

THE TRULY SCRIPTURAL DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY TRINITY

The Trinitarian Bible Society was formed in 1831 by men who were deeply convinced that such an Institution needed a basis of faith which would ensure that its affairs would be conducted by men who held Scriptural views of the equal and eternal Deity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In drawing up the "Laws and Regulations of the Trinitarian Bible Society" our founders stated that-"The members of this Society shall consist of Protestants, who acknowledge their belief in the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Three co-equal and co-eternal Persons in One Living and True God." In an appendix to the Laws this Scriptural truth is plainly expressed in these words:

"There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions: of infinite power, wisdom and goodness: the Maker and Preserver of all things, both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there be Three Persons, of one substance, power and eternity; the Father, the Son and the holy Ghost." The second article in the appendix declares that the Son of God is very and eternal God, of one substance and equal with the Father, and that in the Son two whole, perfect and distinct natures, the Godhead and Manhood, were inseparably joined together in one Person.

The basis concludes with the declaration that, "The Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one substance. majesty and glory with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God." These were not new statements, but were reproduced verbatim from the statements of faith of the Reformed Churches at the time of the Protestant Reformation.

The Inerrant Authority of the Bible

From the earliest period of the history of the Christian Church the true doctrine of the Holy Scriptures on this vital subject has been challenged and denied, and most of the major heresies which have disturbed the peace of the Church have begun with a corruption of this doctrine. At the present time the testimony of the professing Church is weakened by the lack of explicit teaching on the one hand, and by hostility and unbelief on the other. Meanwhile many false sects challenge the faith of the Lord's people, some of whom are at a loss when asked for an immediate, concise and Scriptural answer. For this doctrine there is no other authority than the Bible, the divinely, inspired, inerrant, authoritative revelation which God Himself has given. The following brief statement of the evidence is drawn from that fountain alone.

(I) There is but ONE GOD

The Scriptural doctrine of the Holy Trinity rests upon this foundation. "The LORD He is God, there is none else beside Him" (Deut. 4.35). "I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside Me" (Isa. 45.5).

The New Testament is no less explicit when the Lord Jesus quotes from Deuteronomy "Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is ONE LORD" (Mark 12.29). Paul tells the Corinthians, "We know

that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one" (I Cor. 8.4). He makes the same assertion to Timothy, "There is one God" (I Tim. 2.5).

(2) The One God is "Living and True"

These are the exact words of Holy Scripture. Jeremiah says, "The LORD is the true God, He is the living God" (Jer. 10. 10), and Paul reminds the Thessalonians that they had "turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God" (I Thess. 1.9).

(3) God is Everlasting

The expression "everlasting" and "eternal", which mean the same thing when applied to God, are constantly used by the sacred writers when speaking of the Almighty. Moses said, "The Eternal God is thy refuge" (Deut. 33. 27). "From everlasting to everlasting Thou art God" (Ps. 90. 2). Isaiah speaks of "the everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth" (40.28). Paul speaks also of "the everlasting God", and of "the King, eternal, immortal (Rom. 16. 26 and I Tim. 1. 17). Many other passages could be added, but these assert the truth plainly enough.

(4) God is without body, parts, Or passions

The Lord Jesus Christ said to the woman of Samaria, "God is a spirit", and after His resurrection He said to His disciples, "A spirit hath not flesh and bones" (John 4. 24, Luke 24.39). God is revealed in the Bible as a pure spiritual Being, everywhere present at every instant of time. "Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD" (Jer. 23.24).

Admittedly the Scriptures speak of the hands, ears and eyes of God, and of His pleasure, anger, love and hatred, but this is the language of His condescension to our imperfect knowledge. In order that we may understand something of His being and works He allows men to apply their human words to things divine. In this way He reveals His divine being to our human understanding.

(5) God's power is infinite

"Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power and the glory, and the victory and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine" (1 Chron. 29.11). The divine Savior says, "With God all things are possible", and the angel assures Mary that, "with God nothing shall be impossible" (Matt. 19.26, Luke 1.37). These and other Scriptures reveal that He is of infinite power.

(6) God's wisdom is infinite

"Great is our Lord, and of great power; His understanding is infinite" (Ps. 147:5). The perfection of His wisdom is seen in the works of creation, "In wisdom hast Thou made them all" (Ps. 104. 24). His knowledge embraces all that is past, and all that is to come, "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15. 18). "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4.13). "Oh the depth of the riches both of the

wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" (Rom. 11.33).

(7) God's goodness is infinite

All that He created He looked upon and saw to be "very good" (Gen. 1.31). "The earth is full of the goodness of the LORD" (Pg. 33.5). "He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever" (Ps. 136.1). The Christian needs *no* proof of God's goodness beyond the knowledge of His *gracious* gift of His eternal Son to redeem His people and save them from their sins. This is divine goodness, truly infinite, and beyond our comprehension.

(8) God is the Maker and Preserver of all things

"In six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is." "By Him were all things created that are in heaven and that are *in* earth; visible and invisible" (Col. 1.16). He is *Preserver*- "Thou hast made heaven. . . the earth and all things that are therein, and Thou preservest them all" (Neh. 9.6).

These declarations are all derived from the sure Word of God, and they are the foundation upon which the doctrine of the Holy Trinity rests. They reveal the majesty and glory of ONE GOD. The Scriptures show with equal clarity that the Son is God and the Holy Ghost is God, and that there is a Trinity of persons in the Unity of the Godhead.

The True Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ

Among the errors relating to the Person of the Son there is the notion that He is God only in an inferior sense, a created being, and not "very" and a "true" God, and not co-equal and of one substance with the Father. Some deny the divinity of the Son altogether, and some deny that He had "two whole and perfect natures, the Godhead and manhood". *Some* would assert that on earth He was man *only*, and that after His resurrection He was God only. Some would deny His perfect humanity and some would deny His perfect deity. The article "Of Christ the Mediator" is designed to state the truth of Holy Scripture in opposition to these and other errors, and to declare that the Lord Jesus Christ is "Very and Eternal God".

The old *Testament* speaks of the Messiah in these terms-" Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty: Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; He is thy Lord, and worship thou Him: His name shall be called... the mighty God: This is His Name whereby He shall be called, the LORD (Jehovah) OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS: "and Zechariah declares that *He is the 'fellow'*" (or equal)~of the Lord of Hosts. (Ps. 45. 3, 6, 11; Isa. 9. 6; Jer. 23.6; Zech. 13.7).

He exercises the power and wisdom of God

When the promised Messiah was on earth He showed by His works and by His Word that He was indeed "God with us". Those mighty works which could be done alone by "the LORD God, who only doeth *wondrous* things" (Ps. 72.18), Christ performed by His own power and by His own mere word. He healed the leper, gave sight to the blind, raised the dead, calmed the storm,

all by His own power. If it is objected that the Apostles wrought miracles although they were only men, it must be remembered that they derived their power from Him, and acknowledged it.

Another proof of the Savior's deity is seen in His knowledge of the hearts of men. Solomon prayed to Almighty God, "Thou, even Thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men" (I Kings 8.39), and yet we read that Jesus "perceived the thoughts", that "He knew all men... and knew what was in man". In this He exercises a power that belongs only to God (Luke 9.47, John 2.24, 25). Again, who can forgive sins, but God only? He says, "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions", but the Lord Jesus said, "The Son of Man hath power to forgive sins" (Matt. 9.6).

He is worshiped as God

The Savior said, "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve" (Matt. 4.10), and yet without rebuke He allowed this worship to be paid to Himself and declared that "All men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father" (John 5.23). We read of a leper, a ruler, disciples in a ship, a woman of Canaan, and a man born blind, that they "came and worshiped Christ". After His resurrection, Mary Magdalene and the other women "held Him by the feet and worshiped Him". Thomas met with no censure when he addressed Him as "My Lord and my God" (John 20. 28). He who properly received the worship due only to *the Lord our God*, He must be indeed the Lord our God.

He is declared to be God

How do the disciples speak of the risen and ascended Lord, when He has sent the Spirit of Truth to guide them infallibly into all truth? John says, "The Word was God... and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory..." (John I). In another place he says, "Jesus Christ is the true God and eternal life" (I John 5.20). Paul tells the Romans that Christ "is over all, God blessed for ever" (Rom. 9.5). To the Colossians he declares that "in Christ dwelleth all the

fullness of the Godhead bodily." To Timothy he affirms that "God was manifest in the flesh" (I Tim. 3.16). In the Epistle to Titus he speaks of the Lord Jesus as "the great God and our Savior" (Titus 2. 13). Peter also speaks of Him as "God and our Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter I. I).

In the vision of Christ in glory set forth in the Revelation, Christ announces His presence to the beloved Apostle, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, which is and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty" (Rev. 1. 8,17; 21.6; 22.13). At His Name every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth (Rev. 2.10). All creatures must raise one united voice of adoration to our Savior God, saying, "Blessing and honor and glory and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever" (Rev. 5.13).

The Son is God, and of one substance with the Father

The Lord Jesus Himself said, "I and my Father are One" (John 10.30). He is the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth; He is before all things: His goings forth were from everlasting: He was in the beginning with God: and the Word was God. (John 1.14; Col. 1.17; Micah 5.2; John 1.1,2).

He took upon Him man's nature

He was born into the world and "increased in wisdom and stature". He hungered and thirsted, ate and drank, felt weariness and fatigue, pain and sorrow, was moved with compassion, and wept over the grief of those whom He loved, and over the foreseen ruin of Jerusalem. "He was made like unto His brethren," and as they are "partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same" (Heb. 2.17, 14). "He took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and was found in fashion as a man" Phil. 2.7, 8). In this respect He is described as man-" There is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (Acts 2.22, 1 Tim. 2.5).

In His human nature He was truly man, born of a woman (the incarnation Mary "brought forth her firstborn son" (Luke 2.6, 7). It is equally true that He was sent forth from God, "When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law" (Gal. 4.4).

The Godhead and Man - were inseparably joined together in one Person This mysterious union we cannot understand or presume to explain,

but we maintain it to be true because it is clearly revealed in the sure Word of God. As God, He could say, "Before Abraham was I AM"; as man, He was the seed of Abraham. As God, He was David's Lord; as man, He was David's son. As God, all power and honor in heaven and earth were His: as man, "He was compassed with infirmity". As God, He was Lord of all things by right of creation, for "without Him was not anything made that was made"; as man, He was despoiled of worldly goods and "had not where to lay His head". As God, in His hands were the issues of life and death, and He had power to lay down His life and power to take it again; as man, "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened He not His mouth" (Acts 8.32).

The divine and human natures were never to be separated, Even *after His* ascension He is revealed as the One Mediator- "The *man* Christ Jesus". Paul speaks of the ascended Lord as the future Judge "That *man* whom God hath ordained". The Scriptures thus make it plain that the Lord Jesus Christ, as He was 'while on earth, is now and ever will he both God and man. In Him, though sitting upon the throne of His glory, the human nature is in a mysterious way united to the divine.

The Holy Spirit is revealed as a Person

It is needful to establish the aspect of the truth first, so that it may then be shown that this Person is Divine and of one substance with the Father and the Son. Those who deny the deity of the Holy Spirit invariably deny His distinct *personal* existence.

When the Lord Jesus was about to leave His disciples He promised them, "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of Truth. . . The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance ~whatsoever I have said unto you ... He shall testify of Me ... I will send Him unto you... He will guide you into all truth. . . He will show you things to come ... He shall glorify Me . . . He shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you"(3ohn14.16,26; 15.26; 16.7,13,14).

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself was a Person, and it is clear that the "other Comforter" was to be a Person also, The things which Jesus said of the Comforter are quite unintelligible if the Comforter is not a Person. He must be a Person, if He is sent, teaches, brings things to our remembrance, and shows the things of Jesus to us. These are descriptions of a Person-hearing, receiving, testifying, speaking, reproving, instructing and guiding.

Testimonies from the Epistles of Paul

Paul tells us that "The Spirit helpeth our infirmities and maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom. 8. 26). This can only be true of a Person who helps and intercedes. "To one is given by the Spirit the word of knowledge . . . but all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will" (1 Cor. 12:8). It is incredible that an inspired writer should use language of this character, attributing all these operations to the Spirit, if that Spirit were not a person. Again the Apostle warns us not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, and grief is an affection that cannot be attributed to anything but a Person. Therefore the Holy Spirit is a Person, and this is clearly asserted by the Holy Scriptures.

The consideration of those Scriptures which name the Holy Ghost conjointly with the Father and Son leads to the same conclusion. The command is given to baptize in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. The Father and Son are Persons and the same must be true of the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus did not command His disciples to baptize in the Name of two persons and an abstract influence. The inspired benediction-" The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all", makes it equally clear that just as the Father is a Person, and the Son a Person, so also is the Holy Spirit a Person.

The Holy Spirit is a Divine Person - "Very and Eternal God"

Here again the present brief article does not attempt a full exhaustive proof, but sets forth a sample of the evidence from the storehouse of divine truth.

In Judges 15.14 we read, "The Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson" but in Judges 16.20, after Samson had yielded to Delilah, "The LORD (Jehovah) departed from him". Therefore "the Spirit of the Lord" is the Lord Jehovah, the eternal God. In 2 Samuel 23.2 David affirmed, "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me" - "The God of Israel said" . . . and thus makes it plain that the Holy Spirit is the God of Israel. In Job 33.4 Elihu says, "The Spirit of God hath made me", but God is the maker of all things and therefore the Spirit is God. In Psalm 139. 7 the Psalmist says, "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence . . .". The following words assert the omnipresence and therefore the deity of the Holy Spirit. In Isaiah 6 the prophet

says, "Mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of Hosts . . . also I heard the voice of the Lord, and He said, Go and tell this people, hear ye indeed, but understand not.

The Apostle Paul quotes these words in Acts 28.25, 26. "Well spake the Holy Ghost, by Esias the prophet unto our fathers, saying, Go unto this people and say, hearing ye shall hear, etc." The Person whom Isaiah names as the King, the Lord of Hosts, is no other than the Holy Spirit.

The Apostles show that the Holy Spirit is God

In the New Testament the Angel who announces to Mary the miracle of the Savior's birth says, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore that holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1.35). Here the angel assigns as a reason why Christ should be called the Son of God, the fact that He was to be conceived by the operation of the Holy Ghost, and it must follow that the Holy Ghost is God. In Acts 5. 3, 4, Peter in condemning Ananias uses the expressions lying to the Holy Ghost and lying to God, as synonymous. "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?~thou hast not lied unto men but unto God." In lying to the Holy Ghost Ananias lied to God. Therefore the Holy Ghost is God. Paul writes to the Corinthians, "Ye are the temple of God" (I Cor. 3.16), and "Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost" (I Cor. 6.19). From a comparison of these texts it follows that the Holy Ghost is God. Paul says, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim. 3:16), and Peter says, "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1.21). Therefore the Holy Spirit who inspired the writers was God. All these texts, and many more, lead to but one conclusion-that the Holy Ghost is God.

He is equal to the Father and the Son

The Lord Jesus Christ describes blasphemy against the Holy Ghost as a sin more unpardonable even than blasphemy against the Son of Man (Matt. 12.31). How can this be, unless the Holy Ghost is God? The same Spirit is said to search even the deep things of God, to know the things of God, to give all spiritual gifts, such as wisdom, knowledge, healing, miracles, prophecy, etc. Almighty God alone can do these things, but they are constantly ascribed to the Holy Ghost, who is thus declared to be God. He is "of one substance, majesty and glory with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God"

Paul expressly calls the Holy Spirit "The eternal Spirit" (Heb. 9. 14). If further confirmation were needed it could be gathered from the words concerning baptism in the Name of Father, Son and Holy Ghost. How could the Name of the Holy Ghost be placed side by side with that of Father and Son, unless He is in truth "very and eternal God"? In administering the ordinance of baptism is it conceivable that the name of an inferior being should be placed on a perfect equality with that of the Almighty Father? The Scriptures make it known that there is no God else beside Him, and "His glory He will not give to another" (Isa. 42.8). The Person whose Name stands with that of Father and Son is Himself God-the Holy Ghost. The same may be said of the benediction with which Paul invokes the grace and blessing of God upon the Christians at Corinth-" The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be *with* you all." *It* would be blasphemous to introduce into such a benediction the name of one who was not of one substance, majesty and glory with the Father and the Son.

The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son

He is "the Spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father", as our Lord declares in John 15.26. He is therefore said to be sent by the Father (John 14.26; Matt. 3.16; 1 Cor. 2.11, 14; 3.16, and Matt. 10.20). The same Holy Spirit is said to be sent by the Son, and is called the Spirit of the Son, and the Spirit of Christ (John 15.26; 16.7; Rom. 8.9; Gal. 4.6; Phil. 1.19; 1 Peter 1.11). Thus the same expressions which are spoken of the Spirit in relation to the Father are spoken of the same Spirit in relation to the Son-and for the same reason, that the Holy Spirit "proceeds" from the Son even as He "proceeds" from the Father. Father and Son send forth the Spirit, Who is a Person, eternally Divine, and One with them in His being, in His majesty, in His glory, and in His power.

Trinity in Unity

From these Scriptures it is made plain that there is but One Almighty God, and it is demonstrated with equal clarity that in the unity of the Divine Being there are Three Persons "of one substance, power and eternity". The solemn words, "In the Name of the Father", signify God the Father, and that the Father is God. The words which follow-" and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost"-signify the Son Who is God, and the Holy Spirit Who is God.

Paul well knew that it is written, "To whom will ye liken Me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One" (Isa. 40.25; 46.9). No reasonable or reverent Christian can for a moment imagine that the inspired Apostle would have penned a solemn blessing in the Name of Almighty God (2 Cor. 13. 14) deliberately placing the Divine Name in the middle, between the Names of Jesus and the Holy Ghost, unless he believed, and desired us also to believe, that Jesus Christ is God, and that the Holy Ghost is God, and that in unity with the Father they are the One Almighty God.

The doctrine unfolded in the Old Testament

The revelation of this truth formed a part of God's earliest revelations to mankind. The Hebrew name which we translate "God" is "Elohim"-a noun of the plural number, often joined with plural adjectives and verbs clearly denoting a plurality of Persons in the Godhead (*e.g.* Genesis 20.13, "God caused me to wander", where "God" and "caused" are plural. Joshua 24.19, "He is a holy God", where "holy" and "God" are plural). To show that the Deity is nevertheless One, the plural "Elohim" is often joined with singular nouns and pronouns. "In the beginning God created . Here "God" is plural, while "created" is singular. The title by which the Almighty is designated, "The LORD thy God", is in the Hebrew

"Jehovah Elohim"-Jehovah is singular, denoting the unity of the Godhead, while Elohim is plural, denoting a plurality of Persons in that unity. It must be remembered that these revelations were made to a people constantly warned against the polytheism of the surrounding nations. It is inconceivable that Moses, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, should use words indicating a plurality of Persons in the One Eternal God, unless he had been irresistibly impressed with this mysterious truth, and desired to communicate it as an essential part of the revelation.

The truth revealed in the words of the Holy One

Again, God says, "*Let us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness" (Gen 1.26). "Behold the man is become as one of *us* (Gen. 3.22). "*Let us* go down" (Gen. 11.7). "Who will go for *us*" (Isa. 6.8). No reason can be given why the Almighty should speak thus of Himself, if it were not true that "in the unity of the Godhead there are Three Persons of one sub-stance, power and eternity". There are also many places where the same truth is intimated, even if not so precisely stated. The Lord commands Aaron to bless the people thus~" The LORD bless thee and keep thee; the LORD make His face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee; the LORD lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace" (Num. 6.22-26). In Genesis 18 we read that, "the LORD appeared unto Abraham

and Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked and lo! *three men* stood by him". Why should God appear to him under the similitude of *three men*, unless it was to shadow forth this truth which He purposed to reveal more clearly in later times?

Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the Book of Isaiah

There are some very clear testimonies in Isaiah. "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him; and the Redeemer shall come to Zion . . . saith the LORD" (59. 19,20). Who is this "Redeemer"? "I the LORD am thy Savior and thy Redeemer, the mighty One..." (60.16). Three Divine Persons are spoken of The Spirit of the LORD, the Redeemer-the Eternal Son, who should come to Zion-and the LORD, who speaks by the Prophet. In another place we read, "The Lord GOD and His Spirit hath sent me" (48.16). A study of the context shows that the speaker is the Messiah, the Son of God, and the three persons of the Holy Trinity are clearly indicated, the Lord God (the Father), the Holy Spirit, and the Son.

The changeless Truth of God

There is a wonderful harmony and agreement of doctrine in the different portions of God's revelation to mankind, and holy men of God in all ages, though not always with the same degree of light, have looked with the eye of faith to God the Father who made them, to God the Son who redeemed.