

# 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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THREE-RIVERS, FRIDAY 24th SEPTEMBER 1830.

[Vol. I.—No. 4.

## THEOLOGY.

FOR THE CHRISTIAN SENTINEL.

### DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.—No. IV.

IN this number I shall endeavour to illustrate the Doctrine of the Trinity by an analogy taken from natural objects. But first I will endeavour to answer an objection which is frequently made, and though not always in the precise terms in which I shall state it, yet always so as to be resolvable into it; for all anti-trinitarians charge on the doctrine the proper notion of *three Gods*.

*Obj.* Explain to me how three Gods can be one God, and one God three Gods without there being more Gods than one. For you assert that, "the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God; and yet there are not three Gods, but one God."

*Ans.* Your method of stating the objection is a direct slander on the doctrine of the Trinity, and generally intended to involve a contradiction of which we were never guilty. You are well aware that we never attempt to explain *how* these things are. We never meddle with the *mode* or *manner* of the existence and subsistence of the three divine persons in the Trinity, in one spiritual being, nature and substance: and we have adopted the word *person* to signify the distinction for the want of a better; and even in this we have the authority of St. Paul, who, 2 Cor. ii. 10, mentions "the person of Christ." But when we use the word in regard to the Trinity, we do not use it as we do of three different men. Each man has his own substance and thinking apparatus. But the union of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost is such, that one cannot think or do what the others do not think and do likewise: and thus the proper attributes of Deity are fully and equally given to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; while these, in *some* respects, are not the same. We content ourselves by stating the *doctrinal fact* of it in a general accordance with the language of Scripture: and since we find all the perfections, and actions and claims of the Deity with which we are made acquainted indiscriminately ascribed to Father, Son and Holy Ghost: and not unfrequently the same *individual action* attributed in different passages to each of the three persons as *the act of God*: and moreover find the *three names*, in *one* sense, perfectly convertible terms, and carrying under each the precise abstract idea of *operative almighty power, wisdom and goodness*, we humbly bow to "the record which God hath given," and reverently worship the Trinity in Unity and Unity in Trinity. And you cannot but confess, that, if we were to select an object of worship from among the three names, into which we are baptized in order to obtain the Christian name and hope, and make the selection from a comparative view of their *personal actions* by which we are affected, and the *personal approximations* made by them towards a *personal intercourse* with us, and the *personal good* done to us by these three persons under their respective names and characters, as I have pointed out to you in the three preceding numbers;—I say, you cannot but confess that **GOD THE FATHER must be left out in the selection.** For if we worship the *being* who does us good, and include in the worship *the person* who does us good, (which **MUST** be the case, since every *being* is possessed of *distinct personality*, and all worship must be paid to a *person* or *persons*); and since the Scripture forbids us to worship God without a continual and distinct reference to the *person* and the *personal actions* affecting ourselves, of the "*one Mediator* between God and men, **THE man Christ Jesus**," 1 Tim. ii. 5, that is; "through **Jesus Christ our Lord**;" it follows as a necessary consequence, that we cannot worship God at all without doing it in and through the person of the "*Mediator*," "*our Lord and Saviour*." But the worship of God in, through or by the *personal interposition or mediation* (standing *mid-way* between) of *any creature*, is rigidly forbidden as idolatry: and hence again: if the *person of Jesus Christ* is not truly and properly the *per-*

*son of God*, the New Testament absolutely prohibits the worship of God Almighty, and establishes pure idolatry! For the person of a piece of wood is as good a vehicle or means of conveying our prayers and worship to the person of God as the person of any creature whatever. To "*win Christ and be found in him*," Phil. iii. 8, if he be not God, is no better than to *win*, and be *found in*, a graven image. And if the Holy Ghost be a creature, David might as well have prayed, Ps. li. 11, Take not *Bethsheba* from me, as to pray, "Take not thy *Holy Spirit* from me."—"God, who hath commanded the light to shine out of darkness," saith Paul, 2 Cor. iv. 6, "HATH SHINED in our hearts, to give the *light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*." God hath shined; but who is "the **TRUE LIGHT** which lighteth every man that cometh into the world?" John i. 9. Why should he shine *in the face of Jesus Christ* rather than in the face of such a glorified being as said to St. John: "see thou do it not: I am thy fellow-servant: worship God;" or of any other creature?

We are satisfied that no creature can "find out God to perfection," or do the works peculiar to him; and therefore we believe the doctrine in question, instead of seeking to be assured that the divine nature *cannot*, somehow, exist in a threefold manner. Before we can know this, we must possess *infinite wisdom*. But you, because you cannot subject the substance of the divine incomprehensible nature to the inspection and unmistakable cognizance of human reason, proudly deny its possibility. You assume as certain that of which you are totally ignorant, and then pretend to draw infallible conclusions from it. You make the *properties* of something known your measure of comparison in arguing upon the *nature* of Him who dwelleth in inaccessible seclusion from all the powers of observation, and has never manifested aught of himself but a few faint glimpses of the skirts of his garments, (yet these enough to make us "wise unto salvation:") and you make your conclusions with as much confidence as if He whom you presume to measure were as familiar to your conceptions, and as clearly the subject of demonstration as that measure by which you draw the comparison. And thus going about to clear the Scriptures of *mystery*, and establish your *own doctrine*, you involve the Sacred Volume in such contradictions as *destroy its authority*, and make it a book of absurdities instead of a lamp of truth.

Permit me now to furnish, in turn, a measure of comparison, and to carry the comparison as far as we can find our way clearly, and no farther. Here then is *rain*, here is *hail*, and here is *snow*. Are these names, in all respects, *convertible terms*; namely: is rain hail, or hail snow, or snow rain or hail? Does the name of one of them excite in your mind all the precise ideas excited by the name of either of the others? And yet, in your mind, can you separate from either of these names, when you think of its *substance*, the abstract idea of *water*? If you take either of them into your warm hand, is not the idea of *water* uppermost in your mind? And do you not find *three distinct personalities* under these three distinct forms or modes of the same *substance*, each with its own *relative qualities*? You can hardly think of spow or ice without thinking of their consubstantial sameness with water: and you can hardly combine the idea of water with that of cold weather without thinking of snow and ice.

Here also are the distinctive names or appellations of *Father, Son and Holy Ghost*, inseparably connected with the object of faith in a Redeemer. Does the name of one of these persons necessarily excite in your mind all the nominal or personal ideas excited by the name of either of the others? Certainly not; neither does it confound all the ideas of them, as if they were applicable to *one person only*. But yet the name of each excites *relative* ideas of the others; which ideas are inseparable from the idea of salvation by "*God our Saviour*." The appellation of *Father* excites the relative idea of *Son*; that of *Son*, the relative idea of *Father*; and that of the Holy Ghost the relative idea of both, because he is both the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ. But also the recorded attributes, and actions, and relations of