

The Trinity

by
Edward Henry Bickersteth

Preface

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The title page of this Treatise may sufficiently indicate the line of argument I have attempted to pursue. My standard of reference throughout has been the memorable precept, "Trust ye in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is the Rock of Ages" (Isa. 26:4). That the one Infinite God claims our supreme and undivided confidence; that the same confidence is, on the warrant of Scripture, to be reposed in the Father, and in the Son, and in the Holy Ghost; and that therefore Father, Son, and Spirit are equally God over all, blessed forever, the Triune Jehovah in whose name alone we trust, on whose arm we rely, and whose majesty alone we adore and love--such is the brief outline of a train of thought indelibly impressed many years ago on my own mind.

Local circumstances, to which I allude in my opening chapter, induced me lately to commit these thoughts to paper. I intended to write only a brief pamphlet. But I found that proofs from the written word accumulated upon me so rapidly that I could not duly sketch this most momentous of subjects in so cursory a way. I therefore suffered Scripture, as it were, to lead me by the hand, until by compiling and illustrating Bible evidence alone my little essay swelled to nearly its present dimensions. And when the rough draft of my manuscript was to some extent completed, I did not scruple to avail myself of the labours of those authors to which I have from time to time referred, so far as my limited leisure permitted me to consult them. I especially allude to Dr. Pye Smith's "Scripture Testimony to the Messiah." My readers will find how much I am indebted to that truly learned and elaborate work. I would also mention a short but valuable treatise, now out of print, by the late Mr. Serjeant Sellon; Dwight's Theology, vol. ii; Wardlaw's Discourses; Serle's Horae Solitariae; Lectures at Christ's Church, Liverpool; Scholefield's Hints; Dr. Gordon's Supreme Godhead of Christ; and Jones's Catholic Doctrine of a Trinity; though to many of these authors I have only been able to refer, as isolated passages led me to desire to know their judgment on contested interpretations. And here I cannot refrain from expressing my grateful obligations to my learned and judicious friend the Rev. John Ayre, who most kindly looked through the proof-sheets of the first edition and gave me, on several difficult passages of Scripture, the benefit of his extensive reading. With respect to the last mentioned book, "Jones's Catholic Doctrine," which contains so much in so brief a space, I had not seen it until my treatise was almost finished. His system of proof is in some respects similar to mine. But even my threefold comparison in the last chapter of this work, which resembles his arrangement the nearest, was commenced before the possession of his work enabled me to enrich this, and two or three earlier sections likewise, with

some most apposite quotations gleaned by him from the word of God. I mention this only to show that my collection of Scriptural evidence was, in the main, independent; for in such a subject, of all others, claims of originality can have no place. Here eminently *κοίνα τὰ τῶν ψιλῶν*.

But while speaking of other writers, may I be permitted to urge any who do not know them to study some essays "On the Religions of Man and the Religion of God," by the late Professor Vinet of Lausanne? Space alone prevented my quoting at the close of this book a large portion of his admirable remarks on the mysteries of Christianity. He is not unjustly called the Chalmers of Switzerland.

But after all, our appeal must be to *One Book*. I have honestly tried to understand the views of sincere Unitarians; but I can come to no other conclusion than that while sometimes freely using the language of Scripture with respect to our Lord, they regard him only as a most highly exalted and divinely endowed CREATURE. In a word, to them he is not God. And therefore, on their hypothesis, if men trust in him for eternal salvation, reposing their entire confidence in him, they are trusting in a creature, which is idolatry (Jer. 17:5-8). Whereas if they do not so trust in him, they are rejecting the only name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12). From this disastrous alternative I see no possible escape.

I rejoice to think, however, they are bound down by no definite creed of error. They are, to use their own emphatic expression, "a drifting body." Oh that it might please God that the movement among the American Unitarians might spread to our own land! And while they profess to draw their faith from the oracles of truth, who can despair of their being brought back to the one flock and the one Shepherd? For "the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul;" "the entrance of thy words give light;" "the sword of the Spirit is the word of God." In the humble hope that some may be led to search anew and to believe at last the Scriptures which testify of Jesus, these pages have been written; and utterly disclaiming all confidence in any other weapons, my one prayer is that the Divine Spirit may cast down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and may bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

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