

SERMON III.

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THE TRINITY PROVED BY SCRIPTURE.

For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost : and these three are one.—1 John v. 7.

IN the fifth verse of this chapter, the apostle had laid this down as an article of faith,—that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God : “ Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God ? ” Now, for the proof of so glorious a truth, the apostle produces six witnesses, and ranks them into two orders : some “ bear record in heaven,” and some “ bear witness on earth.” *Some bear witness on earth, as, verse 8 of this chapter : “ There are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood : and these three agree in one ; ” and some bear record in heaven, in the words of my text : “ There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost : and these three are one.”*

In the words you may take notice of these particulars :—

1. *The number of the heavenly witnesses, or the number of those witnesses that “ bear record in heaven.”—Namely, “ three.”*
2. *Their dignity or excellency.—They are “ in heaven.”*
3. *Their act.—They “ bear record.”*
4. *The names of the witnesses.—“ The Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost.”*
5. *Their unity.—“ And these three are one.”*

OBSERVATION.

I would observe from the context,

That it is not an easy matter to believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Whence is it else that the apostle so often urges this point in this epistle ? Whence is it else that, whereas it is sufficient for any truth to be confirmed by the mouth of two or three witnesses, here are no less than six witnesses produced to prove that the Lord Jesus is the Son of God,—three heavenly, and three earthly ? And indeed who can declare the great mystery of the eternal generation of the Son of God ? I will give five wonders in five words :—

1. *God the Father communicates the whole Divine Essence unto the Son, and yet hath the whole Divine Essence in himself.—If God communicates his essence, it must be his whole essence ; for that which is infinite cannot admit of any division, partition, or diminution : yet,*

methinks, we have a faint resemblance of this here below. It is not with things of a spiritual nature as with things of a corporeal. Spiritual things may be communicated without being lessened or divided; namely, when I make a man know that which I know, my knowledge is still the same, and nothing diminished. And upon this account, whether that argument against the traduction of the soul—that “if the soul of the father be traduced, the father is left soul-less”—be cogent, I leave to the judgment of the learned. It is to be granted, that to communicate the notion is one thing, and the faculty is another; but both are things of a spiritual nature.

2. *God the Father and God the Son are one essence; and yet, though the Father begets the Son, the Son doth not beget himself.*—The Father and the Son are one God, yet the Lord Jesus is the Son of God, under that notion, as God is a Father; and not the Son of God, under the notion, as God is a Son, and so not the Son of himself.

3. *God the Father begetteth God the Son; and yet the Father is not elder than the Son, nor the Son younger than the Father.*—He that begetteth is not in time before him that is begotten. If God was a Father from everlasting, then Christ was a Son from everlasting; for *relata sunt simul natura*, [“things related to each other are one in nature,”] an eternal Father must have an eternal Son.

4. *The Father begets the Son; yet the Son is not inferior to the Father, nor the Father superior to the Son.*—The Lord Jesus Christ, “being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God;” (Phil. ii. 6;) it was his right, and therefore it was no robbery. As he is co-eternal, so he is co-equal, with the Father.

5. *The Father begets the Son; yet the Son hath the same numerical nature with the Father, and the Father the same numerical nature with the Son.*—An earthly son hath the same specific nature with his father; but then, though it be the same in regard of kind, yet it differs in regard of number: but God the Father and God the Son have the same individual numerical nature.

USE.

Let me entreat you that you would attend unto the record and testimony that is given by those witnesses; and, for your encouragement, consider the difference between these heavenly witnesses in the text, and earthly witnesses. And so I shall proceed to that which I mainly intend.

1. On earth, there may be some single or one witness; but here are no less than “three.”

2. Earthly witnesses are such as are liable to exception; but these are “in heaven,” beyond all exception.

3. As for earthly witnesses, it may come to pass that their names may not be known; these here are named,—“The Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost.”

4. Earthly witnesses, when they are produced, either may be silent,

or, it may be, bear false witness; but these "bear record," "and their record is true." (John viii. 14.)

5. Earthly witnesses may not agree in their witness; as, the witnesses brought against Christ. But there is a sweet consent and agreement amongst these witnesses, for "these three are one."

6. Whereas earthly witnesses, although they may be one in regard of consent, yet they are not one in regard of essence: every man hath one particular individual essence of his own. But these are one in regard of essence. Now pray mark this; for if it be so, then the Father is God, the Son God, and the Holy Ghost God. And therefore the Socinian, who denies the Deity of the Word, and of the Holy Ghost, will persuade you to believe that these words are to be expounded thus, "These three are one:" "That is," says he, "these three agree in one." But that this is not the meaning of the phrase, appears by the variation of it in the next verse: the words are, "There are three that bear witness on earth, the spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one." (Verse 8.) Now if both phrases note unity in consent, here is an occasion of offence and falling administered by the variation of them in these two verses. Why is it not said, "The Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost agree in one;" as well as, "The spirit, water, and blood?"

And suppose we should grant that the oneness spoken of in the text is to be expounded of consent in will and agreement, yet it would prove the Godhead both of the Word and Spirit; for in free agents, where there is the same will, there is the same nature: indeed with men it is the same specific nature, not numerical; but because there is but one God only, therefore here it must be the same numerical nature.

OBSERVATION.

The DOCTRINE [which] I would speak more fully to, is *the doctrine of the Trinity*, or, *that there are three persons in the Divine Essence.*

In the prosecution of this point, I shall, by God's assistance, observe this method:—

- I. I shall speak something to *the notion of a Divine Person.*
- II. I shall show you that *there are three persons in the Divine Essence.*
- III. I shall speak something to *the distinction of those persons.*
- IV. I shall speak to *the order of these persons.*
- V. I shall inquire *whether the mystery of the Trinity may be found out by the light of nature.*
- VI. *The use and application.*

I. *I shall speak something to the notion of a Divine Person.—What a Divine Person is, or wherein it consists.*

RESOLUTION I. *Negatively.*—A Divine Person, in the precise notion of it, is not a being, or *singularis substantia* ["peculiar subsistence"]. *Persona, et natura singularis, clarè distinguuntur*: "There is a clear difference between person and nature;" as you may perceive by these following considerations:—

1. Our Lord Jesus Christ assumed the nature of men, and yet not the person of men.

2. Those things which may really be separated are not the same ; but that personality may be separated from nature, appears by the foregoing instance.

3. If a person were a being, it must be either finite or infinite : if finite, then something finite would be in God ; if infinite, then there would be three infinities in God, or, which is all one, there would be three Gods. Now *Deum trinum asserimus ; Deum triplicem negamus.**

RESOL. II. *Positively.*—A person is *modus rei*, “the manner of a being ;” and a Divine Person is *modus Divinæ Essentiæ*, “the Divine Essence modified,” or the Divine Essence considered three manner of ways. For instance : consider the Divine Essence as the fountain or principle of Deity, so it is the first person ; consider it as streaming forth from the Father, so it is the second person ; consider it as breathed forth by Father and Son, and so it is the third person.

I said before, that the Father is the fountain or principle of Deity. Now this must warily be understood : I do not say, The Father is the cause of Deity, but the principle ; there is a wide difference between *principium et causam*, “a principle and a cause.” *Omnis causa est principium ; sed omne principium non est causa* : “The cause of a thing may be called its beginning ; but the beginning of a thing is not necessarily its cause.” The beginning of a line is not the cause of it.

But, to return where we were : a Divine Person is *modus Divinæ Essentiæ*, “the Divine Essence modified,” the Divine Essence considered three manner of ways. Now the manner of a thing is neither *ens*, nor *nihil* ; it is neither “a thing,” nor yet “nothing.” For instance, the folding of my hands is not *ens*, for then I should be a creator, and make something ; nor is it plainly nothing, for there is difference between my hands folded, and my hands expanded.

Now we use the word “person,” because it notes the subsistence of the most excellent kind of being, and hath more in it than subsistence hath. We say, “A beast doth subsist ;” but it is absurd to say, “A beast hath personality,” because a person notes an understanding subsistent. Besides, the word “person” is attributed to God in the scripture ; in the Epistle to the Hebrews, you find these words made use of by the apostle concerning Christ : “The brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.” (Heb. i. 3.)

II. *I am to show you that there are three persons in the Divine Essence.*—And that from scriptures, both in the *Old Testament*, and in the *New*.

(1.) *By scriptures in the Old Testament.*—To that purpose, take into your thoughts these particulars :—

1. A plurality of persons may be proved by that scripture, where God speaks of himself in the plural number : “Let us make man in our image.” (Gen. i. 26.) This notes more persons in the Godhead than one. It is true, something is urged by way of objection.

OBJECTION I. “God speaks by way of apostrophe unto the angels, that they should bear witness of the works of creation. It is usual in

* “We assert a tri-une God ; but we deny a threefold Deity.”—EDIT.

scripture for God to speak to the creatures; as in the prophecy of Isaiah: 'Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken.'" (Isai. i. 2.)

RESOLUTION. Although God is sometimes brought-in in the scripture speaking unto the creature, yet it is impossible that this scripture should be expounded after this manner. For,

First. *Those unto whom God speaks were companions with him in the work of creation.*—"Let us make man after our image." Now God did not make use of angels as instruments in the work of creation, nor indeed could he so do. For,

(1.) Every instrument must have subject matter to work upon; but creation doth not presuppose a subject, but make it.

(2.) Every instrument must have time to work in, but creation is in an instant. And therefore when we read that God created the world by Jesus Christ,—as in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "By whom" (speaking of Christ) "he made the world," (Heb. i. 2.)—this particle *per*, or "by," *non est nota instrumenti, sed nota ordinis*; "notes not instrumentality, but the order amongst the Divine Persons." For "as there is an order in regard of themselves, so in regard of their operations:" *operari sequitur esse*. And hence it is, that although we read that God the Father made the world by Jesus Christ, yet we do not read that Jesus Christ made the world by the Father.

Secondly. *God speaketh unto those persons after whose image man was to be made.*—"Let us make man after our image." (Gen. i. 26.) Now man was not to be made after the image of angels, but the image of God himself.

OBJECTION II. "God speaks *more magnatum, or more principum*, 'after the manner of great ones,' who speak in the plural number."

RESOLUTION I. If God speaks *more magnatum*, "after the manner of great ones," why doth he not always, or at least frequently, speak after this manner? You will find God speaking in scripture for the most part in the singular number; even in this very book of Genesis: "Behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth." (Gen. vi. 17.) "And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you." (Gen. ix. 9.) "Fear not, Abraham," saith God: "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." (Gen. xv. 1.) And elsewhere: "I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect." (Gen. xvii. 1.)

RESOL. II. If God speaks in the plural number after the manner of great ones, then certainly he would speak after this manner when he discovers most of his royalty, and power, and majesty, as he did at the giving of the law on Mount Sinai; and yet there he speaks in the singular number: "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." (Exod. xx. 2.)

RESOL. III. It is likely the princes did at first speak in the plural number, not to note their power and greatness, but their modesty and wariness: that it was not their design to rule according to will, but according to counsel; that they were willing to advise with others, and to be guided by others. The wisest kings on earth will have their council; and it is no more than needs. *Plus vident oculi quàm*

ovulus: "Many eyes see more than one eye." But God's counsel is his will: "Who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." (Eph. i. 11.) Nor indeed is it safe or fit for any to govern arbitrarily, or purely by will, but He whose will is his counsel; and is so far from needing a rule, that it is the only rule.

2. As a plurality of persons, so a Trinity of persons, may be proved out of the Old Testament. I shall mention, and only mention, for brevity's sake, one place in the prophecy of Isaiah (lxiii). In the seventh verse you have mention made of Jehovah, or "the Lord;" in the ninth verse, of Jesus Christ, called "the Angel of his presence;" in the tenth verse, of the Holy Spirit: "But they rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit."

(II.) *You have this doctrine more clearly delivered in the New Testament.*—As will appear by several instances.

First, *At the baptism of Christ, the Trinity of persons were clearly discovered.*—You may read the history: "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." (Matt. iii. 16, 17.) Consider here,

1. We have three names given severally and particularly to three persons:—

(1.) He who spake with a voice from heaven, was the Father.

(2.) He who was baptized in Jordan, is called "the Son."

(3.) He who descended in the shape of a dove, is called "the Spirit of God."

2. There were three outward signs or symbols by which those three persons did manifest themselves:—

(1.) The Father by an audible voice; the Word in heaven is borne witness to by a word from heaven.

(2.) The Son in the human nature.

(3.) The Holy Ghost in the shape of a dove.

3. They are described by three distinct actions:—

(1.) The one cries by a voice from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." This could not be the voice of the Son, for then he would be Son to himself; nor can this be attributed unto the Spirit, for then Jesus would have been the Son of the Spirit.

(2.) The second, after his baptism, prays: "It came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened." (Luke iii. 21.)

(3.) The third descended in the shape of a dove, and rested upon Jesus Christ.

Now, to close this particular: why might it not be said, that the Father was baptized in Jordan as well as the Son; or that the Father descended in the shape of a dove, as well as the Spirit; or that the Son did all this,—spake with a voice from heaven, and was baptized in Jordan, and descended in the shape of a dove; if this were not a

truth,—that there are three persons in the Divine Essence? Hence the primitive Christians used to say unto any one that doubted of the Trinity, *Abi ad Jordanem, et videbis*: “Go to Jordan, and you will see a Trinity.”

Secondly. *This doctrine may be proved from the institution of the ordinance of baptism.*—“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” (Matt. xxviii. 19.) And, indeed, no wonder if God discovered himself to be three persons and one God at Christ’s baptism, when the name of the blessed Trinity is, as it were, in fair and legible characters, written upon the forehead of the ordinance of baptism itself: baptism itself is, as it were, baptized “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Now these I call “the words of institution;” for although you have not here the first institution of baptism;—John the Baptist, who was called so from this very ordinance, administering this sacrament, and the disciples unquestionably from the command of Christ himself, (the evangelist John tells us, that “Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples;” John iv. 2;—yet here you have a solemn command for baptism, and the form of the administration thereof, unto all generations.

And here consider,

1. Christ commands them to baptize, not “in the names,” but “in the name, of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.” If you consider them personally, so they have three names,—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; if essentially, then but “one name,” *unum nomen, una Deitas*, “one God, one Deity.” And I observe farther, that which way soever we expound this phrase, “in the name,”—either calling upon the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as some; or “in the name,” by the authority, or at the appointment, of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as others; or “in the name,” namely, for the service, honour, and glory of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as a third sort,—you must either make these to be three Gods, or else three persons in the Godhead. For who is the object of our prayers but God? Who hath authority to appoint ordinances for his church but God? Whom are we to serve and worship but God alone?—“Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.” (Matt. iv. 10.)

2. They were to baptize, not in the name of the Father, by the Son, or by the Spirit; but “in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit;” which notes the equality of the three persons.

3. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are so joined together, that we are no less baptized in the name of the Son, and of the Spirit, than of the Father; and therefore their Deity is the same, their power and authority the same.

4. An article is thrice prefixed, and added to every one: *Baptizate in nomine* [“Baptize ye in the name of”] *του Πατρος, του Υιου, του Αγιου Πνευματος*, “that Father, that Son, that Holy Ghost: “*that Father* whose voice you have heard from heaven; *that Son* whom as yet you see in the human nature; *that Holy Ghost* whom you have seen descending upon me in the shape of a dove.” Surely the repe-

tion of this article doth not want its singular emphasis,—“*that* Father, *that* Son, and *that* Holy Ghost.”

Thirdly. *This doctrine may yet further be cleared from that saying of our Saviour, “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter.”* (John xiv. 16.)—Hence is plainly proved the personality of the Holy Ghost: he is called “another Comforter.” Now he who is distinguished from the Father and the Son, in the manner as to be called “another Comforter,” is either distinguished in regard of his essence, or in regard of his personal subsistence: Not in regard of his essence, for then he would be another God: And therefore he is “another” in regard of his personal subsistence.

Fourthly. *You have a clear proof for this doctrine in the words of the text.*—“There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.” And to that purpose, consider,

1. You have mention here of three witnesses: now three witnesses are three persons.

2. The Word and Holy Ghost are conjoined in their testimony with the Father, which is not competible [compatible] to any creature; and lest we should doubt of this, it is expressly said, even by St. John himself, to be the witness of God: “If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.” (Verse 9.) And concerning Christ, it is said that he is the true God: “This is the true God, and eternal life.” (Verse 20.) Let the Socinian show me where any creature is called “the true God.” Concerning the Spirit also in this chapter it is said, that he is truth itself: “It is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.” (Verse 6.)

3. If there be three witnesses, whereof every one of them is God, the one not the other, and yet not many Gods, but one true God, the point is clear,—there are three distinct persons subsisting in one Divine Essence; or, which is all one, there are three persons and one God.

III. *I am to speak something to the distinction of these three persons.*—Though they cannot be divided, yet they may be, they are, distinguished. Many things in nature may be distinguished, which cannot be divided. For instance: the cold and the moisture which are in the water may be distinguished, but they cannot be divided. Now, that those three persons are distinguished, appears,

1. By what hath been already said,—the Father is not the Son, nor the Son the Father, nor the Holy Ghost the Father or the Son.

2. By the words of the text. Here are three heavenly witnesses produced to prove that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God; namely, “the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost.” Now one and the same person, although he hath a thousand names, cannot pass for three witnesses, upon any fair or reasonable account whatever: you may be sure that God reckons right; and he says, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to be three witnesses: “There are three that bear record in heaven.” So in St. John’s Gospel, the Pharisees charge our Saviour,

that he bare record of himself; say they, "Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true." (John viii. 13.) Now mark what Christ replies: "It is written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me;" (verses 17, 18;) where you have our Saviour citing the law concerning the validity of a testimony given by two witnesses; and then he reckons his Father for one witness, and himself for another.

IV. *I shall speak a few words to the order of these Divine Persons.*—In order of subsistence, the Father is before the Son, and the Son before the Holy Ghost. The Father, the first person in the Trinity, hath foundation of personal subsistence in himself; the Son, the second person, the foundation of personal subsistence from the Father; the Holy Ghost, the third person, hath foundation of personal subsistence from the Father and the Son.

Now although one person be before the other in regard of order, yet they are all equal in regard of time, majesty, glory, essence. This I conceive to be the reason why in the scripture sometimes you have the Son placed before the Father; as, 2 Cor. xiii. 14: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen." So, Gal. i. 1: "Paul, an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead." Sometimes the Holy Ghost is placed before the Father, as, Eph. ii. 18: "Through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." Sometimes before Jesus Christ: "John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before the throne;" (by "the seven Spirits" there, is meant the Holy Ghost;) "and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful Witness," &c. (Rev. i. 4, 5.) The consideration of this caused that rule amongst our divines, *Ab ordine verborum nulla est argumentatio*: "There is no argument to be urged from the order of words." Now this shows, that although one person be before another in regard of relation, and order of subsistence, yet all are equal one with another in regard of essence.

And therefore beware lest you dérogate the least *iota* or "tittle" of glory, or majesty, from any of the three persons. As, in nature, a small matter as to the body may be a great matter as to the beauty of the body: (cut but the hair from the eye-brow, how disfigured will all the face look!) if you take away never so little of that honour and glory which is due to any of the Divine Persons, you do what in you lies to blot, to stain, to disfigure the fair and beautiful face of the blessed Trinity.

V. *I am to inquire whether the mystery of the Trinity may be found out by the light of nature.*

RESOLUTION. There are two things in the general that I would say in answer to this question:—

(I.) *That the light of nature without divine revelation cannot discover it.*

(II.) *That the light of nature after divine revelation cannot oppose it.*

(I.) *That the light of nature without divine revelation cannot discover it.*—And for that purpose take into your thoughts these following considerations :—

1. *If that which concerns the worship of God cannot be found out by the light of nature, much less that which concerns God's nature, essence, or subsistence :—*But the antecedent is certainly true. For,

(1.) As for the part of the worship and service of God which is instituted and ceremonial, it is impossible that it should be found out by the light of nature. For instance : what man could divine that the tree of life should be a sacrament to Adam in Paradise? How comes the church to understand what creatures were clean, what were unclean? that the priesthood was settled in the tribe of Levi, and not in the tribe of Simeon, or the tribe of Judah? Certainly, these lessons were not learned by the candle-light of nature.

(2.) As for that part of the service of God which is moral, all of that, neither, is not discoverable by natural light. For,

(i.) If you consult the seventh chapter of the epistle to the Romans, you shall find that there were some secret moral wickednesses which Paul did not see, which Paul could not have seen, by the light of nature ; no, although a Pharisee, and by that means very expert in the letter of the law : “ I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.” (Verse 7.)

(ii.) If the light of nature be imperfect in us since the fall, which I suppose you will grant, then there may be many things moral now imperceptible by the light of nature, which it might and did see in its state of perfection ; and therefore it must needs be of dangerous import, to make the law of nature, a weak, faint, shadowing, imperfect light, the perfect rule and only measure of moral duties. To cry up the law written in our hearts, is in this case to cry down the law written in the scriptures. This is as it were to pull the sun, in its noon-day brightness, in its greatest lustre and glory, out of the firmament, and to walk by the light of a candle, a stinking snuff in the socket, almost gone out ; this is to make the primer, the horn-book, the A B C of natural light, the highest piece of learning in morality.

The law of nature (to our shame and grief we may speak it) is so obliterated and darkened, that it cannot show a man the least part of his wickedness. Pelagius was a man of great learning, and by his studies and diligence had snuffed the candle of the Lord, and made it burn with a clearer shine ; yet how little could he see into this matter ! It was his assertion, that “ we are born as well without vice as virtue :” *tam sine vitio, quàm sine virtute, nascimur.* And we see all Popery to this very day hold motions to sin not consented unto to be no sins, but necessary conditions arising from our constitution, and such as Adam had in innocency.

But I forbear. The issue of this particular is thus much : If that which concerns the worship and service of God cannot be found out by the light of nature, much less that which concerns his essence and subsistence.

2. *The doctrine of the gospel is called by the apostle a "mystery," and a "mystery without controversy."*—"Great is the mystery of godliness." (1 Tim. iii. 16.) And what greater gospel-mystery is there than the Trinity, which neither men nor angels can comprehend, and both men and angels must adore? Now if this doctrine be discoverable by natural light, it is no more a mystery. "The works of the flesh are manifest," saith the apostle. (Gal. v. 19, 20.) Now why are they said to be manifest? Because they stink in the nostrils of nature, and are discernible by the dim eye of conscience.

OBJECTION I. Possibly some may say, "Man hath, as it were, the image or likeness of a trinity within himself. There are three prime faculties, *understanding, will, and memory*, in one and the same reasonable soul."

RESOLUTION I. A similitude doth not prove a thing to be, but only represent a thing to our fancy, which at present hath, or at least had, a being, one way or other. For instance: it is impossible that any son should know his father's picture, unless first he hath seen or heard that his father was such a person as the picture doth represent, and by that means hath beforehand his father's idea and image printed in his own soul.

RESOL. II. It is denied that these faculties in man's soul bear the image or likeness of a Trinity; neither can any man by a reflex act upon his own soul attain to the knowledge of this great mystery. But such notions as these are the luxuriant extravagances of some curious brains, that would advance earth as high as heaven; and do indeed rather darken than illustrate this truth; as he who would add any colour unto light, doth rather blemish it than adorn it. What a piece of folly would it be to undertake to emblazon a sun-beam!

OBJECT. II. "The doctrine of the Trinity was known to several of the Heathens, who had not the scriptures; and therefore is discoverable by the light of nature."

RESOLUTION I. If the Heathen had any notions of the Trinity, they might receive them either by tradition, from those who had read the scriptures, or out of the scriptures themselves, and not by the improvement of natural light.

RESOL. II. It is very probable that these notions of a Trinity, which are found in Plato and Trismegistus, were not written by them, but foisted into their works by some that lived in after-ages. My reasons are these:—

1. Those writings which go under the name of the ancient fathers are not all truly such, but a great part of them supposititious and forged; as Mr. Daillé proves largely in that learned piece of his, called, "A Treatise of the right Use of the Fathers;" where he gives you an account of whole books that were published under the names of the apostles, as St. Peter, St. Barnabas, and others, which were not such. Now if men durst be thus bold with the apostles, no wonder if they did not stick to deal thus with Heathens. This imposture in the primitive times was very ordinary; yea, the fathers themselves

have used this artifice to promote their own opinions, as you may read largely in the third chapter of that book.

2. Some are apt to believe, that there are clearer notions of a Trinity in some of the books of the Heathens, than in the books of Moses; and so, by consequence, the Heathens should know more of the Trinity, than the Israel of God; which is flat contrary to the scriptures: "In Judah is God known: his name is great in Israel." (Psalm lxxvii. 1.) "He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the Lord." (Psalm cxlvi. 20.)

And thus I have done with the first assertion in answer to this question, *Whether the mystery of the Trinity may be found out by the light of nature*; namely, that the light of nature without divine revelation cannot discover it.

(II.) *The light of nature after divine revelation cannot oppose it.*—For,

1. *As the judgment of sense ought not to be urged against the judgment of reason, so the judgment of reason ought not to be urged against the judgment of faith.*—The judgment of sense ought not to be urged against the judgment of reason. For instance: sense tells us that some of the stars are as small as spangles. (I am apt to believe, that some countrymen think the sun to be no bigger than their cart-wheel.) Here reason interposes, corrects sense, tells us, that, there being a vast distance between us and them, they must needs be very great bodies, or else they could not be visible. There are thousands of stars that cause the white streak in the heavens, called "the Milky Way," which are invisible upon the account but now mentioned. Sense tells us, that the sun is of greater magnitude in the morning and evening, than at noon. Here reason again interposes, corrects sense, tells us it only appears so, because of the denseness, or thickness, of the air or medium; and that, for the same reason, if you put a piece of money into a basin of water, it will appear of a larger size than if it were in a basin without water. That which I aim at is this, that as reason doth thus correct sense, *a pari* ["in like manner"] faith should correct reason.

2. *Philosophical axioms must be kept within their proper bounds, and limited to a finite power.*—For instance: *Ex nihilo nihil fit*, that "out of nothing proceeds nothing," is a truth, if it be understood with reference to a finite power. So, *A privatione ad habitum non datur regressus*,* is a truth upon the same terms. *Sic una numero essentia non potest esse in tribus personis*, that "one and the same numerical essence cannot be in three distinct persons," is a truth, limited, as before; I mean, with reference to a finite power. But all this, and ten thousand arguments more of this nature, cannot overthrow this principle, that there are three persons, and one God; for we are not speaking now of that which is finite, but of that which is infinite. Suppose this question should be started, How the same numerical essence can be in three persons? possibly an answer might be returned thus: Suppose a father begets a son, and communicates to him the same numerical soul and body which he hath still himself,

* "A recession from a privation to a habitus is not permitted."—EDIT.

and both of these should communicate the same soul and body to a third; here would be three distinct persons, yet the same essence in them all. But I know a reply would quickly be made, "This is impossible;" answer must be made, "It is true, as to that which is finite, but not unto that which is infinite," &c.

VI. The time allotted for this exercise being spent in the handling of the doctrinal part of this observation, I can speak but a few words to the use and application.

USE I. This doctrine should establish us in the truth of the gospel, even this "mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest unto" the church. The Heathens, as we have heard, could not attain unto this knowledge by the light of nature. O what a comfort is this, that we serve an incomprehensible God! one God, and yet three persons. To comprehend is to environ and keep-in all that God is. For my part, I would not worship that God that I could comprehend. The doings of God know no bounds, much more his essence and subsistence. Kings have their crowns, a circle about their head; and should also have a circle about their feet: they should not go which way they please, but keep themselves within the limits of law, both of God and man. And this speaks them to be creatures, though in a greater letter, finite beings. But it is otherwise with God; as he will not have any articles put upon him, so he cannot have any circles or lines drawn about him; for an infinite God to be finite and limited, is a contradiction *in adjecto*.

USE II. Let us study this doctrine of the Trinity; and, as a motive to this, consider, we cannot worship God aright without some knowledge of this truth. As God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, are the object of divine faith, so are they the object of divine worship: we must worship Trinity in Unity, and Unity in Trinity. You may direct your prayers unto God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; but you must not pray unto either of the persons, but as united unto the other. Gerhard tells us,* that it is absolutely necessary in some measure to know this truth; and that not only the denial of the Trinity of persons, but the ignorance of it, is damnable. The apostle tells the Ephesians, that some time they were atheists: (Eph. ii. 12 :) we render it, "without God in the world;" but in the original it is, *αθεοι εν τω κοσμω*, "atheists in the world." And the reason of this you have in the beginning of the verse:—because they were *χωρις Χριστου*, "without the knowledge of Christ." Although a man acknowledges there is but one true God, yet if he knows not this God in Christ, he is an atheist.

USE III. Bless God for the clear discovery of this truth under the gospel! "Blessed are our eyes, for we see: and our ears, for we hear." (Matt. xiii. 16.) It is God's method to discover himself by degrees: we know more of God now than the Jews did; and we shall know more in heaven, than we know on earth. Now God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, lead us unto all truth, and bring us at last unto himself, that we may enjoy him, and have a more full and clear discovery of him, unto all eternity. Amen.

* *In Locis Communibus de sanctissimo Trinitatis Mysterio*, cap. 1.