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ART. I. THE GREAT MYSTERY OF GODLINESS INCONTROVERTIBLE. A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE VARIOUS READINGS IN 1 TIM. III. 16.

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PRELIMINARY NOTICE.

THE public are much indebted to Dr Henderson for the able and candid investigations exhibited in the following pages. They were undertaken originally without any view to publication. The author was led, in preparing a course of Theological Lectures, to investigate the different passages of Scripture to which an appeal is usually made on the subject of our Lord's Divinity, and to decide on the legitimacy and amount of the proof furnished by each, according to approved principles of biblical criticism and exegesis. While prosecuting this inquiry, he came, in order, to the important text which forms the subject of the present discussion, and entered at some length into an examination of the authorities for and against its various readings; the result of which was a decided conviction, that the reading of the *Textus Receptus* is fully borne out by the testimonies to which it is proper to refer in questions of this nature.

The occasion which led to the publication of these researches, is stated by Dr Henderson himself in his letter to Prof. Stuart, printed in the first volume of this work, p. 777. The temporary

exigencies of the case induced him to prefix a few paragraphs of a local and controversial nature, having no immediate bearing on the question under discussion. These have been omitted, as not falling within the plan and direct object of the *Biblical Repository*. The work was first published in July, 1830. EDITOR.

## CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE READINGS IN 1 TIM. III. 16.

### SECTION I.

#### *Introductory Remarks.*

THE passage, to the examination of which the following pages are devoted, has ever been regarded as one of the most interesting and beautiful to be met with in the New Testament. While the truths which it predicates are confessedly of the highest importance, and justly entitle it to a prominent place in the minds of all who receive the Christian revelation, the language in which they are announced is so measured and terse, that the place has been considered by some as exhibiting a stanza of one of the primitive hymns. Divided into lines, according to the several propositions of which it consists, it appears thus :

Θεός

ἐφανερώθη ἐν σαρκί,  
 ἐδικαιώθη ἐν πνεύματι  
 ὤφθη ἀγγέλοις,  
 ἐκηρύχθη ἐν ἔθνεσιν,  
 ἐπιστεύθη ἐν κόσμῳ,  
 ἀνελήφθη ἐν δόξῃ.

God

Was manifested in the flesh,  
 Justified in the spirit,  
 Seen by the angels,  
 Proclaimed among the heathen,  
 Believed on in the world,  
 Received up into glory.

Considering the circumstances, that Timothy was resident at Ephesus at the time the epistle was addressed to him ; that this

city was celebrated for the number of its pillars and inscriptions; and that the apostle had just represented the Christian church as the column and basis of the truth, nothing can be more natural than the supposition, that he continues the figure in the 16th verse, and represents the sum and substance of the gospel as an inscription engraven on that pillar for the purpose of luminous exhibition to the world. Not only was it common in ancient times to transmit histories and laws in this way to posterity, but the principles of science and precepts of primary utility in the government of human life were thus inscribed on columns, that they might be read by those who passed by, and be preserved for the benefit of future ages.

Precisely such a purpose has the apostolic inscription served for the long period of seventeen centuries. It has held forth to the view of all, the grand fundamental principles of the Christian belief—the humiliation, triumph, and exaltation of the Messiah, and the early and speedy extension of his kingdom in the world. Like other monuments of antiquity, however, it has not altogether escaped the mutilating hand of time, and the initial word has not a little exercised the ingenuity and skill of such as have addicted themselves to the study of sacred criticism. While the great body of critics and general readers have followed the reading of the *Textus Receptus*, according to which the pre-existence and divinity of the Son of God are distinctly taught, there have been, and still are, those who have called in question the genuineness of that reading, and either follow the Latin Vulgate, which refers all the predicates to the antecedent word *sacramentum* or “mystery,” or render the passage, “He who was manifested in the flesh was justified,” etc. This last is the interpretation usually adopted by the Socinians, and is the rendering of their “Improved Version,” principally edited by the late Mr Belsham.

The fact that a discrepancy of reading exists in some of the documents in which the passage is contained, has long been acknowledged. One of the first who called the attention of the public to it was Erasmus, who, though compelled by a just principle of criticism to insert *θεός* in his editions of the Greek N. T. and frame his Latin translation accordingly, nevertheless gives us clearly to understand in his notes, that he regarded it as suspected, and as foisted into the text in opposition to the Arians. On the same side followed Crellius, Grotius, Clarke, and others, whose hostility to this reading was distinctly avowed,

without any thing like an effectual attempt to make good their point. Dr Clarke, in his Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity, after adverting to the controversy, adds: "But it is in reality of no great importance; for the sense is evident, that That Person was manifest in the flesh, whom St. John, in the beginning of his gospel, styles Θεός."

When we take into consideration the intimacy which subsisted between the last mentioned writer and Sir Isaac Newton, it will be easy to account for the circumstance that this, among other points of theological research, attracted the notice and occupied the attention of our great philosopher. Having, as he imagined, discovered the real source of the interpolation in 1 John 5: 7, and pursued his inquiries to some considerable length, and finding that the views which he had adopted were borne out by very strong evidence, derived from Greek MSS. the ancient versions, Fathers, etc. he proceeded to institute a similar investigation of the passage now under consideration; the result of which was a conviction that it also had been tampered with, and that the true reading is that preserved in the Latin Vulgate. His remarks on both passages compose one continued discourse; but, though drawn up in the epistolary form, they do not appear to have been addressed to any particular person. A copy having been sent to Locke, was forwarded by him to M. Le Clerc, by whom it was deposited in the library of the Remonstrants in Amsterdam, where it is still preserved. From this copy an edition was published in London, 1754, 12mo, under the title of "Two Letters from Sir Isaac Newton to M. Le Clerc, upon the Reading of the Greek Text 1 John 5: 7, and 1 Tim. 3: 16." That they were not addressed to Le Clerc is obvious from his own statement, contained in his epistle prefixed to Küster's edition of Mill's Greek Testament, in which he positively avows that he was ignorant of the author.\* In the title-page, the tract is stated to have

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\* "Est penes me elegans Dissertatio Anglica, quae a quo scripta nescio, sed est a Joanne Lockio, viro clarissimo, olim ad me transmissa, in qua defenditur lectio vulgatae quod." Why Le Clerc was kept in ignorance, the reader will learn from the following circumstances.

In Lord King's Life, are three letters from Sir Isaac Newton to Locke, in which reference is made to his papers, containing the dissertations on 1 John 5: 7, and 1 Tim. 3: 16; and some further light is thrown on the subject by a few extracts from Le Clerc, fur-