

A DISCOURSE ON

THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

IN THREE SERMONS,
DELIVERED AT
MATTAPoisett, ROCHESTER, IN OCTOBER,
AND AT NEW-BEDFORD, NOVEMBER 22, 1835.

BY THOMAS ROBBINS,
Colleague Pastor of the Second Church in Rochester.

1836.

REV. THOMAS ROBBINS:

DEAR SIR, — At a meeting of the North Congregational Church, held in their vestry on the evening of the 3d inst., the undersigned were appointed a Committee to request a copy of your Sermons on the Trinity, recently delivered in their house, for publication. By complying with their wishes, we think you will aid the cause of Evangelical truth, and much oblige

Your Brethren in Christ,

P. G. SEABURY,

WILLIAM LITTLE,

ANDREW MACKIE,

JOHN F. EMERSON,

DAVID BRIGGS,

New-Bedford, December 4, 1835.

SERMON 1.

I. John, 5:7.

For there are Three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one.

THE doctrine of the Trinity is the fundamental principle of our holy religion. That mode of existence in the divine Being, revealed in the Scriptures, consisting of three persons in one God, all equal and eternal, is the foundation of redemption, and the source of all human hope. It is well known that these three divine persons are separately concerned in the work of redemption, — each performing a part which requires almighty power and wisdom, co-operating with perfect harmony in the same great design. It must then be safe to conclude, that without such a mode of operation, there never could have been any redemption for fallen man.

The doctrine of the Trinity is a doctrine of revealed religion only, — but is not, on that account, the less entitled to our faith and confidence. All the realities of a future state of being, the whole scheme of divine grace, whereby sinning man is reconciled to his Creator, many of the attributes of God, and all the obligations of the divine law, are learned from the Bible, and from that alone. When you say that the Trinity of God would never have been ascertained, or even conceived, by the human mind, you say no more than is true of the resurrection of the dead.

The doctrine of the Trinity is taught in a variety of ways in the sacred Scriptures, but in no case more distinctly than in the passage now before us. " There are three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one." The Trinity of God is uniformly connected with his Unity. While it is said, " there are three," it is added, " these three are one." I know of no way in which this great truth has been better expressed than that " there is one God existing in three persons." The Assembly's Catechism, one of the best summaries of revealed truth we have, says, " There are three persons in the godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory." The term Word, in the text, is the same as Son, or Christ; as appears from a like use of this term by the same apostle in the beginning of his gospel.

In a further illustration of this subject, we shall

1. Give some account of the doctrine of the Trinity, as it has been generally held in the church of God.
2. Present some of the evidences of its truth. And

3. Take notice of its practical tendency and effects.

1. We give a brief account of the doctrine. The Trinity of God was taught by our Lord in a manner as impressive as any we can conceive of. At his last interview with his disciples, just as he was rising to his Father, his countenance beaming with all the glory of Heaven, he gave them their high commission, " Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." All persons uniting with the church of Christ were received by baptism, which was a solemn act of worship, paid to God in three persons. This, then, must have been the first article of their faith. Baptism was administered to believers. What do they believe? In God, as exhibited in their baptism, as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

As the imperfections of Christians have appeared in every age, the church of God was not exempt from errors, even in the days of the apostles. Simon the sorcerer was much affected by the preaching of Philip, in Samaria, in common with others, and professed his faith in Christ, and was baptized. Afterwards, he fell into errors and evil conduct, and was told by the apostle Peter, " Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter; for thy heart is not right in the sight of God." He had made a false profession, —had never been truly born of God. He introduced errors in the church, and some were led astray. Others arose after him, of like character, who advocated errors of different kinds.

The apostle John survived the other apostles, and wrote his Gospel and his Epistles at an advanced age, near the close of the first century. And it is very apparent, from numerous passages in his writings, that he intended to refute these early heresies, in their incipient state. One of these opinions was, that the eternal Son of God, existing in Heaven, never was united to the man Jesus who was born of the virgin. It seems to be in reference to such a sentiment, that the apostle John says, " And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory." Other errors were introduced concerning the character of Christ, though they seem to have had but few advocates. The apostle John, under the guidance of divine wisdom, saw that the church needed something a little more explicit, on these and some other subjects, and wrote his Epistles and his Gospel, which completed the volume of divine Revelation. It is on this account, undoubtedly, that the writings of this apostle dwell more upon the character of Christ, particularly his divinity, and the distinct persons of the sacred Trinity, than those of either of the other apostles. And these facts afford a sufficient reason why the Trinity and Unity of God are stated more definitely in our text than in any other passage. And the doctrine is no more questionable on that account than the doctrine of the goodness of God, because no sound writer asserts it as simply and explicitly as John does, in this same Epistle, " God is love."

After the canon of Scripture was completed, the errors of which we have spoken received a check; and though they were revised in some degree in succeeding periods, they were firmly resisted, in common with other errors, by the faithful Christian fathers, Ignatius, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and others, and never acquired much influence. In the former part of the fourth century, after the pagan persecutions ceased, the Arian sentiments were advanced, which excited much attention in the eastern churches, and for awhile, seemed to threaten serious divisions. The Arians denied the doctrine of the Trinity, contending that Christ was inferior to the Father, and created by him; yet that he was the greatest of all created beings, that the world was made by him, and he will be its Judge.

To prevent a schism in the church, which this heresy seemed to threaten, the emperor Constantine, the first Christian emperor, convoked the Council of Nice, in the year 325, consisting of about 320 ministers, or bishops, from the various parts of the Roman empire, to consult and decide on several subjects, the most important of which was the opinions of Arius. This may be considered the most solemn and dignified ecclesiastical council that has been assembled since the days of the apostles. Their opinions and decisions are entitled to more confidence than those of any other. They were tried men, who had "hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." They had passed through the Diocletian persecution, the most severe ever endured by the Christian church. It raged twelve years in most parts of the empire, and ceased about thirteen years before the assembling of this council. The most of these pastors, undoubtedly, had been personal sufferers in this distressing season: it is stated in history that many of them had but one eye, the other having been put out, as was often done, by persecutors. They had risked their all, and probably had lost everything but life, for the love of Christ, and the confession of his truth. We should love to see such men, and hear their views of the gospel salvation. Happily, we have them.

These faithful witnesses for Christ must have known what his gospel was, what were the sentiments of the early fathers, and what the doctrines of the church had been from the beginning. They were not much more distant from apostolic men, who had been taught by the apostles themselves, than we are from the fathers of New-England. And I presume they were as well acquainted with their religious sentiments, as we are with the sentiments of the New-England fathers. And, in times of persecution, these confessors could have had no safety only in a faithful adherence to the pure gospel of Christ Jesus. They knew they had the promise of his constant presence and protection, while they were faithful to him, in a simple testimony of his truth, but in no other way. They also knew what kind of testimony had carried the confessors through former persecutions, and in what they could trust. I only add, that the fathers of the Nicene Council were about the same distance from the death of Christ and the early preaching of his-apostles, that we are from the active labors of Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, Beza, Cranmer, Knox, and others of the venerable Reformers. We do not expect future ages to say that we are unacquainted with the doctrines Of the Reformation.

I would now observe that this Council of Nice, with great deliberation and solemnity, decided that the opinions of Arius were wrong, and that the Son of God was equal and one with the Father. But two members of the whole Council, Secundus, Bishop of Ptolemais in Egypt, and Theonas, Bishop of Marmonica in Libya, dissented from the decision, and were condemned as supporters of heresy. The Council adopted a brief creed, written with great precision, which has been carefully preserved; and their proceedings and decision were published among all the churches of the empire. This was the first General Council of the Christian Church held after the days of the Apostles, and no one since is entitled to greater, and, in my view, not to equal confidence. From that time to this, the doctrine of the Trinity has been the settled doctrine of the Church. The Arian sentiments continued to have a few advocates, and at times they were something numerous; and there have been some who have denied the doctrine of the Trinity in almost every age. But Mr. Chillingworth, one of the ablest theological writers of the British nation, says that those who have denied the doctrine of the Trinity have never been but as an handful in the Christian church.

In saying that the doctrine of the Trinity has been the settled doctrine of the Church from the time of the Nicene Council, we speak in reference to that public decision; not intimating that this was not the general faith of Christians before that transaction; for I consider it certain that it was. The very object of the Council was to decide what was the testimony of the Scriptures on this subject, and what was and had been the sentiment of Christian churches, and especially of the apostolic fathers. Their great unanimity, when so numerous, and from all parts of the Christian world, affords the highest evidence of the sentiment of the Church on this doctrine. The Council was held in the province of the Bythinia, in Asia Minor, and the draft of the creed was by Nosins, bishop of Cordova in Spain. With regard to the previous faith of the Church on the doctrine of the Trinity, we have direct and full evidence. It is admitted on all hands, I believe, that the Trinity and Unity of God are asserted in our text as clearly as they can be. And the only way in which this testimony of the apostle John is evaded, at least so far as I know, is by denying the validity of the text. It is said by some that these words are not genuine; that they are not truly the words of the inspired apostle, but have been added to the Epistle since his time. I fully believe this opinion to be erroneous; the arguments in favor of the genuineness of the passage, are, to my mind, entirely conclusive. The first is —it stands in our Bible. It must require the most daring presumption to add anything to the sacred Scriptures, after the solemn curse denounced against anyone that should presume to add to or take from the volume of God, at the close of Revelation. There have always been different sects in the Christian world, all watchful of each other, and all jealous of the purity and integrity of the Scriptures, that a corruption of this kind would hardly have been possible, without being known and exposed. A specimen of this feeling has been exhibited lately. A translation of the Scriptures, by some of the missionaries of the east in a Pagan language of Asia, has been recently made, with an attempt to give a sectarian turn to certain passages; and the national Bible Societies of Great Britain and the United States promptly resolved to give no further assistance to the circulation of that translation. I know of no reason to conclude that Christians, in past ages, were less jealous of the integrity of the Scriptures than those of our time.

All copies of the Bible, and all other books, were preserved in writing, till the time of the invention of printing, — a little less than 400 years ago. The writing of the ancients was usually done with skill and accuracy, and most commonly on durable materials. Soon after printing came into use, the Bible was printed in the original languages, the Hebrew and the Greek, and from these was translated into the modern languages of Europe. Great pains were taken to publish the sacred books in the most accurate manner, by some of the best men and first scholars of the age; and it was an age of critical investigation and laborious study. And there have been very few editions of the New Testament, printed in any language, with the omission .of this text. The question of its genuineness has been discussed with great ability and the most elaborate search, for a long period; and the whole Christian world, with the exception of but a small portion at any time, have received it as of the same authority as any other part of the writings of this apostle. We have a splendid Greek Testament, printed in Paris in the year 1550, by Robert Stephens, one of the most learned Greek scholars of modern Europe, who labored for years to make this work as perfect as possible; and it contains this verse just as we have it in our Bibles.

I will now adduce some evidence of another kind. Thascius Cyprian, the illustrious bishop of Carthage, was beheaded, as a martyr in a time of persecution, in the year 258. His works are well preserved. In his Treatise on the Unity of the Church, he says, " Our blessed Lord hath given us in this matter a proper caution, where he saith, He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathered not with me scattered abroad. Our Savior hath said, I and my Father are one. And again it is written of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that these three are one." On this extract, I would observe that the author quotes different passages of Scripture just as we have them now, and when he comes to this last, it is also the same. We notice, also, he says, " It is written of the Father," etc.; — precisely the manner in which Christ and his apostles quote the Scriptures of the Old Testament. In this treatise of Cyprian, a great number of passages of Scripture are quoted, or plainly referred to, in no less than twenty-seven books of the Bible, and all according to the present reading; — showing that the Bible was the same 1600 years ago that it is now. I mention these things, my brethren, not that you have any doubts on this subject, but because it is a favorite course of error, at the present day, to call in question the purity and validity of the Holy Scriptures. And as we believe that all Scripture, as we now have it, is given by inspiration of God, it is proper for us to be ready always to give a reason of our faith. There is another passage of Cyprian, in his 73d Epistle, which says, " Of what God, I fain would ask?— the Creator of all things? But it could not be he, since he believes not in him, Of Christ, then? — but he cannot become his temple, who denies him to be God. Or of the Holy Ghost? — but, since these three are one, how can the Holy Ghost be at peace with him who is an enemy either to the Father or the Son? " Here is another quotation of the passage in question, and also the author's views of the equality and unity of the three persons in the Trinity.

Tertullian, another of the distinguished Christian fathers, presented his *Apology for the Christian Faith* to the Roman emperor about the year of Christ 200. His writings are very valuable. He speaks distinctly of the Trinity of the godhead in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. He says, also, "The Father and the Son, centering in the Comforter, make three, subsisting one of the other, which three are one: possessing a unity of substance, but not singular in number." I think it evident that the author, in this passage, refers to the word of our text; or if it does not, he gives us his views of the doctrine of the Trinity much in the same manner as we express it now. He wrote about 100 years after the death of the apostle John, and must have been perfectly familiar with his writings.

Victor, the African, an ecclesiastical historian of the sixth century, in his history of the Vandalic persecution, informs us that a Confession of Faith was presented to Hunneric, king of the Vandals, by Eugenius, bishop of Carthage, with other bishops of the African Church, in the year 484, in which they say, "We teach the one God, as existing in the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, as it is confirmed by the Evangelist John. For he says there are three who bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one." This solemn declaration was made by the African Church, with Arians about them, who would merely have exposed them if they had referred to any Scripture of doubtful authority.

We have thus said, I presume, all that is necessary to confirm the words of the text, as a genuine and valid part of divine truth, and that it was so understood by the primitive Church. If this be true, they must have believed in one God existing in three persons, for that doctrine appears to be declared in this passage as fully as it can be. And we thus see the reason why the authenticity of this passage has been called in question; because there have always been some disposed to deny the doctrine of the Trinity; and as it cannot be explained away, it must be erased from the sacred volume. Dr. Hammond, in his notes on this passage, makes a similar observation.

Since the delivery of this Discourse, a tract has been handed me, entitled, "Outline of the Testimony of Scripture against the Trinity. By Henry Ware, Jr." The author quotes the passage I have now examined, and remarks upon it as follows. "1 John, 5: 7. There are three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one. This verse, everybody knows, was not written by St. John, but has been added to this epistle since his day." And a little after, "It is rejected by all impartial scholars of every denomination, who have inquired concerning it." A very bold assertion to which, it would not be necessary to make any reply, were it not for the deserved reputation of the writer. The learned Professor will probably admit that no editions of the Greek Testament have been published with as much learning and labor as those of Robert Stephens and John Mill. Both have this passage in its place. The work of Dr. Mill was the result of indefatigable study for thirty years, aided by the learning and libraries of Oxford. It is evident that he bestowed more attention upon this passage than any other; and he comes to a firm conclusion in favor of its divine authority. After giving a series of authorities in its favor, he says, "Atquetrie quidem pedem figimus; here we set our foot." I refer to the folio editions, Stephens's, Paris, 1550; Mill's, Leipsic, 1723. Dr. Hammond, one of our ablest expositors on the New Testament, answers the objections made to the genuineness of this verse, after a critical examination, and observes, among other things, "The ordinary reading path the authority of many ancient, and all but one, printed copies." The Professor, having disposed of this text, says, "There are, therefore, only two texts which formally name the Father, Son, and Spirit, in connection with each other." One is in the form of Baptism, Matt. 28: 19; the other, the apostolic benediction, 2 Cor. 13: 14. I would commend to his attention, 1 Peter, 1: 2. "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."

It is hard to believe that intelligent men, who reject this passage of Scripture, are fully satisfied with what they do. They usually exhibit an excitement of feeling on the subject which hardly comports with a full conviction of the understanding. We scarcely find an instance of excited feeling in the whole works of Dr. Lardner, except when he declares against the validity of this text.

There is ample evidence, from ecclesiastical history, in addition to what has been adduced, that the doctrine of the Trinity belonged to the faith of the primitive Church, before the Council of Nice. Justin Martyr; one of the earliest and most distinguished of the ancient fathers, presented his first 'Apology for the Christians' to the emperor Antonius Pius, about the year 140. In this, he speaks of God, the Father of righteousness, — and adds, "Him, and the Son coming from him, — and the prophetic Spirit, we worship and adore." The testimony of Tertullian we have already noticed. Clement, of Alexandria, a cotemporary of Tertullian, concludes his work, entitled, *The Instructor*, with the usual doxology, ascribing praise and thanksgiving to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria, in the middle of the third century, who suffered severely in different periods of persecution, says much in his writings on this subject. He observes, "We hold the indivisible Unity of God as extended to a Trinity, and the Trinity limited to a Unity." Speaking of the Son, he refers to Prov. 8: 30. "I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." It is said by the wise men in the same connection, "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was." The same ancient writer, speaking of the third person, the Holy Ghost, quotes John 4: 24; "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

It will not be necessary to refer you to other authorities, though it might easily be done, to show that the doctrine of the Trinity was the uniform doctrine of the church previous to the Council of Nice. Indeed, it is scarcely possible for us to have any stronger proof of the doctrine of the Christian Church at that time, and for the previous period up to the ascension of Christ, than the result of that Council, pronounced with such great unanimity; since that event, it will be admitted, by all acquainted with ecclesiastical history, to have been, with few exceptions, the settled faith of the Christian world. It has indeed had its opposers, in most ages of the church, for the church

is never without its errors: yet, compared with the friends and advocates of this doctrine, they have ever been few. The learned Dr. Waterland said, more than a century ago, " The Divinity of our blessed Lord has been the work of offence to the disputers of this world, now for 1600 years, always attached by some or other in every age, and always triumphant." There are few of the important doctrines of our religion that have been denied by so small a portion of the Christian world as that of the Trinity of God. It has ever been the doctrine of the Catholic church. With all their errors, they have uniformly professed to worship the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, as one God.

I would now speak of later times. In the Middle Ages, when the errors and corruptions of the Papal power had infected the greater part of Europe, there were a few Churches in the northern part of Italy, mostly confined among the mountains of the Alps, who still retained the faith and manners of the primitive times. They were poor, of great simplicity of manners, had little intercourse with the surrounding countries, had been deemed hardly worthy the attention of leaders of armies, and had continued from age to age in the modes of life received from their fathers. Their remote ancestors had received the religion of the gospel in the purer ages of the Church, before it was connected with the institutions of state, and the dangerous alliances of wealth and ambition: and, in this form, essentially, it had been long preserved. This people, commonly called the Waldenses, are generally considered that interesting portion of the church of Christ, described in the prophetic allegory of inimitable beauty, in the 12th chapter of Revelation, of a woman fled into the wilderness, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. We have, by the favor of providence, a confession of faith of these Churches, situated in the valleys of Piedmont, bearing date in the year 1120, — 400 years before the Reformation by Luther. The first article is, " We believe, and firmly do hold, all that is contained in the twelve articles called the Apostles' Creed, accounting for heresy whatsoever is disagreeing and not consonant thereunto. Article 2. We believe that there is one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Article 3. We acknowledge, for the holy and canonical Scripture, the Books of the Bible; that is to say, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus," etc., repeating all the books of the Old and New Testaments, just as they are in our Bible.

A few other articles follow. This Confession of Faith is an important document, as it shows what was the faith of the best portion of the Christian church, 700 years ago, and that it was, in all essential particulars, the same as ours at the present time. You perceive that the doctrine of the Trinity is here stated in the second article with a brief simplicity, which shows it to have been a sentiment altogether unquestioned. At the time of the Reformation, the churches of the Waldenses, or those of them that had survived the fire and sword of the terrible persecutions they had endured from the Romish church, having, literally, " wandered in deserts, and mountains, and dens, and eaves of the earth," of whom the world was not worthy, were cordially embraced by the reformers as Christian brethren.

The Confessions of Faith adopted by the churches of the Reformation, are so well known and so uniform on this great doctrine, that it would seem to be hardly necessary to refer to them at all. The first, and one that has been embraced by a greater portion of the Protestant church than any other, is that of the Lutheran churches, commonly called the Confession of Augsburg. The first article of this confession is, " Our churches, with one accord, teach that the decree of the council of Nice, concerning the unity of the divine essence, and concerning the three persons, is true, and ought to be confidently believed; viz. that there is one divine essence, which is called and is God; and yet, that there are three persons, who are of the same essence and power, and are co-eternal,— the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." The Confession of Augsburg was presented by the Protestants to the Emperor Charles V. and the German Diet, in the year 1530, and has been the standard of faith with all Lutheran churches ever since.

One of the best of the early Protestant churches was the Reformed Church of France. It adopted the doctrinal sentiments of Calvin, and, from about the year 1580 to 1685, was greatly prospered by the favor of Heaven, till it was broken up by the arbitrary edict of Louis XIV. forbidding the exercise of the reformed religion through his kingdom. A great portion of his best subjects were driven to other countries. The French Protestants, in all their changes, adhered inviolably to their early Confession of Faith, adopted by their first National Synod, in 1559. The sixth article is as follows: " The Holy Scripture teaches us that, in that one and simple Divine Being, (acknowledged in a preceding Article,) there be three persons subsisting,—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. These three persons are not confounded, but distinct, and yet not divided, but of one and the same essence, eternity, power, and equality." The Confession of Faith of the Church of England is contained in what is called their " Thirty-nine Articles." The first of these Articles is, "There is but one living and true God, everlasting, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness: the maker and preserver of all things, both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." The thirty-nine Articles were adopted in the reign of Edward VI. in 1552; and re-enacted, with some small alterations, ten years after, in the reign of Elizabeth, and are still the professed faith of the English Church. The Puritans, who separated from that church and settled New-England, never differed with the parent church in matters of faith, but only in ceremonies and rites.

I might refer you to the Confessions of the various Protestant Churches, formed in different countries at that period; but this is unnecessary, as in this great doctrine of the Trinity they are all agreed. The same observation is applicable to the churches established by the fathers of New-England. And I would add that all the other American colonies, which formed the United States at the era of our Independence, with the exception of Maryland, which was Catholic, early established regular Protestant Churches, all of which were agreed in the leading doctrines of the divine salvation. This was necessarily the case, because the Reformed Churches of England,

Scotland, Holland, France, from whence our ancestors migrated, were cordially united in the faith of the Gospel. I would add, the venerable reformers, and the fathers of New-England knew and felt that they were laying the foundations of Christian churches for ages to come. They felt their high responsibility; they were suffering persecution for their adherence to the faith of the gospel; they had great advantages for knowing what was the ancient faith of the Church of Christ; and they could have no safety, no confidence in the divine protection, only in an inviolable adherence to the faith once delivered unto the saints. On this faith they laid their foundation and built their hope, and we trust it will never be shaken. The long blessing of Heaven upon the work of their hands furnishes great evidence that they built on the chief Cornerstone, from which will arise a holy, durable fabric, to the perpetual praise of the everlasting Redeemer.

SERMON 2.

I. John, 5: 7.

For there are Three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one.

In the former sermon, we have endeavored to give a brief historic view of the doctrine of the Trinity, as it has been generally held in the Christian Church. This statement might easily be much extended; but we apprehend that what has been said will be deemed sufficient to show that this has ever been maintained as a fundamental Christian doctrine. It may be proper to observe that the authorities presented have been taken, generally, from original writers, and those of the best reputation. We have also been necessarily led to a discussion of the divine authority of the words of our text. In preaching from this text, I consider myself delivering divine truth as truly as from any other portion of the writings of this beloved apostle of Christ. We now proceed:

2. To present some of the evidences of the truth of the doctrine of the Trinity.

It is not to be admitted that a sentiment which has been held as a fundamental doctrine of the gospel, in all periods of the Church, has no claim to our confidence on that account. To deny this is to resist all the best feelings of the human heart. With regard to the objects of our faith, we have a right indeed to ask for additional evidence; but no reasonable person would demand the same amount of testimony in behalf of principles which had usually received the consent of mankind, as he would for mere novel opinions.

It has been stated that the doctrine of the Trinity is a doctrine of revealed religion, and could be learned from no other source. This is no evidence against its truth; for if it has pleased God, in the greatness of his mercy, to give to man a revelation of his will, we should expect it to contain truths not otherwise known; if it did not, it would be of little value. I think, however, we shall be able to adduce some evidence of the truth of this doctrine, aside from Scripture testimony; but that is our principal dependence.

The first thing we shall notice is, that God is often spoken of in the Scriptures in a plural form. The Hebrew word Elohim, most commonly used for God in the Old Testament, is plural, signifying Gods. At the same time, it is usually connected with verbs and adjectives in the singular, indicating that although there is a plurality of persons, there is but one God. A Jew in England, John Xeres, about 100 years ago, was converted to Christianity. He was a man of learning, and published an affectionate address to his Jewish brethren, assigning his reasons for renouncing their religion for that of the gospel of Christ. He says, " The word Elohim, in Gen. 1: 1, which is rendered God, is of the plural number, though annexed to a verb of the singular number, which demonstrates, as evidently as may be, that there are several persons partaking of the same divine nature and essence." The first verse in Genesis is, literally, " In the beginning, Gods created the Heaven and the earth." A like form of language is used in the same chapter: " And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." Gen. 3: 22,— " And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become like one of us." Gen. 11: 6, 7,— " And the Lord said, Let us go down, and there let us confound their language." Those who have not admitted the doctrine of the Trinity, have found great difficulty in disposing of these passages, which have ever been considered as expressing a plurality in the divine Being. Epiphanius, a learned expositor of the fourth century, says, on the passage " Let us make man in our image," " this is the language of God to his Word and only begotten, as all the faithful believe." He says, in the same connection, " Adam was formed by the hand of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost."

One attempt to reply to the argument from these passages in favor of the Trinity, is, that this may be considered as a consultation of God with angels. But where do we find that angels ever had any concern in the work of creation, or in the government of the world? Such a thought is expressly excluded by the solemn declaration of God himself. " Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or, being his counsellor, hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment? " The more common reply to these expressions of Scripture, at the present day, is that this is a dignified form of language adopted by Moses, after the manner of earthly monarchs, who often use the terms, we, our, us, when speaking of themselves alone. In reference to this statement, I would give some of the remarks of Bishop Patrick, — whose merits as an expositor no one will call in question, — on the first chapter of Genesis. After noticing the ancient suggestion of a consultation with angels, he says, " Others think God speaks after the manner of kings, who are wont to speak in the plural number when they declare their pleasure. But I take this to be a custom much later than the days of Moses; when they spoke as the king of Egypt doth to Joseph, I am Pharaoh; and see, I have set thee (not we have set thee,) over the land of Egypt; in which style the king of Persia writes, long after this, " I, Darius, make a decree." I do not perceive any reasonable objection to be made to this statement. How much more simple and satisfactory is the explanation of the passage in

Genesis, commonly given, that it is a solemn consultation of God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, than such vague conjectures as those we have noticed.

A few other passages will be referred to in which the name of God is given in a plural form. Gen. 35 7, — " And he built there an altar, —because there God appeared unto him." It would be, literally, " God, they appeared unto him." " Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth," is, literally, " Remember thy Creators." Isaiah, 54: 5, — " Thy Maker is thy husband, the Lord of hosts is his name." It is, " Thy Makers." These texts of Scripture seem to establish the fact that there is a plurality of persons in God, though they do not fix the number. Other divine testimonies evidently limit them to three: showing us that God exists in a threefold character. Some of these will be mentioned.

Ps. 33: 6,— " By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." The Word of the Lord, evidently, is Christ, for it is said, in Revelation, " his name is called, The Word of God; " and John says of the Word, in his gospel, " All things' were made by him." " The breath of his mouth," is the same as the spirit of his mouth, and is the Holy Spirit. The Latin and Greek translations both render the Hebrew word in this place, spirit. We have a like use of the term in Job: " The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life." And the prophet Ezekiel says, " Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." It seems this breath was a mighty agent, who could give life to the dead. Among expositors on the book of Psalms, we have no higher authority than Mollerus. He says, upon this passage, " The breath or spirit proceeding from God is of the substance of God, and is not a created, but a creating spirit." Thus, this passage of the Psalmist clearly teaches that the creation of the heavens and the earth was the joint operation of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The Arian sentiment that creation was the word of Christ alone, by a power delegated from the Father, is as unscriptural as that which ascribes it to the Father only. Isaiah, 48: 16, — " And now the Lord God and his Spirit hath sent me." The speaker is Christ; for he says, a little before, " Hearken unto me, O Jacob; I am the first, I also am the last; " an appellation often given to him. Now, he who is the first and the last, says, " The Lord God and his Spirit hath sent me." Christ is sent, and the Lord God, who is the Father and the Spirit conjointly, sent him. This text is well illustrated by another of the same prophet, where he speaks of the glory of the Lord: " Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, here am I, send me." God speaks plurally when he sends his message of truth to men.

The triune character of God appears in a very striking manner on the occasion of the Savior's baptism; an event which we should think very likely to make manifest the glory of the Lord.

Matt. 3: 16, 17, " And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water, and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo, a voice from Heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Here was God's eternal Son, now one with the Son of man; here was the divine Spirit resting upon him, and the Father, a witness of the whole scene, calling out of Heaven, and acknowledging him as his beloved Son.

The Savior's promise of the Comforter is a lively representation of the sacred Three. John, 14: 26, — " But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." The Comforter, he tells us in the same chapter, is the Spirit of truth; he is to come in his name, on his account, and by his authority; for he says, a little after, " I will send him unto you." And a special object of the coming of the Comforter is to bring to the remembrance of his disciples the truths which their Lord had taught them. And it is also said that the Comforter cometh from the Father. Thus the Holy Ghost, who is the God of truth, for none other can guide his people into all truth, cometh from the Father on account of the great sacrifice and intercession of Christ, to sanctify and save his people. The Holy Three are concerned in the work of salvation.

We would now recur to the vision of the throne of God, in the sixth chapter of Isaiah. The prophet says, " I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; " — a little after, " Woe is me! — for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." He surely saw the true God. The apostle John, speaking of Christ, says, (John 12: 41) — " These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory and spoke of him." When the prophet saw the glory of the Lord of hosts, it was the glory of Christ. But this is not all. The Lord of hosts, on this occasion, said to the prophet, " Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but under-stand not; make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes;" etc.

To this command of God to the prophet, the apostle Paul refers, and says, Acts 28: 25, " Well spoke the Holy Ghost by Esaias, the prophet, unto our fathers, saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing, ye shall hear and not understand; and seeing, ye shall see and not perceive: " repeating the whole of the same passage. Now it is certain that the Lord of hosts, who sat upon a throne, whose train filled the temple, who directed the prophet to say these things to that people, was the mighty God, even the Father. The apostle John says it was Christ that said it: Paul here says the Holy Ghost said it. What shall we say to these things, my brethren? What can we say to them? If Isaiah, and John, and Paul, spoke truly, by the inspiration of God, then the Father, the son, and the Holy Ghost are one. There is another thing to be noticed in this remarkable passage. We have no evidence from Scripture that God ever appeared in such magnificent glory to any of our race as he did to those illustrious saints, Isaiah and John. The prophet heard the holy beings around the throne saying, " Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." The beloved disciple had a like vision of

the throne of God, and heard the praises of the holy ones about the throne: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord, God, Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." The vision of the apostle confirms that of the prophet; and the praises which he heard equally confirm the existence of the same eternal Three in Jehovah. The term Holy, is repeated three times; God is there praised, 'in the second vision, in three appropriate terms, and then in the three periods of existence, the past, the present, and the future.

I would now direct the attention of my hearers to the appropriate and special blessing which God pronounces upon his Church. Numb. 6, — " And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless thee, and keep thee; the Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace." In each of these cases the name is Jehovah. The peculiar office of the per. sons of the Trinity is evidently expressed in these three blessings. Blessing and preservation are from the Father, light and grace are from the Son, reconciliation and peace are from the Holy Comforter. For a further illustration of this blessing of God upon the ancient church, we have only to look into the New Testament: 2 Cor. 13, — " The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all." It seems difficult to believe anything other than that the apostle Paul had the ancient blessing in his mind, and intended to give the same blessing of Jehovah the Lord of hosts upon the church under the new dispensation. And he clearly informs us of the meaning of the thrice repeated Jehovah. At any rate, the apostle Paul invokes the distinct and separate blessing of each of the sacred Three upon the Christian church, that Aaron was directed to do of the eternal Jehovah, upon the church of Israel. The blessing, at the close of the Epistle to the Ephesians, is, " Peace, and love, and grace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Others of these apostolic blessings are from Christ alone. No being, surely, can impart these blessings but God.

I have only to add on this part of the subject, the ordinance of Baptism. As the blessed Savior was leaving the 'world to ascend to his Father, from whence he came when he took upon him the seed of Abraham, he commanded his disciples and their successors to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; with an intimation that gall the children of men would ultimately be brought to acknowledge him as their Lord and Savior. And all who should believe on him through their word, and accept of his salvation, he directed them to baptize, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Baptism is a solemn act of divine worship, whereby the subject dedicates himself to God, giving his body and soul, for his whole future existence, to Him whose name is invoked, even the eternal Father, Son, and Spirit.

He owns these three divine persons as separate characters, and performing separate parts in his redemption. As a lost, helpless child, he goes to the Father for the keeping of his grace; as a guilty transgressor, who deserves to die, he looks to the sacrifice of Christ, whose blood cleansed from all sin; as one that is wholly sinful and all as-an unclean thing, he looks to the Holy Spirit, that he may be renewed and sanctified and saved. In his baptism, he professes his belief in each of their divine persons as they are exhibited in the work of redemption. He believes in the Father, who gave his Son to die for a lost world-, — in the Son, who is one with the Father and laid down his life for sinners in the eternal Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son by whom we are new-born for the kingdom of glory. If, in your baptism, you profess your belief in God the Father, you do it no less in God the Son, and no less in God the Spirit. And this is the everlasting Jehovah, you; God and portion forever.

We will now adduce a few testimonies from the Scriptures, in behalf of the divine character of each of these persons of the holy Trinity. On this point of the subject, we need say but little; for, if the sacred authorities that have been presented are sufficient to show that there is a plurality of persons in God, and that there are three, the proposition contained in the text is established. Still, by showing that each of these sacred three is spoken of in the Scriptures, repeatedly, as truly God, we obtain an- additional proof of the doctrine of the Trinity. That the Father is a distinct and appropriate name of God, is admitted by all, I believe, who receive the Bible as divine truth. We can have no better testimony to this truth than the Lord's prayer.

The evidence of Scripture that the Son, or the Word, as mentioned in the text, is truly God, is hardly less than that of the Father. " In the be-ginning was the Word, and the Word 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 anything made ' that was made. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld his glory, the "glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." John, in this beginning -of his gospel, evidently designs to imitate Moses in the beginning of Genesis. The one is about to give an account of the creation of this material system; the other of the new creation, redemption. A like form of language is very justly adopted, for both describe a work of the same hand, the eternal Word. John says, " All things were made by him." The first expression of these two sacred historians is noticeable. They look into duration, before it was " set out in certain periods," by the measures of time. "In the beginning, God "— there was God, in the infinite void, eternal and alone, amid the thick- darkness. "In the beginning " —the mind fixes upon the same scene, " was the Word," — with God, was God. 'A separate existence, but in every other respect the same. The Father says, or the Word says, " Let there be light; and there was light." The Spirit reaches forth his hand and garnishes the heavens. John says of this Word, by whom all things were made, he "was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory." The glory of his essential character, in his miracles, in his transfiguration, in his rising from the dead, and ascending to Heaven. If we will admit that Christ can be God, and that this truth can be told, it may safely be said that it is here done as fully and plainly as it can be.

A few other passages will be noticed very briefly. The prophet Isaiah says of his Savior, "For unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given; 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." The prophet Jeremiah says of him — "This is his name whereby he shall be called Jehovah, our righteousness." Ps. 78: 56, — "Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies." The apostle Paul, in reference to the same event, says, "Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents." 1 John 5: 20,— "We are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."

The various names of the true God are given to Christ by the sacred writers, divine attributes are ascribed to him without qualification, and he is worshipped. He was worshipped by his disciples, who, of all men, best knew his character; and the martyr Stephen, when he was dying, looked into the heavens, and, saw Jesus standing on the right hand of God; and prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit; — Lord, lay not this sin to their charge; and fell asleep." We have forgiveness from Christ. "Forgive one another, even as Christ forgave you." The Savior said, (John 10,) "I and my Father are one. Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I showed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makes thyself God." If they had misapprehended him, he certainly would have corrected their mistake. But, instead of that, he makes another appeal: "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not." He demanded no more faith than his works sustained. They knew that these proved him to possess divine power. If they were convinced, I see not why we should not be also by the same evidence. I would add, the question of the divinity of Christ may be safely rested on his last promise to his disciples. The occasion was unspeakably tender and solemn. He was taking leave of his weeping disciples, who had stood by him in every extremity; he was taking leave of his church on earth, while the portals of Heaven were thrown open, by adoring angels, for his return; the elements are hushed with listening silence,— "Go ye, and teach all nations, and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." His work on earth is done. Here is ubiquity; here is one that ever lives. The heralds of salvation are charged to convey his gospel in its divine simplicity, from Britain to Japan, from Magellan to Baffin's Bay, — to every inhabited island of the sea, — and to do this till the trump of the Archangel shall sound the knell of time; — and, with every individual, by night or by day, in every change, the glorified Savior is ever present. Is this so, my hearers? You know that it is. You need ask for no other evidence, the Lord Jesus is the Mighty God.

The proof from the word of God that the Holy Ghost is a distinct person in the Trinity, and a divine person, is probably not less full and decisive than that respecting the Son. The objection that has been generally made in reference to the Holy Ghost, by those who have disowned the doctrine of the Trinity, is not so much to his divinity as to his distinct personality. It is said that this is merely a single name for God; and that he is in no respect to be distinguished from the Father. But it will readily be perceived, by anyone that shall examine the subject, that the Lord Jesus speaks of the Spirit, in the character of a distinct being, as truly as of the Father. "Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter, into the kingdom of God." Being born of the Spirit, we become members of the kingdom of God. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit." I don't see how it can be spoken more plainly. He says in the same connection, "So is every one that is born of the Spirit." We must be born again, or we cannot be saved; and that Being of whom we are to be new-born, created anew, is the Holy Spirit. The Savior says, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things." He speaks of the Father, the Comforter, and himself, all possessing an equally separate and distinct personality. Acts 13: 2, — "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." Titus 3, — "He saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." These Scripture texts, presented without comment, I should think sufficient to establish the distinct personality of the Spirit; but the same will further appear from what may be said respecting his divine character. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit." All human power is insufficient to prepare a soul for the kingdom of God; that must be the work of the divine Spirit. As the church at Antioch were engaged in fasting, and worship, the Holy Ghost said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." Paul says, with regard to the sacred ministry, "No man taketh this honor unto himself but he that was called of God, as was Aaron." We have just seen that it was the Holy Ghost that called him to the ministry, and he certainly felt and knew that he was called of God.

Every true believer is born of the Spirit. And John says they are "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." And "whosoever is born of God overcomes the world. The Bible is the word of God. The apostle Paul says, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." Yet, he says in another epistle, "The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." "It was revealed unto Simeon by the Holy-Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ." When he took the infant Savior in his arms, he blessed God and said — Lord, now let thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word." He blesses God and praises the Lord, who had fulfilled his own promise, the promise he had received from the Holy ghost. Peter says to Ananias, "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost? — thou hast not lied unto man, but unto God." I have but one thing further. The Savior says, "Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies where with soever they shall blaspheme. But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost, hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation." It seems this is the highest offence that can be committed under the government of God; blaspheming against the Holy Ghost. Can there be a higher evidence of his divine character? I can conceive of none. On this alone, the question of the divinity of the Spirit may safely rest. It is a basis that can never be moved.

We have thus presented, by the divine favor, a variety of testimonies from the word of God, showing, as we think, conclusively, that there is a plurality of persons in the divine Being; that these are three, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; that he is often spoken of in the Scriptures in the character of these three persons in union; and we have adduced a number of passages which speak of the Son as truly God, and others which speak of the Spirit as truly God. On this subject we might multiply the inspired testimonies to almost any extent; but I trust enough has been offered to satisfy my hearers, that the sacred names of the Supreme Being are given to each of these divine persons, that the attributes and works of God belong to each, and that each one is made an object of religious worship. Stephen prayed to the Son, and Simeon prayed to the Spirit.

It is hardly necessary to add, that, of these three persons, there is but one God. Those who have not believed the doctrine, of the Trinity have often charged upon Trinitarians the belief of more than one God. This they have always denied, and have invariably spoken of these three sacred persons as being one God. This is the statement of our text. "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one." The Unity of God is the leading truth in every part of the sacred volume. This is expressed in the first commandment "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." And no less in the second, where the Lord says he is "a jealous God," and will have no other receive the worship and service which are due to him. Christ says to the tempter, "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Thus, while we acknowledge three distinct subsistence's, or persons, in the divine essence, we view them as one God. Three in one, and one in three. This is clearly the language of the sacred volume; and I know of no passage of Scripture inconsistent with this view of the character of Jehovah.

SERMON 3.

1. John, 5:7.

For there are Three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one.

Having presented some of the evidences of the truth of the doctrine of the Trinity found in the word of God, we shall now take notice of some additional arguments, drawn from facts with which all are familiar. We admit, as before stated, that the principal proof of this doctrine must be taken from divine Revelation; yet there are other considerations that deserve attention.

The first is, that this sentiment is in the world. It will be admitted on all hands, that the doctrine of the Trinity of God, Trinity in Unity, is a doctrine now professed, and fully believed, by the greater part of the Christian world; and that the same has been the fact, in most ages, if not all ages, of the church. We say with confidence, and believe that we prove it, that this has been the faith of every age. Now my brethren, how can this be? How came such a sentiment into existence? Who originated the thought of one God in three persons? I know of no power of the human mind which could have conjectured such a sentiment. I believe our minds never invent anything only by extending the relations of other things of which we have knowledge. Do we know of anything that could have led to such a conception as that we now contemplate? I think not. We usually reason from analogy. Columbus would say, "God has placed a great continent, amid the waters, on this side of the globe; he may have balanced it by another on the opposite side." Or, "He has here, in his benevolent wisdom, provided a residence for millions of rational beings. Would not the same goodness make the like provision for millions more? I think there must be a continent at the west? I will go and see." Now, can any reasoning of this kind be applied to the case before us? Are there any analogies in nature, in science, in human experience, that could lead the mind to the thought of a TRIUNE GOD? I have never heard of any that were supposed to be of that character.

If the doctrine of the Trinity be not true, it is the invention of man. Who invented it? If such were the fact, I think we must have had some knowledge of the inventor of a doctrine which has had such extraordinary currency among men. Yet no one appears. The most important improvements in science, and the arts, and in morals, have perpetuated the memory of their inventors, and are justly considered as meriting the gratitude of succeeding generations. History has preserved the name of Thales of Miletus, who lived five centuries before the Christian era, as the author of the celebrated moral precept, KNOW THYSELF. The respective systems of religion that have prevailed extensively in the world have preserved the names of their authors. And ecclesiastical history names the founders of most of the principal sects that have existed in the Church of Christ. Yet, here is a doctrine, held by the greater part of the Christian church, in every age, and by the purest and most enlightened part, and held as a fundamental principle in the religion of the gospel, and no one appears as its author or inventor.

I would say further, how could any man invent this doctrine? The astronomer conjectures that the planets are inhabited. Why? because our planet is inhabited. And whatever he fancies respecting those inhabitants, is deduced from what he knows of the animated beings on the earth. His thought goes no farther than to extend the relations of such objects as have an image already in his mind. All reasonable persons, so far as I know, believe the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead to be one that must have been taught from Heaven. It is not claimed to belong to natural religion, for it never has been known except from the Bible; and we conclude, justly, that it never could be. And why do we say that philosophy would never have discovered a truth so desirable and important? Because it has nothing to reason upon that could ever lead to it. All analogy is against such a thought. The vegetable dies and perishes; the animal does the same; philosophy must say, man dies in like manner. It can go no further. Solon weeps very justly, because he cannot recall his lost son; he can never see him again. Yet we believe that the grave and the sea will give up their dead, and all will live again;

because this Bible says it, and for no other reason. The great truth came from God, and never from the invention of man. The same is true, precisely, of the doctrine of the Trinity. It never vegetated in the human mind, and must have come from him who alone can fathom and make known the mysteries of his own existence. If this was told from God, it is true. The world have generally believed in the resurrection of the dead, in opposition to the deductions of philosophy, on the faith of the divine testimony. They believe in the Trinity in the same way. But you say that the idea of a Trinity is a mystery, incomprehensible. As the Lord lives, it is no greater mystery than the resurrection of the dead.

It has been much questioned whether the idea of a God would ever have been found among men, if it had not been taught from himself. Mr. Locke inclines to the opinion that it would not. And he investigated the powers of the human mind, we believe, more profoundly than any other man ever has. There is much reason to conclude that the world, by their own wisdom, would never have known their God, had they not been taught by himself. The parents of our race knew their Creator. He held converse with them familiar. And the single fact of his existence would never be wholly eradicated from the human mind by any subsequent changes in the condition of the world. Yet we need all that the Bible teaches to maintain among men correct views of the character of Jehovah. If, then, the existence of God might scarcely have been known in the world without divine revelation, much more should we conclude the same of the peculiar form of the divine existence of which we are speaking, three persons in one God. Still, this idea does exist, extensively, as one of our familiar moral truths. I cannot for myself see any defect in this reasoning. If the human mind would never have conceived such an idea of God as a threefold existence, when it is in fact so common, it must have been revealed from himself; and, of course, is true.

Another argument in favor of the doctrine of the Trinity, of much weight, in my mind, is the blessing, of God that has rested upon, the church of Christ. This has ever been, essentially, a Trinitarian Church. In some ages, those who dissented from this doctrine have been something numerous, but generally few, and compared with the whole number, always few. The doctrine of the Trinity must be believed or not believed. It is not a sentiment to which you can approximate, and believe it with certain modifications, like some others; but God must be contemplated as existing in a plurality of persons, as single only. There is no middle ground. Christ is, an untreated and eternal being, or a created being, dependent on God, like ourselves. The same may be said of the Spirit. Talk of Christ as being the greatest of created beings, greater than angels, existing before all worlds, and by delegated authority governing and judging the world, or whatever else you will, he is still a created being, dependent on God and accountable to him. He is merely a superior agent among the creatures of God; and there is no essential difference between him and Gabriel, or some individuals of our race.

Whether the Lord Jesus be the greatest of created beings, or merely a prophet, like Moses, David, Daniel, and others, according to the opinion of not a few at the present day, he is equally undeserving of our worship, or our trust as a Savior. In neither case can he forgive a sinner, or, by the sacrifice of his blood, save a soul from death. If the Son and the Spirit be not truly God, we have no right to pray to either, or praise them in our songs of worship; and if we depend on them for atonement for our sins, and the sanctification of our hearts, we are resting on a support which will inevitably fail us. There is no more immutable truth, on the whole face of Scripture, than that there is one God; and all worship paid to any other being is wrong, is idolatry. Now, my hearers, judge for yourselves; — have the greater part of the Christian world been engaged for ages in idolatrous worship? Have we and our fathers, whose ' souls are now with God, been constantly singing doxologies to gods that are no gods? Have we ever been worshipping the Son and the Holy Spirit whom God never authorized us to worship? If so, he must have been most highly offended; for he says, " I am the Lord, that is my name; and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images."

Now, it has pleased God, in his adorable love, ever to dwell with this church, that has, addressed its worship to Father, Son, and Spirit, to each and all, praying to each, trusting to each, to perform their respective parts in the salvation of sinners, in sustaining and advancing the great kingdom of redeeming grace. He has preserved this church amid all the devices of its enemies; he has kept it along in a world of sin and temptation, with the opposition of all unholy hearts; he has often rescued it from great degradation and error: — times, set times, to favor Zion, has he given to his people without number, reviving his work, blessing his ordinances, strengthening his churches, and filling the hearts of multitudes with joy and praise. Has this church been essentially wrong in relying on an Almighty Savior, and an Almighty Sanctifier, -Worshipping and praising them, as well as the Father, for these wonders of grace? Rather let us say, — We know in whom we have believed, and know that he is able to keep that which we have committed unto him, our immortal souls, and all the interests of Zion, until his coming and kingdom.

We say, further; — God is now employing this Church, in its perpetual praises to the Three-in-one for the conversion of the world to Christ. They are now changed, and are moving in the work, to go to nations scattered and peeled, to lands long lying in the shadow of death, and to the uttermost parts of the earth, and bring their thankful tribute to their Lord and Redeemer. This Bible is the great instrument by which this work is to be accomplished. This Bible, which says there are three that bear record in Heaven, and these three are one, now multiplying beyond all precedent, soon to be read and preached in most of the languages of the globe, going forth under the great commission and promise of Christ, with orders to gather the Gentile and the Jew, the Barbarian and Scythian, the bond and free, to write in anthems of praise to their ascended Redeemer. And the more the Church loves her Lord and Savior, the more will he, who has all power in heaven and in earth, give success to her enterprises, and answer her long prayer that his kingdom may come, and his will be done on earth as in Heaven. This church, going forth among the nations and tribes of the earth, to the Pagan, the

Mahometan, the Jew, the Catholic, will teach them to present their united praises " Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to whom be glory and dominion forever and ever."

3. We shall now offer some thoughts on the practical tendency and effects of the doctrine of the Trinity. It has been often said, that this is a mysterious, speculative doctrine, merely a matter of opinion, and, whether true or not, is of no practical benefit. It is sometimes thought, even by' pious minds, that these mysteries of the divine existence are above our comprehension and not profitable to be inculcated in public instruction. All that God has revealed concerning himself is for our instruction and benefit; we presume not to go any further. Deut. 29, — " Secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." Whatever is revealed, it seems, is for our practical benefit, that we may keep the divine law; but things unrevealed remain with God, and are not for our inquiry. The inspired apostle says, " All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, — for instruction in righteousness." I see not by what authority we can say that any part of revealed truth is unprofitable. But I would say, with regard to the mystery of the Trinity, the simple fact that there are three persons in one God, is as easy to be perceived as the self-existence of God, or his eternity; the manner of this existence we pretend not to know, and we understand self-existence and eternity no better. Thus, the doctrine of the Trinity is not to be discarded from our faith; and from public instruction, because it is a mystery, and in some respects above our comprehension, any more than other essential attributes of the divine Being. And another reason why we cannot keep this doctrine out of view, is, we do esteem it of great practical benefit. We would now observe,

1. The doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all human hope. Man is lost; he has departed from his God, is exposed to all the penalties of the divine law, and his only hope is in redemption. The Trinity of the divine existence is the source of redemption. There is nothing arbitrary in the government of God; nothing that is done merely because he wills it; but, in all his dispensations, there is a fitness, a reasonableness, an equity, which, so far as known, must ever be satisfactory to all intelligent beings. Now look back into the counsels of eternity before the world was. In a prospective period of duration, man appears, formed in the image of his Creator, holy and blessed; but he is fallen, he lies in ruins, seeking his highest good in the service of sin. What can be done? Is there a being in existence that can be his deliverer? Creation is completed, without any imperfection in the design, or defeat in the execution. The heavens and the earth were finished, and all was good; no new being was to be brought into existence. What can be done? Can man restore himself?

No. Can angels do it? No. Must the race of man perish forever? A voice is heard in Heaven, sweeter than the harps of adoring seraphs, " Lo, I come; — I delight to do thy will, O my God; thy law is within my heart." Thus spoke the Son; and this was enough: he could make atonement for transgression; his blood could cleanse from all sin. The Father soon proclaims the purpose of eternal love toward man; " Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom." How is this great work to be effected? The eternal Son will become man, take upon him the seed of Abraham, and make his soul an offering for sin.

Here is a being that is a Mediator between God. and man. Not by, appointment, but from the nature of his character. Son of God and Son of man, belonging to Heaven and earth, he is precisely suited to the work, and it must be the first desire of his heart to reconcile man to his God. He stands between a revolted transgressor and his offended God, so making peace. Being, in all respects, equal with God, all power is his, and however great the work, he is adequate to the performance. He knows all the claims of divine justice; and his humanity, elevated to a union with the Divinity, is of sufficient value to be offered in sacrifice for sin. Other sacrifice and offering could be of no avail; but the body prepared for him, without blemish and without spot, must be sufficient. As he is Son of man, he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities; he knows the weakness, the burdens, the temptations, of man; he knows -what to require of him, and what he can do, in coming to God. He is acquainted with the wickedness of the world, the obstinacy of the human heart, and the power of sin; he sees what is necessary to bring sinners to repentance, and to prepare his people for the mansions of heavenly rest. Such was the holy Emanuel, God with us; he was " God manifest in the flesh, — seen of angels, — believed on in the world, received up into glory." The Lord Jesus often exhibited this whole character while on earth. In the ship he slept, and being awaked he rose and rebuked the tempest; the winds and seas obey him. He wept at the grave of Lazarus, and then called his friend from the dead. He sat down weary at Jacob's well, and soon showed that he knew all hearts.

And now, my brethren, as here is a Being suited to the work of a Mediator between God and man, it is no less true that he is no more than adequate to the work; a being of less power, less wisdom, or compassion, could never have accomplished the great design; and a being differently constituted in any material features of character, would not have been suited to the end in view. It therefore follows, if God did not exist in a plurality of persons, if there were not an eternal Son, there could have been no redemption for man. It were easy to prove that the respective characteristics of the God-man, the Lord Jesus, to which we have alluded, must be necessary to the character of the Redeemer; but we shall not argue this at length. One thing, however, deserves a distinct notice. God, by being manifest in the flesh, has presented himself to the human mind, on a level with our conceptions, enabling us to form distinct and adequate ideas of the divine Being, which man could never do in any other way: Our minds seem incapable of any distinct conceptions of spiritual beings; and poor must have been our faith and obedience, if God had not exhibited himself to our senses. — When, therefore, we embody the Creator in our thoughts, which all persons do more or less, and which is countenanced by the language of Scripture, if the mind fixes upon Christ, the idea becomes perfectly rational and consistent.

The Holy Spirit is equally necessary in the economy of redemption with the Savior. The work of renewing and sanctifying the unholy heart, making the stubborn and rebellious the subjects of the grace of God, must be the work of almighty power, of an agent truly divine. Amid all the pollutions of sin, the sacrifice creates a clean heart. Before the Lord Jesus left his people on earth, he promised to send them the Comforter, who should guide them into all truth, and abide with them forever. He has revealed the word of truth, and he constantly gives it a holy efficacy in gathering lost sinners, from every generation of men to the kingdom of grace. The atonement of Christ alone cannot save a sinner; it opens a way for the pardon of the penitent: but the power of the Holy Spirit is necessary to bring the sold slave of sin to the mercy-seat of Christ.

In this plan of redemption, the sacred Three all uniting in the great design, we behold the glorious hope set before us. The arrangement is perfect; while the Father sits on the eternal throne, the Son is engaged as mediator and intercessor; the Spirit is enlightening and converting sinners, sustaining the church on earth, and preparing saints for Heaven. Here is hope for the guilty; here is ample encouragement for every effort for the salvation of sinners, or the prosperity of Zion.

2. The doctrine of the Trinity presents the divine Being to our view as a covenant God. One of the most interesting and grateful conceptions we can ever have of our great Creator. He has made known to us a glorious covenant, made in eternity, between the three persons of the godhead, in reference to man,—a covenant of peace, by which a transgressor is reconciled to his God. Ps. 89. "I have made a covenant with my chosen; I have sworn unto David my servant. Thy seed will I establish forever, and thy throne to all generations." Eph. 1 "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; having pre-destinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself." The Psalmist prays, "Have respect unto the covenant, for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty." Evidently referring to the divine covenant, by which the uttermost parts of the earth are given to Christ. The apostle says, "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, — according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began," This covenant, made in eternity, shows that Jehovah is a covenant God, that he can enter into stipulations and engagements.

From this, naturally proceeds the covenant of grace, the covenant between God and man. On account of the stipulations of the divine covenant, respecting our race, God can consistently enter into covenant with man, accepting of his imperfect affections and duties, his faith and obedience, as the condition on which he will bestow infinite blessings. Intimations of this covenant of grace were given, at a very early period, to the first transgressors, and, I trust, the first penitents. To Noah, this gracious covenant was revealed in a manner still more impressive. The faithful patriarch, with his household, came out of the ark, reared an altar, and offered his sacrifice. The Lord smelled a sweet savor, and gave them great promises, hanging his bow in the cloud, as the perpetual token of his covenant to all generations. At subsequent periods, this covenant of grace was often renewed to the people of God; and is now presented to all that hear the gospel of salvation. It is expressed in terms similar to the following. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you; and will be a Father unto you; and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." The hope of the believer does not rest merely on the mercy of God; he has the security of his covenant faithfulness, and he can never perish. This covenant of grace rests on the prior covenant of redemption, which stipulated in Heaven that the Son "should see the travail of his soul and be satisfied." The covenant of grace extends the same security to all the interests of the church of Christ that it affords to the individual believer. It has the pledge of the divine faithfulness that never can fail.

3. The doctrine of the Trinity affords the only clear and satisfactory view of the character of Christ. Of all beings in existence, no one is so important to man, no one sustains such interesting relations to the universe, as the Lord Jesus Christ: The babe of Bethlehem, the insulted prisoner at the bar of Pilate, the bleeding victim of Calvary, the Creator of all things, the final Judge, who will come from Heaven, and close the scenes of time, and fix the destinies of all for eternity. The endless happiness or misery of every person in this house is to be decided by him. What can be so important as to know who and what he is, how we can please him, how obtain his final approbation? There is one way, and one only, in which he appears consistent, intelligible, worthy of all confidence and attachment. This is, in the character of God-man. Viewed as Son of God, and Son of man, all the mystery is resolved. He called himself the Son of God, and Son of man, abundantly; the Father proclaimed to the world that he was his beloved Son, and we know that he was born of a woman, and lived and died as man; and therefore he must be both.

Do you say, this is a mystery that I cannot understand? Your child asks a natural and philosophic question, when he says to you, Who made God? He does not perceive how anything can exist without being made; and we understand it very little better. Yet we have no hesitation as to the fact. If the word of God, and our reason, and our senses, assure us that the Lord Jesus is God and man, it is not to be rejected because the truth is involved, in some degree, in that mystery which envelops all things pertaining to God and spiritual beings.

In the character of God-man, Christ is all that we want, as Savior and Redeemer. He can save the guiltiest sinner from death; he can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. We look upon him as one whom we can worship and trust, and, at the same time, as man's best friend. We adore him as being in Zion, while we are admitted as workers together with him, for the advancement of its holy interests.

Those who do not admit the doctrine of the Trinity, are usually unable to determine, with any degree of confidence, what the Savior is. The opinions concerning him are many, and very diverse, varying from the highest created being that we can conceive of, to that of a mere man like ourselves. It is commonly the case, under the influence of these opinions, that the mind is unsettled, and the belief frequently changes. Such, at least, has ever been the fact with those who do not consider Christ to be truly God, and authorizes the conclusion, that, after giving up the faith of the holy Trinity, there is no resting place; the wanderer may search long; he has lost the guidance of his Savior and the enlightening of the divine Comforter, and wanders, like Noah's dove, with no rest for the sole of her foot.

4. The doctrine of the Trinity is essential to give consistency to the holy Scriptures as the word of God. Without this, many parts of the Bible are unmeaning and inadmissible. Thus it is found that those who do not admit this doctrine, usually disown the integrity of the Scriptures. The words of our text are given up, as unauthentic, of course. This is done of necessity, and I believe this to have been the true cause of questioning their authenticity. When this work is begun, and our text is excluded from the Bible, a bold step is taken, and seldom does any one stop there. He soon doubts of other passages; he finds persons, and authors, and periodicals, that have gone as far as he wishes to; he can set aside almost any portion of the sacred volume that speaks a sentiment he disapproves. One rejects the words of our text; another concludes that several verses in the beginning of the gospel of John are not authentic; another goes further, and rejects the second Epistle of Peter; another adds the Epistle to the Hebrews; the next step is; the historical parts of the Old Testament, after the books of Moses, are mere common history; and finally, the book of Genesis was written by Moses, of his own accord, from such documents as he could collect, as an introduction to the divine law. — TAKE IT ALL. — If a part of my Bible is inspired, and a part not, and I have no means of determining which is from God, and which from man, I can have no confidence in any of it; take the whole. But, I beseech you, give me something in return that will tell me if there be an hereafter, that will tell me how my sins can be forgiven, how my guilty soul can be saved. O, my hearers, turn away from this wilderness of error, this bewildering region of conjecture, and " behold the LAMB OF God, that taketh away the sin of the world." Here you have no difficulty with your Bible; all is consistent, reasonable; and you find a Savior who is all that you want for time and eternity.

5. From the doctrine we have advocated in this long discourse, we may infer the security and certain triumphs of the kingdom of Christ. The most important part of his kingdom is his church on earth, soon to be transferred to the glories of Heaven. It has long been feeble, a little flock, burdened by its own imperfections, beset by enemies within and without; yet it is safe. Its foundation is the eternal covenant of the sacred Three in Heaven; the Lord Jesus must see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied; the church is put under his protection while he wields the scepter of Heaven and earth; the divine Comforter is ever engaged in gathering immortal souls from the domains of sin to this holy fold; the Father is perpetually receiving dying believers, amid the acclamations of angels, to the mansions of rest. The sun may fail in its course, the stars may fall from their stations;— but the Chariot of Salvation will roll on, till your heavenly Father's house is full. Is the path, as yet, straight and narrow, with here and there a traveler? Soon a highway shall be there, a way of holiness, thronged with countless numbers of the redeemed of the Lord. When a full experiment shall have been made of the reign of sin, when human wisdom and philosophy shall have utterly failed of raising man to the perfection of his nature, or giving peace to the world, the Lord Jesus will take the rule into his, own hands, and his saints shall possess the kingdom. Christian lands will be purified; Mahometan and Pagan nations will cast away their numerous forms of false religion to serve and adore the divine Nazarene; while the disinherited Jew, benighted with ages of unbelief, shall find, in the sufferer of Gethsemane, the long-sought, long-expected Messiah. The system of measures prescribed in the gospel for the salvation of the world is complete; no means essentially new will be requisite; all the friends of righteousness are called to the work, to hasten on this glorious consummation.

6. It is a fearful thing, with the light of the gospel before us, with the Bible in our hands, to be left to wrong and inadequate views of God. If he has 'given to man a Revelation, he has not left himself, his own character, without witness. He forbids the worship of any other being, but he claims it for himself, as he is presented in his word.

If the evidence of a Triune God, as given in this discourse, be conclusive, and I cannot but think it is, we are bound to worship the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, each as God. It is required " that all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father." And it is enjoined upon all the angels of God to worship him.

Shortly, will all stand before him. The heavens are again unfolded; the eternal Son descends the second time to our world; every eye shall behold his unveiled glories; no obscurity shall conceal the love and power of the holy Judge. They who have withheld from him divine honors, and they who have worshipped him, appear in his presence. There are found the ministers of Christ, who have been set to watch for souls; they who have guided their fellow-sinners in the right way, and they who have led them into darkness. There stand all who have enjoyed the faithful ministrations of divine truth, and all who have had the word of God for their teacher, to give account of their profiting. The books are opened; and according to the character formed in time, will be the immutable condition of eternity.

7. The holy Three in One will be the object of never-ending joy and praise. This form of divine existence brings the eternal Jehovah, eminently, within the apprehension of created intelligences. Finite beings, lost sinners, renewed and sanctified by divine grace, are prepared to enjoy the inexhaustible glories of the eternal God. The wonders of redemption will be ever in view, presenting a more full and glorious exhibition of the divine perfections, and bringing more felicity to the universe than all the other works of God. The Man of Calvary is on the throne; his kingdom, a multitude of ransomed souls, which no man can number, is complete, ascribing all to the

Lamb that was slain. Oh! for a humble part in that triple ascription of praise, thrice repeated, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.

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