the most essential points; in supposing that they have inquired after truth as candidly as we have done; and in taking for granted that there is as much reason to hope they will be finally accepted of God, as that we ourselves shall be accepted. I assert with confidence, that the word *charity* is never used in this sense in Scripture, and that it ought not to be so used by any one, especially when speaking of *charity* as a Christian duty. The word *charity*, as used in Scripture, is equivalent to the

word *love*. 'To exercise charity towards another in the language of the Bible, is to love him. I may, therefore, exercise the most perfect charity towards one whose principles I reprobate, and whose conduct I abhor, and ought to abhor; that is, I may not have a particle of bitterness or malevolence towards him; but may cherish for him the most lively affection, and may ardently desire to promote his temporal and eternal happiness.

If this writer's ideas of the nature of Christian charity be correct, then our blessed Saviour most grievously offended against this duty, when he said to the Scribes and Pharisees "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" If he be correct, the Apostle John also no less palpably violated this duty when he said, in his second Epistle, "He that abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God: he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds." The Apostle Paul, too, if this be so, lays himself open to a similar charge, when, in writing to the Galatians, he declares—"As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." But will any dare to say, that there was a want of charity in any of these cases? I presume not. On the contrary, in every instance, the context shows that these warnings were

dictated by a tender love to the souls of men, and a desire to promote their happiness. And, surely, in conformity with the example, both of the Master, and his inspired servants, that man who verily believes that certain errors are in the highest degree dangerous, and must infallibly destroy those who adhere to them,—gives the best evidence of his charity, when he faithfully warns all around him of the danger, and thus endeavours to prevent their destruction. The charity of him who sees a precipice, in all its frightful horror, but suffers the blinded and heedless traveller to plunge into the gulph unwarned, is, I must own, a sort of charity which I neither understand nor covet.

But while I deny to Unitarians the name of Christians, and believe them to be in error, which, if persisted in, must prove fatal; I certainly do not mean to deny them the credit of sincerity in what they profess. A man may really believe what he says he does; and yet he may be very far from having embraced that belief as the result of enlightened, impartial inquiry. The Apostle Paul, before his conversion, was an example of this. He “verily thought with himself” that he ought to oppose, and endeavour to destroy the cause of Christianity. But was he therefore innocent? He himself has solemnly decided otherwise. A man, then, if the Apostle is to be believed, may be *strictly conscientious*, both in his creed and his practice, and yet be in the high road to perdition. I take for granted that many deists have sincerely believed they were right, while they were fighting against God, and pouring contempt

on the "blood of the covenant as an unholy thing." But can a Christian admit that they had examined the subject with impartiality, with candour, and with minds open to conviction? No; he must believe that, however *honest* in the popular sense of the term, they were blinded by prejudice, and approached the inquiry with minds strongly prepossessed against the truth. In like manner, I acknowledge the "Unitarian of Baltimore" to be as sincere in his belief as I am in mine,—that is, to be as really convinced that he is right, as I can be that I am right. But he must not ask me to go further: nor do I ask him to go further with respect to me. He cannot possibly entertain a favourable opinion of my sentiments, any more than I do of his. As long as he considers Christ as a mere man, he must think me an idolater: and I do not complain of this opinion, or blame him for entertaining it. With his convictions, it is unavoidable. But I pray that I may not be denied, in my turn, the same privilege of estimating his sentiments, as I honestly think they ought to be estimated. I cheerfully give to Unitarians, what I am willing to receive from them. Surely they will not ask more.

In one respect, indeed, the principles of Unitarians enable them to exercise more of what they call "liberality," than is consistent with orthodox opinions. Although, I must own, it is a fearful ability, which every conscientious man would wish to exercise with the most sacred caution. The explanation of my meaning, cannot be better expressed than by the following quotation from Doctor *Priestley*. "Though Unitarian dissenters

“are not apt to entertain any doubt of the truth of their principles, they do not lay so much stress upon them as other Christians do upon theirs. *Nor, indeed, is there any reason why they should, when they do not consider the holding of them to be at all necessary to salvation, which other Christians often do with respect to theirs. They, therefore, take much less pains to make proselytes, and are less concerned to inculcate their principles upon their children, their servants, and their dependents in general.*

“From this principle it is, that great numbers becoming Unitarians in the church of England, and even among the Clergy, do not feel the impropriety and absurdity, *to say nothing more harsh, of continuing to countenance a mode of worship, which, if they were questioned about it, they could not deny to be according to their own principles, idolatrous and blasphemous. Such persons, also, having no zeal for speculative religion, merely because they have no zeal for religion in general, their moral conduct, though decent, is not what is deemed strict and exemplary.\**”

\* Discourses on various subjects, p. 95, 96.—It will be seen, from the above quotation, that Unitarians can sometimes use the language of very strong censure, as well as others. Dr. Priestley calls the worship of Trinitarians *idolatrous* and *blasphemous*. What will the editor of the “Unitarian Miscellany” say to this? But the Editor himself, it would appear, is sometimes betrayed into a very gross transgression of his own rule of “charity!” One specimen shall suffice—in his work, No. II. p. 58, the following most extraordinary passage occurs. “But they all receive their rewards, and are, no doubt, contented. *Horsley* cared little, so long as he left the field with a mitre on his head, that *Priestley* went off with the laurels of victo-



The following extract from a treatise of the late Dr. Witherspoon, on this very subject, is so directly to my purpose, both for illustrating my meaning, and fortifying my opinion, that I cannot forbear to transcribe it. Your readers, Mr. Editor, will perceive, that a senti-

“ry. The redoubtable combatant, Dean *Magee*, probably feels no reluctance at yielding the palm to *Belsham* and *Carpenter*, since he has “found so quiet a repose, with eight thousand a year, in the episcopal “halls of Raphoe. And what Dr. *Nares*, and the Bamptonians, *Heber* “and *Moysey*, can expect, as no one can divine, time must unfold.”

As to the former part of this paragraph, which represents Dr. *Priestley*, in his contest with Bishop *Horsley*, as having “gone off with the laurels of victory,”—I must candidly confess it is a piece of information entirely new to me. I had always considered Bishop *Horsley* in that controversy, as having not only completely vanquished Dr. *Priestley*, but, as having displayed a masterly vigour of intellect, a depth and accuracy of knowledge, and an overwhelming superiority in the establishment of his cause, which made his antagonist (though in many respects a truly able and respectable man) appear, to all impartial spectators of the conflict, as a pigmy in the hands of a giant. This was not only my impression, but I had certainly understood it to be the impression of every man, who made any pretensions to intellect or knowledge, with whom I have ever happened to converse on the subject. And it is my sincere opinion that those who really wish to honour Dr. *Priestley*'s memory, would do well to say little about that controversy. Very much the same strain of remark would apply to Bishop *Magee*. I do not know what victories others may suppose Mr. *Belsham*, and Dr. *Carpenter* to have gained over him. But I think, as an old military commander once said of himself, that “a few more such victories would ruin them.”

But it is to the *general spirit* of the passage quoted that I wish to draw the attention of the reader. The writer undertakes to pronounce *Horsley*, *Magee*, and others, in effect, a set of *unprincipled hypocrites*, who had no real concern for the cause, about which they appeared to

ment which some of them, perhaps, have considered as novel, and rashly taken up, was deliberately adopted, more than half a century ago, by one of the greatest men that ever adorned both the church and state in our country.

“Within the Christian church there are not only different, but opposite opinions, and mutually destructive of each other. Those who hold them on each side, not only say, but think, that their adversaries are guilty of impiety and blasphemy. Let us take, for instance, the *Calvinists* and *Socinians*. Read the writings of the first, and you will see that they consider their adversaries as taking away the very foundation of the Gospel, denying the only Lord God that bought them, and as guilty of gross idolatry in giving divine worship to one whom they believe to be a creature. Again, if you read the writings of the last, you will find them charging their adversaries with blasphemy of the most horrible nature, and not only making a God different

be so zealous; as men who contended and wrote, *not from a regard to truth, but from base mercenary motives!* I appeal to the Christian publick, whether, in all the writings of the orthodox against Unitarians, an outrage against “charity” comparable to this, is to be found? I recollect none. Whatever may have been said by the former, of the *opinions* of the latter, they have uniformly, so far as I know, allowed them the credit of acting upon *sincere conviction*. Here, however, is a palpable denial, to two of the most respectable men of their day, of even this humble praise, an imputation against the moral character of the most serious kind—Is this Unitarian charity? But I forbear—it is difficult to pursue a subject of this kind without feelings and language which I wish to suppress.

“from the true God, but such a one as is more cruel and  
 “vindictive than the very devils. Now I desire to know  
 “how the one of these sorts of persons, can have a fa-  
 “vourable opinion of the state and sentiments of the op-  
 “posite, without renouncing their own. I do freely  
 “acknowledge that I NEVER DID ESTEEM THE SOCINIANS  
 “TO BE CHRISTIANS; yet I find nothing more easy, or  
 “indeed more necessary, than to have charity for them,  
 “in what I take to be the scripture sense of that word.  
 “But in the modern sense, it appears to me utterly im-  
 “possible. For the very same reason, if any who had  
 “embraced these principles, should pretend that he had  
 “such charity for me, as to esteem and receive me as a  
 “faithful minister of Christ, I would consider it as a  
 “profession altogether hypocritical, or that he did not  
 “believe a word of his own system. The truth is, I  
 “cannot help thinking, from the manner of conducting  
 “theological controversies, that it is very common for  
 “many to plead for that charity to themselves, which  
 “they never give to their adversaries; while the power  
 “of prejudice hinders them from observing the incon-  
 “sistency between their reasoning and practice.”\* The  
 same celebrated writer, in a treatise on Justification,  
 published some years before, and dedicated to the Rev.  
 Mr. *Hervey*, explicitly extends this remark to the *Pela-*  
*gians*. “As to Socinians and Pelagians,” says he, “who  
 “are the greatest opposers of the truths above defend-  
 “ed, I never did esteem them to be Christians at all.”

\* Witherspoon's works, vol. iii. page 16.

The "Unitarian of Baltimore" can find no justifiable motive for my stating the conversation with Dr. *Priestley*; and, at length, refers it to my personal vanity; to a desire to have it known, that I had the honour of some acquaintance with that distinguished man. But was there not a more obvious and natural motive than this? I had expressed an opinion that the errors of Unitarians are radical and "soul-destroying." Was it not a consideration of some weight, to be able to show, that even Dr. Priestley felt and confessed, that if Calvinism were admitted to be true, Unitarianism must be regarded as a fundamental and fatal error? I really must be permitted to express my surprize, that the "charity," if not the candour of your friend, did not dictate a more favourable construction of my conduct.

As to his insinuation, that it was "neither fair nor honourable" to give to the publick this fragment of a private conversation, held more than twenty years ago, I can only say that it appears to me altogether unjust. No circumstance attending the conversation, gave it a confidential character. The doctor evidently considered me throughout the whole, though amicably, as an adversary, and I had no more doubt that what he said to me, he would have been willing to say to all the world, than that I was listening to his voice. I repeated the substance of his remarks, probably a hundred times at least, for years before his decease, as a signal evidence of his great frankness and candour: and those who will take the trouble of examining his sixth *Familiar Letter to the Inhabitants of Birmingham*, will find, published by

himself, not the same language, indeed, but what leads to the same conclusion.

There is only one topick more on which this gentleman touches, that appears to me to require notice. It is the list of distinguished Unitarians, with which he decorates his pages, and of which I am particularly anxious to separate at least *one name* from the company in which it is placed. When I find the names of NEWTON and LOCKE so frequently inserted in catalogues of Unitarians, I confess my impression is, that those illustrious men are treated with great injustice. I do not believe they would submit to the imputation, if they were now alive to speak for themselves. I am not an entire stranger to the ground on which this allegation concerning them is made; but must pronounce it altogether unsatisfactory. With respect to Bishop Clayton, I acknowledge there is stronger proof that he was not a sound Trinitarian; and shall only say, that if he, with his Unitarian opinions, could find in his heart, not only to subscribe the 39 articles, a number of times, as he must have done; but also to offer up his prayers to the heart-searching God, for forty years together, in the strongly Trinitarian language of the English liturgy, Unitarians are heartily welcome to such a specimen of clerical *honesty*. No other denomination I imagine, will ever be disposed to envy them the honour of his name.

The same general remark may be made concerning several other persons, whose names appear in the list of distinguished Unitarians, formed by this writer. That

bishop *Hoadley* was very much of a latitudinarian, I have long known. That *Chillingworth*, with all his acknowledged talents, manifested great unsteadiness of character; that he was a Protestant and Papist by turns; and at length died a Socinian, soon after having solemnly denied that he was one—I have also known. But granting this: granting that not only *Hoadley* and *Chillingworth*, but *Law* and *Blackburne*, and multitudes more, of equal literary fame, belonged to the same class; what is the consequence? Why, that a number of regular clergymen, of the church of England, who had subscribed the articles, and were in the habit of solemnly reciting the prayers of that church, did not believe a word of either; but continued, from time to time, deliberately to violate their vows, and insult their God, by not only *joining*, but also *leading* in a worship which, Dr. *Priestly* himself being judge, they could not but consider as “*idolatrous*” and “*blasphemous*.” Is this Unitarian morality? Verily if it be, it is one of the last things that I should expect to find a society, calling itself Christian, claiming as an acquisition, or an honour. When I see such men as *Lindsey* and *Jebb* voluntarily giving up all their emoluments and preferments, because they could not honestly continue to hold them, and refusing any longer to repeat prayers in which their hearts could not join; I venerate their integrity, while I must abhor their opinions. But when the names of others are vaunted, who cannot be recognized as Unitarians, without being branded with epithets, which I will not trust myself to apply, I am utterly as-

tonished; and know not how men, whom I am compelled to consider as honest and sincere themselves, can so far suffer their zeal to triumph over their prudence—I had almost said over their moral sense—as to claim such associates!

But against placing the pious, the heavenly-minded WATTS in such company, I feel constrained to enter my solemn protest. That Dr. Watts lived and died a Trinitarian, I consider as clearly established, not only by his biographers, but also still more clearly by his works. It is true, he appears to have speculated on the constitution of the Saviour's person, in a manner not always wise or prudent. But that he fully maintained the Divinity of the Son of God, is as unquestionable as any fact concerning him. This great and good man, to whom the interests of vital piety are so much indebted in the preface to his work entitled "*Orthodoxy and Charity United*," comes to a formal and solemn conclusion, that *Socinians are not Christians*, and that we cannot hope for their salvation. In one of his *Lyrick Poems*, having expressed a hope that he should find Mr. Locke in heaven, he declares in a note, that his hope was founded on the confident persuasion, that Locke was not a Socinian. Besides all this, his *Psalms* and *Hymns* are so entirely opposed to the feelings of Unitarians, that they are sung in none of their places of worship, without being mutilated or altered. How are these facts to be reconciled with Dr. Watts's Unitarianism? But it is alledged by some, that he afterwards altered his mind. I have heard much on this subject; but nothing that de-

serves to be considered as supporting the allegation, has ever met my eye; nor do I believe that it was a fact. That a man so pre-eminently conscientious and disinterested as he is confessed to have been, should have left the world, without disavowing and calling in, his psalms and hymns, and especially his *Doxologies*, in all which the Trinity is so strongly acknowledged, is proof enough for any candid mind, that he continued, to the end of life, to receive and glory in that doctrine.\*

\* In turning over the leaves of Dr. WATTS's Work, already referred to, I, unexpectedly met with some remarks on the text of my Ordination Sermon in Baltimore, which so much interested me, that I could not forbear to transcribe and insert them in this place.

"I may add, also, that if St. *Paul* had meant no more by the Gospel "of Christ than this, that God was willing to be reconciled to mankind, "if they would repent of their sins and be sorry for them, and live as "well as they could for time to come. there had been very little reason "for him to speak of his *courage* in preaching it so often as he does, and "that with such an emphasis; *Romans* i. 16. *I am not ashamed of the "Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto Salvation.* And he "repeats it again, *2 Tim.* i. 12, and encourages young *Timothy* to preach "the same Gospel with boldness, and not be ashamed of Christ, nor his "ministers, He counts it a great thing that he could *glory of Christ,* "*Gal.* vi. 15, and in his doctrine of *Christ crucified;* and is resolved to "spread the savour of it, round the world. *I am not ashamed of this "Gospel; I am ready to preach it among the Jews or the Barbarians,* or in "the CITY OF ROME ITSELF, *Rom.* i. 15. Now if he had preached noth- "ing but the *Socinian* Gospel, there was nothing in it that would have "exposed him to much shame and reproach; for the hopes of forgive- "ness upon mere repentance, and the enforcement of the duties of "natural religion, with a little illustration and advance upon them, was "so much like the Gospel or doctrine of the wisest of the heathen



I have now done with this subject; and shall not easily be persuaded to resume it.—In the mean time I take leave of it with the most entire “charity” in the scriptural sense of the word, for the “Unitarian of Baltimore.” He and I differ on the most important subjects that can come before the human mind. I cannot help viewing him as not only in error, but as in fatal error. My prayer is, that a merciful God may enlighten and sanctify us both; and that through the merit of that atoning sacrifice, which he cannot as yet receive, we may both finally have a happy meeting on the right hand of our common Judge!

I am, Sir,

Very respectfully, &c.

SAMUEL MILLER.

*Princeton, March 17, 1821.*

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“philosophers, that he had almost been esteemed one of those wise men, and rather treated with honour among them at *Athens*, and in other Gentile cities, and not been reproached as a setter forth of strange Gods, and called a babbler, for his preaching of such sort of doctrines. Acts. xvii. 18.” *Orthodoxy and Charity united. Essay* i. 2.

THE END.

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