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ARTICLE I.

TESTIMONY OF THE EARLY FATHERS TO THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

We have assumed, in our whole discussion, the truth, the Divine inspiration, and the authority of the sacred Scriptures. From this it follows that the teaching of Scripture, in all questions of doctrine, when clearly ascertained, is the infallible rule and judge of what is to be believed as true.

Widely different interpretations, however, have been and are put, upon various passages of Scripture. It is therefore necessary, while every man must, for himself, search the Scriptures, and be fully persuaded in his own mind, that he should avail himself of all proper assistance in confirming himself in the correctness of his conclusions. This assistance is to be found, in the most eminent manner, in the promised influences of that Holy Spirit, who alone can infallibly guide into all truth.—Next to this, however, is the confirmation given to our opinions by the judgment of others, whose ability and character render them capable judges of the true meaning of the sacred Scriptures.

Now, among those who must be regarded as, beyond controversy, most eminently capable of knowing what our Lord and his apostles really taught, orally, and in writing, the Christians who lived contemporaneously and immediately after them, must be enrolled. If, therefore, we can ascertain those views which were held by the *primitive* church, on the subject of the Trinity,

we have the highest assurance that these must have been delivered by Christ and his apostles, and must contain the real doctrine of the Holy Scriptures. And if we find that those views are not those of the Unitarians, but are, in all that is essential, those of Trinitarians, then we may safely conclude that the Trinitarian, and not the Unitarian doctrine, is that taught in the word of God. In a very important sense, Tertullian's declaration is correct, as it regards Christian doctrine: "Whatever is first, is true,—whatever is later, is adulterate." And the rule of Vincentius will apply, that whatever Christian doctrine was held by all, every where in the first age of Christianity, must be true. The question is not one regarding the opinions of the early Christians, but as to the simple fact of their holding certain opinions, because they believed them to be those taught in the word of God, and by Christ and his apostles. Christianity being undoubtedly a revelation from God, and this revelation being now contained in the sacred writings, what views on the subject of the Trinity did the primitive Christians consider to be enforced in those writings, and to have been taught by Christ and his inspired apostles? We appeal to the primitive Christians therefore, not as judges, but simply as credible and fully qualified witnesses of what was held and believed in the churches in their day, as the undoubted doctrine of Christianity. We do not, therefore, constitute them either judges or interpreters of the faith; but most reliable witnesses of facts, and most capable translators of language, which, to many of them, was vernacular, who were also most likely to know the views and opinions of the inspired penmen.

At the period of the Reformation, as we shall afterwards prove, the doctrine of the Trinity was every where and by all the reformed churches, adopted as the undoubted teaching of Scripture, and as of primary and fundamental importance. This was done while the same judgment was delivered by the Romish church, from whose tenets and practices they would naturally have been disposed to recede, as far as Scripture warranted. Such also, was the doctrine held by the churches of Rome, of Britain, of the Greek and Oriental churches,

with a very partial exception, and that under the pressure of very severe persecutions, up to the time of the Council of Nice, A. D. 325. To constitute this general council, or assembly of the representatives of the Christian world, more than 300* were present.

These ministers were representatives of the various churches of Spain, Italy, Egypt, the Thebais, Libya, Palestine, Phœnicia, Cœlo-Syria, Lydia, Phrygia, Psididi, Lycia, Pamphylia, the Greek Islands, Caria, Isauria, Cyprus, Bithynia, Europa, Dacia, Mysia, Macedonia, Achaia, Thessaly, Calabria, Africa, Dardania, Dalmatia, Pannonia, the Gauls, Gothia, Bosphorus. It is thus made certain, as a matter of fact, that the Trinitarian doctrine was held by nearly all the clergy, when the controversy first began. Alexander mentions only three bishops, five presbyters, and six deacons, who supported the Arian heresy: and without supposing these persons to be actuated by improper motives, (a suspicion, which is more than insinuated against some of them,) it is only reasonable to decide, that the sentiments of so small a minority are not to be weighed against the deliberate declaration of the whole catholic church.

The creed adopted by this council was as follows:

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible: And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten, only-begotten from the Father, that is, from the substance of the Father; God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not created; consubstantial with the Father: through whom were all things made, both things in heaven and things in earth; who, on account of us men, and of our salvation, descended, and became incarnate, and was made man: suffered, was buried, and rose again on the third day: ascended into the heavens: is coming to judge the quick and the dead.

We believe also in the Holy Ghost.

But those who say there was a time when the Son existed not, and that he existed not before he was begotten, and that he was made out of things which are not,

* 318 or 320, besides, as Eusebius says, "an infinite number" of other clergy and officers.

or who say that he was from any person or substance, or who teach that the Son of God was created, or was vertible, or was mutable; these persons the apostolic and catholic church anathematizes.

This council was called on account of the views of the Trinity broached by Arius, a presbyter of Alexandria, which denied the absolute consubstantiality, coequality, and divinity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, though he admitted the personality and divine nature of each.

The creed thus adopted was declared by these various representatives of churches in Asia, Africa and Europe, to be that which had invariably been the doctrine of the Catholic Church, from the very age, and by the very teaching of the Apostles themselves.

In his historical epistle to his own church of Cesarèa, Eusebius unequivocally states, that the Nicene Fathers avowedly proceeded in their definition of sound Christian doctrine, on this principle: "As" says he, "we have received from the Bishops, our predecessors, both in our first catechumenical instruction, and, afterwards, at the time of our baptism; and as we have learned from the Holy Scriptures; and as, both in our Presbyterate, and in our Episcopate itself, we have both believed and taught, this also, now believing, we expound to your faith."* Concerning which things, we firmly pronounce,

* Eusebius introduced a creed, or confession of faith, to the Council assembled at Nice. The creed is as follows:

"I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, the Maker of all things visible and invisible, and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God, God of God, Light of Light, Life of Life, the only begotten Son, the first born of every creature, begotten of God the Father before all the worlds: by whom all things were made; who, for our salvation, was incarnate, and lived among men, and suffered and rose again the third day, and returned to the Father, and will come again in glory to judge the quick and dead. I believe also in one Holy Ghost, believing that each of these has a being and existence, the Father really the Father, the Son really the Son, and the Holy Ghost really the Holy Ghost. As our Lord, when he sent his disciples to preach, said, Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Ghost: concerning whom I affirm, that I hold and think in this manner, and that I long ago held thus, and shall hold so until death, and perish in this faith, anathematizing every impious heresy. I declare in the presence of Almighty God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, that I have held all these sentiments from my heart and soul, from the time that I know myself; and that I now think and express them sincerely, being able to show by demonstration,

anathematizing every godless heresy, both that they thus are; and that we thus think; and, again, that we have always thus thought; and yet, additionally, that we will insist upon this faith, even until death. Furthermore, in the presence of God Almighty, and our Lord Jesus Christ, we testify, that ever since we knew ourselves, we have always, from our heart and from our soul, thus thought, respecting these matters; and that we now think the same; and that we speak truly. For, by sure demonstrations, we are able to show, and to persuade you, that in times past also, we thus believed and preached. This faith, accordingly, having been by us expounded, there was no room for contradiction."

Hence, the Nicene fathers alleged, *as a notorious fact*, that they propounded no doctrine, save what they themselves had learned in the course of their catechumenical institution; save what had been handed down to them from their predecessors; save what they had always taught to their several flocks during the times of their Presbyterate and their Episcopate. Into the more ancient creed, the single word *consubstantial* they acknowledge themselves to have introduced: and this addition they avowedly and openly made, for the purpose of effectually meeting the endless subterfuges of the Arians.

But, though the precise word *consubstantial* might not hitherto have appeared in any symbol formally adopted by the whole Catholic church, the doctrine set forth in that word was distinctly propounded in the older universally recognised symbols. Accordingly, they themselves adduced one of those ancient symbols, as containing the theological system handed down to them from their predecessors.

and to persuade you, that my belief was thus, and my preaching likewise, in time past."

Eusebius was born about the year 270, so that a creed which he recited at his baptism would carry us back to at least ten years before the end of the third century; and though we are not bound to suppose that this creed was actually recited, word for word, by Eusebius, at the time of his baptism, we must at least believe that the doctrines contained in it were in accordance with those which every catechumen was expected to possess, at the end of the third century. The words of Eusebius might allow us to refer to a still earlier period.

Their assertion, as expressed in their own precise words, runs in manner following: "This is the apostolic and blameless faith of the church; which faith, ultimately derived from the Lord himself, through the apostles, and handed down from our forefathers to their predecessors, the church religiously preserves and maintains the same, both now and forever: inasmuch as the Lord said to the disciples—Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."*

Thus, says Mr. Faber, in two several passages, we have the attestation of full three hundred responsible individuals, collected out of all parts of the world, little more than three centuries after the Christian era, and little more than two centuries after the death of the apostle John, to a naked historical fact: the fact, namely, that the doctrines maintained in the first council of Nice, were the doctrines which they themselves had always taught, which, in the course of their catechumenical institution they had learned from predecessors, which they had openly professed at the time of their baptism, which, in the several lines of their respective churches, had invariably been handed from one spiritual generation to another, which had been received on the authority of the apostles, and which the apostles had ultimately derived from the Lord himself.

How more than three hundred men could have ventured to hazard such an assertion, unless the facts affirmed were almost universally admitted, and how otherwise such an assertion could have completely escaped contradiction, may be deemed extraordinary, and indeed impossible. It must, therefore, be regarded an established fact, that the Trinitarian doctrine was held by nearly all the churches, when the controversy respecting it first began. Alexander mentions only three bishops, five presbyters, and six deacons, who supported Arius in his heresy; and without supposing these persons to have been actuated by improper motives, (a suspicion which is more than insinuated against some of them,) it is only

* *Gelaa. Cyric. Hist. Council Nic. prim, lib. ii., c. 23. Labb. Council, vol. ii., p. 224.*

reasonable to decide, that the sentiments of so small a minority are not to be weighed against the deliberate declaration of the whole catholic church.

This creed, it will also be remembered, was adopted after a long and careful inquiry and discussion. "All things" said the Emperor Constantine, in his circular epistle to the churches, "obtained a suitable examination."* He makes the same assertion in his particular epistle to the Church of Alexandria. "All things which might seem to give any handle for dispute or dissension, were argued and accurately examined."† On this assertion of the Emperor, the remark of the historian Socrates runs as follows: "Constantine, indeed, wrote these things to the people of Alexandria, signifying that the definition of the faith was made, not lightly, nor at pure hazard; but they laid it down with much inquiry and examination; and not that some things were mentioned, while other things were suppressed; but that all things were agitated, whatsoever were meet to be spoken for the establishment of the dogma; and that the definition was not made lightly; but that it was preceded by an accurate discussion."‡ Here then is proof positive that in A. D. 325, the Trinitarian doctrine was, beyond the possibility of contradiction, the almost universal doctrine of the Christian church, and declared to have been such from the beginning. In confirmation of this position, we may, however, present many strong and conclusive arguments.

1. It will here be proper, as our first line of argument, to introduce the testimony afforded by the heathen, as to the opinions at this period, and previously, entertained in the Christian church. From the very nature of the objections constantly put forward by the heathen, it is evident that they regarded, and that the Christians admitted, the worship of Christ, as God essentially with the Father, to be a fundamental part of the faith and practice of Christians.

These objections, as given by Arnobius, A. D. 303, are thus stated: "The gods" as Arnobius represents the

* Euseb. de, vit. Constant. lib. ii., c. 17.

† Socrat. Hist. Eccles. lib. i., c. 9.—‡ Ib.

jagan enemies of the gospel as saying, "are not angry at you Christians, because you worship the omnipotent God. But they are indignant: both because you contend that one who was born a man, and who was put to death by the ignominious punishment of crucifixion, is God; and because you believe him still to survive, and because you adore him with daily supplications."*—Now the answer made to this charge by Arnobius in part, after a sarcastic allusion to the Gentile deities, is this: "You tell us that we worship one who was born a man, * * * * *. Now, even if it were true that we did worship a mere man, yet, on account of all the blessings which we have derived from him, he might, on your own principles, well deserve to be styled a divinity. But, since he is God in reality, and without the slightest ambiguity or doubt, do you imagine us inclined ever to deny that he is worshipped by us in the highest possible degree, and that he is called the President of our community? * * * * *. Some one, maddened and enraged, will say: what then—is that Christ God? Yes, we answer, and God of the very innermost potency. We further profess, however it may irritate unbelievers, that for ends of the last importance, he was sent to us by the Supreme Sovereign. He was the high God; God radically and essentially. From unknown realms, by the Prince of the universe, he was sent, God, God the Saviour."

We find the same familiar allegation urged again and again, almost to absolute satiety, by the Epicurean Celsus, who flourished about the middle of the second century; and his testimony is peculiarly valuable, not only for its antiquity, but also because, like that of the Pagan in Arnobius, it unequivocally tends to show, that the Christians of that period supposed their Lord to be God essentially.

"Well, therefore," says Origen, in his reply to Celsus and to his fictitious Jew, "do we censure the Jews for not deeming Him to be God, who is by the Prophets so often testified of, as being the great power and God, according to the God and Father of all things. For we

* Arnob. adv. gent, lib. i., pp. 19, 20. Lugdun, Batar, 1651.

assert, that, in the Mosaic cosmogony, the Father addressed to Him the command, Let there be light,—and Let there be a firmament,—and whatsoever other things God commanded to be made. He moreover said to him: Let us make man after our own image, and our likeness; and THE WORD, having these commands, did all the things the Father enjoined him. But we speak thus, not as separating the Son of God from the man Jesus; for, after the economy, the soul and the body of Jesus became most intimately one with the word of God.”*

“On the whole,” says Origen, “since he (Celsus) objects to us, I know not how often, concerning Jesus; that from a mortal body we esteem him to be God, and that in doing so, we conceive to act piously; it were superfluous, so much having already been said, to give him any further answer: yet, let these objectors know, that this person, whom, with full persuasion, we believe to be from the beginning, God and the Son of God, is the very Word, and the very Wisdom, and the very Truth; and we assert, that this mortal body, and the human soul in him, not only by fellowship, but likewise by absolute union and commixture, having participated of his divinity, have passed into the Deity.”†

It will be observed, says Faber, that the allegations of Celsus, while they are throughout, constructed upon the express ground that Christ was believed to be strictly and properly the Supreme God, respect not only a few visionary individuals, but the whole collective body of the Church. *As such*, accordingly, they are understood and answered by Origen. Hence, whatever in the abstract we may think of the arguments on either side, we have the positive and admitted testimony of Celsus, to the evidently well-known and familiar circumstance,—that The Catholic Church, about the middle of the second century, or some fifty or sixty years after the death of St. John, held and maintained the essential divinity of Christ, viewed under the aspect of God the Word, the eternal Son of the Father, co-existent with him from the beginning, in the inseparable unity of the Godhead.”

* Orig. Cont Cels, lib. i., p. 54.

† Cels. lib. iii., pp. 135, 136. See also lib. ii., p. 100: lib. vii., p. 368: lib. viii., p. 404.

Similar proof of the Trinitarian views of the Church will be found in the similar objections of Trypho, the Jew, in his celebrated argument with Justin Martyr, some years earlier, *i. e.* in the year 136; that is only thirty-six years after the death of the apostle John.

"With regard to what you assert," says Trypho, "that this Christ, in as much as he is God, pre-existed before all ages, and that he endured to be born a created man, and that he was not a mere man, born from man, in the ordinary course of nature; such an assertion, seems to me, not only a paradox, but even a downright absurdity." "To this" says Justin, "I replied: I know that my discourse is paradoxical, more especially to those of your race, who were never willing, either to understand or to perform the things of God. And Trypho said: You attempt to show a matter incredible and well nigh impossible,—that God endured to be born, and to become a man. My reply was: If I attempt to show this by mere human arguments, there were no need that you should bear with me; but, if I bring my proofs from repeated Scriptural authorities, you will then be convicted of hard-heartedness in regard to understanding the mind and the will of God."*

The exactly concurring testimony of Pliny, regularly founded upon the strictness of legal depositions, will bring this testimony within three years after the death of the apostle John; and in the next instance, will carry it back, even seventeen years before his death. For St. John died in the year 100; and from the Bithynian Nicomedia, in the year 103, was written the well known letter of Pliny to Trajan.

"Some of the Asiatic Christians affirmed before me," says Pliny, in his official report to Trajan, "that the sum total of their fault or error was this: On a stated day, they were wont to assemble together before sunrise, and alternately to sing among themselves a hymn to Christ, as to God." On this evidence, says Faber, it is important to remark, that the persecutor does not speak from vague hearsay. He officially reports to the Emperor the depositions of the prisoners themselves,

* Justin, *Dial. Cum. Trypho*, Oper., p. 228.

regularly taken down from their own mouths, at a public examination. On the face of the depositions, therefore, it appears that in the age of Trajan, at the very beginning of the second century, and therefore, immediately after the death of St. John, the Catholic Church, in her ordinary stated assemblies, and through the medium of her familiar appointed ritual, was regularly accustomed to worship Christ as God. This divine adoration of Christ as God prevailed, it will be observed, not in some remote corner of the world which might have been less under the apostle's superintendence, but in a province of Asia Minor, which may justly be deemed to have specially appertained to his own Patriarchate.

Nor yet, is even such the whole result of the evidence now under consideration. Pliny tells the Emperor, that of the persons who were brought before him, and who all made the deposition in question, some professed to have abjured Christ, or have ceased to be Christians, three years; some more than three years; and some even twenty years, previous to their appearance at his tribunal.* Our evidence, therefore, now specifies, on the personal knowledge of the deponents, that full seventeen years before the death of St. John, no less than three years after it, the Catholic Church, in the apostle's own immediate jurisdiction, was liturgically accustomed to worship Christ as God."

"How *numerous*, moreover," says Eusebius, "are the hymns and the songs of the brethren, written by the faithful, from the beginning, which celebrate Christ the Word of God, ascribing to him divinity."† Such hymns, as we learn from Origen, still continued to be used by the faithful, in the middle of the third century. "We recite hymns" says he, "to the alone God, who is over all, and to his only begotten Son, God the Word; and thus we hymn God and his only begotten.‡

The faith of the primitive church is also attested by the early apologies. In the composition of these works, some accredited champion of the common faith stepped

* Plin. Epist., lib. x., epist. 97. † Euseb. Hist. Eccles., lib. v., c. 28.

‡ Orig. Cont. Cels., lib. viii., p. 422.

forth: and appearing as the acknowledged representative of his brethren, described and vindicated, in the general name of the Church, those doctrines which, by common consent, were universally taught and believed. In the same class with the ancient Apology, may be fitly arranged all evidence of a kindred description.

According to this arrangement, let us now first hear Arnobius, who flourished about the year 303, and who has left us a controversial work in defence of Christianity against Paganism. "If Christ were God, they object: why was he put to death after the manner of a man?"—To this I reply: Could that Power, which is invisible, and which has no bodily substance, introduce itself into the world, and be present at the councils of men, in any other way, than by assuming some integument of more solid matter, which, even to the dullest eyesight, might be capable of visibility? He assumed, therefore, the form of man, and shut up his power under the similitude of our race, in order that he might be viewed and seen; in order that he might utter words and teach; in order that he might execute all these matters, for the sake of performing which he had come into the world, by the command and disposition of the highest Sovereign. "But they further object, that Christ was put to death after the manner of a man." * * * * *. Not in absolute strictness of speech, Christ himself, I reply: for that which is divine, cannot be liable to death; nor can that which possesses the attribute of perfect unity and simplicity, fall asunder by the dissolution of destruction. Who, then, was seen to hang upon the cross?—Who was the person that died? Doubtless, the human being, whom he had put on, and whom he himself bore in conjunction with his own proper self."*

We may next hear the official letter addressed to Paul of Samosata, by the fathers of the Council of Antioch, in the year 269.

"This, the begotten Son, the only begotten Son, who is the image of the invisible God; begotten before the whole creation; the Wisdom, and the Word, and the Power of God; who existed before the worlds; not by

* Arnor. Adv. Gent., lib. i., pp. 37, 38. See also lib. i., p. 41.

mere foreknowledge, but in substance and in person, God, the Son of God; him having known, both in the old and in the new covenant, we confess, and we preach," &c.

From the public letter of the Antiochian Fathers, let us pass to the Elenchus and Apology of Dionysius of Alexandria, as we find some fragments of that work preserved by Athanasius, A. D. 260.

"There never was a time when God was not a Father." * * * * *. "Christ, in as much as he is the Word, and the Wisdom, and the Power, always existed. For God did not at length beget a Son, as being originally ungenerative of these; but only the Son was not of himself; for he derives his being from out of the Father," &c. "He, then, is the eternal Son of the eternal Father, in as much as he is light from light. For, since there is a Father, there is also a Son. But, if there were no Son, how, and of whom could the Father be a Father? Both, however, exist; and both exist eternally."

Contemporary with Dionysius of Alexandria, was Dionysius of Rome. Part of a controversial work, written by this author against the patripassianising Sabellians, has been preserved by Athanasius. "I hear" he says, "that there are among you some teachers of the Divine word, who run into an error diametrically opposite to that of Sabellius. For he blasphemously asserts the Son to be identical with the Father: but they, in a manner, set forth three Gods in three alien essences altogether separate from each; thus dividing the sacred unity.—Now, the divine Word must inevitably be united with the God of all things; and the Holy Ghost must inevitably cohere and dwell in the Deity. Thus is it altogether necessary, that the divine Trinity should unite and coalesce in one, as it were in a certain head, namely, the Almighty God of the universe."

Cyprian was elected bishop of Carthage, A. D. 248, and suffered martyrdom in 258. In the numerous writings put forth in this interval, he has much that bears on our subject. I only quote a few passages.

"The Lord says, I and the Father are one thing.—And again, concerning the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, it is written, And these three are one

thing.”* “The Lord, after his resurrection, sending forth his disciples, instructed and taught them how they ought to baptize, saying: Go, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. He insinuates the Trinity, in whose sacrament the nations should be baptized.” “How, then,” he asks, “do some assert, both without the Church and against the Church, that a Gentile, provided he be baptized anywhere, and any how, in the name of Christ, can obtain remission of sins; when Christ himself commanded that the nations should be baptized in the full and united Trinity?”†

Hippolytus, the pupil of Irenæus, who received his theology from the apostle John, through the medium of Polycarp, flourished about the year 220. He asks, “Why was the temple desolated? Because the Jews put to death the Son of the Benefactor: for he is co-eternal with the Father. This, then, is the Word, who was openly shown to us. Wherefore we behold the incarnate Word; we apprehend the Father through him: we believe in the Son: we adore the Holy Ghost.”‡

“The Father,” says this same writer, “is indeed one: but, there are two persons, because here is also the Son; and the third person is the Holy Spirit: for the Father commands; the Son obeys; the Holy Spirit teaches. The Father is over all; the Son is through all; the Holy Spirit is in all. We cannot understand the one God, otherwise than as we truly believe in the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”

Tertullian, A. D. 200, composed, in the name of the suffering Church at large, a public Apology, addressed to the reigning Emperors. In this he says: “the Word, we say, was produced out of God; and, in his prolation, was generated from the unity of substance; therefore, he is called both God and The Son: for God is a Spirit, * * * * *; what hath proceeded from God, is both God, and the Son of God; and they two are one God.”

From the controversial works of this author, it were

* Cyprian, de Unit. Eccles. Oper., vol. i., p. 109.

† Cyprian. Epist. lxxiii.

‡ Hippol. Cont. Noet. § xii., Oper. vol. ii., pp. 14, 15.

easy to produce testimonies to the same effect, enough to fill a volume. But these will suffice.

We now adduce the testimony of Clement, of Alexandria. This ancient Father professed to be a scholar of Pantænus: who, by some of the early theologians, is said to have been a disciple of the apostles; and who, doubtless, conversed with the Fathers denominated Apostolical. Clement is thought to have died about the year 220; and those who had been taught by the apostles might have been alive in the year 150. "Because" he says, "the Word was from above, he both was and is the Divine principle of all things. This Word, the Christ, was both the cause of our original existence, for he was God; and also the cause of our well-existence, for this very Word hath now appeared unto men, he alone being both God and man." * * * * * Believe, then, O, man, in him who is both man and God; believe, O, man, in the living God, who suffered and who is adored.**

From the attestation of Clement of Alexandria, we may proceed to that of Ireneus, of Lyons, the scholar of Polycarp, the disciple of the apostle John. This, we shall find in the controversial work, which, with the approbation of the Catholic Church, that eminent writer, about the year 175, published against the existing heresies. "Man," he says, "was formed according to the likeness of God; and he was fashioned by his hands. That is to say, he was fashioned through his Son, and through his Spirit: to whom also he said, Let us make man."† "Therefore, in all, and through all, there is one God, the Father, and one Word, and one Son, and one Spirit, and one faith and salvation to all who believe in him."‡ "With him, i. e. God, are ever present, his Word and his Wisdom, his Son and his Spirit, through whom, and in whom, he freely and spontaneously made all things; to whom, likewise, he spoke, when he said, Let us make man after our own image and likeness."§ "Man was made and fashioned after the image and like-

* Clem. Alex. *Protrepa. Oper.* p. 66.

† *Iren. Adv. haer., lib. iv., c. 8, p. 237.* ‡ *Ib. c. 14, § 6, p. 242.*

§ *Ib. c. 27, § 2, p. 266.*

ness of God, who is uncreated: the Father approving: the Son ministering and forming: the Spirit nourishing and augmenting.”*

Let us now proceed still higher, in the list of primitive writers, and adduce the testimony of Athenagoras. This writer lived contemporaneously with Irenæus. His Apology or Legation is thought to have been addressed to the Emperors Marcus Antoninus and Lucius Aurelius Commodus.

“For by him, and through him, were all things made, the Father and the Son being one; since the Son is in the Father and the Father in the Son, through the unity and power of the Spirit. The Son of God is the Mind and the Word of the Father.”† In this he says, “That *we* are not Atheists, has been sufficiently demonstrated by me; inasmuch as *we* worship one unproduced and eternal and invisible and impassable Being, who, by the mind and reason alone, can be comprehended, and who, through the agency of his own Word, created and arranged and compacted the universe; for *we* receive also the Son of God.”

“Who, then,” says Athenagoras, “would not wonder that we should hear ourselves called Atheists, when we profess our belief in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, shewing both their power in unity, and their distinction in order.‡ To this only do we strenuously apply ourselves, that we may know God and the Word, who is from him; what is the unity of the Son with the Father; what is the communion of the Father with the Son; what is the Spirit; what is the unity and the distinction of these who are such; inasmuch as the Spirit, and the Son, and the Father, are united.”|| “We say that there is a God, and the Son his Word, and the Holy Ghost, united in power; namely, the Father, the Son, the Spirit. For the Son is the Mind, the Word, the Wisdom, of the Father: and the Spirit is an emanation from him, as light flows from fire. But, if I thus accurately set forth *the doctrine which is received among*

* Iren. Adv. hæer., lib. iv., c. 75, § 3, p. 310.

† Ateenag. Legat. pro Christian., c. ix., pp. 37, 38, Oxon. 1706.

‡ Athen. Legat. c. x., p. 40.

|| Athen. Legat. cxi., p. 46.

us, do not wonder. For lest you should be carried away by the silly, vulgar opinion which is entertained of *us*, and in order that you may be able to know the *real truth*, I thus carefully *study accuracy*."

Our next witness is Melito, of Sardis, who lived about the year 170. Of his Apology, nothing remains save a fragment; but that fragment abundantly indicates the doctrine and practice of the Christians, his contemporaries. "We are worshippers," says he, "not of insensible stones, but of the only God who is before all things, and above all things; and we are worshippers likewise of his Christ, truly God, the Word before the worlds."*

In the next year, 168, lived Theophilus, of Antioch, who will be our next witness. He wrote a defence of Christianity, in three books, addressed to Autolycus; and from this work, we learn that the Christian Church of that age maintained the doctrine of a Trinity of persons in the Deity. "The three days" says he, "before the creation of the sun and moon, are types of the Trinity, God and his Word and his Wisdom."† "In the person of God, the Son came into the garden, and conversed with Adam."‡

Still earlier flourished Tatian, who lived about the year 165, and who, in his Oration against the Greeks, which was written before the death of Justin, says: "We do not speak foolishly, nor do we relate mere idle tales, when we affirm that God was born in the form of man."||

From Tatian we pass to Justin Martyr, whose conversion occurred prior to the year 136, and whose Apologies, therefore, will exhibit the received doctrine of the Church, during the earliest part of the second century. "Him, the Father says; and his Son who came forth from him; and the prophetic Spirit; these we worship and we adore, honouring them in word and in truth, and, to every person who wishes to learn, ungrudgingly delivering them as *we ourselves* have been taught. Athe-

* Melit. Apol. See above, Book I., chap. 4, § x.

† Theoph. Ad. Autol., lib. ii., c. 15. ‡ Ibid., c. 22.

|| Tatian Orat. Cont. Græc., § xxxv., p. 77, Worth.

ists, then, we are not, inasmuch as we worship the Creator of the universe; and having learned that Jesus Christ is the Son of him who is truly God, and holding him in the second place, we will shew that, in the third degree, we honour also the prophetic Spirit, in conjunction with the Word.* For the Word, who is born from the unborn and ineffable God, we worship and we love, next in order after God the Father; since, also, on our account, he became man, in order that, being a joint partaker of our sufferings, he might also effect our healing."†

Two Apologies by Quadratus and Aristides, addressed to the Emperor Adrian, in the year 125, are unfortunately lost. But they are spoken of, both by Eusebius and Jerome, as being "defences of the worship of God which prevails among," and "as conducted by, Christians," "as setting forth the right principles of our dogmatic theology," and as being imitated by Justin Martyr.‡

Ignatius, who is our next witness, was a disciple of the apostle John, who died in the year 100, and he suffered martyrdom at Rome, either in the year 107, or (as some think,) in the year 116. "There is" he says, "one physician, fleshly and spiritual, made and not made. God became incarnate, true life in death, both from Mary and from God, first passible, and then impassible." "Our God Jesus Christ was conceived by Mary according to the economy of God, from the seed indeed of David; but from the Holy Ghost." "Permit me to be an imitator of the passion of my God. I glorify Jesus Christ, the God who has thus endued you with wisdom." "Expect him who is beyond all time, the eternal, the invisible; even him who on our account became visible; him, who is intangible and impassible; who yet, on our account, suffered; who yet, on our account, endured after every manner."||

The very short Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians, which alone has survived him, is chiefly practical.

* Justin Apol. 1. Oper. pp. 46, 47.

† Ibid, 11 Oper., p. 40.

‡ Euseb. B. IV., c. 3: B. I., c. 2, § 2. Heer. Script. Eccl., Ep. lxxiv.

|| Ignat. Epist. ad, Polya., § iii., p. 40.

Hence we cannot expect there to find any very precise doctrinal statement. Yet, even in this document, which appears to have been written almost immediately after the martyrdom of his friend and fellow disciple Ignatius, about the year 107, we may observe an incidental recognition of the divine nature of our Saviour. "May the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and may he himself, the eternal High-priest, the Son of God, Jesus Christ; build you up in faith and truth, and grant unto you a lot and portion among his saints, and to us also along with you, and to all who are under heaven, and who hereafter shall believe in our Lord Jesus Christ and in his Father, who raised him up from the dead."*

We can as little expect, from the plan of their composition, any very copious and precise statement of doctrine in either of the two epistles to the Corinthians, written from 67 to 96, by the venerable Clement of Rome; yet, in both of them, do the recognised opinions of the early Church show themselves with abundantly sufficient distinctness, and by one to whom St. Paul himself bears testimony, as being one of his fellow-labourers, whose names are in the book of life. "Ye were all humble-minded, in no wise boastful, subject rather than subjecting, giving rather than receiving. Being satisfied with the supplies which God has furnished for your journey, and diligently attending to his words, you receive them into your very breast and bowels; and before your eyes were his sufferings. Thus was there given unto all, a deep and glorious peace, and an insatiable desire of doing good; and, over all, there was a full effusion of the Holy Ghost."† "For Christ is of the number of the humble-minded, not of those who exalt themselves above his flock. The sceptre of the majesty of God, our Lord Jesus Christ came not in the pride of pomp and circumstance, though he was able to have done so; but with humbleness of mind, as the Holy Ghost spake concerning him. Ye see, beloved, what an example has been given unto us. For, if the Lord bore himself thus hum-

* Polycarp. Epist. ad. Philipp., § xii. Cotel. Patr. Apost., vol. ii, p. 191.

† Clem. Rom. Epist., 1, ad. Corinth., § ii. Patr. Apost. Cotel., vol. i, pp. 147, 148.

bly, what ought we to do, who have come under the yoke of his grace?"*

Similar phraseology occurs in the very ancient Epistle, which is ascribed to the Apostle Barnabas, but which really seems to have been written by a Hebrew Christian of that name, about the year 137. "When he chose his apostles," says this writer, "who were about to preach his gospel, then he manifested himself to be the Son of God. For, unless he had come in the flesh, how could we men, when looking upon him, have been saved? For they, who look even upon the perishable sun, which is the work of his hands, are unable to gaze upon its beams. Wherefore, the Son of God came in the flesh."†

The second Epistle of Clement opens with what is equivalent to a direct assertion of Christ's Godhead: "Brethren," says he, "we ought thus to think concerning Jesus Christ, as concerning God, as concerning the Judge of both the quick and the dead. And we ought not to think small things concerning our salvation: for, in thinking small things concerning him, we are hoping to receive small things."‡

We have thus been enabled, in the first place, by the testimony of the heathen, to establish the doctrine of the Trinity, as having been the doctrine of Christians up to the very age of the Apostles.

A second line of argument, by which the Trinitarian views of the early Christians has been established, is by the public apologies, epistles, and other documents published by them, in their name, and with their concurrence, during the same period.

A THIRD line of proof that the doctrine of the early Christian church was Trinitarian, will be found in the creeds which remain.

These creeds were most familiarly known and received, as indeed their very name imports, by the whole assembly of the baptized, whether ministers or people. They formed also the basis of lectures to the catechumens, and were publicly recited at the time of baptism.

* Clem. Rom. Epist. I., ad. Corinth., § xvi., Patr. Apost. Cotel., vol. i., pp. 156, 157.

† Barnab. Epist. Cathol., § v., Patr. Apost. Cotel. vol. i., pp. 15, 16.

‡ Clem. Rom. Epist. ii., ad. Corinth., § i., p. 185.

Such being the case, as the creed of each church was communicated to every catechumen, and was received by every catechumen, and at the font, in answer to the interrogation of the Bishop, or Presbyter, was recited by every catechumen, if adult, or by the parents, if a child. It, of course, and by absolute necessity, expressed the faith of every baptized member of the Christian church.

When any individual was suspected of holding doctrines contrary to the creed, he was called to account, and if found guilty, was solemnly excommunicated.—Thus, when Theodotus, at the close of the second century, attempted to propagate, at Rome, the doctrine that Christ was a mere man, and that there is no distinction of persons in the unity of the Godhead, he was called to account by Victor, the Bishop of that city, in order that he might have an opportunity of vindicating or explaining his conduct. This, however, he could not do; for he persisted in maintaining the scheme of doctrine which he had taken up; and the consequence was, that, having avowedly departed from the well-known faith of the church, he was, by excommunication, visibly separated from the society of the faithful.*

But as we have examined these creeds, and presented their evidence in the chapter on the Baptismal Commission, we will not dwell on their invariable and concurrent testimony to the doctrine of the Trinity at this time.† We will only remark that Irenæus asserts the unity of the Catholic faith, as exhibited in its creeds, throughout the whole world; and the various symbols of the three first centuries, whether Latin or Greek, or African, fully bear him out in his assertion. For the most part, even their phraseology is the same; but, invariably, their arrangement and their doctrine are identical.—Now, this is a mere naked fact, of which each individual may form a complete judgment. The doctrine taught in the Symbols, he may receive, or he may reject. But the bare fact itself will remain unaltered, whatever may be his own personal opinion, as to the abstract truth or

* Euseb. Hist. Eccles., lib. v., c. 28.

† See them fully collected, and historically presented, by Mr. Faber, vol. i., B. 1., chap. vi., pp. 156-193.

falsehood of the doctrine in question, and must be considered an undeniable proof of the Trinitarianism of the church, up to the time when the earliest of these, "the creed of the Trinity," must be supposed to have existed, that is, the very age of the Apostles.

A FOURTH line of testimony in proof of the fact that the early Christian Church believed the doctrine of the Trinity, is found in the earliest existing liturgies. As Bishop Bull well observes, all the ancient Liturgies extant, in whatever part of the world they may have been used, contain, under one modification or another, that solemn concluding Doxology to the Blessed Trinity, with which, in some form, every Christian is so abundantly familiar: "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; both now and alway, and to all eternity."*—This Doxology is evidently built upon that brief and most remotely ancient creed, which was familiarly denominated the Symbol of the Trinity: "I believe in God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." And the symbol of the Trinity again, is manifestly founded upon the formula of baptism enjoined and appointed by our Lord himself. Baptize them in, or into, the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.†

Now, although no liturgy was committed to writing until the fifth century, yet the primeval existence and public use of the Doxology has been fully determined by the concurrent attestation of a series of witnesses, all chronologically prior to the first Nicene Council. About the year 220, we may observe it employed by Hippolytus, as the most proper conclusion of his Treatise against Noetus.‡ About the year 200, Tertullian refers to it as a clear proof of the universal reception of the doctrine of Christ's divinity.¶ About the year 194, we find it used by Clement of Alexandria.§ About the year 175, Irenæus incidentally remarks, that it was employed by the Catholic Church in the course of her ordinary thanks-

* Athan. de. Virginit. Oper.. vol. i., p. 829.

† Matt. xxviii: 19.

‡ Cont. Noet., c. xviii., vol. 2, p. 20.

¶ De Spectat., p. 700.

§ Clem. Alex. Poedag, lib. iii., c. 12, Oper. p. 266.

givings. In the year 147, it was used at the stake by the venerable Polycarp, and at the same time it was attached by the collective members of the church of Smyrna, to the Epistle in which they communicated the account of his martyrdom.* Finally, we have the direct attestation of Justin Martyr, that, in his days, the prayers and thanksgivings of the church invariably terminated with some one or other modification of it. "In all that we offer up," says he, "we bless the Creator of all things, through his Son Jesus Christ, and through the Holy Ghost."†

We now proceed to a fifth line of proof for the Trinitarianism of the primitive Christian church. "Having observed" as Athanasius remarks, "the great wisdom of the Apostles, in not prematurely communicating the doctrine of Christ's divinity to those who were unprepared to receive it; the Church, from a very early period, adopted a mode of institution, reasonable and natural in itself, but singular on account of its attendant phraseology." During the first part of their theological education, therefore, to use the language of Faber, nothing more than the general truths of Christianity was communicated to the catechumens; and so slowly was the divine light suffered to beam upon what Tertullian calls the preparatory schools of the auditors, that it was not until the very eve of their baptism, that its particular truths, viewed as universally depending upon one pre-eminent truth, were at length distinctly propounded. To their instruction in these particular truths, of which they had hitherto been kept, (so far as it was possible to keep them,) in a state of profound ignorance, were devoted the forty days which immediately preceded their baptism; and this studied concealment was rendered the more easy, because, in the primitive church, the sacrament of Baptism was administered only at the two great festivals of Easter and Whitsuntide.

"The institution of the Catechumens was spoken of as an initiation into the Christian Mysteries; and the communication of what was deemed the pre-eminent, parti-

* Epist. Eccles. Smyrna, § xiv., Patr. Apost. Cotel., vol. ii., p. 201.

† Justin Apol. i. Oper. p. 77.

cular truth of Revelation, with its subordinate and dependent particular truths, was considered and technically mentioned as the final enunciation of the grand secret.

Mr. Faber adduces abundant evidence to prove that the secret of the mysteries was the doctrine of the Trinity, running into the doctrine of the Incarnation. To this secret, Ireneus, the scholar of Polycarp, the disciple of St. John, who wrote in the year 175, but who was born in the year 97, alludes: "This" says he, "is THE CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD. Such is the mystery, which Paul declares to have been manifested to him by revelation; namely, that he who suffered under Pontius Pilate, is the Lord and King, and God and Judge of all, receiving power from him who is God of all, since he became subject unto death, even the death of the cross."

To this testimony may be added that of the ancient author of the Epistle to Diognetus; whether he were Justin Martyr himself, or whether (according to his own descriptive statement of his character,) he were some apostolical man, a contemporary of Justin Martyr. In the course of a very long, and very fine passage, while this writer styles the Christian worship of God the mystery which man can never discover, he teaches us, when largely treating of the nature and offices of Christ, that "the Word, though to-day called a Son, existed, nevertheless, eternally."

Such was the doctrine communicated from a very early period, to every catechumen, before he was admitted to the sacrament of Baptism,—certainly as early as the age of Justin and Ireneus.*

A FIFTH line of testimony in proof of the fact that the early Christians believed in the doctrine of the Trinity, is found in the unanimous primitive interpretation of those texts, the true import of which is now litigated between modern Trinitarians and modern Anti-Trinitarians.

If the primitive church, up to the Apostolic age, were Anti-Trinitarian, the system of Scriptural interpretation uniformly adopted by the Fathers of that church, must

* See Faber, vol. i., B. I., ch. viii., pp. 206-230.

plainly have been Anti-Trinitarian likewise; and conversely, if the primitive church, up to the Apostolic age, were Trinitarian; the system of Scriptural interpretation uniformly adopted by the Fathers of that church, must also have been Trinitarian; since a church collectively cannot hold one set of doctrines, while all the leading teachers, and writers, and divines, and bishops, in direct and full communion with it, openly and avowedly maintain quite another set of doctrines. The unanimous system of exposition adopted by the Fathers of the three first centuries, is evidence as to what system of exposition was familiarly received in the church of the three first centuries, as setting forth the undoubted mind of Holy Scripture. For, though the insulated exposition of an insulated writer, might justly be deemed nothing more than the unauthoritative speculation of his own private judgment; it is morally impossible that all the writers of a church should be unanimous in their system of Scriptural interpretation; if, in point of systematic Scriptural interpretation, the church itself, collectively, differed from them utterly, and radically, and essentially.

"So far as my own reading and observation extend," says Mr. Faber, "the early fathers invariably and unanimously interpret the texts now litigated between Trinitarians and Anti-Trinitarians, not after the mode recommended by the latter, but precisely after the mode adopted by the former. In no one instance, which, in the course of a tolerably wide investigation, I have been able to discover, do they ever interpret a single text, so as to bring out the result, that *that* text does not teach the doctrine of the Trinity, or the doctrine of Christ's Godhead. If, among the Fathers of the three first centuries there be an exception, I can only say, that I have inadvertently overlooked it. To this general rule, I myself, at least, am unable to produce a single exception."* This argument acquires a tenfold force, when we consider that heretics, in order to get rid of these texts, rejected the Books of Scripture in which they are

* See Faber, 1 B. I., ch. ix., pp. 231-244, and App. I., pp. 299-377, where these texts and the explanations are given at length.

found,* and also the strict harmony of the present line of evidence, with all the other lines of evidence which have now in review successively passed before us; and that force, so far as I can judge, becomes absolutely irresistible, when we bear in mind that the present position is established, not merely by a single testimony, or by a single class of testimonies, but by a concurrence of numerous distinct classes of testimonies, all vouching for the same fact, and all tending to the same purpose. As, in regard to Scripture, the early Doctors expounded, so, in point of fact, without any contradiction, on the part of Christians, did the enemies of Christianity allege; so, from generation to generation, did the primitive Christians worship; so, with one mouth, to be the universally received doctrine of the Church Catholic, did the ancient apologists profess; so, with rare and striking concord, did all the early creeds or symbols propound; so were all the ancient liturgies constructed; so were all the catechumens instituted. If the church of the first ages had been Anti-Trinitarian, this accordance, in so many different points, could never have existed. By all the laws of evidence, therefore, the inevitable result from it is, that the primitive church, up to the age of the Apostles, held and taught, as vitally essential truths, the doctrines of the Trinity and of the Godhead of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

A SIXTH line of testimony, in corroboration of the fact that the early Christians were believers in the doctrine of the Trinity, is found in the argument from prescription and universality, as this was urged by them. About the year 175, when the then aged Irenæus wrote; and about the year 200, when Tertullian flourished; that is

* Instead of the litigated texts being read by these religionists, without suggesting to them any such notions of the divinity or the pre-existence of Christ, as are now supposed to be clearly contained in them, the truth is, that they allowed to those texts no voice whatever in the decision of the question, whether Christ was a mere man, or whether he is very God, mysteriously united to very man; for they cut the matter short by the compendious process of utterly rejecting the whole of St. Paul's writings, and all the Gospels, save that of St. Matthew, or rather what they pleased to call that of St. Matthew. So incorrigible, indeed, were the Ebionites, in their error, and so completely did they proceed upon the plan of total rejection, rather than on the plan of perverse misinterpretation, that they actually disregarded even Apostolical authority itself.

to say, about 75 years, and about 100 years after the death of St. John, when, through chronological necessity, and agreeably to positive attestation, no particular church could have been separated from the Apostolic age, by more than two intervening steps of communication; ALL the then existing churches mutually in communion with each other, though variously deriving their succession from twelve different apostles, held precisely the same system of doctrine respecting the nature of the Deity, or respecting the mode in which the Deity exists; and, on this point, their harmony was such, that not a single church could be found which held any other system than what is now called Trinitarian. That is to say, it was a system which asserted the existence of the one Deity in three persons; and which maintained that the second of these three persons became incarnate, and appeared upon earth, as the man Christ Jesus. Such, however, is not the whole amount of the fact publicly appealed to by Ireneus and Tertullian. While, without a single exception, they all concurred in holding that peculiar doctrine, which is briefly denominated the doctrine of the Trinity; they all, moreover, without a single exception, concurred in declaring, that, through one, or at the most, through two intermediate channels, they had received this doctrine from some one or other of the twelve Apostles, up to whom they severally carried their ecclesiastical succession; that, the Rule of Faith, which propounded this doctrine, was ultimately derived from Christ himself, and that, as it was universal in point of reception, throughout all the provincial churches in mutual communion with each other, so it was questioned by none save heretics, who, in parties of scattered individuals, had gone out from the great, and more ancient body of the Church Catholic.*

Mr. Faber quotes, in confirmation of this position, Ireneus, Tertullian, Hegesippus, and urges in confirmation, all the previous lines of proof, and the fact that it never was denied by the ancient heretics,† “and hence, all heretics, says Ireneus, are much later than the Bishops,

* See *Iren. Adv. haer.*, lib. i., c. 2, pp. 34-36: lib. iii., c. 4, § 2, p. 172. *Tertul. de praescript. ad haer.*, § 4, *Oper.*, p. 100.

† See vol. i., B. I., ch. x., pp. 245-271.

to whom the Apostles delivered the churches." "Whatever is first," says Tertullian, "is true; whatever is later, is spurious."

Now, when this argument was originally used, the fundamental fact, it will be observed, required no historical establishment. Without an effort, it was palpable and obvious to every individual throughout the entire world of Christianity. Each person was himself an eye-witness. In the days of Ireneus and Tertullian, the fact of the universal Trinitarianism of the whole Catholic Church in all its mutually symbolizing and mutually communicating branches, no more demanded the formality of a grave historic demonstration, than the fact of the universal Trinitarianism of the entire reformed Church would now demand such a substantiation. Those two early Fathers appealed to what was then familiarly known to every Christian; and upon the notorious fact, thus appealed to, they framed their celebrated argument, from universality and prescription.

A SEVENTH line of proof of the Trinitarianism of the early Christians, is the certain connection which can be proved to subsist between that system of doctrine and the Apostles, as its first promulgators. Ireneus of Lyons, was born in the year 97; and he wrote or published his work against the Heresies of the Age, in the year 175. While a young man, as he himself teaches us, he was a pupil of Polycarp; which Polycarp was himself the disciple of the Apostles, and eminently so of their last survivor, the apostle St. John. Hence, though he actually wrote or published, not earlier than the year 175; yet his strictly proper evidence is, in truth, much more ancient; for, it may justly be deemed the personal evidence of his youth; that is to say, the personal evidence of a witness, who was living, and learning, and observing, about the year 120, or only about twenty years after St. John's departure. And hence, on the principle already laid down, the church of Lyons, over which he presided as Bishop, stood, through his instrumentality, though toward the latter end of the second century, separated only by a single descent, from the Apostles themselves.

Let us again consider one of the several statements of

doctrine made by Irenæus. Speaking of this doctrine of the Trinity, and its kindred topics, he says: "The Church, though dispersed through the whole world to the ends of the earth, hath received this Faith from the Apostles and their disciples. She believes in one God, the Father Almighty; who hath made the heavens and the earth, and the seas, and all things in them: And in one Jesus Christ, the Son of God; who became incarnate for our salvation: And in the Holy Ghost; who, through the prophets, preached the dispensations, and the advents, and the birth from the virgin, and the passion, and the resurrection from the dead, and the incarnate ascension to heaven of our beloved Lord Jesus Christ; and his coming from heaven in the glory of the Father, to recapitulate all things, and to raise up all flesh of all mankind, in order that to Jesus Christ, our Lord and God, and Saviour, and King, according to the good pleasure of the invisible Father, every knee may bow, of things in heaven and things on earth, and things under the earth: and in order that he may in all things execute just judgment." "Having" he adds, "received this declaration and this faith, the church, though scattered throughout the whole world, diligently guards it, as if inhabiting only a single house; and, in like manner, she believes these matters, as having one soul and the same heart; and she harmoniously preaches and declares and believes them, as possessing only one mouth. For through the world, there are indeed dissimilar languages; but the force of this tradition is one and the same. And neither do the churches, which are founded in Germany, believe otherwise, or deliver otherwise; nor do those, which are founded in the Iberias, or among the Celts, or in the East, or in Egypt, or in Libya, or in the central regions of the earth. But as God's creature, the sun is one and the same in the whole world; so, likewise the preaching of the truth everywhere shines, and enlightens all men who are willing to come to the knowledge of the truth."*

Such is the testimony of Irenæus: and that this was also taught by Polycarp, who formed the intervening

* Iren. Adv. hæres. lib. i., c. 2, 3, pp. 34-36.

link between Ireneus and the Apostles, Ireneus distinctly affirms. "Polycarp also," he says, "who was not only instructed by the Apostles, and conversed with many of them, but who was likewise by the Apostles made Bishop of the Church of Smyrna, in Asia: this Polycarp always taught us those things which he had learned from the Apostles themselves, which he also delivered to the church, and which alone are true. All the churches in Asia, and they who succeeded Polycarp, down to the present day, give testimony to these things.*

Now, among the Asiatic churches thus appealed to, Polycarp had been a burning and a shining light, for the space of more than half a century; which period of more than half a century had expired only twenty-eight years previous to the making of the appeal on the part of Ireneus. Therefore, the churches of Asia, and the successors of Polycarp, could not possibly have then been ignorant as to the mere naked *fact* of what doctrines were really preached by Polycarp.

The justice of the appeal is however directly evinced by the testimony, both of Polycarp himself, and of the members of his church who witnessed his martyrdom, which has been already quoted, and by the testimony of Justin Martyr, whose conversion† took place shortly after the year 130, or but little more than thirty years subsequent to the death of St. John. Hence, the doctrinal testimony contained in any of his writings, is, in fact, the doctrinal testimony of the year 130; for, about that time it was, that Justin was catechetically instructed in the principles of Christianity. About the year 130, therefore, the whole Christian Church, in doctrine and in worship, was avowedly Trinitarian.

The testimony of Justin Martyr, be it also observed, vouches for the yet additional fact, that the Christians of that day were ready to deliver their faith and their practice to all who should wish to learn them, even as they themselves had been previously taught the same faith, and the same practice, by the regularly appointed catechists, their own ecclesiastically authorized instructors

* Iren. Adv. haer., lib. iii., c. 3, p. 171.

† See Faber, vol. i., B. I., ch. xi. pp. 272-286.

and predecessors. The whole body of Christians, in the year 130, therefore, both themselves held, and were ready to teach to others, the doctrine and adoration of God, even the Father, and the Son, and the prophetic Spirit.

The conclusion to which we have thus been regularly brought, perfectly agrees with the testimony of Ireneus; and so far as I can judge, the final result, on the legitimate principles of historical evidence, is the positive Apostolical antiquity of the doctrine of the Trinity.

There are many works in which the opinions of the early fathers on this doctrine will be found collated. Of these, the principal one was, *A Vindication of the worship of the Son and the Holy Ghost against the exceptions of Mr. Theophilus Lindsey, from Scripture and Antiquity*: by Thomas Randolph, D. D., President of C. O. C.; and Lady Margaret's Professor of Divinity, Oxford, 1775. Bishop Bull's works: 1. *Defence of the Nicene Creed.* 2. *The Judgment of the Catholic Church of the three first centuries, concerning the necessity of believing that our Lord Jesus Christ is true God, asserted against M. Simon Episcopus and others.* 3. *The Primitive and Apostolical Tradition concerning the received doctrine in the Catholic Church of our Saviour Jesus Christ's Divinity, asserted and plainly proved against Daniel Zuicker, a Prussian, and his late disciples in England.* Of these, Dr. Burton's *Testimonies of the Ante-Nicene Fathers to the doctrine of the Trinity, and of the Divinity of the Holy Ghost*, which is already very scarce, is eminently full, candid and satisfactory.*

* Dr. Burton's *Testimonies of the Ante-Nicene Fathers to the Doctrine of the Trinity, and of the Divinity of the Holy Ghost*, published in Oxford, 1831. It contains the names of the following writers: Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Lucian, Ireneus, Clemens Alexandrinus, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Origen, Eppian, Novatian, Dionysius, Alexandrius, Romanus, Theognostus, Alexander, Athanasius, Eusebius, Council of Nice. In every case, also, he gives the original, as well as the translation. See also his *Testimonies of the Ante-Nicene Fathers to the Divinity of the Son of God*.

Besides these distinct works on the subject, are the works of Dr. Waterland, in ten vols. 8 vo. Oxford, 1833, chiefly occupied with voluminous and full discussions, including the testimony of the Fathers, on the subject of the Trinity. See also Cary's *Testimonies of the Fathers of the first four centuries, to the doctrine of the XXXIX Articles, Art. 1.* Welchman on the same subject. Smith's *Testimony to the Messiah, Appendix.* Suiceri

From this I will quote the following declaration: "The first question for inquiry is, whether the writers of the first three centuries were unanimous; whether one uniform system of belief concerning the Son and the Holy Ghost can be expected from their writings, or whether they opposed and contradicted each other. Even if we should adopt the latter conclusion, it would by no means follow that they held the Socinian or Unitarian notions. Pains have been taken to rescue some of them from an inclination to Arianism; and the present work may shew whether the attempt has not been successful; but there is not even a shadow of proof, that any one of these writers approach to the Socinian or Unitarian tenets. It will however be seen, that the Fathers of the first three centuries were perfectly unanimous. There are no signs of doubt, or dissension, in any of their writings. Some of them were engaged in controversy, while others merely illustrated Scripture, or applied themselves to practical theology. In all of them, we find the same uniform mode of expression concerning the Son and the Holy Ghost. The testimony is collected with equal plainness from the casual and incidental remarks, as from the laboured conclusion of the apologist and the polemic."

I had myself proceeded some length, in the perusal of the early Fathers, in order to be able to give their testimony on this and other subjects from personal and original examination. Having, however, become possessed of the work of Mr. Faber, based upon his careful perusal of the early Fathers, I found his method of presenting their testimony so clear and conclusive, not only as having their undivided opinions, but the views also of the entire church, in their days, that I have concluded to adopt it, and to present a summary of the arguments he so ably and elaborately maintained.*

Theaurus. Eccl. sub. nom. τριας, &c. Hagenbach's *Hist. of Christian Doctrine*, vol. i., pp. 49, 50, 222, 123. And in a variety of other works.

* The work is entitled, *The Apostolicity of Trinitarianism*, (or, see copy Title Page.) The first vol. contains the positive testimony, with a discussion respecting the Primitive Hebrew Church of Jerusalem, the Nazarenes of Ebionites, &c. The second vol. is occupied with a full and elaborate reply to all the objections which have been made against the Trinitarianism of that testimony.