

The Trinity Rebuked by Matteo Gribaldi in the year 1554

[Below is an excerpt from the Book, "Declaratio, Michael Servetus's Revelation of Jesus Christ the Son of God." Michael Servetus was burned at the stake by John Calvin in 1553 for writing his Book, 'The Errors of the Trinity.' The author of 'Declaratio,' has been discovered, was not Michael Servetus but was Matteo Gribaldi, an Italian Lawyer, who wrote it under a pseudo name. This excerpt is from Book four, pages 95 to 109. To understand this excerpt, one must understand it is from the middle of his book and also that Matteo's usage of the word, God, is the meaning of the Hebrew word, *elohim*.¹ One must also realize that during the 1500's, it was a capital offense if one rejected the Trinity, so Matteo, in the most part, is moderate in his writing. I highly recommend this book, which is a great treasure of history, because the premise, One God and One Lord, is true, even though it has some errors.]

You will easily learn from the Old Testament the kind of deity that is in Jesus Christ, if you pay close attention to which Hebrew word is used when Christ is called God. You will also be able to comprehend the clear difference between the proper name of God the Father, who alone is God, by himself and by nature (Galatians 4),^a and the other names that are given to Christ, who is God by means of grace or a nature freely given by the Father. For when Thomas called Jesus his Lord and his *God*, he did not say *Jehovah*, but *Adonai* [Lord] and *Elohim* [God]! Similarly, speaking of the Son of God in Hebrews 1, the Apostle says *Elohim*. According to the meaning of the word *Elohim*, to say that he became God over us means nothing A other than that he became *our Lord, our king, and our judge*.

Indeed, the name *Elohim* signifies the power and superiority of God. Therefore, the name God is truly appropriate to Christ, since the Father anointed him king and Lord, and gave him rule over all creatures. For kingship and all judgment and all power in heaven and on earth was bestowed on him. Did not scripture also call King Cyrus, who was a type of the true Christ (that is, the King), *Elohim*, the God of Israel (Isaiah 45): "*I will give you hidden treasures, he said, that you may know that I am the God who View your name, the God of Israel.*" Similarly, God made Moses a God to Pharaoh because of the power and superiority which God had given him over the Pharaoh. Therefore, the name God is far

¹ 0430 מֵיְהוָה 'elohiym el-o-heem' 1) (plural) 1a) rulers, judges 1b) divine ones 1c) angels 1d) gods' *elohim*. God, gods, judges, angels (Generally, agreement is found in ASV and RSV, however in some passages where the meaning is not clear they differ from KJV: #Ex 31:6, where RSV has 'God' but KJV 'the judges'; similarly in #Ex 22:28 [H 27] where RSV has 'God' but KJV 'the gods' or as a margin 'judges.'). This word, which is generally viewed as the plural of 'eloah is found far more frequently in Scripture than either 'el or 'eloah for the true God. The plural ending is usually described as a plural of majesty and not intended as a true plural when used of God. This is seen in the fact that the noun 'elohim is consistently used with singular verb forms and with adjectives and pronouns in the singular.

more suited to the Son, Jesus Christ, whom the Father raised above all creatures, and filled with all power, divinity, grace, and blessedness. For this reason Isaiah says: *He will called Mighty God and Emmanuel, which means, God with us.*

The theologians, however, who think so impiously and unjustly about the human nature of Christ, do not consider that this, which was folly to Gentiles and a stumbling-block to Jews, was the most excellent of all the works God performed: that God wished to bring forth from his Word a human being as his Son — visible, capable of suffering, and subject to death — to raise him up above all creatures, and, in all glory and sublimity, place him at his right hand, making all things subject to him. Christ the consummation and fulfillment of all the works and plans of God the Father. He was our visible Lord and God, through whom and by whom all things were made.

However, even this is insufficient for a complete knowledge of Christ. For this you must come to understand the mysteries of the Word, and become acquainted with that most holy man Jesus, the Son of God. Before all the ages and from eternity, he was already God with God the Father, to whom all things are eternally present. In the unchanging light of his eternity, he sees and arranges, as already accomplished, those things which, among us in time, were, are, or will be. A thousand years with him are but as an outward day when it is past. Thus, the Word, or Logos, of God, which was Christ, predestined before all creation, was with the Father, as John relates, and was "true God of true God." We will discuss this at greater length below.

Thus in Hebrews 1 the Apostle calls Christ Elohim. Indeed, according to tradition, Solomon is also called Elohim (this passage is taken from Psalm 44). The Apostle does not, however, place the force of his argument on the word Elohim, but on the statement that his throne and kingdom are for ever and ever. For, from the word Elohim alone, he could not have proved Christ greater than other rulers of the earth or angels, since even they are called by the same name and are called gods [Elohim] by the Prophet! Similarly, where it says, Let all the angels worship him or You have made him a little lower than the angels, in both places Elohim is used.

Therefore, I believe that you can now see more clearly how, in so serious and fundamental a matter, ignorance of Hebrew phraseology has so wildly deceived Greek philosophers that they have not been able to distinguish the different names for divinity, both Father and Son. They say that they think of persons and subsistences as one and the same God, thereby confusing the nature and substance of the Father and the Son. However this is contrary to the meaning of the Apostle, who, in Hebrews 1, says clearly that the Son is the splendor of the glory and the very stamp of the substance of God. Also, in Colossians 1, he calls the Son the visible image of the invisible God.

Thus, in order to convey the difference between Jesus Christ and other, partial gods, since

he is the Son and heir, and, by a nature freely given, God, Christ is also called God of all the earth, great God, true God, mighty God, wonderful, and blessed above all things.

Due to the dearth of divine names in Greek, the apostles could only express divinity to the Greeks by using the word *theos* [god]. Nevertheless, when speaking of Christ, they use this word very rarely, almost always employing the word *kyrios* [Lord]. For in Scripture the Father is called God, and the Son, Lord. All this needs to be considered carefully. For the Greeks would not have caused us so much trouble if they had learned Hebrew.

Now, therefore, you can clearly judge the source of the Greeks' pernicious error about the triad or three hypostases forming one God — and also their creating three separate persons out of one God, not to mention *communicatio idiomatum*,² two natures and two sons, connotative supposita,³ aggregates, and similar nonsense, about which the apostles never gave a thought, and concerning which there is not even a single jot in all of scripture. Indeed they are ignorant of the meaning of the words for God and of the various divine names in the Hebrew language. Because they see that in scripture Christ is sometimes called God — although there is only one God that we should worship — they are compelled to establish three persons or hypostases in one deity and to maintain that one of them is Christ.

A greater consequence is that they are compelled make two Christs and two sons, one of whom is the Son of God and the other the Son of man, one visible and capable of suffering, the other invisible and incapable of suffering. Furthermore when scripture calls Christ, "God: they understand this to mean an invisible being who is not a man, thus denying that Jesus Christ, our redeemer and the head of the church," the one mediator between God and men, is the Son of God and God, when, nevertheless, the whole of scripture says and expresses nothing more clearly. Is it perhaps because they are afraid of creating two gods, even though, with their triad, they are in effect foisting on us three gods, equal in nature? And yet, contrary to all reason, they accept that one god can command the other, and that one can be sent forth by the other, not understanding that dominance and superiority do not happen among equals, that decisive action does not arise from an equality of power, and that, in combination, equals would impede one another. Because of this, one must admit that all things originate in one pure and simple God, who is the Father, by virtue of his own will the founder of all that is, who willingly begot the Son. All things obey and are subject to him, even the Son himself, as the Apostle plainly testifies (Corinthians 8 and 15).

² In Christ there is one person with two natures, the human and the Divine. In ordinary language all the properties of a subject are predicated of its person; consequently the properties of Christ's two natures must be predicated of his one person, since they have only one subject of predication. He Who is the Word of God on account of His eternal generation is also the subject of human properties; and He Who is the man Christ on account of having assumed human nature is the subject of Divine. Christ is God; God is man. (New Advent *Communicatio Idiomatum*)

³ In usage: "But according to those who suppose two persons or two hypostases or two supposita in Christ, no reason prevents Christ being called the adopted Son of God" (New Advent).

Observe, therefore, how a small error at the outset of a teaching or doctrine grows more powerful until it leads to a great many blasphemies and impieties. How much better and more faithful would it have been if they had propounded, based on scripture, a pure and simple faith in only one God, the Father, who alone is God by nature, infinite, invisible, and unchanging, God of all gods, who dwells in inaccessible light; and in the true and natural Son of this one God, the Lord Jesus Christ crucified, the Word of God incarnate, made visible and capable of suffering, visible God from invisible God, who was required to suffer in order to fulfill every plan, decree, and purpose of the Father, and to achieve his glory to the fullest degree in triumphant victory over all his enemies. This is our true God, the beloved Son, in whom the Father was well pleased, and on whom he bestowed as much grace, might, spirit, power, honor, and divinity, as the most omnipotent Father is capable of giving and conveying to his most loved and only begotten Son, so that all our hope and faith might be in him, and to him let there be all praise, honor, glory, and blessing for ever and ever. Amen!

This is the true, pure, simple and genuine Christian doctrine. This is the unadulterated proclamation of the holy gospel set forth most plainly in all of scripture, in both the Old and New Testaments. The prophets did not proclaim, the apostles did not preach, nor did the martyrs preserve with their blood any faith or doctrine other than this. You, indeed, pious and faithful Christian, you who follow the authority of no man and swear by the words of none, but seek rather to obey the simplicity of spirit of genuine scripture, weigh carefully, I beseech you, and, setting aside all outside influence, diligently consider in your heart which doctrine of religion seems to you truer, purer, more authentic, clearer, and more in line with the gospel of Christ: the one which I have just set forth, about one God the Father and the only Son of that same God, the Lord Jesus Christ crucified, or the one which Greekish philosophy — utterly unknown to the Hebrews—has for so long been forced upon you, in so many volumes and commentaries, about three persons or hypostases, two natures and two sons, the *communicatio idiomatum* and *connotative supposita*, without which they say that the mysteries of Christ cannot be rightly understood nor the gospel soundly proclaimed.

O Christians, how miserable you are, if you are compelled to accept an empty and deceitful Greek philosophy—which the Hebrews, Scythians, Turks, and infidels of every kind rightfully ridicule and mock — in place of the genuine faith, the holy utterances of God, and the untainted gospel of Jesus Christ. Let the philosophers produce, from anywhere in scripture, even a single speck of support for their sophistical pronouncements. Did Paul, the chosen vessel, who left out nothing pertaining to the revelation of the true faith and the Christian religion, at any time even so much as mention hypostases or natures, or such a thing as *communicatio idiomatum*? He was totally unfamiliar with such things. And if Paul was unfamiliar with them, who, of all mankind, knew about them? See how rapidly this entire chimera,⁴ which no one has ever been able to understand or explain, evaporates!

⁴ Chimera : a monster from Greek mythology that breathes fire and has a lion's head, a goat's body, and a snake's tail :

If a spirit eager for the gospel truth, wishing to disentangle the mystery — or, more correctly, the philosophy — of this triad, asks some eminent person to explain it to him, he immediately hears that he should inquire no further about so arcane and abstruse a mystery. Augustine spent nearly his entire life investigating and trying to explain the triad but was unable to make any progress. For that reason, we are told that we must restrain our intellects and not trouble ourselves any more about the matter, lest we should be overcome by vainglory. Instead, we are instructed simply to follow the faith of those holy fathers and theologians who have handed these things down to us, and not to pursue any further investigation.

What a ridiculous kind of piety! And why have these eminent persons not also sought out the truth, and more carefully investigated the teachings of the church fathers on prayer, purgatory, the Eucharist, free will, the invocation of the saints, and other traditions of this kind? If only the fathers had told the truth! For then the Christian religion would never have needed to have written anything about or investigated this metaphysical triad. Did not Paul do well to forewarn Christ's faithful not to pay heed to philosophy or to listen to strange new expressions, nor to permit themselves to become entangled and led astray by such sophisticated nonsense? Unfortunately, however, shortly thereafter, this is precisely what occurred, to the grave detriment of the entire Christian religion.

Tell me how Christianity has ever grown or been strengthened by the preaching of such sophistries. Which Jews have they won over to Christ, during the last thousand years or more? The apostles, however, converted many thousands of Jews in one day by their straightforward preaching of one God the Father and his only begotten son, Christ Jesus crucified. The number of believers, from among the Gentiles as well as the Jews, daily multiplied and increased wondrously! However, they were not then preaching about three gods or hypostases, nor about two sons. What Jew could ever have believed in such triplication of divinities — or, in truth, this Cerberus — or could believe in it now? For the Jews realize that they ought to worship, in the simplest way, only one eternal, invisible God, the creator of all things. Thus they rightfully throw this multiplicity of gods in our faces and scoff at it. For then the Jews heard from the apostles about only one God, the Father, and only one Son of God, Jesus Christ, who died for the redemption of Israel and was resurrected and glorified. They easily understood this faith, and would also understand it now and be converted, if today's theologians proclaimed that faith and religion as the apostles did, most simply and purely, in the early days. Nor do I doubt that all the heresies and contentions among Christians would cease if they had a correct understanding of Christ, the Son of God.

But wondrous are the judgments of God the Most High. He did not allow so great an error to spread for no reason. (And there are other errors, by no means trivial, which also persist

in the church to this day.) Otherwise, we would not see the Mohammedan sect, so impious, false, and abominable, prowling about and gaining strength throughout the world. For only God and the palpable Word of God are true; every man is false God has confined everyone in error and sin, so that all may be judged by the Son, who alone is the Truth of the Father. The wise have become fools, because they follow their own contrivances, seeking their own glory, not the glory of God. Thus they are found to be like chaff without wheat.

I will now decisively turn the argument about a plurality of gods against the theologians. They set up three persons, distinct in being and number, while not granting, according to the meaning of the Latin word *persona* and that these persons are qualities or dispositions of one God. Instead, they say that there are three "subsistences," which, in Greek, they call "hypostases"—certainly an uncommon word, although one quite familiar to physicians.

But although they wish each of these persons or hypostases to be God, they nevertheless say there is only one God, one nature, and one substance. For they propose to us three distinct subsistences and want to persuade us that these are all a single substance. I do not see from what source they have derived this subtle distinction between substance and subsistence. They likewise presume three entities or three existing beings, and say that they are one nature, so that, in effect, they want one to be three and three, one. What mind could understand this?

They want "God," which is a substantive and appellative noun, to be predicated equally of three substances, distinct in being and number. Let us see if they can vanquish this chimera! As Lorenzo Valla, a man preeminent in all disciplines, especially in sacred literature, has also rightly judged, they have in effect set up three gods, equal in nature. In book 6 of *De Elegantia*, chapter 450, where he writes about *persona* and its proper meaning, he argues against Boethius, saying that those who wish persons to be not qualities, but substances, should consider the possibility that they have thereby set up three gods, which is doubtless both impious and blasphemous.

Having, therefore, cast aside such sophistical inventions, let us examine those arguments that offer a solution. Let us say that Jesus Christ is God in the way that he revealed himself as God to the Jews who rebuked him. Let us not seek any other teacher or interpreter. When pressed about his divinity, he did not deny that he was God. But clearly, due to the generous gift of superabundant grace, Christ, unlike other earthly men and partial gods, is the Son, and, by his freely-given nature, God. This grace was given to him in a greater degree than it was given to all the others who were chosen by God and divinely illumined, whom scripture calls gods.

Besides, although Christ is God, he is nevertheless one with God the Father in a unity of spirit, will, and love. Thus, the plurality which theologians see is not there, but rather results if, as they would have it, there are two or three gods equal in nature. In that case, as

we have shown above, it would be impossible for one of them to be dispatched or sent forth by the other.

On the other hand, Christ is truly God because of the nature of the divinity shared with him by the Father. Thus, the nature of the divinity in Christ and the Father is one and the same. So, in effect, he can be called one God with the Father. For, no matter how you look at it, no greater unity can be found than that of the Father and the Son, even though they are distinct in being and nature. This is why Christ said, "I and the Father are one"; "who sees me sees also the Father:" "the Father is in me and I in the Father": "the Father who dwells in me, he does the works." This being the case, there is no cause for wonder, for since the Son is the visible image of the invisible Father, all the power and spirit of God the Father shines forth in the visible Son Jesus Christ, and thus we recognize, from his wondrous deeds and words, that the Father is in the Son. This is the unity about which scripture speaks. It does not, however, speak about a unity or identity of nature, as the theologians have erroneously taught.

Read and examine all of scripture. You will never find that "Son of God," naturally understood, means the same thing as God. Instead you will find that "Son of God" is always used for one who is distinct in being and nature from the eternal, invisible God. Of course, the Father alone in his very self and nature is the eternal, invisible, and unchanging God. He was never a Son, never begotten, never a man, never sent, never suffered, never seen, never dead and restored to life, but has ever remained the same, eternal, invisible, incomprehensible, and unchanging. It is a terrible blasphemy to say or think otherwise. However, the Son of God was truly a man, truly begotten, truly born, truly sent, truly seen and touched, truly suffered, died and was restored to life. To believe and to confess this is eternal life. Let those tritoites [tritheists], therefore, contrive for themselves as many gods, equal in nature, as they like. For us, as for Paul, one God is enough: the most high and invisible Father, from whom all things are and in whom we are, and one Lord Jesus Christ, our redeemer, through whom all things are and through whom we exist: who is the blessed Son forever.