

# THE CHRISTIAN SENTINEL.

I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.—HAB. ii. 1.

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## THEOLOGY.

FOR THE CHRISTIAN SENTINEL.

DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.—No. III.

THE Doctrine of the Trinity takes for granted the *distinct personality* of the Holy Ghost; he who is the *sanctifier* of those who obey the Gospel, as Christ is their Mediator and Intercessor at the right hand of God. That part of the divine administration which comprehends the application of grace to the souls of men is entirely committed to his hands. Where the Holy Spirit is not actively present in a gracious sense, there is no spiritual life. Hence these expressions: "Quench not the Spirit;" "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God;" "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me."

There appears to be a fitness in the work of the general application of grace being committed exclusively to one person of the blessed Trinity. There is a difficulty in bringing the person of God the Father, our Governor, and the Judge of our conduct, into personal intercourse with us, on account of the "enmity" and breach of friendship occasioned by sin. Our only means of favourable access to him is by the "one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus." But as he is personally absent from the earth, and is entered with "the blood of the everlasting covenant" into the "holy of holies," or the immediate presence at the right hand of God, to intercede for those who call on his name: it appears not unnatural, that the personal application of the grace mediated for, should be made by other hands than his;—even by the hands of Him whom the Father was to send in his name; and whom he promised to send for that purpose from the Father.—"He shall take of mine, and show it unto you." (See John xiv. 26, and xv. 26, and xvi. 15.) And the reason why he is called the Comforter, is, because he sanctifies the heart and life in the application of the grace committed to his charge. "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." (John xiv. 16.) Sanctification by the purifying blood of Christ, is that which makes our persons acceptable in the sight of God: for he saith: "Be ye holy, because I am holy." And the Holy Ghost is the Comforter, because he sanctifies the unclean, and excites in them the love of God, which brings comfort and peace.

It is worthy of remark, that the Holy Ghost is never mentioned in Scripture, except in connection with some act of grace. Even in denouncing judgments by those "holy men of old who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," he was performing acts of kindness and mercy, by warning sinners to turn and repent before it was too late.

But since the personality of the Holy Ghost is denied by some, it may not be amiss to make a few remarks on the subject.

If the Holy Ghost is nothing more than a quality or attribute of God, without a personality of his own, as some pretend, why are personal actions, qualities and attributes given to him the same as to God himself? Why may not all the Divine attributes, such as wisdom, goodness, justice, power, mercy, &c. claim their deification and divine attributes also? Did an attribute of God move upon the face of the waters at the time of the Creation? Did a quality of a Divine person say, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul to the work whereunto I have called them?" Was our Lord begotten of his Virgin Mother by an attribute or quality of a person, and not by the person himself? If it be so indeed, these things are infinitely more mysterious than "the Catholic doctrine of the Trinity" possibly can be.

Some again contend for a Trinity of personal office only, without any distinction of persons. But this destroys the personal and relative distinctions of Father, Son and Holy Ghost. For there cannot be a Father without a Son, nor a Holy Ghost proceeding from the Father

and sent by the Son, and also sent by the Father in the Son's name, without Father, Son and Holy Ghost, each maintaining his own distinct personality. But this official Trinity seems to require the matter to stand thus: The office of the Father shall send the office of the Holy Ghost in the name of the office of the Son, to teach, comfort and sanctify those whom the office of the Son has redeemed from the displeasure of the office of the Father; while yet there is neither Father, Son, nor Holy Ghost, because, there is but one solitary person in the Godhead! David prayed: "Take not the office of thy Holy Spirit from me." Yet David did not fancy himself in possession of such a high office.

If the Holy Ghost is a creature, namely: not a divine person, the same difficulties arise on account of the influence his office and works are calculated to establish over the hearts and affections of those whom he comforts and sanctifies, and makes fit for the enjoyment of heaven, as we have found to arise in the case of our Saviour and Redeemer: and the influence would have a bearing on our connection and relation both with the Father and the Son. For as bare redemption leaves us unsanctified; and as the grace of sanctification is the work of another person than the Redeemer: if that other had not a perfect community of interest with both the Father and the Son, he might have, or wish to have a separate independent interest of his own; and personal individual ambition might introduce a distracting influence into his operations. The affections—namely, the allegiance, (and the oath of allegiance is taken, in baptism, equally to the Son and the Holy Ghost in conjunction with the Father:) the allegiance, I say, of those who derive such amazing benefit from his personal intercourse in the individual application of grace, might certainly be coveted, and possibly be given to his individual person, to the exclusion of all others. We know that those who come the nearest to our persons in acts of kindness and charity, have far the best chance of securing our gratitude and affection. And hence, if the Holy Ghost be not God, the foundation for seducing our allegiance from God, while he confers on us such great benefits, is laid in nature itself. The premises themselves furnish direct evidence of it. The person of God is kept at too great a distance from us for us to feel ourselves as his especial favourites; and we can hardly persuade our own self-consciousness that we are effectually "made nigh" to him by favours so remote in their origin, and passing through the hands of two intermediate personages; who indeed by their actions which have a bearing on our happiness, appear to be the only ones nearly and intimately interested in our welfare.

It is unnecessary here to repeat what I have said in the two preceding numbers concerning community of nature as the only sure foundation of community of interest. I will, however, notice what our Lord says of the Holy Spirit in John xvi. 13: "He shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak." Scripture calls him, (See 1 Pet. i. 2,) the Spirit of Christ which was in the prophets; and in many places, the Holy Spirit of God. Paul argues that he knows the things of God the same as the Spirit of a man knows the things of a man. And as the Spirit of a man can do nothing of itself as independent of the man whose the Spirit is; so the Holy Ghost, being one in nature, substance, knowledge, power, and will with the Father and the Son, whose Spirit he is, can do nothing of himself otherwise than as it is equally of them: the same as a partner in a firm, does things of partnership not as of himself, but as of the firm.

I will also further observe, that if the Holy Ghost is a creature, there is no foundation in the nature and order of his being for a perfect and indissoluble community of interest with the Father and the Son; and consequently no natural security, or security arising from the nature of his existence and essential union with them, against the abuse of the great and extraordinary powers entrusted to his control. Every creature, by the constitution of free-agency and will, may rebel against God, seeing that it is naturally possible so to do as long as the mind is held by simple motive: for that cannot be called obedience