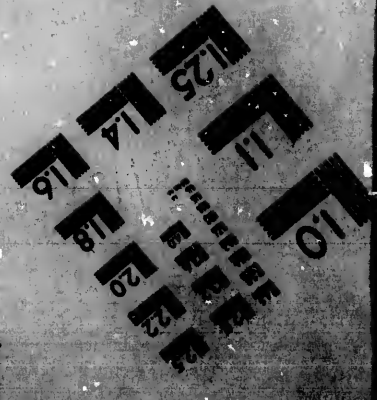
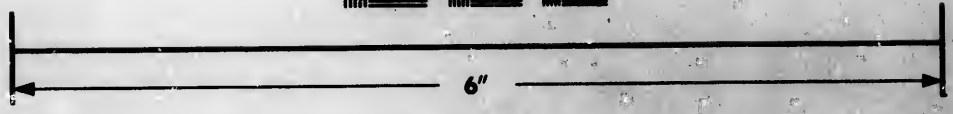
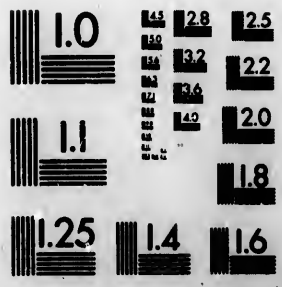


**IMAGE EVALUATION
TEST TARGET (MT-3)**



**Photographic
Sciences
Corporation**

23 WEST MAIN STREET
WEBSTER, N.Y. 14580
(716) 873-4800

**CIHM/ICMH
Microfiche
Series.**

**CIHM/ICMH
Collection de
microfiches.**



Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions / Institut canadien de microreproductions historiques

© 1983

Technical and Bibliographic Notes/Notes techniques et bibliographiques

The Institute has attempted to obtain the best original copy available for filming. Features of this copy which may be bibliographically unique, which may alter any of the images in the reproduction, or which may significantly change the usual method of filming, are checked below.

L'institut a microfilmé le meilleur exemplaire qu'il lui a été possible de se procurer. Les détails de cet exemplaire qui sont peut-être uniques du point de vue bibliographique, qui peuvent modifier une image reproduite, ou qui peuvent exiger une modification dans la méthode normale de filmage sont indiqués ci-dessous.

- Coloured covers/
Couverture de couleur
- Covers damaged/
Couverture endommagée
- Covers restored and/or laminated/
Couverture restaurée et/ou pelliculée
- Cover title missing/
Le titre de couverture manque
- Coloured maps/
Cartes géographiques en couleur
- Coloured ink (i.e. other than blue or black)/
Encre de couleur (i.e. autre que bleue ou noire)
- Coloured plates and/or illustrations/
Planches et/ou illustrations en couleur
- Bound with other material/
Relié avec d'autres documents
- Tight binding may cause shadows or distortion
along interior margin/
La reliure serrée peut causer de l'ombre ou de la
distortion le long de la marge intérieure
- Blank leaves added during restoration may
appear within the text. Whenever possible, these
have been omitted from filming/
Il se peut que certaines pages blanches ajoutées
lors d'une restauration apparaissent dans le texte,
mais, lorsque cela était possible, ces pages n'ont
pas été filmées.
- Additional comments:/
Commentaires supplémentaires:

- Coloured pages/
Pages de couleur
- Pages damaged/
Pages endommagées
- Pages restored and/or laminated/
Pages restaurées et/ou pelliculées
- Pages discoloured, stained or foxed/
Pages décolorées, tachetées ou piquées
- Pages detached/
Pages détachées
- Showthrough/
Transparence
- Quality of print varies/
Qualité inégale de l'impression
- Includes supplementary material/
Comprend du matériel supplémentaire
- Only edition available/
Seule édition disponible
- Pages wholly or partially obscured by errata
slips, tissues, etc., have been refilmed to
ensure the best possible image/
Les pages totalement ou partiellement
obscurcies par un feuillet d'errata, une pelure,
etc., ont été filmées à nouveau de façon à
obtenir la meilleure image possible.

This item is filmed at the reduction ratio checked below/
Ce document est filmé au taux de réduction indiqué ci-dessous.

10X	12X	14X	16X	18X	20X	22X	24X	26X	28X	30X	32X
					X						

The copy filmed here has been reproduced thanks to the generosity of:

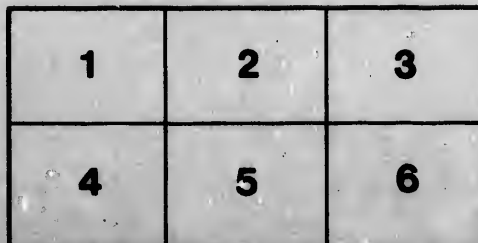
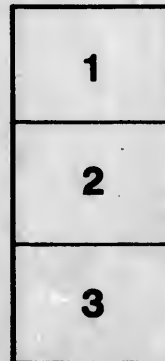
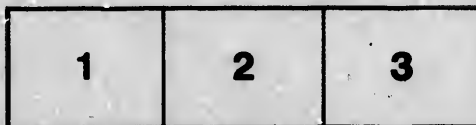
Library of the Public
Archives of Canada

The images appearing here are the best quality possible considering the condition and legibility of the original copy and in keeping with the filming contract specifications.

Original copies in printed paper covers are filmed beginning with the front cover and ending on the last page with a printed or illustrated impression, or the back cover when appropriate. All other original copies are filmed beginning on the first page with a printed or illustrated impression, and ending on the last page with a printed or illustrated impression.

The last recorded frame on each microfiche shall contain the symbol → (meaning "CONTINUED"), or the symbol ▼ (meaning "END"), whichever applies.

Maps, plates, charts, etc., may be filmed at different reduction ratios. Those too large to be entirely included in one exposure are filmed beginning in the upper left hand corner, left to right and top to bottom, as many frames as required. The following diagrams illustrate the method:



L'exemplaire filmé fut reproduit grâce à la générosité de:

La bibliothèque des Archives
publiques du Canada

Les images suivantes ont été reproduites avec le plus grand soin, compte tenu de la condition et de la netteté de l'exemplaire filmé, et en conformité avec les conditions du contrat de filmage.

Les exemplaires originaux dont la couverture en papier est imprimée sont filmés en commençant par le premier plat et en terminant soit par la dernière page qui comporte une empreinte d'impression ou d'illustration, soit par le second plat, selon le cas. Tous les autres exemplaires originaux sont filmés en commençant par la première page qui comporte une empreinte d'impression ou d'illustration et en terminant par la dernière page qui comporte une telle empreinte.

Un des symboles suivants apparaîtra sur la dernière image de chaque microfiche, selon le cas: le symbole → signifie "A SUIVRE", le symbole ▼ signifie "FIN".

Les cartes, planches, tableaux, etc., peuvent être filmés à des taux de réduction différents. Lorsque le document est trop grand pour être reproduit en un seul cliché, il est filmé à partir de l'angle supérieur gauche, de gauche à droite, et de haut en bas, en prenant le nombre d'images nécessaire. Les diagrammes suivants illustrent la méthode.

ails
du
diffier
une
page

rate

elure.
à

2X



THE PHILOSOPHIC ORIGIN
AND
HISTORIC PROGRESS

OF THE

Doctrine of the Trinity ;

A LECTURE.

Delivered in the Unitarian Church Montreal, on Sunday Evening
January 26th, 1851.

BY JOHN CORDNER.

Published by Request.

MONTREAL:

PRINTED BY JOHN C. BECKET, NO. 22, GREAT ST. JAMES STREET.

1851.

H

De

H

PR

THE PHILOSOPHIC ORIGIN
AND
HISTORIC PROGRESS

OF THE

Doctrine of the Trinity ;

A LECTURE.

Delivered in the Unitarian Church Montreal, on Sunday Evening
January 26th, 1851.

BY JOHN CORDNER.

~~~~~  
**Published by Request.**  
~~~~~

MONTREAL :

PRINTED BY JOHN C. BECKET, NO. 22, GREAT ST. JAMES STREET.

1851.

THE following Lecture was prepared in the usual course of pulpit duty, and without any view to publication, at a juncture when I thought some such Discourse was demanded. A written communication, signed by many friends, was presented to me next day, expressing an "earnest desire that I would allow it to be printed for gratuitous distribution." I scarcely felt at liberty to decline such a request, and so the manuscript goes to the printer. My friends, in their request, profess to be influenced by a desire to serve the cause of Truth and Religion; and I, myself, am conscious of no other motive in giving it to the public. Whatever may be wrong in it, I am willing should perish. And as for the Truth it may contain, the God of all Truth will take care of *that*. To God's Providence, then, I commit it without fear, and to all who love Truth, better than sect or party, I commend it with becoming humility.

J. C.

PL

MA

W
tion
Ap
"C
dis
—v
gra
Sor
and
hun
dic
wr
to
and
onl
deg
Go
ma
ren
get
wit
reg
bee
wo
pag
ma
unl
wo
act
ten
sita
the
wh
sta
put
the

THE
PHILOSOPHIC ORIGIN & HISTORIC PROGRESS
OF THE
DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

MAT. XIII. 27.—“Didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?”

We were engaged on last Sunday evening in considering the question, publicly put to us, “Who is Christ?” To this we gave the Apostolic answer, contenting ourselves to rest in humble faith that “Christ is the Son of God,” without attempting any psychological dissection of his interior nature, or metaphysical analysis of his person—without attempting to be wise above what is written, but receiving gratefully the plain statements of Holy Writ concerning him as the Son, Messiah, or Messenger, sent by the Father to instruct, elevate, and redeem humanity. We have no hesitation in discarding any human theories concerning his person, or nature, which go to contradict or confuse what he himself has plainly said, and what the sacred writers have plainly written on that topic. It is no recommendation to me that any human theories concerning religion are very accurate and precise in their statements; for this accuracy and precision may only make their contradiction more obvious. By attempting a greater degree of precision than the Holy Scriptures on the high concerns of God and Christ, human theories and creeds, as I conceive, have been marring matters, rather than mending them. By doing so, they have rent the Church, which should have been one body, ever bound together by the binding power of love. But many will not be satisfied without precise definitions. The statements of the Scriptures are regarded as not sufficiently exact: hence creeds and confessions have been drawn up as tests of orthodoxy. To say that you believe the words of the Lord Jesus and his Apostles, as these are recorded in the pages of the New Testament, is far from being sufficient in the estimation of many persons. They will probably call you an infidel, unless you consent to receive their human interpretations of those words; thus putting their human interpretations on a level with the actual teaching of the blessed Christ himself. They construct a system out of their human reason interpreting the Scripture, and if you hesitate to accept this system, or venture to assail it, they forthwith raise the cry that you are invading the mysteries of religion by your reason, when the simple truth is, that you are only exercising your understanding to keep clear of their errors. It is only human reason disputing the conclusions of human reason. Thus—a certain theory of the Godhead has become prevalent and popular. By this theory the

Supreme Being is represented as existing in three distinct and co-equal persons. We take the liberty to question its soundness and deny its truth. What is the consequence? It is forthwith said that the Unitarians are unduly elevating human reason—that we are vain of heart, and proud of understanding. But what is the actual state of the case? Obviously this: the Trinitarian has constructed his theory of the Trinity by reasoning from the Scriptures, and the Unitarian only disputes that reasoning, and declines to accept its conclusions. The Unitarian still abides by the Scriptures. He holds the Bible in his hand, and says to the Trinitarian, “point out to me where your doctrine of three persons in the Godhead is stated there, and I will receive it. You say there are three persons in the Godhead—you say that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one God, equal in power and glory. Now, only show me such statements in the Bible, and I will receive them without farther questioning.” But the Trinitarian cannot do so. He has to resort to a process of comparison and reasoning to *construct* his doctrine. His comparisons we deem insufficient, and his reasoning unsatisfactory, and so we decline to accept his conclusions, and still demand a *scripture statement* of the doctrine. He will probably present us with the Apostolic benediction, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all,” (2 Cor. xiii. 14.) But here we find no statement of three persons in one God. We find simply a pious parting wish uttered by the Apostle at the close of his epistle, to the effect that the grace or favor of the Lord Jesus Christ, and God’s love, and the blessed influences of God’s Spirit should abide with the Corinthians, to whom he wrote.* Or the Trinitarian may present us with our Lord’s commission to the Apostles, “Go ye and teach (make disciples of) all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,” (Matt. xxviii. 19.) But this is also defective for the purpose alleged. There is no statement of three persons in one God here. The command is to baptize into the name of, or into the profession of faith in, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as the agencies and instrumentalities engaged in the origination, promulgation, and confirmation of the gospel—into the belief of the Father as the great Originator of the scheme of Christian salvation; of the Son, as the Messenger sent by the Father to announce it to the world; of the Holy Spirit, by whose active influence it was confirmed in the beginning by miracles and signs, and through which it is still confirmed in the hearts of the humble and the faithful.† Or possibly we may still be presented with the text of

* The force of the Trinitarian argument from 2 Cor. xiii. 14, is supposed to lie in the fact of the collocation of terms; but the ground seems to me extremely feeble. For independently of the fact that the second or middle term is “God,” distinguished from Christ, and which, of itself, is sufficient to invalidate the argument—independently of this fact, I say, we find such collocation in usage with Paul. His 1st Ep. to the Corinthians closes with this pious parting wish:—“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you; my love be with you all, &c.”

† Here, also, the force of the Trinitarian argument is supposed to lie in the collocation of terms, in conjunction with the fact that it occurs in a formula of baptism. With respect to the former, we say that collocation of terms is no proof of equality of the persons denoted by the terms. We read in 1 Chron. xxix. 20, that all the congregation “worshipped the Lord and the King.” Here is a collocation of terms, by which Jehovah and the King are formally connected as objects of worship. But this does not prove the King co-equal with Jehovah. Nor are we bound

the three heavenly witnesses, since I observe it is yet permitted to stand as a leading proof text in the Westminster Confession and Catechism. "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one," (1 John v. 7.) Here it may be thought the desired statement is made. Here the three alleged persons of the Trinity are named together and called "one." And this is the only place where such a statement is made within the covers of the Bible. But this text requires no remark from us. For I hope I need scarcely remind you that it is not a genuine passage of Scripture. It is an acknowledged interpolation.*

The Trinitarian, then, cannot state his doctrine in Scripture language. To use the words of a Trinitarian theologian, it is "a doctrine of inference," i. e., a doctrine said to be drawn from the Scriptures by a process of inferential reasoning. This is the most which the Protestant Trinitarian theologian can claim for it. But this, again, is denied by the great majority even of those who accept the doctrine, and by the overwhelming majority of the Christian world. For the Roman Catholics are in the habit of denying that the doctrine of the Trinity can be proved from Scripture without the aid of tradition. "My belief in the Trinity is based on the authority of the Church," says the Roman Catholic controversialist, "no other authority is sufficient."† And the majority of Protestants in France and Germany reject the Trinity of the Athanasian Creed, or Westminster Confession: I may say, indeed, that they reject a Trinity of persons under any form of statement. In the United States of America there are probably three thousand congregations of Christians under various names, who reject the Triune theory of the Godhead, and adhere to the strict Unity of the Deity. Now, when all this is

to infer that baptism, into a given name, implies the Supreme Deity of the person indicated by the name. The Jewish people "were all baptized unto Moses," (1 Cor. x. 2).—It is only by a careful study and comparison of the general language of Scripture, that we can avoid prevailing mistakes, and arrive at a truthful interpretation.

* I have been informed that in the delivery of this discourse, some of my Trinitarian hearers did not consider my remarks concerning 1 John, v. 7, sufficiently explicit. I certainly did not dwell upon this text, which I thought every intelligent christian knew to be a forgery. I could not suppose that those who were habitual attendants on the ministrations of the christian pulpits around us, would still remain in ignorance of a fact of such marked importance in the criticism of the christian Scriptures. Sir Isaac Newton has written a history of this "Corruption of Scripture," to which I would willingly direct the attention of my readers. But as Newton was an Unitarian, it may be considered more desirable, for present purposes, to produce the testimony of Trinitarians. So long ago, then, as 1809, the Eclectic Review pronounced 1 John, v. 7, a "gross interpolation." Dr. Pye Smith, in his Scripture Testimony, styles this verse "spurious," and says, with reference to some who would assert its genuineness, that "the attempt to set aside the decision of impartial and honest criticism is painfully discreditable." Bishop Loth says, "I believe there is no one among us, in the least degree conversant with sacred criticism, and having the use of his understanding, who would be willing to contend for the genuineness of the verse 1 John, v. 7." And Dr. Adam Clarke, in his commentary, closes a lengthened dissertation on this verse in these words—"In short, it stands on no authority sufficient to authenticate any part of a revelation professing to have come from God." Similar testimonies might be multiplied.

† Discussion between the Rev. Mr. Hughes and the Rev. Mr. Stoney, at Castle bar, Ireland, in 1837.

considered, it will be seen that the Trinitarians who assert that the doctrine can be proved by a process of inferential reasoning from the Scriptures, form but a small minority. But we do not notice this fact as any argument against the truth of their system. It is not denied that the Unitarians are in the minority in the Christian world, and the Trinitarians in the great majority. But it is a circumstance well worthy of note by the candid enquirer, that by far the greater number of that Trinitarian majority do not rest their doctrine on *scriptural grounds*; so that the case stands thus—the overwhelming majority of the Christian world deny that the doctrine of the Trinity can be legitimately drawn from the Scriptures by any process of inferential reasoning. While there is no Trinitarian whatever, of any class, who pretends, or can pretend, that his doctrine is expressly stated in the Scriptures.

Now I put the question in all earnestness to every serious and candid mind—I would ask, Is it likely that in a volume of writings containing no fewer than 66 different treatises or books, as the Bible does—I would ask, Is it likely that in such an extensive volume, avowedly written to instruct mankind in religion, there should be no statement of God's existence in *three persons*, if that doctrine really formed any part of the faith of the writers? Surely if the sacred writers had intended to teach the doctrine of *three persons in one God*, they would have written it somewhere in their 66 books. Well might the eminently pious Dr. Isaac Watts say in his "Solemn Address to God," "Hadst thou told me plainly in any single text that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three real persons in thy divine nature, I had never suffered myself to be bewildered by so many doubts." It was the obvious deficiency of such a statement which led Dr. Watts, in his later years, to set aside the doctrine of a tri-personal Deity. Now, suppose a number of "orthodox" theologians of the present day were requested to issue 66 treatises setting forth and illustrating the history and the doctrines of religion, would they omit to make express statement of the Trinity? Would they leave any room for their readers to doubt their belief in it? The answer is obvious. They would state it over and over again. They consider it a fundamental doctrine, and it would be their duty to do so. How, then, can we account for the omission of such express statement by the writers of the sacred Scriptures? Only in one way. They were unacquainted with the doctrine of a Trinity, or if they knew it, they did not consider it a true doctrine of religion.

The holy prophets and apostles sowed "good seed"—they gave sound religious teaching. Whence, then, came the "tares"—the strange and mistaken doctrines which have sprung up and spread so extensively in the field of Christianity? We are now considering the doctrine of the Godhead. Inconsiderate polemics sometimes taunt Unitarians for being in the small minority, and point triumphantly to the vast multitude of Trinitarian believers—the reputedly orthodox of Christendom. The enquiry, then, is fitting; Whence came a Trinity of persons in the Deity? How came it to attain its present position in the world? And to give an answer to these questions will be the aim of the following discourse.

The doctrine of the Trinity, we say, sprung, not from the statements of the oracles of God, but from the refined speculations of human philosophy. I respectfully ask your attention while I offer my reasons for saying so. The subject is one of vast importance; at least it seems so to me, and I hope it seems so to you. I have nothing to gain by bearing testimony against a popular doctrine. If I consulted my own ease merely, I should remain silent on the subject. If I were content to go with the multitude it might accord better with my temporal interest and convenience. But Truth is of more consequence to me than the favor of the multitude. And I cannot remain indifferent to it, but must affirm it openly, be the result what it may. If I be not true to my inward conviction, woe be unto me, for God never permits himself to be mocked with impunity. The present approbation of a few men and women would be but a paltry item to place against the future sorrow and shame of a violated and wronged conscience. The inward emptiness and weakness which come from falsity or indifference, form but a sorry substitute for the fulness and force which come from simple fidelity to inward conviction, and which are the certain recompense of a soul true to itself and to God.

I speak, then, because I must speak, and dare not be silent under the circumstances. But while I speak, let me remind you that you must use your own judgments in forming your own opinions. All I have a right to ask is a candid and attentive hearing. And I am willing to hope that I shall have this from the audience which I now see before me. Let us remember that God is ever present with us, and let us ever seek the aid of his good Spirit which is able to guide us into all Truth.

About 360 years before the Christian era, flourished Plato, the celebrated Athenian Sage. That great man was superior to the popular idolatry of his country and time. He held the doctrine of a supreme First Cause, unseen, and ever active—the fountain of all goodness, wisdom and life. He had many and ardent disciples, men who admired their great master-mind, followed him through the academic shades of Athens while living, and carefully studied his writings when dead. He formed a school of philosophy by which his name was perpetuated from generation to generation. His disciples were proud of their master, and took their name from him. They were called Platonists. It is not requisite here to speak of their doctrines generally. In this discussion we are concerned with only one of those doctrines. The Divinity of the Platonists was Triad, or Trinity of Hypostases or persons. Their first was *To Agathon*—the Supreme Good, their second was called *Logos* or *Nous*—Mind or Intellect; their third was called *Psyche*—Soul. To give you an idea of this Platonic doctrine of a Trinity in the divine nature I shall quote from Cudworth's "Intellectual System." The second hypostasis or person of the Platonic Trinity was said to have been generated from the first. "But that the second hypostasis or person [in the Platonic Trinity] viz., Mind or Intellect, though said to have been generated, or to have proceeded by way of emanation from the first called *To Agathon*, the Good; was, notwithstanding, unquestionably acknowledged to have been eternal, or without beginning, might be proved" says Dr. Cud-

worth, "by many express testimonies of the most genuine Platonists." And then the learned author of the "Intellectual System" cites Plotinus, a Platonic writer to this effect. "Let all temporal generation here be quite banished from our thoughts, whilst we treat of things eternal, or such as always are; we attributing generation to them only in respect of causality and order, but not of time. And though Plotinus," continues Cudworth "there speaks particularly of the second hypostasis or *Nous*, yet does he afterwards extend the same also to the third hypostasis of that Trinity, called *Psyche* or the mundane Soul."

Again, we read "that though the genuine Platonists or Pythagoreans supposed none of their three archæal hypostases to be indeed *creatures*, but all of them *eternal, necessarily existent, and universal or infinite*, and consequently creators of the whole world; yet did they nevertheless, assert an essential dependence of the second hypostasis upon the *first*, as also the third both upon the *first* and *second*, together with a gradual subordination in them."

Farther, we are informed, "that though these philosophers sometimes called their three Divine hypostases not only *Treis Physeis*, three natures, and three principles, and three causes, and three opificers; but also three Gods; and a first, and second, and third God; yet did they often for all that, suppose all these to be One *Theion*, one Divinity". "Thus when God is often spoken of in Plato singularly, the word is not always to be understood of the first hypostasis only, or *To Agathon*, but many times plainly of the *proton*, and *deuteron*, and *triton*, the first, and second, and third, all together, or that whole Divinity which consisteth or is made up of these three hypostases."† "The Platonists, therefore," continues Dr. Cudworth in another place, "first of all suppose such a close and near conjunction betwixt the three hypostases of their Trinity as is nowhere else to be found in the whole world." To show this, he cites a passage from Plotinus, the Platonic philosopher already named. "The Platonists further declare," says this very learned author, "that these hypostases of their Trinity are absolutely indivisible, and inseparable, as is the splendor indivisibly conjoined with the light or sun: *which similitude Athanasius often makes use of to the same purpose*. These Platonists seem likewise to attribute to their three divine hypostases just such a circumcession or mutual in-being as Christians do. For as their second and third hypostases must needs be in the first, they being therein virtually contained; so must the first likewise be in the second and third, they being, as it were, but two other editions thereof, or itself gradually displayed and expanded. But to speak particularly, the first must needs be in the second, the *Agathon* in the *Nous*, and so both of them really *one* and the *same* God."[§]

The citations just made will, I hope, convey to your minds a tolerably distinct impression of the Platonic doctrine of the Deity. You will perceive the conception of the Platonic philosophers was that of a Trinity of hypostases, or persons, subsisting in the Supreme Being—

* Cudworth's Intellectual System of the Universe p. 573.

† Ibid, p. 590.

‡ Ibid, p. 588.

§ Ibid, p. 590.

the second being *generated* from the first; and the third being essentially *dependent* both on the *first* and *second*, while yet it is asserted that all three are *co-essential*, *co-eternal*, and one *Divinity*.

Two facts are now before us, which I wish you carefully to bear in mind:

1st. The doctrine of a Trinity of persons in the Godhead is *not* plainly expressed in the Sacred Scriptures.

2nd. Such a doctrine is plainly taught in the writings of the Platonic philosophers.

It will be readily perceived that there is a marked difference between the manner in which the subject of God's existence is spoken of by our Lord and his Apostles, and that in which it is spoken of by the disciples of the Athenian philosopher.

I ask your attention, now, to another fact of great importance. There is to be found no recognition of the present doctrine of the Trinity in the works of any of the Christian writers of the first three centuries. Says a highly reputable living writer,—“I am prepared to state, without fear of contradiction, that the doctrine of the *equality* of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, cannot be found in any genuine Christian work of the *three* first centuries, and that there cannot be found, with reference to the Divine nature, in any genuine Christian work of the first *two* centuries any statement of doctrine equivalent, or approaching to, or consistent with, the modern doctrine of the Trinity.”*

Let me offer a few very brief citations from the works of those early Christian writers, in illustration of their opinions, and I will leave you to form your own judgment as to whether they could have been believers in the co-equality of the alleged persons of the Godhead.

Clement of Rome, A. D. 96, writes, “The Apostles preached the gospel to us from the Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus Christ from God. Christ, therefore was *sent out* by God, and the Apostles by Christ. Both these events were ordered by the *will of God*.”†

Justin Martyr, A. D. 140. “I will endeavor to show that he who appeared to Abraham, Jacob, and Moses, and who is called God in Scripture, is different from the God who made all things, numerically different, but the same in will. For I say that he never made anything but what that God who made all things, and above whom there is no God *willed* that he should do and say.”‡

Clement of Alexandria, A. D. 194. “There is *One Unbegotten Almighty Father*, and one first begotten, by whom all things were, and without whom nothing was made. For one is truly God who made the *arche* (beginning) of all things, meaning his first begotten Son.”§

* A. P. Peabody. Lectures on Christian Doctrine, p. 41.

† Clement's Ep. Sect. 42. ‡ Dial. cum Tryph, p. 252.

§ Strom. lib. vi. p. 644.

Tertullian, A. D. 200. This writer is the author of a work against Praxeas who advocated the strictness of the Divine Unity, with much success in Africa at the close of the second century. Therein he writes:—"I do not altogether say there are Gods and Lords, but I follow the Apostle, so that if the Father and the Son are named together, I call the Father God, and Jesus Christ *Lord*; though I can call Christ God when speaking of himself alone."* And he explains this expression by the illustration of a ray, coming from the Sun, which may with propriety, he says, be called the Sun.

Origen, A. D. 230. Referring to those who were jealous for the Divine Unity, this writer says: "We may by this means solve the doubts which terrify many men, who pretend to great piety, and who are afraid of making two Gods. For we must tell them that he who is *God of himself*, is *THE God*, even as our Saviour affirms in his prayer to his *Father*, 'that they may know *Thee*, *THE only True God*;' but that whosoever becomes divine by partaking of his divinity, cannot be styled *THE God*, but a God, among whom especially is *the first born of every creature*." Also he says:—"The Saviour and the Holy Spirit are more excelled by the Father, than he (Christ) and the Holy Spirit excel other things, etc., and he (Christ) though excelling such and such great things (*viz.* thrones, principalities, etc.,) in essence and office, and power, and Godhead, is by no means to be compared to the Father."†

Novatian, A. D. 251. "The rule of truth teaches us to believe, after the FATHER, in the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ; our God, yet the Son of God, of that God who is ONE and ALONE, the Maker of all things."‡

Eusebius of Casaria, A. D. 315. "The only begotten Son of God, and first-born of every creature, teaches us to call his FATHER the ONLY TRUE GOD, and commands us to worship HIM (the Father) only."§

From the quotations just given, you may form your own opinion as to whether those ancient fathers of the Church were believers in a Trinity of co-equal persons in the Godhead. To me it seems evident they were not. This, then, is another particular, which I ask you to bear in mind, in connexion with the other two, already named.

Now let me turn your attention to yet another circumstance in history. "The arms of the Macedonians diffused over Asia and Egypt, the language and learning of Greece; and the theological

* Adv. Prax. Sect. 13. † Comment. Vol. ii, pp. 47—218. ‡ Cap. ix, p. 26. § Præparatio, lib. vii, cap. 15.

|| Quotations to a similar effect, from the ante-Nicene fathers, might be multiplied. See Priestley's History of Opinions; Dr. Samuel Clarke's Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity; Forrest's Account of the Origin of Trinitarian Theology; Peabody's Lectures on Christian Doctrine; Thom's Lecture on the Trinity in Liverpool Controversy, between three Unitarian Ministers, and thirteen Clergymen of the Church of England. It is to the first, third, and fifth, of the works just named, that I am indebted for the references appended to the citations from the seven ancient Christian writers given above.

system of Plato was taught with less reserve, and, perhaps, with some improvements, in the celebrated school of Alexandria. A numerous colony of Jews had been invited by favor of the Ptolomies, to settle in their new capital. While the bulk of the nation practised the legal ceremonies, and pursued the lucrative occupations of commerce, a few Hebrews of a more liberal spirit devoted their lives to religious and philosophical contemplation. They cultivated with diligence, and embraced with ardor the theological system of the Athenian sage." Here, then, we have a school of Platonic philosophy established at Alexandria, in Egypt. Numbers of Jews in that place, who devoted their lives to philosophical studies, admired the theological system of Plato, and effected an union between it and the theology of Moses. This was the first inroad on the pure monotheism of the Bible. As Christianity was propogated, it found its way likewise to that noted seat of commerce and learning, Alexandria. Here the simple doctrines of the Gospel came in contact with minds imbued with the metaphysical subtleties of the Platonic philosophy. Those minds, vain of their subtle wisdom, and proud of their fashionable doctrines, could not brook the idea of accepting in its simplicity, the system of a Teacher who had been hunted down in his native country and crucified like a common slave. As this had been "to the Jews a stumbling-block," so it was "to the Greeks foolishness." The plain doctrines of Christianity were *too plain* for men accustomed to such refined speculations. They were led, therefore, to seek in the Christian system ideas corresponding to those to which they had been accustomed in their popular and fashionable philosophy. In such a state of mind, they would readily and eagerly seize on any apparent approximation to their favorite notions, and in the employment of the term *Logos* by the Apostle John, in the introduction to his Gospel, they discovered a point which they thought justified them in blending the doctrines of Platonism with those of Christianity. *Logos* is a Greek term signifying sometimes "word," "doctrine," "discourse," &c., and sometimes the "reason," or rational faculty in man. This was one of the terms used by the Platonists to denote the second hypostasis or person in their divinity. They, therefore, interpreted the Apostle John in this sense. They made the *Logos*, or 'Word,' a second hypostasis or person in the Deity, and thus laid the foundation of the present Church doctrine of the Trinity. I do not say they completed this doctrine, for it was a work of time to bring it to its present state, as I shall presently show. But I say that in this way the Platonic philosophers who embraced the Christian religion laid the basis of the present popular doctrine of a trinity of *co-equal* persons in the Godhead.

Gibbon, in his peculiar style, says, that "the Athenian Sage had marvellously anticipated one of the most surprising discoveries of the Christian Revelation." But this sneer of the historian falls lightly on me. It falls lightly on me, for I deny that the Trinity forms any part of the Christian Revelation; and I sorely regret that the popular faith of the Christian Church should seem to give ground for such a sneer.

* Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Vol. iii, pp. 318, 314.

I attach but inferior value to his opinions on points of religion, though, like others, I am willing to learn from his page in matters of historical fact. He tells us, also, that "the same subtle and profound questions concerning the nature, the generation, the distinction, and the equality of the three divine persons of the mysterious Triad or Trinity were agitated in the *philosophical* and in the *Christian Schools of Alexandria*." No less a champion of the Trinity than Bishop Horsley himself acknowledges that the Platonic converts to Christianity "applied the principles of their old philosophy to the explication and confirmation of the articles of their faith. They defended it by arguments drawn from Platonic principles, and *even propounded it in Platonic language*."† And St. Augustine, in his *Confessions*, has stated that he was in darkness about the matter, until he found the doctrine concerning the *Logos*, or "Word," in a Latin translation of some Platonic writings.‡ Thus plainly admitting that it was the Platonic philosophy which moulded this portion of his Christian faith.

But while the doctrine of the simple Unity of God was invaded and obscured in one part of the world by the influence of Gentile philosophy, it was steadily maintained in its purity in another. The Jews of Palestine were not familiarised with the Platonic writings, as the Jews and people of Egypt were. They knew nothing of a threefold nature in God. Many of them received Jesus as the Messiah, or Christ of God. Such, you know, was the declaration and doctrine of Peter, one of the earliest of those Jewish converts to the Gospel. But none of this class ever did accept the doctrine of the Supreme Deity of the Son. On this account they came to be set down afterwards among the heretics. Through the influences already referred to, however, the doctrine of the Deity of the *Logos*, or "Word," came to be introduced among Christian believers generally, and propagated in the Church. At its introduction, its advocates did not aim to establish an absolute equality, for some of the fathers who advocate the doctrine, plainly intimate elsewhere in their writings, the subordination of the Son to the Father. How the attempt to introduce it was met by the great body of Christians, may be learned from a passage in the writings of Tertullian:—"The simple, the ignorant and the un-learned, who are always the greater part of the body of Christians, since the rule of faith [the Apostles' creed probably] transfers the worship of many Gods to the one true God, not understanding that the unity of God is to be maintained but with the economy [distribution of persons], dread this economy; imagining that this number and disposition of a Trinity is the division of the Unity. They, therefore, will have it that we are worshippers of two, and even of three Gods, but that they are the worshippers of one God only. 'We,' say they,

* Decline and Fall, Vol. iii, p. 319

† Charge iv. § 2, *spud* Norton on the Trinity.—The Bishop elsewhere professes to rejoice in the similitude between the Christian and the Platonic Trinity, and thinks that "the advocates of the Catholic faith have been too apt to take alarm at the charge of Platonism." He thinks that in such similitude he discovers additional argument to confirm his own views. We leave him to his rejoicing. Perhaps some will think that the learned Prelate made a virtue of necessity.

‡ *Opp.* 1, p. 128.—See also Translation of Augustine's *Confessions*. Boston: 1843. Book vii.

'hold the monarchy,' [absolute Unity]. Even the Latins have learned to bawl out for the monarchy, and the Greeks themselves will not understand the economy.*

The repugnance of the generality of christians to this new and strange doctrine, may be farther learned from Origen, who writes that when it is necessary, the Gospel must be taught in a corporeal or literal way, "saying to the carnal, that we know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified. But when persons are found confirmed in the spirit, and in love with heavenly wisdom, [i. e., persons more refined, and capable of understanding his spiritual philosophy], we must impart to them the *Logos*,"† that is the mysterious doctrine of his divinity.

But the new opinion (involving a distribution of the Supreme Divinity, similar to that of the Platonists,) gradually advanced in the Christian world. Its advocates were earnest in their recommendation of it. It is reasonable to suppose that Justin Martyr may be taken as the representative of a class. That writer was a Platonic philosopher as well as a Christian, and he writes to another Platonic philosopher, who was not a Christian, saying that Christ corresponds to the second person of the Trinity, as Plato their master had taught them. The doctrine carries some subtleties and nice distinctions along with it, which circumstance would recommend it to a certain class of minds; while, at the same time, it has an air of mystery and marvel about it which would recommend it to another class—to a class of ruder and less cultivated cast, and naturally fond of the marvellous. It gradually advanced, however, obscuring the simplicity of the Gospel; and early in the fourth century, the indiscreet zeal of Alexander, bishop of Alexandria, brought the matter to open and public controversy. Alexandria, the great seat of the Platonic philosophy, was the birth-place of the alleged Christian doctrine of a Trinity. Here it was generated, and here it flourished, until it gathered strength and boldness from the number of its adherents. Alexander, the bishop, in an assembly of his clergy, alleged and asserted that the Son was consubstantial (*homoousian*) with the Father. Here he was promptly met by Arius, one of his presbyters, who assailed the doctrine of his bishop, and maintained the proper subordination of the Son. This was the commencement of a controversy, the most important on the page of history—a controversy which shook the Church and the world. The grand question at issue was the doctrine of the Godhead. Arius (who was the leader of what may be called the Unitarian party of the time,) maintaining the supremacy of the Father, and the absolute Unity of the Supreme Being. Now *Arius was no Platonist*. For saying this we have the authority of Dr. Cudworth. But Arius was standing in opposition to his bishop. Powerful influences were, therefore, against him. Alexander assembled a council of his clergy, at which he himself presided; and he procured a sentence of excom-

* Adv. Praxeam, cap. liii. ap. Priestley's History of Opinions, Lardner's Credibility, and other writers.

† Comment. ii, p. 9. History of Opinions. Book iii, chap. 13.

munication against his opponent. The result was, Arius and his adherents were deposed from their offices in the Church. This was the first stage of the great Arian controversy.

This step of the Bishop quickened the zeal of the Arians. They were not to be thus speedily extinguished. The discussion was carried on with great vigor, and no little acrimony on both sides. So violent did the dispute become, that appeal was made to the Emperor Constantine. The Emperor was unwilling to interfere. He addressed both parties in an epistle recommending peace and unity. But the adherents of the bishop urged his interference, and he yielded to their request. As the most proper and effectual way of deciding the controversy, he resolved to call a general Council of the Church, "and *that*" says Waddington, "was, perhaps, the most critical moment in ecclesiastical history, in which Constantine determined to convoke the Council of Nice."³

Here the same historian's account of that assembly:—"In the year 325, A. D., about three hundred and eighteen Bishops assembled at Nice, (Niccæa) in Bithynia, for the purpose of composing the Arian controversy. 'Let us consider,' says Dr. Jortin, 'by what various motives these various men might be influenced; by reverence to the Emperor, or to his counsellors and favorites; his slaves and eunuchs, by fear of offending some great prelate, who had it in his power to insult, vex and plague all the Bishops within and without his jurisdiction, by the dread of passing for Heretics, and of being calumniated, reviled, hated, anathematized, excommunicated, imprisoned, banished, fined, beggared, starved, if they refused to submit; by compliance with some active, leading and imperious spirits; by a deference to the majority; by a love of dictating and domineering, of applause and respect; by vanity and ambition; by a total ignorance of the question in debate, or a total indifference about it; by private friendship, by enmity and resentment, by old prejudices, by hopes of gain, by an indolent disposition, by good nature, by the fatigue of attending, and a desire to be at home, by the love of peace and quiet, and a hatred of contention, &c., &c.'" These considerations will enable us to form an opinion of the value of any decision such an assemblage should arrive at. "The Bishops began," continues Waddington, "by much personal dissension, and presented to the Emperor a variety of written accusations against each other. The Emperor burnt all their libels, and exhorted them to peace and unity. They then proceeded to examine the momentous question proposed to them." And after much acrimony and unintelligible argument, the decision went against the Arian opinions, and by this Council was "established, respecting the *two first persons* of the Trinity, the doctrine which the Church still professes in the Nicene Creed."⁴ These considerations will farther enable us to judge of the value to be attached to the Nicene Creed. And to crown the whole, Arius was banished, his writings committed to the flames, and sentence of death pronounced against any

³ Waddington's Church History, pp., 91, 92, 93.

person in whose possession copies of those writings should hereafter be found.

But it is difficult to crush opinion. A steady and persevering course of heartless persecution may and will do it; but great as was the disaster of the decision of the Council of Nice, the Arians were far from being subdued. Strong in the strength of what they conceived to be the truth, they continued to profess and promulgate their opinions, not only throughout Asia, but in Alexandria itself. And such was the effect of their efforts, that Constantine recalled Arius from banishment, and subsequently received baptism from an Arian bishop. In the meantime, however, Alexander died, and he was succeeded in the see of Alexandria by the celebrated Athanasius. This man likewise succeeded to all his predecessor's enmity against Arius and his opinions. He protested against the recall of that distinguished exile; but in vain. For now the imperial favor was setting toward the Arian party. Athanasius himself, shortly afterwards shared the fate he was so anxious to perpetuate on his opponent. At a Council held at Tyre, A. D., 335, he was condemned and banished. Soon after the death of Constantine, he was restored. Constantine was succeeded in the throne by his son Constantius, a very zealous Arian. Athanasius was an ardent and constant assertor of his opinions. He was an admirer of the Platonic doctrine of a Trinity, and in his discussions with the Arians, he used to tell them to go to school to the Platonists.* In A. D., 341, he was again banished by the Council of Antioch. Again he was restored, and a third time he was banished. This exile lasted six years, after which he was, for the third time, restored. It will be observed here, that both parties partook fully of the persecuting spirit of the age. The Athanasians, when they had the power persecuted the Arians; and the Arians, in their turn, persecuted the Athanasians. At this period, during the reigns of Constantius and Valens, Arianism was in the ascendant for nearly half a century. But during the reign of Theodosius, it was subdued and crushed. The means employed for this purpose were of the most cruel and unjustifiable character.

Let me now direct your attention briefly to the progressive formation of the doctrine of the Trinity, until it arrived at its present form. In doing so, I shall take the three Creeds of the Church of England Prayer-book as historical documents, and by means of these point out the gradual progress of the doctrine. Intervals of centuries elapsed between the times of the composition of these creeds respectively, and each creed as it stands shows the change of opinion which had taken place in the meantime. By looking at these three creeds we can perceive how the advance was gradually made from the simple and consistent teachings of the Scriptures to the complex and contradictory doctrines of the present popular theology.

The first creed I shall cite is that commonly called the Apostles' Creed. It is a Unitarian Creed, and was the only one known to the Church during the first three hundred years.—“I believe in God, the FATHER ALMIGHTY, Maker of heaven and earth :— And in Jesus Christ

* Cudworth, p. 623.

his only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell, the third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God, the FATHER ALMIGHTY; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.—I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy Catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.”

This, I say, is a Unitarian Creed, and since it was the only creed recognised and used by the Christians of the first ages, it shows us clearly that the faith of the primitive Church was Unitarian. The Church at the present day would not be satisfied with such a creed. And the reason is obvious. Their faith is widely different from that of the early Christians.

I shall next quote the Nicene Creed. It was drawn up, as we have seen, at the Council of Nice in the fourth century. An important modification had by this time taken place in the Christian faith, and mode of expression, through the influence of the Platonic philosophy. In this Creed we perceive a great departure from the simple Unitarianism of the primitive ages, yet it by no means unfolds the perfect doctrine of a Trinity. This was to be the work of subsequent times. It has been not inappropriately styled the Semi-trinitarian Creed. It is in truth only half Trinitarian in its doctrine and character. Here it is:—“I believe in One God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made: who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, and the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God. And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead: whose kingdom shall have no end.—And I believe in the Holy Ghost, [the Lord and giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father (and the Son) who with the Father and the Son together is to be worshipped and glorified, who spake by the prophets.] And I believe one Catholic and Apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.”*

* The clause here enclosed within the outer brackets, was not in the creed as it came from the Council of Nice, but was added more than half a century afterwards by the Council of Constantinople. This Council sat A. D. 381, and it was here, and by this clause that the doctrine of the Trinity received what the learned Trinitarian historian Mosheim has called its “finishing touch.” The clause “and the Son” within the inner brackets was subsequently added in Spain, and generally adopted in the 9th century. Stebbing, in his note on the Nicene Creed, endeavors to break the force of the argument from history against the Trinity, by asserting that the doctrines were declared according to the order of time in which they were denied. But such a method of explaining away the argument appears to me very unsatisfactory.

TH
ter.
ed to
quer
ed D
He i
the i
trine
cent

T
call
It is
who
Tap
ed to
to se
the
fect
tradi
porti
Trin

For,
for th
and
prem
of the
of the
howe
alleg

which
that
ad.
ever
by th
dina
be ec
tal a
notic
the l
most
abov
Nica
egre
it is
of th
held
This
grea
of th
then
Trin
whic
view
they
and
of th
oun
sari
stat
the
nate

This creed, I say, is only half trinitarian in its doctrine and character. The Son is declared consubstantial with the Father. Deity is ascribed to him, but not in the same terms which are employed in the subsequent creed. Deity is ascribed to the Son, but it seems to be a *derived* Deity rather than a Deity, absolute, independent, and co-equal. He is styled, "God of God." But no Deity whatever was ascribed to the Holy Spirit in the Nicene Creed as originally framed. This doctrine was the production of another Council held more than half a century afterwards.*

The Third and last Creed I have to cite is that which is commonly called the Creed of St. Athanasius. Its origin is involved in obscurity. It is generally admitted that it is not the production of the man whose name it bears. It is very commonly attributed to Vigilius Tapsensis, who lived at the close of the fifth century. It was published to the world with the name of Athanasius surreptitiously attached, to secure it credit and currency. In it we perceive the doctrine of the Trinity advanced to what may be regarded, I suppose, as its perfect stage. It contains probably the most hopeless catalogue of contradictions that ever the ingenuity of man devised. I shall cite that portion of it only which refers exclusively to the doctrine of the Trinity.

For, as I have had occasion to observe elsewhere, it is admitted that the evidence for the distinct personality, and divine co-equality of the third person is less obvious and copious than that of the second person. This being the case, the separate supreme Deity of the third should certainly have been called in question before that of the second, and thus we should be led to look for the formal assertion of the Deity of the Holy Spirit before the declaration of the Deity of the Son. It will be seen, however, that the case is just the reverse, which proves the unsoundness of the allegation referred to.

* We have before us the Methodist Quarterly Review for the current month, in which there is a lengthened article on the Incarnation. The Reviewer is of opinion that the time has come when this, and the cognate questions, should be re-examined. "Nor do we fear" he says "the ultimate result of this investigation, whatever may be its more immediate consequences. Essential truth can lose nothing by the discussion. A clearer apprehension and a more precise statement of cardinal principles may possibly be reached. And even if, in reaching them, we should be compelled to surrender points we have been accustomed to regard as fundamental and essential, Christianity loses nothing, and we are infinite gainers." We notice the Reviewer's article here, more particularly on account of his reference to the Nicene Creed. He says "the formula of this Creed—'We believe in God—most clearly has exclusive reference to the Father, independent of, and placed above, both the Son and the Holy Spirit. Nothing is more clear than that the Nicene Fathers regarded *autotheism* [divine in himself, not by derivation], and *agennasia* [not generated, unproduced] as pertaining exclusively to the Father; but it is equally evident that they regarded this as in no way conflicting with the divinity of the Son." Of course not, we say, because the divinity of the Son which they held was, in some sense, a derived divinity, rather than inherent and independent. This is a point which ought always to be distinguished and borne in mind. How great a step may have been the departure, in the Nicene age, from the strict Unity of the primitive times, and whatever may have been the character of the Trinity then arrived at, it seems clear, that they had not advanced to the doctrine of a Trinity of persons absolutely co-equal, such as was developed in subsequent times, which is now the prevalent faith of Christendom. "The Son," writes the Reviewer, "is sometimes called by them *deuteros Theos* [second God]. The unity they were anxious to maintain, seems to have been merely of counsel, will, and work." Again, the *homoeousios to Patri*, [one substance with the Father] of the Nicene Creed, expresses no unity of the Father and Son beyond a homogeneity of nature; and, consequently, the idea of *numerical oneness* is not necessarily implied." In this article we are also reminded of a fact in history, the statement of which will not be wholly out of place here, viz.,—that it was at the Council of Chalcedon in the fifth century (453) that the doctrine of the "two natures" in Christ was authoritatively settled and pronounced.

"Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith; which Faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled: without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. And the Catholic Faith is this: that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the substance. For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son: and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one; the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father uncreate, the Son uncreate, and the Holy Ghost uncreate. The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost eternal. And yet they are not three eternals; but one eternal. As also there are not three incomprehensibles, nor three uncreated; but one uncreated and one incomprehensible. So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty; and the Holy Ghost Almighty. And yet there are not three Almighties; but one Almighty. So the Father is God, the Son is God; and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet they are not three Gods; but one God. So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Ghost Lord. And yet there are not three Lords; but one Lord. For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity, to acknowledge every person by himself to be God and Lord; so we are forbidden by the Catholic religion to say there be three Gods, or three Lords. The Father is made of none; neither created nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone; not made nor created, but begotten. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son; neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding. So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts. And in this Trinity none is afore or after the other; none is greater or less than another; but the whole three persons are co-eternal together, and co-equal. So that in all things as is aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped. He therefore that will be saved, must thus think of the Trinity."

In this creed we have evidence of farther important modifications of the opinion on the subject of the Godhead between the period of the Council of Nice and the time of its promulgation—involving an interval of probably two centuries. But though this Creed, asserting the absolute co-eternity, and co-equality of the three persons of the Trinity, was promulgated perhaps in the fifth or sixth century, it did not meet with a general reception among Christians until probably the ninth or tenth century."* It was never established, however, by any general Council of the Church. We are told by the learned Cudworth that the doctrine of a "Trinity of persons, numerically the same, or having one and the same existent essence," (which is the present popular form of the doctrine) was not owned by any public authority in the Christian Church until it was established by the Lateran Council.† The Council referred to here was the fourth Lateran Council which sat A.D. 1215. Thus it appears that it was as late as the

* Waddington p. 220. † Intell. Syst. p. 604.

third
publ
of re
of T
Prot
thos
sam

"
phet
"ta
"H
men
lati
The
only
thei
of th
ing
posit
cern
thou
beca
popu
say,
I ha
whe
and
full
me
writ
in th
teac
pers
of t
seat
Gos
of th
cern
sho
alte
due
tion
prin
look
see
the
an
Trin

A

com

thirteenth century that the present popular doctrine of the Trinity was publicly sealed, and authoritatively consummated. And it is worthy of remark, that it was the same Council which established the doctrine of Transubstantiation. It was in the night of those ages, then, which Protestants, at least, have been accustomed to style dark ages, that those twin dogmas received authoritative seal and sanction from the same ecclesiastical assembly.

“Good seed”—simple and sound doctrine—was sown by the Prophets of old, by the Lord Jesus Christ, and his Apostles; but the “tares” of subtle and false doctrine gradually sprung up in the Church. “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, is one Lord,” was the announcement of the divinely appointed Hebrew leader; but the subtle speculations of men in time announced that God was *three* as well as *One*. The Lord Jesus Christ himself has plainly said, the Father is “*the only true God*,” and the Apostle Paul, after him, has declared, “to us there is but *one God, the Father* ;” but, notwithstanding the precision of these statements, men in their pride of opinion have constructed authoritative creeds, in which *two other persons* are set forth as sharing the Supreme Godhead, as well as the Father. We hold to the positive statements of Moses, the Lord Jesus, and his Apostles, concerning the fundamental point of all religion—the Godhead; but though we do so, we are stigmatised as negative religionists; and this, because we will not also accept the constructed statements of the popular Creeds. Moses, our Lord Jesus Christ, and his Apostles, we say, sowed good seed. Whence, then, came the tares? From what I have just set forth, I think, you will be enabled to discern from whence they came. I have given you a rapid sketch of the origin and progress of the doctrine of the Trinity. I have made it as full as I could consistently with the limits of a pulpit discourse. Let me here remind you of the principal points set forth. The sacred writings of the Bible are without any statement of a Trinity of persons in the Godhead. The writings of the Platonic philosophy do plainly teach such a doctrine. The doctrine of the *co-equality* of the alleged persons cannot be found in the genuine work of any Christian writer of the first three centuries. Alexandria, in Egypt, was the noted seat of the Platonic philosophy; and as the simple doctrines of the Gospel advanced to that place, they were corrupted by the subtleties of the Platonic system. Here sprung up that great controversy concerning the Unity of God, and the supremacy of the Father, which shook the Church and the world in the fourth century, in which, after alternating defeat and victory, the power of the temporal prince subdued the Unitarians. And lastly, we marked the important modifications of religious opinion which the world has undergone from the primitive ages until now, as evidenced by the three Creeds. By looking at the Apostles’, Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds, we have seen how, through restless speculation, and metaphysical subtleties, the world has been led by degrees from the simple Unitarian Christianity of the early ages, to the present complicated system of prevalent Trinitarian theology.

And now, you may be willing to enquire how Unitarianism was so completely subdued, that we do not find it raising its head with any

proper success after the fourth century; and how it happens that even now, three centuries after the Reformation, it is professed by but a small minority of the Christian world? I shall offer a remark or two to satisfy this enquiry, and then I shall have done. Unitarianism, we say, was the doctrine of the first ages, and its widespread prevalence in the fourth century stands a prominent fact on the page of history. Time has been when the struggle was—"The world against Athanasius, and Athanasius against the world"—when the opponents of the Ariens were heard to cry, "They have the people, but we have the faith"—when Athanasius himself had to write a treatise to prove that numbers were not to be regarded as a test of truth.* But the Ariens were crushed; not, however, by fair persuasion and argument. Shortly after the death of Valens (an Arian Emperor), Theodosius ascended the throne. This prince was a Trinitarian. He was likewise a cruel persecutor, and particularly remarkable for the inflexible perseverance with which he carried out his persecuting plans. He "considered," says Gibbon, "every heretic [i. e., every one who differed from himself] as a rebel against heaven and earth. In the space of fifteen years he promulgated at least fifteen severe edicts . . . more especially against those who rejected the doctrine of the Trinity; and to deprive them of every hope of escape, he sternly enacted that if any laws or rescripts should be alleged in their favor, the judges should consider them as illegal productions either of fraud or forgery."† And Waddington says, "as he persevered inflexibly . . . his severities were attended by general and lasting success, and the doctrine of Arius, if not perfectly extirpated, withered from that moment rapidly and irrecoverably.‡ The page of history, then, leaves us at no loss respecting the foul and cruel means by which this form of Unitarianism was crushed at the close of the fourth century.§ We

* Chillingworth, in reply to his opponent's charge against Protestantism, of want of universality, denies the "absolute universality and diffusion" of Catholicism, and says, that though the Catholics should now be larger than any other sect of Christians, it is "most certain the time has been when they have not been so; when the whole world wondered that it was become Arian," (Jerome)—when Athanasius 'opposed the world, and the world Athanasius.'—when the Catholic Liberius having the contemptible paucity of his adherents, objected to him as a note of error, answered for himself, 'there was a time when there were but three opposed the decree of the king, and yet those three were in the right, and the rest in the wrong,'—when the 'professors of error surpassed the number of the professors of truth, in proportion as the sands of the sea do the stars of heaven,' (as St. Austin acknowledges),—when Vincentius confesses that 'the poison of the Ariens had contaminated, not now some certain portion, but almost the whole world,'—when the author of Nazienzen's life testifies 'that the heresy of Arius had possessed in a manner, the whole extent of the world,'—when Nazienzen found cause to cry out, 'where are they who reproach us with our poverty, who define the Church by the multitude, and despise the little flock? They have the people, but we the faith.' And when Athanasius was so overcome with shoals and floods of Ariens, that he was enforced to write a treatise on purpose, against those 'who judge of the truth only by plurality of adherents.'"—*Religion of Protestants*,—*Ans. to vi. chap., sect. 42.*

† Decline and Fall, vol. v., p. 31.

‡ History of the Church, p. 99.

§ By what means the opposition of Arius himself, had been previously cut off, we may also learn from the following note in Mosheim's History. Alluding to the dismal death of Arius, the writer says—"After having considered this matter with the utmost care, it appears to me extremely probable, that this unhappy man was victim to the resentment of his enemies, and was destroyed by poison, or some such violent method. A blind and fanatical zeal for certain systems of faith has, in all ages, produced such horrible acts of cruelty and injustice."

all know what followed. Ages of general ignorance and darkness came upon the world, and the human mind, when thoughtfully exercised at all, became involved in scholastic disputations which were certainly not favorable to the simplification of a religious creed. Under such circumstances, Christianity, instead of being purified, had corruption after corruption heaped upon it, until the reality of the religion seemed almost lost; and, we may say, was almost lost, amid the multitude of factitious appendages. And even when the day of Reformation did come, the cruel spirit of the Theodosian edicts was still alive. Servetus, at Geneva, was burned to a cinder at a stake raised by the hands of the Reformers, because he maintained, from Scripture, the simple Unity of God. The learned and accomplished Socini were obliged to flee their native country for the same cause, and take refuge in a foreign land. Thus it was that Unitarianism was treated, even in a boasted age of advancing light and freedom. And it may seem strange to some who hear me, when I add that it was not, until about 35 years ago, that the penal statutes against the profession of Unitarian opinions, were expunged from the statute book of Britain. May we not see, in such circumstances, ample reason why Unitarianism has not spread more widely? But this is not all. Even where open violence is not arrayed against it, or legal enactments hanging over it, popular opinion is brought to bear constantly and most unfairly against it. It is unjustly and ungenerously dealt with from the pulpit, from the platform, by the common religious press, and in the private circle. People are cautioned against it, and warned against it, in public and in private, as a seductive and awful heresy, until weak minds become alarmed, and are frightened from any approach to investigation. No yoke of priest-craft was ever more disastrous to healthy freedom of thought, than this yoke of popular opinion. Warnings are uttered against Unitarianism as an awful heresy, although we can state its every tenet in the fairly quoted language of that Sacred Book, which all Protestants recognize as the highest and only proper rule of faith, and this is more than can be done for the doctrines commonly called orthodox. Thus has it become very generally misunderstood, and very frequently misrepresented: and the tendency of the more prevalent faith is to close the avenues of the popular mind against every reasonable explanation and argument, and in this way perpetuate the misapprehensions and misrepresentations. Again, I ask, do we not see, in such circumstances, ample reason why Unitarian opinions have not spread more widely? Simple Unitarianism is the latent faith of multitudes, who almost fear to recognize it, though it exists in their minds. And many, again, who do recognize it, are deterred from acting upon it, through the subtle influence of that public opinion to which so large a class of both young and old are content to live in bondage. They permit their souls to be hemmed in by a spider's web, which one manly word would break, if they had only the courage and candor to utter it. Many others, again, who, under different circumstances, might be inquisitive in the matter, are not anxious to enquire when the result might involve them in a belief which is not very popular. The higher work of the world, and the sacred cause of Truth must, of course, be sustained and promoted, by minds of a nobler order. O,

that we may, indeed, belong to this nobler order of minds! Let us not boast that we do, lest we fall through our vain boasting. Let us ever temper our Christian firmness with Christian humility; but if we feel our faith to be true, let us never shrink from its avowal, whether it be popular or unpopular. And, popular, or unpopular, we believe that Unitarianism is true, and therefore we profess and maintain it. We believe that we can prove it true from reason and from Scripture. And we can point to a period in history, when the faith of the world hung trembling in the balance—Unitarianism and Trinitarianism poised against each other, and depending on the accident of the opinion and temper of a temporal prince, to give either side the preponderance. The effects of the persevering cruelty of Theodosius, are every where felt in the world at the present time, in the prevalence of Trinitarianism. If any Arian Emperor had been guilty of such inflexible and incessant persecution, against those who differed from him in opinion, the result, we think, would have been otherwise—a different form of faith, we think, would, at this day, have been prevalent in the Christian world.

How long matters will remain as they are, I pretend not even to conjecture. If the spirit of enquiry were fully awakened, an important step would be made towards the restoration of religion to its original simplicity. If men were fully persuaded to shake themselves free from mental indolence—to rise superior to mental timidity—to look the prevalent Creeds and forms of faith, fairly in the face, and test their worthiness to be believed, a great point would be gained. If men and women were adequately aroused to a sense of their responsibilities as rational beings, with a heavenly message before them, to be read with their own eyes, and acted out in their own lives, a commencement would be made which would lead to a gratifying consummation. In closing, therefore, I would appeal to all—to old and young, and implore them to respect themselves—to respect the reasonable nature which the Almighty has given them, and to respect that Sacred Record which he has vouchsafed for their guidance in religion. I would appeal to all, and implore them carefully to examine whatever is propounded to them as an article of faith. Remember the warning and injunction of the Apostle—“Beloved, believe not every spirit; but try the spirits, whether they are of God.” “Yea,” I say with another Apostle—“Let God be true, but every man a liar.” Let the forms of the Creeds perish, and the simple doctrines of the Divine Word prevail evermore.

et us
et us
if we
ether
lieve
in it.
ture.
world
oised
and
nce.
here
rian-
d in-
nion,
m of
rist-

en to
npor-
s ori-
elves
-to
and
ined.
ir re-
hem,
es, &
con-
d and
rea-
spect
ce in
exa-
mem-
ve not
"ea."
"iar."
of the

WORKS BY UNITARIAN WRITERS, FOR SALE,

AT THE BOOKSTORES OF

JOHN McCOY, Great Saint James Street, and C. BRYSON,
No. 24, Saint Francois Xavier Street.

Channing's complete Works, 2 vols.
Channing's Memoir, 3 vols., (cheap edition)

"Such a man as Dr. Channing," says the Methodist Quarterly Review, "must have stood majestically in advance of his age, whenever and wherever he had lived. He lived according to the sense of the present generation, at least, in the best age of the world, and yet he was far in front of it; if it reaches his radiant position in two centuries, the signs of the times are certainly quite illusive."

Dewey's complete Works.
Wilson's Scripture Proofs and Illustrations of Unitarianism, English edition, in muslin.
Wilson's Scripture Proofs, &c.—1st part, American edition, in paper cover.
Peabody's (A. P.) Lectures on Christian Doctrine.
J Scott Porter's Lectures on Unitarianism.
Bartol's Discourses on the Christian Spirit and Life.
Bulfinch's Communion Thoughts.
Furness' Domestic Worship.
Brooks' Family Prayers.
Peabody's (W. B. O.) Memoir and Sermons.
Ware on the Christian Character.
Gifford's Remonstrance.
Worcester on the Atonement.
Livermore's Commentary on the Four Gospels.

—ALSO,—

An assortment of the Tracts of the American Unitarian Association, including, "John Milton's Last Thoughts on the Trinity," "Channing's Baltimore Sermon on the distinguishing opinions of Unitarians;" &c. &c.; all calculated to illustrate the Doctrines and Spirit of Unitarian Christianity.

UNITARIAN CHURCH.

The Public are hereby informed, that at a General Meeting of the Unitarian Congregation, held on the 20th ultimo, it was resolved, that the PEWS in their Church be made FREE to the Public. All are invited to attend, who may feel desirous to do so.

February 1, 1851.

S,

DN,

must
had
the
liant

ing-

, in

tion,
han-
ns;"
it of

ng of
s re-
to the
lo so.

