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ARTICLE I.

FURTHER OBJECTIONS TO THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY ANSWERED.

A consideration of the Heathen Doctrine of the Trinity, the opinions of the ancient Jews, and the almost universal testimony of the Christian world, both ancient and modern.

We have now endeavoured to meet fairly, fully and candidly, the objections offered as presumptive arguments against the doctrine of the Trinity.

There is, however, one other objection that occurs to our minds, and which may deserve a passing notice. It has been said that if this doctrine of the Trinity is so essential, and so practically important as we allege, it would have been revealed as clearly in the Old Testament as in the New. To this objection we would reply, *first*, that the objection admits that the doctrine of the Trinity is taught clearly in the New Testament. But, if the doctrine of the Trinity is clearly revealed, as true, in the New Testament, then to all who receive it as containing the doctrine taught by Christ and his apostles, it becomes fundamental, and vitally essential, whatever may have been the degree in which it was revealed to believers under the Old Testament. But, in the *second* place, we reply, that the doctrines of a future life, of the resurrection of the dead, of the nature of everlasting life, of the mercy of God, the way of acceptance with him, and the principle of obedience, not to mention others, are, on all hands, admitted to be of fundamental and

practical importance, and among "the first principles of the oracles of God," and yet these are far more clearly and fully revealed in the New than in the Old Testament. And it is therefore only in accordance with the progressive character of God's revelation that the doctrine of the Trinity should be more distinctly revealed in the New, than in the Old Testament. But, *thirdly*, we affirm that there is more in the Old Testament to lead to the belief of a plurality in the Divine Godhead, than there is to regard that Godhead as a simple and absolute personal unity; and as this plurality is limited to the mention of the invisible Jehovah,—the visible, Jehovah, the God of Israel—and the Holy Spirit, we have in the Old Testament a *sufficient* revelation of the doctrine of the Trinity.

We now proceed however, to remark, that in coming to the investigation of Scripture as to the doctrine of the Trinity, we are not only relieved from all presumptive objections against it, but are assisted by a presumptive argument in its favour, which, to our minds, has no small importance in rendering it probable that the Trinity is a doctrine of divine revelation.

It is admitted by both parties in this controversy, that the doctrine of the Trinity of the Godhead is infinitely above, and beyond, the *comprehension*, or the *discovery*, of reason. The very fact, therefore, that a doctrine so remote from the ordinary conceptions of reason should exist, and should have existed always in some form, is a presumption that the human mind was, originally, led to such a conception by a direct revelation from Heaven.

The *UNIVERSALITY* with which this belief, in some form has been held, is a powerful confirmation of the opinion that the origin of this doctrine must be referred to a primitive and common revelation, since, as is admitted, and even urgently advanced by our opponents, it is not a doctrine which could naturally suggest itself to the human mind. It would require a volume to contain the evidence of the actual existence of the doctrine of a Trinity, in some form or other, among almost every nation of the earth. Volumes *have* been written upon this subject containing proof of the belief in a Trinity—a triad of supreme and co-equal deities—in Hindostan—in

Chaldea—in Persia—in Scythia, comprehending Thibet, Tartary, and Siberia,—in China—in Egypt—among the Greeks—among the Greek philosophers who had visited Chaldea, Persia, India, and Egypt, and who taught the doctrine of the Trinity after their return to Greece—among the Romans—among the Germans—and among the ancient Americans.

The truth of this fact it might be necessary to establish by full and explicit evidence, were it not fully admitted by Unitarian writers who base upon it, an argument for the heathen origin of the doctrine. A considerable portion, for instance, of Dr. Beard's recent work entitled *Historical Illustrations of the Trinity** is occupied with the presentation of evidence that "a divine triplicity was common in the heathen world prior to the Gospel of Christ." He gives proof of its existence among the Babylonians, the Phœnicians, the Persians, and in India. Zoroaster, he quotes as declaring in so many words, that "the paternal monad (or the Diety) generates too, and in the whole world shines the triad over which the monad rules." In the most ancient of all mythologies, that of Egypt, "as described by authors who lived before the Christian era, and as set forth on the walls of the temples in which its ritual of worship was performed, it was taught to the initiated, and concealed from the vulgar, that God created all things at the first, by the primary emanation from himself, his first-born, who was the author and giver of all wisdom, and of all knowledge, in heaven and in earth, being at the same time the wisdom and the word of God. The birth of this great and all-powerful being, his manifestation as an infant, his nature and education through the succeeding periods of childhood and of boyhood, constituted the grand mystery of the entire system." The idea of a divine trinity, then, more or less distinctly outlined in other Eastern systems of religion, appears in that of Egypt fully and definitely formed, and may in consequence, says Dr. Beard, be legitimately considered as the immediate parent of the modern doctrine.†

* *Hist. and Artistic Ill. of the Trinity* from Lond. 1846. The works of this writer are in great repute among American Unitarians.

† Dr. Beard, pp. 19, 20, 21.

Dr. Beard quotes as an ancient proverb the declaration "every THREE is perfect." Servius, in his Commentary on Virgil's 8th Eclogue says, "they assign the perfect number three to the highest God, from whom is the beginning, middle, and end." Triplicity was, therefore, found in those things which were held to be mirrors of the Divine essence. And Plutarch (de Iside 56,) expressly says, the better and diviner nature consists of the three."

Servius remarks that "the distinctive attributes of nearly all the gods are represented by the number three. The thunderbolt of Jupiter is cleft in three; the trident of Neptune is three-forked; Pluto's dog is three-headed; so are the Furies. The Muses also, are three times three." Aurelius, according to Proclus, (in Tim. ii. 93,) says, "the Demiurge or *Creator* is triple, and the three intellects are the three kings,—he who exists, he who possesses, he who beholds. And these are different.*

And we learn further, that there existed and was familiar to the heathen mind the idea of a Θεανδρωπος, *Theanthropos*, or GOD-MAN.†

It follows from what is thus admitted by this learned Unitarian, *first*, that the absolute, metaphysical, or personal unity of God for which Unitarians contend, never was the doctrine of human reason, or of human religion; and *secondly*, that in ALL ancient religions we find the evidence of an original doctrine of a Trinity.

As to the Romans, "the joint worship of Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva,—the Triad of the Roman Capitol,—is, (says Bishop Horsley,) traced to that of the THREE MIGHTY ONES in Samothrace; which was established in that island, at what precise time it is impossible to determine, but earlier, if Eusebius may be credited, than the days of Abraham."‡ The notion, therefore, of a Trinity, more or less removed from the purity of the Christian faith, is found to have been a leading principle in all the ancient schools of philosophy, and in the religions of almost all nations; and traces of an early popular belief of it, appear even in the abominable rites

* Dr. Beard, p. 4. † Dr. Beard, p. 27. ‡ Horsley's Tracts, p. 49.

of idolatrous worship. In regard to Plato, it is well known that he largely discoursed of a divine Trinity; the three component members of which are, (says Bishop Horsley,*) "more strictly speaking, one, than anything in nature, of which unity may be predicated. No one of them can be supposed without the other two. The second and third being, the first is necessarily supposed; and the first *αγαθόν*, (*agathon*) being, the second and third, *νους*, (*nous*) and *ψυχή*, (*psyche*) must come forth. Concerning their equality, I will not say that the Platonists have spoken with the same accuracy which the Christian Fathers use; but they include the three principles in the Divine nature, in the *τὸ Θεῖον*, (*to theion*) and this notion implies the same equality which we maintain." "In the opinions of the Pagan Platonists, and other wise men," adds Bishop Horsley,† "we have in some degree an experimental proof, that this abstruse doctrine cannot be the absurdity, which it seems to those who misunderstand it. Would Plato, would Porphyry, would even Plotinus, have believed the miracles of Mahomet, or the doctrine of transubstantiation? But they all believed a doctrine which so far at least, resembles the Nicene, as to be loaded with the same, or greater objections."

"God is but One; who holds a Trinity,
Believes in that which is not, cannot be,
For Three in One's impossibility."
Thus speaks the "Christian" of Socinus' brood.
What said the very heathen? "There are Three
Who are One God," quoth Plato, "th' only Good,
The Word, the Spirit." Nay, the Pagan rude
In Scythian wilds, less stormy than his mind,
Who hoped from foemen's skulls to quaff Heaven's mead,
Believed one God, from whom all things proceed,
And yet declared Three Gods had made mankind,
Each giving his own blessing. Shame, oh Shame!
That men should ape the Christian's heavenly name,
And yet be darker than the heathen blind!

Such then, are THE FACTS in this case. What inference, then, are we to make from these admitted facts, proving, as they do, the universal belief of the doctrine of a Trinity. "If reason," says Bishop Horsley,‡ "was

* Tracta, p. 247. † Horsley's Tracta, p. 77. ‡ Ib., p. 49.

insufficient for this great discovery, what could be the means of information, but what the Platonists themselves assign." "A theology delivered from the gods," *i. e.* a revelation. This is the account which Platonists, who were no Christians, have given of the origin of their master's doctrine. But, from what revelation could *they* derive their information, who lived before the Christian, and had no light from the Mosaic Scriptures? Their information could be only drawn from traditions founded upon earlier revelations; from scattered fragments of the ancient patriarchal creed; that creed which was universal before the defection of the first idolaters, which the corruptions of Idolatry, gross and enormous as they were, could never totally obliterate. Thus the doctrine of the Trinity is rather confirmed than discredited by the suffrage of the heathen sages; since the resemblance of the Christian faith and the Pagan philosophy in this article, when fairly interpreted, appears to be nothing less than the consent of the latest and the earliest revelations."*

That this universal belief in A Trinity is to be traced to an original revelation is, however, proved not only by the incapacity of reason to discover such a doctrine, and its reluctance to receive it when discovered, and by the equally universal reference of it to an original divine revelation, but also by the fact that it is only in the very earliest and purest traditions and theologies that this doctrine exists in any degree of clearness. As human reason was developed the doctrine became obscured, and was either hidden from public knowledge, or transformed into a mere intellectual refinement. Dr. Minchola in his Treatise on Vaticination § 4, speaking of the experiences of all nations as a proof of the rationality of even supra-rational doctrines says: "Here we meet, in the first place, the mysterious number "three," in all the religious systems of antiquity, and even where such systems are not, and were not, existing, the number of the highest gods have so frequently been found to coincide with "the number three," *e. g.* the Laplanders, the Finns, the Germans, the South Sea Islanders, the an-

* Tracts, p. 50.

cient Mexicans, and others, that this phenomenon cannot be considered as an accidental one. The ancient philosophical systems were likewise based upon this mysterious number; *e. g.* those of Orpheus, Pythagoras, Plato, the very ancient Chinese philosopher, Laodhoë, in later times, that of Aurelius, (*Suidas sub voce*), of the Jew Philo, of the modern Platonists and the Cabbalists, so that we can only say that the mystery of the Divine Trinity has found its wonderful mystic harmony, from the beginning of the world, among all zones and nations. However, the fountain from which this mystery has flowed, can have been no other but "the Lord," *i. e.* the first revelations of God to man."

To use the language of a recent poet who has ably written on this subject:*

Gross as was the darkness on man's mind,
And wild as were his hopeless wanderings,
Tradition, if 'tis fairly followed out
In every quarter of the world, will show
That man's progenitors in early times
Worshipp'd and own'd a triune Deity.
Chaldea, China, Egypt, India,
Greece, Persia, Seythia, Scandinavia, Rome,
Britain, and all those late discover'd realms,
Named from Americus, with one accord
[To all who trace their superstitions up
Unto the Fountain-head] proclaim aloud
That, through the darkness of the human mind,
Their polytheism was derived thence;
And every system of Idolatry
First rose from worship of the Living God,
When man, to fancy giving up the reins,
Began to substitute philosophy
For the plain lessons which his Maker gave;
And shew that all their best and wisest men
Beheld the great First-Cause as *three in one*.
When, at th' Eternal's high command, the floods
Subsided, and the earth, long drench'd in tears
Of penitence for sin, brighten'd once more
Her wave-wash'd features to a joyous smile,
The patriarch Noah unto all his race,
Whilst he abode a pilgrim on the earth,
Made known the nature of a Deity.
To China, Ham the knowledge carried forth,
[Himself the founder of that ancient state,]
Where, till the days of the Confucius,
They, as a triune spirit worshipp'd God;

Ragg's Poem on the Deity, pp. 125-127.

And in their sanctuaries hymn'd His praise,
 Without an image or a symbol there.
 Chaldea's region, chief abiding place
 Of Shem, of all the post-diluvian world,
 Was probably the earliest peopled land,
 Whence the surrounding nations all derived
 Their knowledge of the arts and sciences;
 And her great Zoroaster, first of those
 Who, from the hillock of philosophy,
 Dar'd lift their eyes to the Eternal One,
 To his disciples in plain terms declar'd
 That "The Paternal Monad amplifies
 Itself, and generates a Duality,
 Which by the Monad sits, and shining forth
 With intellectual beams, o'er all things rules,
 For Deity in Triad shines throughout
 The world, of which a Monad is the head;"
 Which Triad, Virtue, Wisdom, Truth, he styled.
 Losing its clearness still, on either hand
 Thence roll'd the stream of sacred doctrine forth
 To Indostan and Persia; varying oft
 In breath and depth, but ever bearing signs
 Of that all-glorious Fountain whence it flow'd;
 And Brahma, Visnu, and Siva here,
 There Oromasdes, Mithra, Ahriman,
 Shew forth corruptions of th' Eternal Three.
 Through middle Asia, more or less corrupt,
 With Shem's and Ham's remaining progeny
 The doctrine spread; and unto Egypt borne
 By Taut, Phœnicia's early emigrant,
 Upon the fertile banks of Nile, we view
 The same great Triad in another form,
 (Not deeply darken'd yet, though not so clear
 As in His primal loveliness reveal'd
 In persons of Osiris, Cneph, and Phtha."*

* For the testimonies of the heathen to the doctrines of a Trinity, see Professor Kidd's Essay on the Trinity: Maurice's Indian Antiquities, vol. iv., ch. 2, 3 and 4: Dr. Hales on the Trinity, vol. ii., p. 266-285: Simpson's Plea for the Divinity of Jesus, p. 432-456: Kidder's Demonstration of the Messiah: Cudworth's Intellectual System: Pritchard's Egypt, p. 295: Faber's History of Idolatry, vol. iii., pp. 111, &c., 611, 616, 617: Work on Egypt, by London Tract Society, p. 136, &c. Newman's History of Arianism in the 4th Century, p. 100: Poole's *Horæ Egyptiacæ*, p. 204-206: Gale's Court of the Gentiles, vol. iv., p. 306, and vol. i., ch. 2, p. 68: Smith's Testimony to the Messiah, vol. iii., p. 420: Morris's Prose Essay on the Hindua, pp. 165, 365, and notes, p. 391: Spencer de Leg. Hebraeæ, Lib. iii., Diss. 5., ch. 3: Hutchinson's Trinity of the Gentiles and Moses, Linc. Hey's Lectures on Div., B. iv., Art. 1, § 1., vol. i., p. 486, 2 vol. ad. See however, particularly, Ancient Fragments, with an Introd. Dissert., and an Inq. into the Trinity of the Ancients, by Isaac Preston Cory, 2d Ed., Lond., Pickering, 1832, which contains all the evidence from which to form our opinion.

This argument is also pursued at length, by Chevalier Ramsay, in his *Princ. of Nat. and Rev. Rel.*, ed. Glasgow, 1748, vol. i., p. 97, and

Before leaving this presumptive argument, we will offer three remarks in confirmation of it:

In the *first* place, we would wish it to be distinctly understood that we do not by any means, concur with Dr. Beard and other Unitarian and infidel writers, in thinking that the heathen triads are *similar* to the Christian Trinity, or could by any force of imagination have been transmuted into it. Many learned and able writers, who have perceived in the heathen triads the corruption of a primitive revelation of the Trinity, have nevertheless pointed out their manifest and essential dissimilarity to it.*

On this subject there is, therefore, a safe and middle way to be pursued. We are not, with Bishop Horsley, to attempt to construct out of the heathen triads a clear threefold personal distinction co-existing in one essential Godhead or nature, nor are we, on the other hand, to reject the manifest and indisputable *analogy* which they present to the doctrine of the Trinity. This analogy is as great in regard to this doctrine as it is to that of sacrifice and other firmly revealed and divinely authorised truths, and so great as to be altogether inexplicable, except upon the supposition, that like them, it is the corruption of a primitive revealed truth.†

vol. ii. See also, Vossius, Huet, Kurher, Thomassin, Stanley and Purchas. Ramsay regards all the Pagan triads as variations of one common original faith, and the Chinese and Egyptian triads as going beyond and being independent of the Mosaic records.

See also, note A, being an Analysis and Historical account of the Pagan Triads, p. 560, vol. viii, of So. Pres. Review.

* See Gale, vol. iv., p. 388: Cudworth, B. i., c. 4, § 34 and 35, and particularly Faber, as above, and in the pages following.

† "Much, (says Mr. Cory,) in his very learned work, (*Ant. Fragments of the Phœnician, Chaldean, and other writers, with Dissert. and Inq. into the Trinity of the Ancients*, Lond. 1832, Pickering,) as has been said upon the Platonic trinity, I must confess that I can find fewer traces of that doctrine in the writings of Plato, than of his less refined predecessors, the Mythologists. I have given such extracts as appear to me to relate to the subject, together with a fragment of Amelius, which expressly mentions the three kings of Plato as identical with the Orphic Trinity. Dr. Morgan, in his Essay upon the subject, satisfactorily refutes the notion, that Plato regarded the Logos as the second person of the Trinity; and upon this refutation he denies that Plato held the doctrine at all, more particularly, as from the time of Plato to that of Ammonius Saccas, in the third century, no disciple of his school seems to have been aware that such a doctrine was contained in his writings. Perhaps, however, we may trace some obscure allusions to it in the beginning of the second

Our object in the presentation of this presumptive argument in favour of the Trinity has, therefore, been two fold. First, to repel the *a priori* objection to this doctrine founded upon its alleged unreasonableness and contrariety to the general conceptions of mankind, and secondly, to prove that as the doctrine is one evidently above, and beyond, and contrary to, the natural conceptions of uninstructed reason, it must be traced to the source to which the Fathers and ancient philosophers themselves traced it, that is, to an originally divine revelation. "We may reasonably conclude," says Cudworth, "that which Proclus assented to of this Trinity, as it was contained in the Chaldaic Oracles to be true, that it was at first a Theology of divine tradition or revelation, or a divine Cabbala, viz: amongst the Hebrews first, and from them afterwards communicated to the Egyptians and other nations."*

The understanding of man can never be more grossly insulted than when Infidelity labours to persuade us, that a truth so awfully sublime as that at present under consideration, could ever be the offspring of human invention: nor can history be more violated than when it traces the origin of this doctrine to the schools of Greece. Equally above the boldest flight of human genius to invent, as beyond the most extended limit of human intellect fully to comprehend, is the profound mystery of the ever blessed Trinity.†

We remark then, in the *second* place, that the very earliest manifestations of the Deity to unfallen, and to fallen man, give proof that God was then known, not as

hypothesis of the Parmenides, and in the passages which I have given, (though in the latter the doctrines appear rather to refer to the Monad and Duad, than to the genuine Trinity of the ancients.) So far from any such doctrine being maintained by the Pythagoreans, or in the Academy, we find only such vague allusions as might be expected among philosophers who revered an ancient tradition, and were willing after they had lost the substance, to find something to which they might attach the shadow. "The Christian Trinity is not a Trinity of principles, like that of the Persian philosophers; it does not consist of mere logical notions, and inadequate conceptions of Deity, like that of Plato; but it is a Trinity of subsistences, or persons, joined by an indissoluble union."

* B. i., c. 1, § 35, quoted by Gale in *Court of Gentiles*, vol. iii., p. 286, and see also, vol. i., p. 8, ch. 2.

† Maurice Ind. Antiq., vol. iv., pp. 39, 40.

a personal unity but as a Trinity. God, we are everywhere taught in the Scriptures, is absolutely invisible to mortal eyes, and as a fact, never has been visible, "no man having seen," or being able to see "God at any time."* The Jehovah therefore, who is everywhere visible to men,—who appears to them and converses with them, cannot be Jehovah the Father, but must be Jehovah the son.

We find however, in addition to this primitive revelation of a visible Jehovah,—and of a plural deity who is also called Jehovah,—distinct mention made of "THE SPIRIT OF GOD moving on the face of the waters," which SPIRIT we are told, would "not always strive with the children of men."† And thus we are led to the belief that a knowledge of a trinity of persons in the divine unity was the primitive revelation made of himself by God to man, and "that the universal traditionary beliefs in this doctrine are the fossil remains of that primitive revelation."

The *third* remark, on which we wish to dwell at some length before leaving this point is, that even should it be denied that this universal belief in the doctrine of a Trinity is the traditionary form of a primitive revelation, it does not follow that the Christian doctrine originated as Dr. Beard and Unitarians generally,—following Voltaire, Volney, Gibbon, and other infidels,*—affirm, in Pagan and idolatrous superstition. For, as we *have* already seen in part, and *will* further hereafter shew, there are sufficient grounds to believe that this doctrine of the Trinity is the doctrine of the Old as well as of the New Testament, and of the ancient Jews as well as of the primitive Christians, and thus we are again brought to the conclusion that the doctrine of a Trinity is found to exist among all nations, must have been derived from the Hebrew Scriptures and people, or from a primitive and common revelation, and not from Pagan philosophy. And to suppose that mankind so universally, and in many cases so clearly, arrived at the separate and inde-

* See numerous passages to this effect.

† See numerous similar passages.

‡ See Voltaire's Works, vol. 24, 26, 27, and Gibbon Hist. of Decl. and Fall, vol. ii., 4 to p. 227.

pendent belief of some kind of Trinity in unity, is at once to abandon the whole foundation on which opposition to this doctrine rests, and to admit that instead of being irrational, contradictory, absurd, and incredible, the doctrine of the Trinity, and not the doctrine of a personal unity of the Godhead, is the result to which human reason has been universally brought by its own convictions. And if this is so, then that revelation should teach clearly, authoritatively and universally, what reason only taught obscurely, unauthoritatively and to the initiated and philosophic few, is in perfect accordance with the teachings of revelation, on the subjects of future life, immortality, and many other doctrines, such as the existence of angels.*

The historical fact that the doctrine of a Trinity is found embodied in all the most ancient forms of religion the world over, must be explained in some way. The hypotheses by which this fact can possibly be explained, are, however, very few.

By collecting all the evidence that can be had, and examining separately, and excluding successively every hypothesis which shall be found inconsistent with the admitted and undeniable facts, we may contract the circle of conjecture till but one hypothesis is left; which one must be the truth, and is thus negatively rendered matter of demonstration.

Now, Mr. Faber, in his admirable work on the Pagan Idolatry, has collected and separately examined all the different systems of the Heathen Mythology; and has shown that there is such a singular, minute and regular accordance among them, not only in what is *obvious* and *natural*, but also in what is *arbitrary* and *circumstantial*, both in *fanciful speculations* and in *artificial observances*, so as to render untenable every other hypothesis than this,—that they must all have arisen from some common source.

Having thus shewn their common origin, he enumerates three hypotheses, as the only three on which, he conceives, the common origination of the various systems of Paganism can be accounted for:

* See Horaley's Tracts, p. 45-50, and also Tholuck, in Note B.

I. Either all nations agreed to borrow from one, subsequent to their several settlements:

II. Or all nations, subsequent to their several settlements, were compelled by arms to adopt the superstition of one:

III. Or, all nations were once assembled together in a single place and in a single community, where they adopted a corrupt form of religion, which they afterwards respectively carried with them into the lands that they colonized.

After examining, and shewing the utter impossibility of maintaining either the first or the second of these hypotheses, he concludes that the third only can be the truth.

May we not, therefore, as Dr. Cudworth remarks, adore the wonderful providence of God, who so ordered that this doctrine of a Trinity should have been generally retained in the heathen world, and received by their wisest philosophers. "Whereas," says the learned writer, bold and conceited wits, precipitantly condemning the doctrine of the Trinity for nonsense, absolute repugnancy to human faculties, and impossibility, have thereupon, some of them, quite shaken off Christianity, and all revealed religion professing only Theism, others have frustrated the design thereof by paganizing it into creature worship or Idolatry; this ignorant and conceited confidence of both may be retunded and confuted from hence, because the most ingenious and acute of all the Pagan philosophers, the Platonists and Pythagoreans, who had no bias at all upon them, nor any Scripture, (which might seem to impose upon their faculties,) but followed the free sentiments and dictates of their own minds, did, notwithstanding, not only entertain this Trinity of divine hypostases eternal and uncreated, but were also fond of the hypothesis, and made it a main fundamental of their theology.* The latter Platonists and unbelieving Jews were, therefore, led, as this author points out, to adulterate the Cabbala and the genuine doctrine of Plato, in order to weaken their evidence in favour of the reasonableness of the doctrine of the Trinity.

* See also remarks to the same effect in Stillingfleet on the Trinity, pp. 216, 217. See also Note A.

This conclusion however, that the Pagan doctrine of triads originated in a primitive revelation, though to our minds irresistably strong, is very far from being admitted by our opponents. There was a time when the policy pursued was to deny the existence of any other than an imaginary resemblance between the Pagan and Christian triads. "Thus have I given," says Dr. Priestly, "the best view that I have been able to collect of every thing that can be supposed to constitute the Trinity of Plato, from his own writings: without finding in them any resemblance to the Christian Trinity, or indeed to any proper personification of the Divine Logos; which has been made the second person in it."

The discovery however, has now been made; that the Christian doctrine of the Trinity was first introduced into the Christian system by certain of the early fathers, who, by their too great fondness for the philosophical learning of Gentilism, corrupted Christianity, in respect to the tenets of Christ's godhead and the Trinity, Justin Martyr being commonly set down as the ringleader of the innovators. The other Fathers chiefly implicated in this serious charge, are Ireneus, Athenagoras, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria. The opportunity being thus afforded for imputing to the doctrine of the Trinity a Pagan origin and character, the heathen triads were henceforward acknowledged to be, not only essentially analogous to, but the very sources and origin of the Christian doctrine.

Such is the hypothesis. Is there then, we would ask, any foundation for this assertion in the writings of these Fathers? If indebted for such important truth to the Gentile philosophers, to whose works they had been devotedly attached, we may expect to hear them speak of them with gratitude and praise. If, however, on the contrary, we find them in the face of all the shame, reproach and persecution to which their belief of this doctrine subjected them; if we find them treating these

* Hist. of Early Opin. Book i., ch. 6: Works. vol. 6, p. 164. "A similar statement occurs also, in Dr. Priestley's Letters to Bishop Horsley. As to the Trinity of Plato, (says he,) it was certainly a thing very unlike your Athanasian doctrine. For, it was never imagined that the three component members of that Trinity were, either equal to each other, or (strictly speaking) one."

philosophers with contempt, and tracing up their views to the Hebrew Scriptures, as the only pure foundations of primitive revelation, then we may feel assured that this hypothesis is gratuitous; unwarranted by the facts, and framed only as a subterfuge from the overwhelming power of the universal belief of this doctrine by the Fathers, as a proof of the primitive revelation of the doctrine of the Trinity.

Let us, then, hear what Justin Martyr says, "You will adduce," says he to the Greeks, "the wise men and the philosophers: for to these, as to a strong hold, you are wont to make your escape, whenever concerning the Gods, any twits you with the opinion of the poets. Wherefore, since it is fitting to begin with the first and the most ancient, commencing with them I will shew: that the speculation of each philosopher is still more ridiculous than even the theology of the poets.* He then proceeds in regular succession, through the several opinions of Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Heraclitus, Anaxagorus, Archelaus, Pythagorus, Epicurus, Empedocles, *Plato* and Aristotle, for the purpose of convicting them all of manifest and indisputable folly. With respect to *Plato* in particular, nothing can be more contemptuous than Justin's sneer at him. "*Plato* forsooth, is as sure that the Supreme Deity exists in a fiery substance, as if he had come down from above, and had accurately learned and seen all the things that are in Heaven."†

"Since," continues he to the Greeks, "it is impossible to learn from your teachers anything true respecting piety towards God, inasmuch as their very difference of opinion is a plain proof of their ignorance; I deem it an obvious consequence, that we should return to our own forefathers, who are of much higher antiquity than any of your teachers, who have taught us nothing from their own mere phantasy; who among themselves have no discrepancies, and who attempt not mutually to overturn the opinion of each other, but who, without wrangling and disputation, communicate to us that knowledge which they have received from God. For, neither by nature,

* Justin ad Græc. Cohort. Oper. p. 8. † Ibid. p. 4.

nor by human intellect, is it possible for men to attain the knowledge of such great and divine matters, but only by the gift which descends from above, upon holy men who needed not the arts of eloquence, or the faculty of subtle disputation, but who judged it solely necessary to preserve themselves pure by the efficacious energy of the Divine Spirit.”*

Equally vituperative is the language of Tertullian. “For the authors of our Theology,” says he, “we have the apostles of the Lord; who, not even themselves, arbitrarily chose what they would introduce, but who faithfully delivered to the nations that discipline which they received from Christ. Finally, heresies themselves, are suborned from philosophy. Thence spring those fables and endless genealogies, and unfruitful questions and discourses, creeping like gangrene, from which the Apostle would rein us back by charging us, even in so many words, to beware of philosophy. What then is there in common between Athens and Jerusalem, between the Academy and the Church, between Heretics and Christians? Our institution is from the porch of Solomon, who, himself, has admonished us to seek the Lord in simplicity of heart. Let those persons see to it, who have brought forward a stoical, or a Platonic, or a dialectic Christianity.”† “From the Prophets and from Christ, we are instructed in regard to God; not from the Philosophers nor Epicurus. God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, that he might confound the wise. Through this simplicity of the truth, directly contrary to subtiloquence and philosophy, we can savour nothing perverse.”‡

* Justin Cohort, *Oper.* p. 87.

† Tertull. *Adv. Marcion*, Lib. ii., § 13, *Oper.* p. 181.

‡ Tertull. *Adv. Marcion*, Lib. v., § 40, *Oper.* p. 328. Stillingfleet, in his work on the Trinity, replies to this objection as follows: (p. 213-215.) “But our Unitarians have an answer ready for these men, viz., that they came out of Plato’s school with the tincture of his three principles; and they sadly complain, that Platonism had very early corrupted the Christian faith as to these matters. In answer to which exception, I have only one postulatum to make, which is, that these were honest men, and knew their own minds best, and I shall make it appear, that none can more positively declare, than they do, that they did not take up these notions from Plato, but from the Holy Scriptures; Justin Martyr saith he took the foundation of his faith from thence, and that he could find no certain-

It is thus apparent that the very witnesses produced by the Unitarians to prove the Pagan origin of the doctrine of the Trinity, reject such imputation with scorn for its foolishness, and actually give their testimony in favour of its origin in a primitive Divine revelation. But this is not all. These witnesses go further and charge home upon those who had endeavoured to suborn and pervert their testimony, the introduction of their errors from that very Pagan philosophy to which they would daringly and blasphemously ascribe the origin of the Christian Trinity.

To this purpose speaks the venerable Irenæus, who yet, by Dr. Priestly, has been accused in conjunction with Justin and sundry others, his contemporaries, of introducing the doctrine of the Logos from the schools of the philosophers into the system of Christianity. "Heretics (says Irenæus,) are not only convicted of steal-

ty as to God and religion anywhere else; that he thinks Plato took his three principles from Moses; and in his dialogue with Trypho, he at large, proves the eternity of the Son of God from the Scriptures, and said he would use no other arguments, for he pretended to no skill but in the Scriptures, which God had enabled him to understand.

Athenagoras declares that where the philosophers agreed with them, their faith did not depend on them, but on the testimony of the Prophets, who were inspired by the Holy Ghost. To the same purpose speaks Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch, who asserts the co-eternity of the Son with the Father, from the beginning of St. John's Gospel, and saith their faith is built on the Scriptures.

Clement, of Alexandria, owns, not only the essential attributes of God to belong to the Son, but that there is one Father of all, and one Word over all, and one Holy Ghost, who is everywhere, and he thinks Plato borrowed his three principles from Moses; that his second was the Son, and his third the Holy Spirit. Even Origen himself, highly commends Moses above Plato, in his most undoubted writings, and saith, that Numenius went beyond Plato, and that he borrowed out of the Scriptures; and so he saith, Plato did in other places; but he adds, that doctrines were better delivered in Scripture, than in his artificial dialogues. Can any one that hath the least reverence for writers of such authority and zeal for the Christian doctrine, imagine that they wilfully corrupted it in one of the chief articles of it, and brought in new speculations against the sense of those books, which at the same time, they professed to be the only rule of their faith? Even where they speak most favourably of the Platonic trinity, they suppose it to be borrowed from Moses. And therefore Numenius said, that Moses and Plato did not differ about the first principles; and Theodoret mentions Numenius as one of those who said, Plato understood the Hebrew doctrine in Egypt; and during his thirteen years stay there, it is hardly possible to suppose, he should be ignorant of the Hebrew doctrine, about the first principles, which he was so inquisitive after, especially among nations who pretended to antiquity."

ing from the comic writers, but they likewise collect together the sayings of all those who are ignorant of God, and who are called philosophers. Out of these numerous, vile, borrowed rags, they industriously patch up a sort of cento; and thus through the introduction of a new doctrine, they prepare themselves with subtle eloquence, a system superficially plausible.”*

Exactly similar also, are the repeated declarations of Tertullian. “Turning from the Christians to the philosophers, from the Church to the Academy and the Portico, Hermogenes has thence borrowed from the Stoics the phantasy of conjoining matter with the Deity. For, matter, he contends, always existed; being neither born, nor made, nor having either beginning or end: and out of this God afterwards created all things.”†

“In good truth, (adds Tertullian,) I grieve to say that Plato has become the universal seasoner of heretics. Since then, those matters, which heretics borrow, are insinuated by Plato, I shall sufficiently confute heretics, if I demolish the argument of Plato.‡ Philosophers are the patriarchs of heretics.”§ “Finally, (adds he,) heresies themselves are suborned from philosophy.”§

Cyril of Alexandria, makes similar remarks. “Porphry, expounding the sentiment of Plato, sayeth, that the essence of God proceeds even to three hypostases, but that the Supreme God is “the Supreme Good,” and that after him, the second is, the prime Opificer or Creator; moreover, that the third is, the mundane soul, (or universal spirit.) For, the Divinity extended itself to the soul of the universe. This Platonic trinity Cyril refutes, as that which is the spawn and seed to Arianism.”

Athanasius also charged upon the Arians two things as Gnostic and Valentinian, which undoubtedly, are so:** one was their bringing in, will, (1) between the Father and his *word*; another was their *creature* Creator. (2) Philastrius (3) farther charges them with having borrowed another principle from the infamous Apelles, (of the

* Iren. Adv. Hær. Lib. ii, c. 19, sec. 2, p. 117.

† Tertull. Adv. Hermog. sec. 1, Oper. p. 335.

‡ Oper. p. 659. | Ibid. p. 339. § Tertull. Adv. Hær. sec. 2, Oper. p. 97.

** See Dr. Waterland's Second Defence, vol. iii., p. 289. (1) Athan. p. 608. (2) Athan. Orat. ii., p. 489. (3) Philastrius Hæres. cap. 47.

Marcionite tribe,) which was the making a *second* God, a *creature* and a *subject* of the *first*, not to mention that Bishop Bull had run up your doctrines to the old Gnostics, (4) long ago; and was never yet confuted, nor ever will be."

That Arianism originated in Pagan philosophy, was the opinion of Melancthon, who, says "Paulus Samosatenus—who adopted the blasphemy of Ebion and Cerinthus—was led to his errors in the following way: Plotinus the philosopher, who was a scholar to Ammonius, reading in the school of Alexandria, had mingled with his philosophy allegories touching the eternal Word, and in as much as there were many debates about these things from the writings of the ancients, Paulus Samosatenus drew thence his impostures, and maintained that Jesus Christ was only man; and that by *λογος*, *logos*, the word; (John i., 1,) we are not to understand any person subsistent, but the declaration and word of promise. These reveries were received with much praise by curious spirits, and particularly by Zenobia, Queen of Arabia and dame of Antioch, by whose means P. Samosatenus was defended for ten years. This heresy of Samosatenus, in denying the divinity of Christ, was received by Arius, and that from the very same foundation of Platonic philosophy, yea, in the very same school of Alexandria."

The same fact is stated by Aquinas.* "We find, (says he,) in the books of the Platonist, that in the beginning the Word was, by which Word, they understood not a person in the Trinity, but an Ideal Reason, by which God made all things—whence sprang the error of Origen and Arius, who followed the Platonists herein. So again, in what follows. Q. 34, A. 1. Aquinas assures us that Origen laid the foundation of Arianism, by affirming that the word in Divine matters, was to be interpreted only metaphysically, not properly. That Arius also, derived his opinion from the Platonists through this school of Alexandria, is evident, since Arius was a Presbyter in this Church, and student in this school, where the Pythagorean and Platonic philosophy was at

(4) Bull, D. F., Sect. iii., Cap. 1.

* Sum. Part. i., Q. 32, A. 1.

this time wholly in request, Aristotle not having come into play till afterward."

Similar is the opinion of that great French reformer, M^{ore}lius.* "It has been the custom (says he,) to use disputes in many places, whence many inconveniences may follow: for such disputes tend only to awaken and discover the spirit, whence follows much presumption and ostentation, and the starting of high and curious questions, which may afterwards trouble the church." The Arian heresy had its rise from the particular conferences of learned men in the city of Alexandria. Indeed, Constantine sharply reprehended these curious disputes, &c. The same may be applied to the Photinian heresy, which was the same with the Arian and Samosatenean.

Origen, therefore, introduced the Aristotelian philosophy in order to counteract the paganizing effects of the Platonic, and for the same purpose endeavoured to harmonize the Platonic and Christian Trinities, and thus paved the way for greater errors.†

We have thus, I think, demonstrated that so far from being true that the doctrine of the Trinity was derived

* *Discipl. Liv. ii., chap. 4, pp. 87, 88.*

† The error of identifying the Platonic and Christian trinities, says Mr. Cory, (1) took its rise with a few of the writers in the second century. "They were led into the mistake by the word *Logos*, used by Plato and St. John, and made the Platonic Trinity to consist of God, the *Logos* and the Soul of the world, and this in spite of all the professed followers of Plato, who, however they might vary among themselves, uniformly insisted upon placing the *Monad* and *Duad*, or at least, a *Monad* above their *Triad*.

In the first century of the Christian era, Philo, an Alexandrian Jew, had attempted to expound the Scriptures on Platonic principles; and after the promulgation of the Gospel, many of the fathers warmly adopted the same mode of exposition. The different sects of the Gnostics went far beyond the Grecian sage, and sought in the East the doctrines, to which they looked upon the writings of Plato merely as essays, introductory to the sublimer flights of the Oriental mysticism, and they treated his followers with that contempt, against which the vanity of a philosopher is seldom proof; and as long as these schools existed, a bitter enmity prevailed between them. The Gnostics gave at once a real existence to the *Ideal* world, and continuing the chain of being from the Supreme through numerous orders of *Eons*, personified abstract ideas, of which the second and third persons of the Trinity were the first and second *Eons*, and from thence to the lowest material species, founded that daring

(1) *Ancient Fragments*, p. 7, *Introd.*

by some of the early Fathers from the Pagan doctrine of Plato and other philosophers; these Fathers brand, repudiate and deny the charge, condemn those doctrines as erroneous and foolish, and attribute to them the heresies which are now advocated by Unitarians. But these Fathers go still further than this. These very Fathers attribute whatever is true or good, in these ancient philosophers, not to human reason, not to their genius, or original invention, but to the revelation of God. "Your philosophers," says Justin Martyr to the Greeks, "through the agency of the Divine Providence, have unwillingly been even themselves, compelled to speak on our side of the question: and now, especially those who sojourned in Egypt, and who are benefitted by the theosophy of Moses and his ancestors. For those of you, who are acquainted with the history of Diodorus, and with the productions of other similar writers, can scarcely, I think, be ignorant; that Orpheus and Homer, and Solon, and Pythagoras, and Plato, and several others, having sojourned in Egypt, and having been benefitted

heresy which so long disturbed the tranquillity of Christendom, and with this spurious Platonism of the fathers of the Arian heresy, is likewise intimately connected.

But the internal heresies of the Church were not the only ill effects of which the misguided zeal of the fathers, in forcing upon Plato the doctrine of the Trinity, brought about. Though it is possible, that by pointing out some crude similarity of doctrine, they might have obtained some converts by rendering Christianity less unpalatable to the philosophical world of that day, yet the weapon was skillfully turned against them, and with unerring effect, when the Pagans took upon them to assert that nothing new had been revealed in Christianity; since, by the confessions of its very advocates, the system was previously contained in the writings of Plato.

In the third century, Ammonius Saccas, universally acknowledged to have been a man of consummate ability, taught that every sect, Christian or Heretic, or Pagan, had received the truth, and retained it in their varied legends. He undertook therefore, to unfold it from them all, and to reconcile every creed. And from his exertions sprung the celebrated Eclectic School of the later Platonists, Plotinus, Amelius, Olympius, Porphyrius, Jamblicus, Syrianus and Proclus, were among the celebrated Professors who succeeded Ammonius in the Platonic Chairs, and revived and kept alive the spirit of Paganism, with a bitter enmity to the Gospel, for near three hundred years. The Platonic Schools were at length closed by the edict of Justinian; and seven wise men, the last lights of Platonism, Diogenes, Hermias, Eulalius, Priscianus, Damascius, Isidorus and Simplicius, retired indignantly from the persecutions of Justinian, to realize the shadowy dreams of the Republic of Plato, under the Persian despotism of Chosroes.

by the history of Moses, afterward set forth matters directly contrary to their former indecorous speculations concerning the gods. Thus, for instance, Orpheus, though the first teacher of Polytheism among you, declared to his son, Museus, and to other sincere hearers, the unity of the Godhead. We find him also adjuring **THE VOICE OF THE FATHER**: by which expression, he means **THE WORD OF GOD**, through whom were produced the heavens and the earth, and the whole creation, as the divine prophecies of holy men teach us. For, becoming partially acquainted with those prophecies in Egypt, he thence learned that the whole creation was produced by the word of God. Pythagoras, likewise, who, through symbols, mystically declared the dogmata of his philosophy, learned just sentiments, concerning the unity of God, during his abode in Egypt. After a similar manner, Plato, as it seems, learned in Egypt the doctrine of Moses and the prophets respecting one only God. For, wishing to interpret to the ignorant what was mystically said concerning the eternity of God, he wrote as follows: "God, as the ancient discourse sets forth, has the beginning, and the end, and the middle of all things." Here, under the name of the ancient discourse, Plato clearly and openly alludes to the law of Moses: though through fear of Aconite he did not venture to mention the precise name of the Hebrew Legislator."*

Hear also, to the same effect, Clement of Alexandria. "Plato," says he, "remarks, God, as also the ancient discourse teaches, comprehends the beginning and the end, and the middle of all things. Whence, O Plato, did you thus darkly set forth the truth? The nations of the barbarians, says he, are wiser than those. Truly I well know your teachers, though you may wish to conceal them. From the Hebrews you have borrowed both all your good laws, and your opinions respecting the Deity."† "Pythagoras transferred largely from our Scriptures into his own system of dogmatic philosophy. For, Numenius, the Pythagorean philosopher, undisguisedly writes: what is Plato save Moses atticising?‡ Again,

* Justin Cohort, ad Græc. Oper. pp. 11, 12, 14, 18.

† Clem. Alex. Admon. ad Gent. Oper. pp. 43, 46.

‡ Clem. Alex. Strom. Lib. 1, Oper. p. 342.

he says, "The philosophies of the Greeks without acknowledging their obligations, borrowed the best of their dogmata from Moses and the prophets."*

According to Justin Martyr, the three principles of the Greek philosopher were God, and Matter, and Form: to which he sometimes added a fourth, under the title of the soul of the universe.†

But, Porphyry exhibits Plato's second and third principles, as being active instead of passive: whence he sums up the entire three as the Highest Good, God, the Second Creative God, and the Soul of the World. And this last statement of the speculation seems to be favoured by the language of Plato himself: for, mentioning them altogether in his second epistle to Dionysius, he denominates his three divine principles, Essential Goodness, and Creative Intellect, and The Universal Mundane Soul. "Now, in the Triad of Plato, (says Faber,) some of the early Fathers wished to discover a real, though corrupted declaration of the three persons of the Trinity: and the theory upon which they proceeded was avowedly the following: The doctrine of the Trinity, they maintained, so far from being an invention of Plato, was, in truth, a *primitive patriarchal revelation* of the divine nature. This primitive revelation was, with a more ample developement, confirmed under the Gospel. Plato, meanwhile, had corruptly borrowed its outline from the writings of Moses and the Prophets. Consequently, men need not wonder to have found a prominent dogma, both of the ancient and Hebrew Church, and of its successor the Christian Church, in the works of a speculative Greek, who had been largely conversant with the Orientals.‡

Thus, it is made apparent that the Fathers, instead of lending any countenance to the Unitarian hypothesis; that they derived the doctrine of the Trinity from Plato and other Pagan philosophers, condemned their doctrine of triads as a corrupt perversion of the teaching of the

* Justin Cohort, ad. Græc. Oper. p. 5.

† Justin Cohort, ad. Græc. Oper. p. 6.

‡ Justin Apol. 1, Oper. pp. 72, 73. See Faber's Apost. of Trinitarianism, vol. ii., B. 2, ch. 3, from which we have taken our authorities and the argument. See also, do. ch. 4, p. 145-150. Gale's Court of Gentiles, vol. iv., p. 386.

Hebrew Scriptures, and of an original primitive revelation, from which they borrowed their ideas.

But, passing from the ancient world to the various portions of the Christian Church, the fact that this doctrine of the Trinity has been the almost universal belief of that church in every country, and in every age,—the fact that the denial or modification of it led to the formation of the earliest creeds and the controversies of Christians with those calling themselves Fellow-Christians,—the fact that, with the exception of one period, when for reasons which can be stated, a modification of this doctrine called Trinitarianism prevailed,* all who denied it were excommunicated as heretics, as abandoning the essential doctrine of the Gospel,—the fact that during that age referred to, Christian men contended earnestly for this doctrine as “the faith once delivered to the saints,” “even unto blood,”†—the fact that from that time this doctrine has been received as a fundamental doctrine by the Western, Greek, Oriental, Syrian and Waldensian Churches;—the fact that at the reformation this doctrine was adopted by every church, and introduced into every confession of faith, without exception,‡—the fact that all denial and discussion of the doctrine has only convinced the almost unanimous mind of Christendom that this is the doctrine of the Bible, and that it is vital and fundamental;—these facts surely carry with them a very powerful presumption in favor of our opinion that this doctrine is clearly taught in the word of God.§

But the *character* of these witnesses is as striking as their number. In the *first place*, we have the testimony of the ancient Jews. This is fully established by the writings of Philo, who was contemporary with the Apostles, and by the Dialogue of Justin Martyr with the Jew Trypho, in the middle of the second century, as well as by the Jerusalem Targum, or Paraphrase, written about the fourth century, by the Targum or Paraphrase of the Pentateuch, as ascribed to Jonathan ben Uzziel, written

* See Newman's History of Arianism in the 4th Century.

† See Note C., for the testimony of the early Fathers.

‡ See Note D., for the testimony of the Reformers.

§ Note on the views of the Fathers.

in the sixth or seventh century, and also by other Jewish works of acknowledged antiquity. That the ancient Jews were led to the belief of a plurality—a trinity—in the divine nature, has been further illustrated from the Books in the Apocrypha, as well as from the works above mentioned. "To the man who is really conversant in the writings of the Targumists, Cabbalists and Daruschiasts, remarks Mr. Oxlee, who is himself to be guided by their direction and authority, the doctrine of the Trinity can offer no scruples. The Targumist certainly distinguishes between Jehovah—the word of Jehovah—and the Habitation of Jehovah, by ascribing to each of them personal actions and properties, whilst he makes them all equally God, by assigning to them those effects of wisdom and power which are peculiar to the first cause; and yet he is not accused of having established three Gods, nor of having denied the unity. The Cabbalist distinguishes between the higher Numerations, Supreme Crown, Wisdom and Understanding; which he asserts to be no properties, as the name might import, but eternal subsistence of the Godhead; and yet he is not charged with having violated the unity of Jehovah, nor with having induced three Gods. Finally, the Daruschi vindicates the eternity and divinity of the Law and of the Throne of Grace, by demonstrating that they actually existed with Jehovah prior to the creation, and that on the authority of the inspired penman, they all denote one and the same thing; that is, one and the same God; and yet he is not condemned for having dissolved the unity by the number of his pre-existences. How then can the Professors of Judaism with any colour of propriety object to that tenet, which agrees in every essential point with the principles of their own church.*

* On this point, the reader can examine the judgment of the Ancient Jewish Church against the Unitarians, by Alex. Simpson, *Plea*, pp. 407-431. Haleson on the Trinity. Maurice *Jud. Antiq.* vol. 4, ch. 11, pp. 113. Jamieson's *Reply to Priestly*, vol. i., pp. 48-117. Randolph's *View of our Saviour's Ministry*, vol. ii., pp. 343-354. Gill's *Commentary on all the Passages*. Lightfoot. Whitaker's *Origin of Arianism*. Kidder's *Demonstration of the Messias*, Part iii., ch. 4, 5. Horsley's *Traacts*, pp. 242-244. McCann's *Old Paths*. Stillingfleet on the Trinity, pp. 203-206. For a full account of the Targum, see Prideaux *Connect. of Old and New Test.*, Part ii, B. 8.

We do not allude to these writings of the Jews because we think they have any claim of authority over our judgment, or that they are entitled to any high regard for the soundness of their understanding, or the correctness of their principles of interpretation: but their testimony is valuable, as historical documents giving us relics of the better knowledge and the purer faith of their ancestors. Neither do we undertake to affirm that these ancient writings of the Jews as clearly teach the triune personal distinction in the Godhead as so many and so learned men have been led to believe they do. Their opinion is our own. But still, we do not offer the testimony of these writings as *in itself*, a *positive* proof of the divine authority and truth of the doctrine of the Trinity, but as a *presumptive* proof that it is so, because the ancestors of those who now oppose the doctrine so interpreted Scripture, and so contemplated the Divine Being as to conceive of a plurality in the one Eternal Godhead. Against the Jews, who regard these writings as authoritative, their testimony must undoubtedly be conclusive, and against all presumptive arguments of Unitarians, they are equally conclusive, since they prove that the doctrine of an absolute personal unity in the divine nature is a defection from the ancient faith of the Jews as well as of Christians, and was never held either by believers in revelation, or by Gentiles without revelation.*

It must be remembered also, that a great number of the early converts to Christianity and to the belief of the Trinity were, like Paul and the other apostles, Jews, and some of them, like him, trained up in their schools and familiar with all their learning. And as a contradiction between the Old and New Testaments would be destructive to the inspired and authoritative claims of both, the adoption of Christianity *with the doctrine of the Trinity as a vital principle*, by them, is an irrefragable proof to their belief in its perfect consistency with what they regarded as the teaching of God's word.†

* Note D., Testimony of Jews.

† The alleged Unitarianism of the early Hebrew Christians has been triumphantly overthrown by Bishop Horsley, in his Tracts against Priestley, and in Jamieson's Vindication in reply to the same writer in Whitaker's Origin of Arianism, and other works.

A multitude of the early Christians were, on the other hand, Greeks, or at least familiar with the Greek language, and with that dialect spoken in Palestine, and in which the Books of the New Testament were written. Many of them also, like Paul, had been learned in all the wisdom of the ancient philosophers; and some of them had been teachers of their systems, and enthusiastic admirers of their genius and eloquence.

But further, all the primitive and early disciples of Christianity, had either been brought up Jews or Pagans. They were imbued therefore, with all the prejudices and bigotry of these nations, and their enmity even unto blood against Christianity. To the unbelieving, who constituted the great majority of the Jewish nation, the doctrine of the deity of Christ and of the Trinity, was an opprobrious scandal, nay a God defying blasphemy, for the open avowal of which they condemned Jesus Christ to what, by their law, they considered a merited crucifixion. To the Greeks and Romans this doctrine was the uttermost folly, contradiction and absurdity. It was made the ground-work of opprobrious ridicule, as may be seen in the oath put by Lucian into the mouth of a Christian, and by the charge contained in the letter of Pliny to Trajan.* By the philosophic few these doctrines were regarded as pure polytheism and the idolatrous worship of a mere man, while they rejected all faith in the Gods. To the multitude among them, on the contrary, they appeared as the impious substitution of a new system of polytheism for one already established, as the faith of their fathers.

That the early Christians, both Jews and Gentiles, should have adopted Christianity, and with it as a prime verity, this doctrine of the Trinity, is, therefore, overwhelming presumptive evidence, both that the doctrine is Scriptural, and that it is Divine.

It is a further evidence for this conclusion, and a new line of presumptive and corroborative proof, that some even of the ancient heretics, who separated themselves from the body of the church and were cut off by it, as fully retained the doctrine of a consubstantial trinity as

* See given in Note C., as one line of proof. See also, Lardner's Works.

the orthodox. This was the case with the Manichees* and the Montanists, Tertullian having written *some* of his strongest works in favour of the Trinity after joining this sect.

Such then, are the many various and antagonistic witnesses, who unite their testimony in favour of the doctrine of a trinity, as having been the doctrine originally, of a primitive divine revelation, and as being the undoubted doctrine taught in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. The heathen world, the Christian world, the various and conflicting denominations of Christians, the ancient Jews, all converted Jews, Romanists and Greek, and all other oriental Christians, the Syrian Church buried for ages on the coasts of Malabar, and the Waldenses equally concealed from the earliest times amid their inaccessible mountains, all unite in testifying to this glorious and divine truth.

Now, be it remembered, that fact thus testified to, is not the *truth* of this doctrine, but the simple, palpable, and easily understood *fact*, of this doctrine having been handed down more or less, and purely from primitive and patriarchal revelation; and of its being at this moment, and ever since they were written, embodied and taught in the sacred Scriptures.

It must also be remembered, that the Greek and Roman Churches were early separated, and have ever since remained rival and antagonistic churches. The firm tenure of this doctrine therefore, by both churches, their mutual and earnest contending for it as the faith once delivered to the saints, and their undeviating preservation of it amid all their other changes and corruptions, gives undoubted strength to the force of their independent and yet concurrent testimony.

The undoubted fact of the early and established belief in the doctrine of the Trinity is, itself, a powerful presumption in favour of its apostolic origin. For, as it is itself, altogether remote from the conceptions of the human mind, had the primitive Jews and Jewish converts, and Christian converts, been Unitarian, it is impossible to conceive how, or in what manner the doctrine

* See Lardner, vol. iii, pp. 351, 350, 287.

could have been so firmly and finally established as the doctrine, both of the Old and New Testaments, and as fundamentally important.

To these considerations must be added, not only the almost universal testimony of Christendom, in the present and all modern times, to the doctrine of the Trinity,—but the amazing learning with which every point bearing upon this question has been discussed;—the erudition and research employed in the study and analysis of the Greek and Hebrew languages; and the definitive character now given to the proper and only legitimate interpretation of the sacred Scriptures.

The passages from which these various and independent witnesses deduced the propositions which constitute the elements of the doctrine of the Trinity, are all those which teach that God, while in his Godhead or nature, he is absolutely one, is, in some sense plural, and not absolutely or personally one, that this plurality is limited to the persons of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and that each of these are God. Now, these passages of Scripture are not few. They are exceedingly numerous and enter into the whole structure and phraseology of the Bible. And as it regards their qualities of clearness, plainness, and determinate signification, we appeal from the prejudiced dogmatism of an adversary to the judgment of the truly calm and sincere inquirer, and from the comparatively few who have attempted to sustain the Unitarian hypotheses, upon purely Scriptural testimony,—to the innumerable witnesses we have produced, who, against all the prejudices which stood in their way, have been constrained to receive the doctrine of the Trinity as the doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures.

There is still another remark, which will strengthen this presumptive argument for the Scriptural authority of the doctrine of the Trinity, and that is, that were it not plainly and indubitably taught by God himself, no sincere believer could ever have dared to promulgate it. For, if there is one point on which the Scriptures are more full, express and positive than any other, it is in their denunciations against all idolatry and false Gods.

Of Christ, it is almost essential characteristic in the prophetic writings, that he should "utterly abolish idolatry."—(Isa. ii., 18.) If therefore, the doctrine of the Trinity be not true, then believers in any age, have been almost universally idolaters. And hence, from anti-trinitarian principles, the blasphemous consequence follows,—that God himself has led his creatures into temptation,—temptation to that very sin, which, above all others, he hates and abhors,—temptation to idolatry! The Deity declares that he is a "jealous God;" that his glory he will not give to another, nor his praise "to graven images." He most pathetically expostulates upon this subject, (Jer. xlv., 3.). "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate." With what scrupulous care does the Supreme Being guard against all temptations to idolatry? Lest the Israelites should worship the relics of Moses, the Deity himself privately interred him, and no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day." The brazen serpent also, was destroyed, lest it should lead the Israelites into idolatry. But, if the Deity used such precaution to prevent men from worshipping the body of Moses and the brazen serpent, how can we believe that he would use no precaution where the temptation was infinitely greater. How can we imagine that he would use no precaution to prevent men from worshipping his Son and the Holy Ghost, if only creatures? Is not such a supposition in the highest degree, absurd and unreasonable, and impious? We find that, not only is there no precaution employed in the Scriptures to prevent men from such idolatry, but that everywhere and in every way the Scriptures teach and require men to worship, both the Redeemer and the Holy Spirit. The most glorious perfections of Deity are ascribed to them; the most glorious works of Deity are performed by them,—those very works by which the being and attributes of God are proved,—by which his eternal power and Godhead are manifested,—and by which he is distinguished from all false gods. They are, also, everywhere represented as the object of the prayers of men, and of the united praises and adorations of all intelligent beings. What temptations to idolatry if these persons are only crea-

tures or attributes. All the temptations that ever existed compared with these, were nothing, and less than nothing."*

Finally, if, as it is said by Unitarians, we cannot and ought not to believe the doctrine of the Trinity, even though the Scriptures when interpreted, as all other books are, clearly teaches it,—then, since God has given us no other laws of interpretation by which to understand their meaning, it would follow that the Scriptures cannot be received as an authoritative and inspired standard of faith and practice, and we are thrown upon the wide sea of scepticism and human conjecture as to what is truth. By the great majority of those who have candidly studied the Bible, it has been regarded as teaching the doctrine of the TRINITY of persons in the ONE Godhead, and therefore, it follows that the great majority of those who believe the Bible to be the inspired word of God, must, also, believe the doctrine of the Trinity. They have no alternative between infidelity and Trinitarianism, and since they cannot adopt the latter they must adhere to the former.

From these consequences, therefore, which follow from the rejection of the doctrine of the Trinity, and from all the reasons which constitute our presumptive argument in its favour, we are brought to the conclusion that it is very probably true, that it will be found clearly taught in the Scriptures, and that its opponents therefore, are bound to prove that Christianity distinctly and equivocally condemns and rejects this doctrine before they can offer any valid argument against it on the ground of antecedent impossibility, or in any degree tamper with the plain meaning of the words of Scripture. In coming therefore to Scripture to ascertain what God has revealed on the subject of his own nature, we are not only freed from any prejudices against the probability of finding there the doctrine of the Trinity, but are presumptively led confidently to expect that it will be clearly and distinctly taught in those Scriptures which "were

* On the alleged idolatry of the doctrine of the Trinity, and the consequences it involves, and its futility, see Wynpersee on the Godhead of Christ, sec.*17, pp. 157-162.

given by inspiration of God and are profitable for doctrine,"—"the law and testimony,"—the rule and standard of all revealed truth.*

* We would earnestly ask our readers to distinguish carefully between the doctrines proposed in Scripture to our belief, and the things themselves that are the matter and subject of them. The former may be known, and ground sufficient seen for receiving them; where our reason, at least in this its weak and impaired state, can't reach the full clear, and adequate understanding of the latter.

"Would not advantage be given to Deists and Anti-Scripturists, not to say Atheists, to scoff at the Bible, if after pretences of its truth and authority, and that its great end is to call off the world from idolatry and polytheism to the knowledge, worship and service of the one only true God, and of its plainness to such purposes, being for the use of all; yet even as to this main point, the setting forth of this one true God, distinguishing him from all other beings, it is allowed to be done in such a manner, that not only one, or a few, through carelessness or prejudices, or judicial blindness might mistake; but that the generality of Christians, in all ages, have mistaken, under as good capacity to understand it, as good means and helps thereto, as much concern and diligence, impartiality and faithfulness in the study of it, as sincere and earnest prayer to God for his guidance, and as good ground to hope for it from him as any can pretend to! What use, may they say, can such a book be of, or what likelihood that it is from God? Could he not speak plainly of himself, where 'tis pretended he designed to do so? Is all there so delivered, that the world might, and almost all actually have erred, as to the very object of their faith, worship and obedience, and in whom their felicity is placed? Would not that book, instead of leading to life and salvation, be the most insinuating and dangerous one that can be? Of what tendency must those notions be from which any such consequences would justly follow?"

ARTICLE II.

A PLEA FOR THE STUDY OF HEBREW LITERATURE.

While the names of Heathen, as well as Christian sages, are scarcely ever mentioned without calling up feelings of affection and regard towards the nations that gave them birth; the names of the sages of the Hebrew nation, who were once justly styled, by common consent, Sapientissimi, are passed over in silence; they are never thought of; very few think it worth their while to explore their invaluable writings; having imbibed the idea that all Jewish productions, without exception,