

# 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.

REV. A. H. BURWELL, Editor.]

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## THEOLOGY.

### FOR THE CHRISTIAN SENTINEL.

#### DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY—No. II.

IN my first Essay on the Doctrine of the Trinity, I assumed the position, that the Saviour of sinners is of necessity their God. A God I defined to be, a Being whom any one worships and serves, under the expectation of receiving kindness and protection from him. We know that this is the condition under which all idolaters worship false gods; because they regard them as *helpers*, or *protectors*, or *saviours*. In fact, it is the ground of all worship. Hence in Scripture the *self-existent* God is placed in opposition to false gods, as the only being worthy the title of God, and of the confidence of his worshippers. It is for this reason that the Scriptures teach us to trust in Christ—to believe on his name, or have faith in him as a Saviour—to pray to him, to serve, honor and worship him. If there were any superior Being able to pluck us out of his hand, he is not “able to save to the uttermost” in any case, and our confidence might as well be placed in a graven image. None can save but the “*true God*,” and him only is it lawful to serve and worship. Christ hath said of himself, that he is the life of men. John says of him, “God hath given unto us *eternal life*, and this life is in his Son.” “We are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. *This is the true God and eternal life*.” And John immediately adds: “Little children, keep yourselves from idols.” But what is idolatry? What, but the worship of some *created* being—a being that cannot save?

Let us further exemplify this notion of a God, as strictly applicable to our Lord, and to him only. To whom does a redeemed sinner owe his life, his love, his affection—his *allegiance itself*? Let us, according to our Lord's common custom, draw an illustration from human life. And since he took for a like purpose a king who commanded his rebellious subjects to be brought and slain before him, let us suppose the king decrees the death of such a one. But an innocent subject steps into his place, and surrenders his own life to save that of the criminal. The king accepts him as an equivalent, and sets the other free. Now to whom does he owe his life, and to whom should he be grateful? Can he regard the king, who coldly assented, and indifferently permitted it, as his benefactor, his Saviour? No, he cannot. Does he believe that mercy influenced his Majesty to spare his life? He knows to the reverse; and he sees nothing more in him to call forth his gratitude, or kindle his affections towards him, than as if he had ordered him to execution.

Precisely in a parallel case, in regard to God, on the antitrinitarian scheme, is a sinner saved by the blood of Christ, supposing it possible in the mean time for a *creature* to be a *Saviour*. He barely owes the Almighty cold distant thanks, and hardly that. He sees in the transaction no prevailing motive—no especial personal reason why he should love rather than hate him. He need not wish ever to hear of him again; because in the voluntary kindness of another, whom God barely permitted to be kind, he sees nothing directly between himself and the Almighty to bind him by the ties of affection: nothing to beget *personal* attachment and allegiance to him; nothing from spontaneous gratitude, to call forth a joyful and happy obedience. And yet, his heart, mind, soul, and strength, without a single motive arising from nature or relationship calculated to call forth that great tribute of affection. Unitarianism is certainly a cold, a cheerless, and a barren region for the cultivation of the plants of grace. And I do not wonder that it has adopted this motto: “*Where mystery begins, religion ends*.”

We are told that “no man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him?” But how, and in what character does the Son reveal him? Why truly, *in himself*,

*in his own conduct*, as it were by personal intercourse in the person of Immanuel, God with us. With this agrees other Scripture. “Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet thou hast not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father: and how sayeth thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me he doth the works.” The unity and community of nature and interest he has with the Father, precludes the possibility of his doing any thing “*of himself*” as distinct and radically of another order of being. “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” But how? Not by a curious account of his nature and person, but by declaring his goodness and other attributes in his own doctrine and conduct. His own actions were those of “the fullness of the Godhead,” and were no otherwise His than they were the Father's, nor the Father's that dwelt in him than they were his. Thus, in human partnerships, where there is unity and community of interest, design, and action, whatsoever one partner does as a partner is yet the *joint action of all*. The “fullness” of power resulting from the plurality in unity of the partnership resides in each one; and yet no one partner can do aught as of himself, but as of the firm. The partnership is one; its power is one; its interest is one: and whatsoever is of either is equally and in the same sense of all. And since the actions of Christ are literally and properly the actions of God by the Unity of the divine nature, St. Paul saith: “Be ye followers,” (or as it is in the original, *imitators* or *mimics*) “of God as dear children, and walk in love as Christ also hath loved us.” But how imitate the actions of God, seeing no man hath seen him at any time? Why truly, because the Son hath revealed him in himself and by his own conduct. He hath declared him, not merely as permitting the request of another, and coldly allowing him to do good to the unfortunate objects of his own displeasure; but in the person of the Son exhibiting himself “the God of all consolation,” as himself laying in the strongest personal claims to personal attachment and *undivided* loyalty and love, in the same character that is sustained by the God of Israel throughout the Old Testament. The Trinity in Unity is a partnership of nature, not of mere occasional convention. It is a firm co-existent and co-eternal with Deity. It has its foundation in the Divine nature itself, and therefore it can never be dissolved. The glorious and lovely attributes of God naturally flow out of it as living streams from an exhaustless fountain. And, Oh! here I could be eloquent on so sublime and magnificent a subject, were it proper to give the reign to my feelings in the midst of argument and disquisition.

Suppose again, that all the King's subjects were in open rebellion: the King has them completely in his power, and is going to judge them by the laws of his kingdom. His son somehow manages by great personal exertions and painful sacrifices to interpose and procure their exemption from punishment. He suffers amazingly on their account: he undertakes to advocate their cause. He mediates for them: he procures them life, liberty and happiness: he does every thing that can tend to rivet their affections on his own personal self. Suppose him also ambitious of his father's throne, saying: “O, that I were made judge in the land,” and should play the part of Absalom in stealing the hearts of those who already owed him their lives and liberties: how long would David wear his crown in peace? Could Absalom sit down with his Father in his throne (see Rev. iii. 21.) and rule the kingdom with him and for him, and yet equally for himself, unless David and Absalom were somehow substantially one in unity of counsel, means, aim and end, in such manner that it were naturally impossible for them to feel as two distinct beings, having separate individual rights and interests, which might clash with each other, and produce ambition, jealousy, and rivalry?