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"LET US CONSIDER ONE ANOTHER TO PROVOKE UNTO LOVE AND TO GOOD WORKS."—HEBREWS X. 24.

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DIVINITY.

SPIRITUAL WORSHIP.

"This is the true God, and eternal life."

I. JOHN, v. 20.

1. In this Epistle, St. John speaks, not to any particular church, but to all the Christians of that age: although more especially to them among whom he then resided. And in them he speaks to the whole Christian Church, in all succeeding ages.

2. In this letter, or rather tract, (for he was present with those to whom it was more immediately directed, probably being not able to preach to them any longer, because of his extreme old age,) he does not treat directly of faith, which St. Paul had done; neither of inward or outward holiness, concerning which, both St. Paul, St. James, and St. Peter had spoken: but of the foundation of all, the happy and holy communion which the faithful have with God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

3. In the Preface, he describes the authority by which he wrote and spoke, (chap. i. 1-4,) and expressly points out the design of his present writing. To the Preface exactly answers the conclusion of the Epistle, more largely explaining the same design, and recapitulating the marks of our communion with God, by, *we know*, thrice repeated, (chap. v. 18-20.)

4. The tract itself treats,

First, Severally, Of communion with the Father, (chap. i. 5-10.) Of communion with the Son, (chap. ii. and iii.) Of communion with the Spirit, (chap. iv.)

Secondly, Conjointly of the testimony of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; on which, faith in Christ, the being born of God, love to God and his children, the keeping his commandments, and victory over the world, are founded. (chap. v. 1-12.)

5. The recapitulation begins, chap. v. ver. 18. "We know that he who is born of God," who sees and loves God, "sinneeth not," so long as this loving faith abideth in him. "We know we are of God," children of God, by the witness and the fruit of the Spirit: "and the whole world," all who have not the Spirit, "lieth in the wicked one." They are, and live, and dwell in him, as the children of God do in the Holy One. "We know, that the Son of God is come; and hath given us" a spiritual "understanding, that we may know the true One," the faithful and true Witness. "And we are in the true One," as branches in the vine. "This is the true God, and eternal life."

In considering these important words, we may enquire,

I. How is he the true God?

II. How is he Eternal Life? I shall then,

III. Add a few inferences.

I. And first we may enquire, How is he the true God?

1. He is "God over all blessed for ever." "He was with God," with God the Father, "from the beginning," from eternity, "and was God. He and the Father are One;" and consequently, "he thought it not robbery to be equal with God." Accordingly, the inspired writers give him all the titles of the Most High God. They call him over and over, by the incommunicable name, JEHOVAH, never given to any creature. They ascribe to him all the attributes, and all the works of God. So that we need not scruple to pronounce him "God of God, Light of Light, very

God of very God: in glory equal with the Father, in majesty co-eternal."

2. He is *the true God*, the only cause, the sole Creator of all things. "By him," saith the Apostle Paul, "were created all things that are in heaven, and that are on earth:" yea, earth and heaven themselves: but the inhabitants are named, because more noble than the house, *visible and invisible*. The several species of which are subjoined: "Whether there be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers." So St. John, "All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made." And accordingly St. Paul applies to him those strong words of the Psalmist, "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands."

3. And as *the true God*, he is also the *Supporter* of all the things that he hath made. He *beareth*, upholdeth, sustaineth all created things by the word of his power—the same powerful word which brought them out of nothing. As this was absolutely necessary for the beginning of their existence, it is equally so for the continuance of it: were his almighty influence withdrawn, they could not subsist a moment longer. Hold up a stone in the air; the moment you withdraw your hand, it naturally falls to the ground. In like manner, were he to withdraw his hand for a moment, the creation would fall into nothing.

4. As *the true God*, he is likewise the *Preserver* of all things. He not only keeps them in being, but preserves them in that degree of well-being, which is suitable to their several natures. He preserves them in their several relations, connexions, and dependencies, so as to compose one system of beings, to form one entire universe, according to the counsel of his will. How strongly and beautifully is this expressed! *Ta panta en auto eunesteke*: "By whom all things consist:" or, more literally, *By and in him are all things compacted into one system*. He is not only the support, but also the cement of the whole universe.

5. I would particularly remark, (what perhaps has not been sufficiently observed,) that he is the true *Author of all the Motion* that is in the universe. To spirits, indeed, he has given a small degree of self-moving power, but not to matter. All matter, of whatever kind it be, is absolutely and totally inert. It does not, cannot in any case move itself; and whenever any part of it seems to move, it is in reality moved by something else. See that log, which, vulgarly speaking, moves on the sea! It is in reality moved by the water. The water is moved by the wind, that is, a current of air. And the air itself owes all its motion to the ethereal fire, a particle of which is attached to every particle of it. Deprive it of that fire, and it moves no longer: it is fixed; it is as inert as sand. Remove fluidity (owing to the ethereal fire intermixed with it) from water, and it has no more motion than the log. Impact fire into iron, by hammering it when red hot, and it has no more motion than fixed air, or frozen water. But when it is unfixed, when it is in its most active state, what gives motion to fire? The very heathen will tell you. It is,

Magnam Mens agitant molem, et vasto se corpore miscetas.

6. To pursue this a little farther. We say, the moon moves round the earth, the earth and the other planets move round the sun, the sun moves round its own axis. But these are only vulgar expressions. For if we speak the truth, neither the sun, moon, nor stars move. None of these move themselves. They are all moved

every moment by the Almighty Hand that made them.

"Yes," says Sir Isaac, "the sun, moon, and all the heavenly bodies, do move, do gravitate toward each other." Gravitate! What is that? Why, they all attract each other, in proportion to the quantity of matter they contain. "Nonsense all over," says Mr. Hutchinson, "jargon, self-contradiction! Can any thing act, where it is not? No, they are continually impelled toward each other." Impelled! by what? "By the subtil matter, the ether or electric fire." But, remember! be it ever so subtil, it is matter still: Consequently, it is as inert in itself as either sand or marble. It cannot, therefore, move itself—but, probably, it is the first material mover, the main spring whereby the Creator and Preserver of all things is pleased to move the universe.

7. *The true God* is also the *Redeemer* of all the children of men. It pleased the Father to lay upon him the iniquities of us all, that by the one oblation of himself once offered, when he tasted death for every man, he might make a full and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.

8. Again. The true God is the *Governor* of all things: "his kingdom ruleth over all." "The government rests upon his shoulder," throughout all ages. He is the Lord and Disposer of the whole creation, and every part of it. And in how astonishing a manner does he govern the world! How far are his ways above human thought! How little do we know of his methods of government! Only this we know, "*Ita præsides singulis sicut universis, et universis sicut singulis*." Thou presidest over each creature, as if it were the universe, and over the universe, as over each individual creature. Dwell a little upon this sentiment: what a glorious mystery does it contain! It is paraphrased from the words recited above:

"FATHER, how wide thy glories shine!
Lord of the universe—and mine;
Thy goodness watches o'er the whole,
As all the world were but one soul:
Yet keeps my every sacred hair,
As I remain'd thy single care!"

9. And yet there is a difference, as was said before, in his providential government over the children of men. A pious writer observes, There is a three-fold circle of Divine Providence. The *outermost circle* includes all the sons of men, Heathens, Mahometans, Jews, and Christians. He causeth his sun to rise upon all. He giveth them rain and fruitful seasons. He pours ten thousand benefits upon them, and fills their hearts with food and gladness. With an *interior circle*, he encompasses the whole visible Christian church—all that name the name of Christ. He has an additional regard to these, and a nearer attention to their welfare. But the *innermost circle* of his providence encloses only the invisible church of Christ: all real Christians, wherever dispersed in all corners of the earth—all that worship God (whatever denomination they are of) in spirit and in truth. He keeps these as the apple of an eye: he hides them under the shadow of his wings. And it is to these, in particular, that our Lord says, "Even the hairs of your head are all numbered."

10. Lastly, Being *the true God*, he is the end of all things, according to that solemn declaration of the Apostle, (Rom. xi. 36.) "Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things:" of him, as the Creator; through him, as the Sustainer and Preserver; and to him, as the ultimate end of all.