

5. *Lastly*, Ye who are yet sinners, lying in your natural state of sin and misery, come unto God in Christ, and receive him as your God by faith, and so ye will be preserved from atheism. And ye who are believers in Christ, be often viewing God in your own experiences of him. Have you not often found God in the strengthening, reviving, and refreshing influences of his grace upon your souls? Have ye not had sweet manifestations of his love? Have you not had frequent refreshing tastes of his goodness, in pardoning your iniquities, hearing and answering your prayers, supplying your wants, and feasting your souls? The reviewing of such experiences will be a mighty preservative against atheism. Can you doubt of his being, when you have been so often revived, refreshed, and supported by him? The secret touches of God upon your hearts, and your inward converses with him, are to you a clearer evidence of the being of God, than all the works of nature.

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OF THE HOLY TRINITY.

1 JOHN v. 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 5th verse of this chapter, John lays down a fundamental article of the Christian faith, That Jesus is the Son of God; and brings in the witnesses of this truth, ver. 7. and 8. The text condescends on the divine heavenly witnesses. Where, consider,

1. Their number, *three*, viz. three persons.

2. Their names, *the Father, the Word*, that is, the Son, so called, because he reveals the Father's mind, and *the Holy Ghost*. And here is noted the order of their subsisting also.

3. The majesty and glory of these witnesses; they are *in heaven*, manifesting their glory there, and from it have borne record; which should make the inhabitants of the world to believe their testimony.

4. Their act: They *bear record* to this truth.

5. Their unity: They are *one*, one God; not only one in consent and agreement, but one thing, one substance, one essence.

The doctrine evidently arising from the words is,

DOCT. '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.'

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall,

I. Explain the terms mentioned in the doctrine, *the Godhead*, and *a person*.

II. Shew that there are three persons in the Godhead.

III. Prove that these three are distinct persons.

IV. Demonstrate that these three persons are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.

V. Evince the weight and importance of this article of the Christian faith.

VI. *Lastly*, Deduce a few inferences.

I. I am to explain the terms mentioned in the doctrine, *the Godhead*, and *a person*.

1. By *the Godhead* is meant the nature or essence of God, Acts xvii. 29, even as by *manhood* is understood the nature of man. Now the Godhead is but one, there being but one God.

2. A divine person, or a person in the Godhead, is the Godhead distinguished by personal properties, Heb. i. 3, where Christ the Son of God is called 'the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.' For consider the Godhead as the fountain or principle of the Deity, so it is the first person; consider it as begotten of the Father, it is the second; and as proceeding from the Father and the Son, it is the third person.

II. Our next business is to shew that there are three persons in the Godhead. This is confirmed by the scriptures both of the Old and New Testament.

1. The Old Testament plainly holds forth a plurality of persons in the Godhead, Gen. i. 26. 'God said, let us make man in our own image, after our likeness.' Chap. iii. 22. 'And the Lord God said, Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil.' This cannot be understood of angels: for man is said to be created after the image of God, but never after the image of angels; and the temptation was, 'Ye shall be as gods,' not as angels. Nor must it be conceived, that God speaks so after the manner of kings; for that way of speaking is used rather to note modesty than royalty. But when God speaks so as to discover most of his royalty, he speaks in the singular number, as in the giving of the law, 'I am the Lord thy God.' This trinity of persons is also not obscurely mentioned in Psal. xxxiii. 6. 'By the Word of the Lord, or *JEHOVAH*, were the heavens made; and all the host of them, by the breath, or Spirit, of his mouth.' Here is mention made of *Jehovah the Word and the Spirit*, as jointly acting in the work of creation. Accordingly we find, that 'all things were made by the Word,' John i. 3. and that 'the Spirit garnished the heavens,' Job xxvi. 13. Nay, a Trinity of persons is mentioned, Isa. lxiii. where, besides that the Lord, or *Jehovah*, is three times spoken of, ver. 7. we read, of 'the angel of his presence,' which denotes two persons,

and 'his Spirit,' ver. 9, 10. So that it evidently appears, that the doctrine of the Trinity was revealed under the Old Testament.

2. The New Testament most plainly teaches this doctrine.

(1.) I begin with the text, where it is expressly asserted, *There are three that bear record*, &c. Here are three witnesses, and therefore three persons. Not three names of one person: for if a person have ever so many names, he is still but one witness. Not three Gods, but one.

(2.) In the baptism of Christ, Matth. iii. 16, 17. mention is made of the Father speaking in an audible voice, the Son in the human nature baptized by John, and the Holy Ghost appearing in the shape of a dove; plainly importing three divine persons.

(3.) This appears from our baptism, Matth. xxviii. 8, 19. 'Go ye and teach all nations baptising them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.' Observe the words, *in the name, not names*; which denotes, that these three are one God: and yet they are distinctly reckoned three in number, and so are three distinct persons.

(4.) It appears from the apostolical benediction, where all blessings are sought from the three persons distinctly mentioned, 2 Cor. xiii. 14. 'The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.'

III. That these three are distinct persons, (for though they cannot be divided, yet they are distinguished), is evident. For the Son is distinct from the Father 'being the express image of his person,' Heb. i. 2.; and in John viii. 17, 18. he reckons his Father one witness and himself another. And that the Holy Ghost is distinct from both, appears from John xiv. 16, 17. 'I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever: even the Spirit of truth.' And the text is plain for the distinction of all the three. Now, they are distinguished by their order of subsisting, and their incommunicable personal properties. In respect of the order of subsistence, the Father is the first person, as the fountain of the Deity, having the foundation of personal subsistence in himself; the Son is the second person, and hath the foundation of personal subsistence from the Father; and the Holy Ghost is the third person, as having the foundation of personal subsistence from the Father and the Son. And so for their personal properties,

1. It is the personal property of the Father to beget the Son, Heb. i. 5, 6, 8. 'Unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son. And again, when he

bringeth in the first begotten into the world he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.—But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.' This cannot be ascribed either to the Son or Holy Ghost.

2. It is the property of the Son to be begotten of the Father, John i. 14. 18. 'We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father. No man hath seen God at any time: the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.'

3. The property of the Holy Ghost is to proceed from the Father and the Son, John xv. 26. 'When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.' In Gal. iv. 6. he is called 'the Spirit of the Son;' and in Rom. viii. 9. 'the Spirit of Christ.' He is said to 'receive all things from Christ,' John xvi. 14, 15.; to be 'sent by him,' John xv. 26.: and to be 'sent by the Father in Christ's name,' John xiv. 26. All this plainly implies, that the Holy Spirit proceedeth both from the Father and the Son. This generation of the Son and Holy Ghost was from all eternity. For as God is from everlasting to everlasting, so must this generation and procession be: and to deny it, would be to deny the supreme and eternal Godhead of all the three glorious persons.

IV. I proceed to shew, that these three persons are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory. To this end consider,

1. How express the text is, *These three are one*. When the apostle speaks of the unity of the earthly witnesses, ver. 8. he says, they 'agree in one,' acting in unity of consent or agreement only. But the heavenly witnesses are *one*, viz. in nature or essence. They are not only of a like nature or substance, but one and the same substance; and if so, they are and must be equal in all essential perfections, as power and glory.

2. There is but one true God, as was before proved, and there can be but one true God. Now, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are each of them the true God; and therefore they are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory. And this I shall prove by scripture testimony.

*First*, That the Father is true God, none that acknowledge a God do deny. Divine worship and attributes are ascribed to him. But,

*Secondly*, That the Son is true God, appears if ye consider,

1. The scriptures expressly calls him *God*, Rom. ix. 5. John i. 1. Acts xx. 28.; 'the true God' 1 John v. 20.; 'the great God,' Tit. ii. 13.; the 'mighty God, Isa. ix. 6. 'Jehovah or Lord,' Mal.

iii. 1. which is a name proper to the true God only, Psal. lxxxiii. ult.

2. The attributes of God, which are one and the same with God himself, are ascribed to him; as eternity, Micah v. 2. 'Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting; independence and omnipotence, Rev. i. 8.—'The Almighty;' omnipresence, John iii. 13. where he is said to be 'in heaven,' when bodily on earth; and Matth. xxviii. 20. 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world:' omniscience, John xxi. 17. 'Lord thou knowest all things,' says Peter to him; and unchangeableness, Heb. i. 11, 12. 'They shall perish, but thou remainest: and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.'

3. The works proper and peculiar to God are ascribed to him; as creation, John i. 3. 'All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.' Conservation of all things, Heb. i. 3.—'upholding all things by the word of his power.' Raising the dead by his own power, and at his own pleasure, John v. 21, 26. 'The Son quickeneth whom he will.' The Father 'hath given to the Son to have life in himself.' The saving of sinners, Hos. i. 7.—'I will save them by the Lord their God.' Compare chap. xiii. 4. 'in me is thine help.' Yea, whatsoever the Father doth, the Son doth likewise.

4. Divine worship is due to him, and therefore he is true God, Matth. iv. 10. The angels are commanded to 'worship him,' Heb. i. 8. All must give the same honour to him as to the Father, John v. 23. We must have faith in him, and they are blessed that believe in him, Psal. ii. 12. compare Jer. xvii. 5. We are to pray to him, Acts vii. 58.; and we are baptised in his name, Matth. xxviii. 19. Nay, he is expressly said to be 'equal with the Father,' Phil. ii. 6. and 'one with him.' John x. 30. Now, seeing God will 'not give his glory to another,' Isa. xlviii. 11. because he is true and cannot lie, and he is just, it follows, that though Christ be a distinct person, yet he is not a distinct God from his Father, but one God with him, the same in substance equal in power and glory. And it is no contradiction to this doctrine when Christ says, 'My Father is greater than I,' John xiv. 28.; for he is not speaking there of his nature as God, but of his mediatory office; and hence he is called the Father's 'servant,' Is. xlii. 1.

*Thirdly,* That the Holy Ghost is true God, or a divine person, appears, if ye consider,

1. The scripture expressly calls him God, Acts v. 3, 4. 1 Cor. iii. 16. Isa. vi. 9. compared with Acts xxviii. 25, 26. 2 Sam. xxiii. 2,

3. He is called 'Jehovah, or the Lord,' Num. xii. 6. compare 2 Pet. i. 21.

2. Divine attributes are ascribed to him; as omnipotence, he 'worketh all in all,' 1 Cor. xii. 6, 9, 10, 11.; omnipresence, Psal. cxxxix. 7.; and omniscience, 1 Cor. ii. 10.

3. Works peculiar to God are ascribed to him; as creation, Psal. xxxiii. 6; conservation, Psal. civ. 30.; working miracles, Matt. xii. 28.; raising the dead, Rom. viii. 11.; inspiring the prophets, 2 Tim. iii. 16. compare 2 Pet. i. 21.

4. Divine worship is due to him. We are baptised in his name, Matth. xxviii. 19.; we are to pray to him, 2 Cor. xiii. 14. Acts iv. 23, 25. compare 2 Sam. xxiii. 2, 3.

Hence it appears,

1. That the Godhead is not divided, but that each of the three persons hath the one whole Godhead, or divine nature.

2. That it is sinful to imagine any inequality amongst the three divine persons, or to think one of them more honourable than another, seeing they are all one God.

V. I proceed to consider the weight and importance of this article. It is a fundamental article, the belief whereof is necessary to salvation. For those that are 'without God,' Eph. ii. 12. and 'have not the Father,' cannot be saved; but 'whoso denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father,' 1 John ii. 23. Those that are none of Christ's cannot be saved; but 'he that hath not the Spirit, is none of his,' Rom. viii. 9. None receive the Spirit but those that know him. John xiv. 17. This mystery of the Trinity is so interwoven with the whole of religion, that their can neither be any true faith, right worship, or obedience without it. For take away this doctrine, and the object of faith, worship, and obedience is changed; seeing the object of these declared in the scripture, is the three persons in the Godhead; and the scriptures know no other God. Where is faith, if this be taken away? John xvii. 3. 'This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.' Here it is to be observed, that our Lord does not call the *Father only* the true God, exclusive of the other persons of the Trinity; but that he (including the other persons who all subsist in the same one undivided essence) is the *only true God*, in opposition to idols, falsely called gods. 1 John ii. 23. 'Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father.' There is no more true worship or fellowship with God in it: 'For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father,' Eph. ii. 18. And there is no more obedience without it, John xv. 23. 'He that hateth me,' says Christ, 'hateth my Father also.'

John v. 23, 'He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.' We are debtors to the Spirit, to live after the Spirit, and are bound by baptism to the obedience of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

I shall conclude with a few inferences.

1. How much ought we to prize divine revelation, wherein we have a discovery of this incomprehensible mystery ! This is a truth which nature's light could never have found out. It is above reason, though not contrary to it ; for reason, though it could never have brought it to light, yet when it is discovered, it must needs yield to it ; for as the judgment of sense must be corrected by reason, so the judgment of reason by faith.

2. See here that God whom you are to take for your God, to love, trust in, worship and obey, even the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This is that God who offers himself to you in the gospel, and whom you are to take for your God in Christ. This is that Father who elected a select company of sinners unto salvation ; this is that Son that redeemed them unto God by his blood ; and this is that Spirit that renews and sanctifies them, making them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

3. *Lastly*, Take this Father for your Father, who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ; and be obedient children, if ye would be reckoned of his seed. Receive the Son, and slight him not. Give your consent to the gospel-offer, seeing it is your Maker that offers to be your husband. And grieve not the Holy Spirit, lest ye be found fighters against God.