

# Of a Plurality on the Godhead; Or, a Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Divine Essence.

by John Gill

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*John Gill argues that the Bible teaches a plurality in the Godhead, with multiple persons in the unity of the divine essence.*

**Scripture:** Genesis 1:1, Genesis 1:26, Isaiah 6:8, Matthew 28:19, John 1:1-3, John 14:23, 2 Corinthians 13:14, Ephesians 1:3-14, 1 John 5:7, Revelation 1:4-5

**Topics:** "Doctrine of the Trinity", "Unity of God"

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## Description

John Gill expounds on the doctrine of the Trinity, asserting that the Godhead consists of three distinct persons--Father, Son, and Holy Spirit--while maintaining the unity of the divine essence. He provides scriptural evidence for this plurality, citing various passages that use plural terms and expressions when referring to God, such as 'Elohim' and 'us' in creation. Gill emphasizes that the Trinity is not merely a theological concept but is essential to understanding God's nature and His works in creation, providence, and grace. He argues that the distinct roles of each person in the Godhead are evident in the acts of salvation and the worship practices of believers. Ultimately, Gill concludes that the Trinity is foundational to the Christian faith and the experience of salvation.

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## Transcript

A Body of Doctrinal Divinity

Book 1--Chapter 27

OF A PLURALITY IN THE GODHEAD;

OR, A TRINITY OF PERSONS IN THE UNITY OF THE DIVINE ESSENCE.

Having proved the unity of the divine Being, and explained the sense in which it is to be understood; my next work will be to prove that there is a plurality in the Godhead; or, that there are more persons than one, and that these are neither more, nor fewer, than three; or, that there is a Trinity of Persons in the unity of the divine essence. Some except to these terms, because not literally and syllabically expressed in scripture; as Essence, Unity, Trinity, and Person; of which see the Introduction, see topic (point 5), 741, I shall, 1.

First, Prove that there is a plurality of persons in the one God; or, that there are more than one. The Hebrew word Mynp which answers to the Greek word proswpa, is used of the divine persons, ynp "My persons shall go with thee", (Ex. 33:14) and if Kynp "thy persons go not with me, (Ex. 33:15) and "he brought thee out wynpb by his persons", (Deut. 4:37). The word is used three times in (Ps. 27:8, 9) and in each clause the Septuagint has the word proswpon, and which, as Suidas[1] observes, is expressive of the sacred Trinity.

That there is such a plurality of persons, will appear more clearly, 1a. From the plural names and epithets of God. His great and incommunicable name Jehovah, is always in the singular number, and is never used plurally; the reason of which is, because it is expressive of his essence, which is but one; it is the same with "I AM that I AM"; but the first name of God we meet with in scripture, and that in the first verse of it, is plural; "In the beginning God (Elohim) created the heaven and the earth", (Gen. 1:1) and therefore must design more than one, at least two, and yet not precisely two, or two only; then it would have been dual; but it is plural; and, as the Jews themselves say, cannot design fewer than three[2].

Now Moses might have made use of other names of God, in his account of the creation; as his name Jehovah, by which he made himself known to him, and to the people of Israel; or Eloah, the singular of Elohim, which is used by him, (Deut. 32:15, 16) and in the book of Job frequently; so that it was not want of singular names of God, nor the barrenness of the Hebrew language, which obliged him to use a plural word; it was no doubt of choice, and with design; and which will be more evident when it is observed, that one end of the writings of Moses is to extirpate the polytheism of the heathens, and to prevent the people of Israel from going into it; and therefore it may seem strange, that he should begin his history with a plural name of God; he must have some design in it, which could not be to inculcate a plurality of gods, for that would be directly contrary to what he had in view in writing, and to what he asserts, (Deut. 6:4).

"Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord": nor a plurality of mere names and characters, to which creative powers cannot be ascribed; but a plurality of persons, for so the words may be rendered, distributively, according to the idiom of the Hebrew language; "In the beginning everyone, or each of the divine persons, created the heaven and the earth". And then the historian goes on to make mention of them; who, besides the Father, included in this name, are the Spirit of God, that moved upon the face of the waters, and the word of God, (Gen. 1:2) which said, "Let there be light, and there was light"; and which spoke that, and all things, out of nothing; see (John 1:1-3).

And it may be further observed, that this plural word Elohim, is, in this passage, in construction with a verb singular, "bara", rendered "created"; which some have thought is designed to point out a plurality of persons, in the unity of the divine essence: but if this is not judged sufficient to build it upon, let it be further observed, that the word Elohim is sometimes in construction with a verb plural, as in (Gen. 20:13; Gen. 35:7; 2 Sam. 7:23) where Elohim, the gods, or divine persons, are said to cause Abraham to wander from his father's house; to appear to Jacob; and to go forth to redeem Israel: all which are personal actions: and likewise it is in construction with adjectives and participles plural, (Deut. 4:7, 5:26; Josh. 24:19; 2 Sam. 7:26, 27; Ps. 58:11, Prov. 30:3; Jer. 10:10) in which places Elohim, gods, or the divine persons, are said to be nigh to the people of Israel; to be living, holy, and to judge in the earth; characters which belong to persons; and now, as a learned man[3] well observes, "that however the construction of a noun plural with a verb singular, may render it doubtful to some whether these words express a plurality or not, yet certainly there can be no doubt in those places, where a verb or adjective plural are joined with the word Elohim".

No such stress is laid on this word, as if it was the clearest and strongest proof of a plurality in the Deity; it is only mentioned, and mentioned first, because it is the most usual name of God, being used of him many hundreds of times in scripture; and what stress is laid upon it, is not merely because it is plural, but because it appears often in an unusual form of construction; it is used of others, but not in such a form; as has been observed. It is used of angels, (Ps. 8:5) they being not only many, but are often messengers of God, of the divine Persons in the Godhead, represent them, and speak in their name.

And it is used of civil magistrates, (Ps. 82:6) and so of Moses, as a god to Pharaoh, (Ex. 7:1) as they well may be called, since they are the vicegerents and representatives of the Elohim, the divine Persons, the Triune God; nor need it be wondered at, that it should be sometimes used of a single Person in the Deity, it being common to them all; and since each of them possess the whole divine nature and essence undivided, (Ps. 45:6, 7). The ancient Jews not only concluded a plurality, but even a Trinity, from the word Elohim[4].

With respect to the passage in (Num. 15:16) they say[5], "There is no judgment less than three"; and that three persons sitting in judgment, the divine Majesty is with them, they conclude from (Ps. 82:1) "he judgeth among the gods", Myhla. Hence they further observes[6], that "no sanhedrin, or court of judicature, is called Myhla unless it consists of three". From whence it is manifest, that the ancient Jews believed that this name not only inferred a plurality of persons, but such a plurality which consisted of three at least.

Another plural name of God is Adonim; "If I am (Adonim) Lords, where is my fear?" (Mal. 1:6) now, though this may be said of one in the second and third persons plural, yet never of one in the first person, as it is here said of God by himself; "I am Lords"; and we are sure there are two, "The Lord said to my Lord", &c. (Ps. 110:1). In Daniel 4:17 the most high God is called the watchers and the Holy Ones; "This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the Holy Ones"; which respects the revolution and destruction of the Babylonian monarchy; an affair of such moment and importance as not to be ascribed to angels, which some understand by watchers and Holy Ones; but however applicable these epithets may be to them, and they may be allowed to be the executioners of the decrees of God, yet not the makers of them; nor can anything in this world, and much less an affair of such consequence as this, be said to be done in virtue of any decree of theirs: besides, this decree is expressly called, the decree of the most High, (Dan. 4:24) so that the watchers and Holy Ones, are no other than the divine Persons in the Godhead; who are holy in their nature, and watch over the saints to do them good; and over the wicked, to bring evil upon them: and as they are so called in the plural number, to express the plurality of them in the Deity; so to preserve the unity of the divine essence, this same decree is called, the decree of the most High, (Dan. 4:24) and they the watcher and Holy One, in the singular number in (Dan. 4:13). 1b.

A plurality in the Deity may be proved from plural expressions used by God, when speaking of himself, respecting the works of creation, providence, and grace. At the creation of man he said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness", (Gen. 1:26) the pronouns "us" and "our", manifestly express a plurality of persons; these being personal plural characters; as image and likeness being in the singular number, secure the unity of the divine essence; and that there were more than one concerned in the creation of man, is clear from the plural expressions used of the divine Being, when he is spoken of as the Creator of men, (Job 35:10; Ps. 149:2; Eccl. 12:1; Isa. 54:5) in all which places, in the original text, it is my Makers, his Makers, thy Creators, thy Makers; for which no other reason can be given, than that more persons than one had an hand herein; as for the angels, they are creatures themselves, and not possessed of creative powers; nor were they concerned in the creation of man, nor was he made after their image and

likeness; nor can it be reasonably thought, that God spoke to them, and held a consultation with them about it; for "with whom took he counsel?" (Isa. 40:14).

Not with any of his creatures; no, not with the highest angel in heaven; they are not of his privy council. Nor is it to be thought that God, in the above passage, speaks "regio more", after the manner of kings; who, in their edicts and proclamations, use the plural number, to express their honour and majesty; and even they are not to be considered alone, but as connotating their ministers and privy council, by whose advice they act; and, besides, this courtly way of speaking, was not so ancient as the times of Moses; none of the kings of Israel use it; nor even any of those proud and haughty monarchs, Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar; the first appearance of it is in the letters of Artaxerxes, king of Persia, (Ezra 4:18, 7:23) which might take its rise from the conjunction of Darius and Cyrus, in the Persian empire, in both whose names edicts might be made, and letters wrote; which might give rise to such a way of speaking, and be continued by their successors, to express their power and glory: but, as a learned man[7] observes, "it is a very extravagant fancy, to suppose that Moses alludes to a custom that was not (for what appears) in being at that time, nor a great while after."

The Jews themselves are sensible that this passage furnishes with an argument for a plurality in the Deity[8]. A like way of speaking is used concerning men, in (Gen. 3:22). "And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us"; not as one of the angels, for they are not of the Deity, nor the companions of God, and equal to him; for whatever private secret meaning Satan might have in saying, "Ye shall be as gods"; he would have it understood by Eve, and so she understood it, that they should be not like the angels merely, but like God himself; this was the bait he laid, and which took, and proved man's ruin; upon which the Lord God said these words either sarcastically, "Behold the man whom Satan promised, and he expected to be as one of us, as one of the persons in the Deity; see how much he looks like one of us! who but just now ran away from us in fear and trembling, and covered himself with fig leaves, and now stands before us clothed with skins of slain beasts!" or else as comparing his former and present state together; for the words may be rendered, "he was as one of us"; made after their image and likeness: but what is he now? he has sinned, and come short of that glorious image; has lost his honour, and is become like the beasts that perish, whose skins he now wears.

Philo[9], the Jew, owns that these words are to be understood not of one, but of more; the *en kai polla*, the "one" and "many", so much spoken of by the Pythagoreans and Platonists; and which Plato[10] speaks of as infinite and eternal, and of the knowledge of them as the gift of the gods; and which, he says, was delivered to us by the ancients; who were better than we, and lived nearer the gods; by whom he seems to intend the ancient Jews; this, I say, though understood by their followers of the unity of God, and the many ideas in him, the same with what we call decrees; I take to be no other than the one God, and a plurality of persons in the Deity; which was the faith of the ancient Jews; so that the *polla*, of Plato, and others, is the same with the *plhyov* of Philo, who was a great Platonizer; and both intend a plurality of persons.

God sometimes uses the plural number when speaking of himself, with respect to some particular affairs of providence, as the confusion of languages; "Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language"; which also cannot be said to angels; had it, it would rather have been, go "ye", and do "ye" confound their language: but, alas! this work was above the power of angels to do; none but God, that gave to man the faculty of speech, and the use of language, could confound it; which was as great an instance of divine power, as to bestow the gift of tongues on the apostles, at Pentecost; and the same God that did the one, did the other; and so the us here, are after explained of Jehovah, in the following verse, to whom the confounding the language of men, and scattering them abroad on the face of the earth, are ascribed, (Acts

2:8-11).

In another affair of providence, smiting the Jewish nation with judicial blindness; this plural way of speaking is used by the divine Being; says the prophet Isaiah, "I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" (Isa. 6:8) not the seraphim say this, but Jehovah; for to them neither the name Jehovah, nor the work agree; and though there is but one Jehovah that here speaks, yet more persons than one are intended by him; of Christ, the Son of God no question can be made, since the Evangelist applies them to him; and observes, that Isaiah said the words when he saw his glory, and spoke of him, (John 12:40, 41) nor of the Holy Ghost, to whom they are also applied (Acts 28:25, 26).

There is another passage in Isaiah 41:21-23 where Jehovah, the King of Jacob, challenges the heathens, and their gods, to bring proof of their Deity, by prediction of future events; and, in which, he all along uses the plural number; "show us what shall happen, that we may consider them; declare unto us things for to come, that we may know that ye, are gods, and that we may be dismayed;" See also Isaiah 43:9. And as in the affairs of creation and providence, so in those of grace, and with respect to spiritual communion with God, plural expressions are used; as when our Lord says, "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him", (John 14:23) which personal actions of coming and making abode, expressive of communion and fellowship, are said of more than one; and we cannot be at a loss about two of them, Christ and his Father, who are expressly mentioned; and hence we read of fellowship with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ; and also of the communion of the Holy Ghost, (1 John 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:14).

To all these instances of plural expressions, may be added (Song 1:11; John 3:11). 1c. A plurality in the Deity may be proved from those passages of scripture which speak of the angel of Jehovah, who also is Jehovah; now if there is a Jehovah that is sent, and therefore called an angel, and a Jehovah that sends, there must be more persons than one who are Jehovah. The first instance of this kind is in Genesis 16:7, where the angel of Jehovah is said to find Hagar, Sarah's maid, in the wilderness, and bid her return to her mistress; which angel appears to be Jehovah, since he promises to do that for her, and acquaints her with future things, which no created angel, and none but Jehovah could, (Gen. 16:10-12) and what proves it beyond all dispute that he must be Jehovah, is, what is said, (Gen. 16:13) "She called the name of the Lord, or Jehovah, that spake unto her, thou; God, seest".

In Genesis 18:2 we read of three men who stood by Abraham in the plains of Mamre, who were angels in an human form, as two of them are expressly said to be (Gen. 19:1). Dr. Lightfoot[11] is of opinion, that they were the three divine Persons; and scruples not to say, that at such a time the Trinity dined with Abraham; but the Father, and the Holy Spirit, never assumed an human form; nor are they ever called angels. However, one of these was undoubtedly a divine Person, the Son of God in an human form; who is expressly called Jehovah, the Judge of all the earth, (Gen. 18:13, 20, 25, 26) and to whom omnipotence and omniscience are ascribed, (Gen. 18:14, 17-19) and to whom Abraham showed the utmost reverence and respect, (Gen. 18:27, 30, 31) and now he is distinguished, being Jehovah in human form on earth, from Jehovah in heaven, from whom he is said to rain brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, (Gen. 19:24) which conflagration was not made by the ministry of created angels, but is always represented as the work of Elohim, of the divine Persons (Jer. 50:40; Amos 4:11).

An angel also appeared to Abraham at the offering up of his son Isaac, and bid him desist from it; and who appears plainly to be the same with him who ordered him to do it; expressly called God, (Gen. 22:11, 12 compared with Gen. 22:1, 2) and Jehovah, who swore by himself, and promised to do what none but God

could do, (Gen. 22:16-18; Heb. 6:13, 14) where what is here said is expressly ascribed to God. Add to this, the name Abraham gave the place on this occasion, Jehovah-Jireh, because the Lord had appeared, and would hereafter appear in this place.

The angel invoked by Jacob, (Gen. 48:15, 16) is put upon a level with the God of his fathers Abraham and Isaac; yea, is represented as the same; and the work of redeeming him from all evil, equal to that of feeding him all his life long, is ascribed to him; as well as a blessing on the sons of Joseph, is prayed for from him; all which would never have been said of, nor done to, a created angel. The angel which appeared to Moses in the bush, (Ex. 3:2) was not a created angel, but a divine person; as is evident from the names by which he is called, Jehovah, God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, "I AM that I AM", (Ex. 3:4, 6, 14) and from the things ascribed to him; seeing the afflictions of the Israelites, coming to deliver them out of Egyptian bondage, and promising to bring them into the land of Canaan, (Ex. 3:7, 8) to which may be added, the prayer of Moses for a blessing on Joseph, because of the good will of him that dwelt in the bush, (Deut. 33:16) and the application of this passage to God, by our Lord Jesus Christ, (Mark 12:26).

Once more, the angel that was promised to go before the children of Israel, to keep and guide them in the way through the wilderness to the land of Canaan, is no other than Jehovah; since not only the obedience of the children of Israel to him is required; but it is suggested, that should they disobey him, he would not, though he could, pardon their iniquities; which none but God can do: and also it is said, the name of the Lord was in him; that is, his nature and perfections; and since it is the same the children of Israel rebelled against, he could be no other than Christ, the Son of God, whom they tempted; the angel of God's presence; who, notwithstanding, saved and carried them all the days of old (Isa. 63:9; 1 Cor. 10:9).

Again, we read of the angel of the Lord, before whom Joshua the high priest was brought and stood, being accused by Satan, (Zech. 3:1) who is not only called Jehovah, (Zech. 3:2) but takes upon him to do and order such things, which none but God could do; as causing the iniquity of Joshua to pass from him, and clothing him with change of raiment (see Isa. 61:10). To these may be added, all such scriptures which speak of two, as distinct from each other, under the same name of Jehovah; as in the above mentioned text, (Gen. 19:24) where Jehovah is said to rain fire and brimstone from Jehovah, out of heaven; and in Jeremiah 23:5, 6, where Jehovah promises to raise up a righteous branch to David, whose name should be called "Jehovah our righteousness"; and in Hosea 1:7 where Jehovah resolves he would save his people by Jehovah their God.

Other passages might be mentioned, as proving a plurality in Deity; but as some of these will also prove a Trinity in it, they will be considered under the following head; where it will be proved, 2. Secondly, That this plurality in the Godhead, is neither more nor fewer than three; or, that there is a Trinity of persons in the unity of the divine essence: this I have before taken for granted, and now I shall prove it. And not to take notice of the name Jehovah being used three times, and three times only, in the blessing of the priest, (Num. 6:24-26) and in the prayer of Daniel, (Dan. 9:19) and in the church's declaration of her faith in God, (Isa. 33:22) and the word holy repeated three times, and three times only, in the seraphims' celebration of the glory of the divine Being, (Isa. 6:3) and in that of the living creatures, in Revelation 4:8 which may seem to be accidental, or the effect of a fervent and devout disposition of mind; but there is not anything, no not the least thing, that is said or written in the sacred scriptures, without design.

I shall begin with the famous text in 1 John 5:7 as giving full proof and evidence of this doctrine; "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one":

which is not only a proof of the Deity of each of these three, inasmuch as they, are not only said to be "one", that is, one God; and their witness is called the witness of God, (1 John 5:9) but of a Trinity of Persons, in the unity of the divine essence; unity of essence, or nature, is asserted and secured, by their being said to be one; which respects not a mere unity of testimony, but of nature; for it is not said of them, as of the witnesses on earth, that they "agree in one"; but that they "are one".

And they may be called a Trinity, inasmuch as they are "three"; and a Trinity of Persons, since they are not only spoken of as distinct from each other, the Father from the Word and Holy Ghost, the Word from the Father and the Holy Ghost, and the Holy Ghost from the Father and the Word; but a personal action is ascribed to each of them; for they are all three said to be testifiers, or to bear record; which cannot be said of mere names and characters; nor be understood of one person under different names; for if the one living and true God only bears record, first under the character of a Father, then under the character of a Son, or the Word, and then under the character of the Holy Ghost; testimony, indeed, would be bore three times, but there would be but one testifier, and not three, as the apostle asserts.

Suppose one man should, for one man may bear the characters, and stand in the relations of father, son, and master; of a father to a child of his own; of a son, his father being living; and of a master to servants under him; suppose, I say, this man should come into a court of judicature, and be admitted to bear testimony in an affair there depending, and should give his testimony first under the character of a father, then under the character of a son, and next under the character of a master; every one will conclude, that though here was a testimony three times bore, yet there was but one, and not three, that bore record.

This text is so glaring a proof of the doctrine of the Trinity, that the enemies of it have done all they can to weaken its authority, and have pushed hard to extirpate it from a place in the sacred writings. They object, that it is wanting in the Syriac version; that the old Latin interpreter has it not; that it is not to be found in many Greek manuscripts; and is not quoted by the ancient fathers who wrote against the Arians, when it might have been of great service to them.

To all which it may be replied; that as to the Syriac version, though an ancient one, it is but a version, and till of late appeared a very defective one; the history of the adulterous woman in the eighth of John, the second epistle of Peter, the second and third epistles of John, the epistle of Jude, and the book of Revelation, were all wanting, till restored from a copy of archbishop Usher's, by De Dieu and Dr. Pocock; and who also, from an Eastern copy, has supplied the version with this text, so that now it stands in it.

And as to the old Latin interpreter, it is certain that it is to be seen in many Latin manuscripts of an early date, and is in the Vulgate Latin version of the London Polyglot Bible; and the Latin translation which bears the name of Jerom has it; and who, in an epistle to Eustochium, prefixed to his translation of those canonical epistles, complains of the omission of it, by unfaithful interpreters. As to its being wanting in some Greek manuscripts, it need only be said, it is found in many others; it is in the Complutensian edition, the compilers of which made use of various copies; out of sixteen ancient copies of Robert Stephens's, nine of them had it; and it is also said to be in an old British copy.

As to its not being quoted by some of the ancient fathers, this can be no proof of its not being genuine; since it might be in the original copy, and not in that used by them, through the carelessness and unfaithfulness of transcribers; or through copies erased falling into their hands, such as had been corrupted before the times of Arius, even by Artemon, or his disciples, who lived in the second century; who held that Christ was a mere man; by whom it is said<sup>[12]</sup>, this passage was erased; and certain it is,

that this epistle was very early corrupted; as the ancient writers testify[13]; or it might be in the copies used by the fathers, and yet not quoted by them, having scriptures not without it, to prove and defend the doctrine of it; and yet, after all, it appears plainly to be quoted by many of them; by Fulgentius[14], in the beginning of the sixth century, against the Arians, without any scruple or hesitation: and Jerom, as before observed, has it in his translation, made in the latter end of the fourth century: and it is quoted by Athanasius[15], about the middle of it; and before him by Cyprian[16], in the middle of the third century: and is manifestly referred to by Tertullian[17], in the beginning of it; and by Clemens of Alexandria[18], towards the end of the second century: so that it is to be traced up within a hundred years, or less, the writing of the epistle; which is enough to satisfy anyone of the genuineness of this text.

And, besides, it should be observed, that there never was any dispute about it, until Erasmus left it out in the first edition of his translation of the New Testament; and yet he himself, upon the credit of the old British copy, before mentioned, put it into another edition of his translation. Yea, the Socinians themselves have not dared to leave it out in their German Racovian version, A. C. 1630. To which may be added, that the context requires it; the connection with the preceding verse shows it, as well as its opposition to, and distinction from, the following verse; and in 1 John 5:9 is a plain reference to the divine witnesses in this; for the inference in it would not be clear, if there was no mention before made of a divine testimony.

But I shall not rest the proof of the doctrine of the Trinity on this single passage; but on the whole current and universal consent of scripture, where it is written as with a sunbeam; according to which, a Trinity of Persons in the Godhead appears in the works of creation, providence, and grace; in all things respecting the office and work of Christ; in God's acts of grace towards and upon his people; and in their worship and duties of religion enjoined them, and practised by them. 2a.

In the works of creation: as by these the eternal power and Godhead are made manifest, so in them are plain traces of a Trinity of persons; that God the Father made the heavens, earth and sea, and all that are in them, under which character the apostles addressed him as distinct from Christ his Son, (Acts 4:24, 27) none will doubt; and that the divine Word, or Son of God, was concerned in all this a question cannot be made of it, when it is observed that it is said, "All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that is made" (John 1:3).

And as for the Holy Spirit he is not only said to move upon the face of the waters which covered the earth, and brought that unformed chaos of earth and water into a beautiful order, but to garnish the heavens, to bespangle the firmament with stars of light, and to form the crooked serpent, the Leviathan, which being the greatest, is put for all the fishes of the sea; as well as he is said to be sent forth yearly, and renews the face of the earth at every returning spring; which is little less than a creation, and is so called, (Gen. 1:2; Job 26:13; Ps. 104:30) and all three may be seen together in one text, (Ps. 33:6) "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth"; where mention is made of Jehovah, and his Word, the eternal Logos, and of his Spirit, the breath of his mouth, as all concerned in the making of the heavens, and all the host of them.

And as in the creation of man, in particular, a plurality has been observed, this plurality was neither more nor fewer than three; that God the Father is the maker of men, will not be objected to; "Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us?" (Mal. 2:10) and the Son of God, who is the husband of the church, and the Redeemer of men, is expressly said to be their maker, (Isa. 54:5) and of the Holy Spirit, Elihu in so many words says, "The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the almighty hath given me life" (Job 33:4). 2b.

A Trinity of persons appears in the works of providence. "My father", says Christ, "worketh hitherto and I work", (John 5:17) that is, ever since the works of creation were finished, in which both had an hand, they have been jointly concerned in the works of providence, in the government of the world, and in ordering and disposing of all things in it; and not to the exclusion of the Holy Spirit, for, "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him?" that is, in the affair of the government of the world, as follows; "With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding?" to manage the important concerns of the world, to do everything wisely and justly, and to overrule all for the best ends and purposes (see Isa. 40:13,14).

And particularly the three divine persons appear in that remarkable affair of providence, the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, and the protection and guidance of them through the wilderness to the land of Canaan. Whoever reads attentively (Isa. 63:7-14) will easily observe, that mention is made of Jehovah, and of his mercy, lovingkindness, and goodness to the children of Israel; and then of the Angel of his presence, as distinct from him, showing love and pity to them, in saving, redeeming, bearing, and carrying them all the days of old; and next of his Holy Spirit, whom they rebelled against, and whom they vexed, and yet, though thus provoked, he led them on through the wilderness, and caused them to rest in the land of Canaan. 2c.

The three divine persons are to be discerned most clearly in all the works of grace. The inspiration of the scriptures is a wonderful instance of the grace and goodness of God to men, which is the foundation and source of spiritual knowledge, peace, and comfort; it is a divine work: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God", (2 Tim. 3:16) of God, Father, Son, and Spirit; and though it is particularly ascribed to the Holy Spirit, "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost", (2 Peter 1:21) yet no one surely will say, to the exclusion of the Father; nor is there any reason to shut out the Son from a concern herein; and we find all three dictating the writings David was the penman of: "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in tongue; the God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me", (2 Sam. 23:2, 3) where, besides the Spirit of the Lord, who spake by every inspired writer, there is the Father, the God of Israel, as he is commonly styled, and the Son, the Rock of Israel, the Messiah, often figuratively called the Rock; and in the same manner, and by the same persons David was inspired, all the other penmen of the scriptures were.

Those writings acquaint us with the covenant of grace, no other writings do, made from everlasting before the world was; this covenant was made by Jehovah the Father, and was made with his Son, who condescended and agreed to be the surety, mediator, and messenger of it; yea he is said to be the covenant itself; and in which the Holy Spirit is promised, and whose part in it is, and to which he agreed, to be the applier of the blessings and promises of it to those interested therein; see (Ps. 89:3; Isa. 42:6; Mal. 3:1; Heb. 7:22, 12:24; Ezek. 36:27; John 16:14, 15) and they are all three mentioned together as concerned in this covenant, in (Hag. 2:4, 5) where, for the encouragement of the people of Israel to work in rebuilding the temple, it is said, "For I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts", according to "the word that I covenanted with you"; or rather, as Junius renders it, "with the Word" by whom I covenanted "with you, when ye came out of Egypt", (at which time the covenant of grace was more clearly and largely revealed;)"so my Spirit remaineth among you": where may be observed, Jehovah the covenant maker, and his Word, in, by, and with whom he covenanted; and the Spirit standing, as it may be rendered, remaining and abiding, to see there was a performance and an application of all that was promised.

In the sacred writings, the economy of man's salvation is clearly exhibited to us, in which we find the three divine persons, by agreement and consent, take their distinct parts; and it may be observed that the election of men to salvation is usually ascribed to the Father; redemption, or the impetration of salvation, to the Son; and sanctification, or the application of salvation, to the Spirit; and they are all to be met with in one passage, (1 Peter 1:2) "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus".

The same may be observed in (2 Thess. 2:13, 14) where God the Father is said to choose men from the beginning unto salvation; and the sanctification of the Spirit, is the means through which they are chosen; and the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, the end to which they are chosen and called: but no where are these acts of grace more distinctly ascribed to each person than in the first chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians, where God the Father of Christ, is said to bless and choose his people in him before the foundation of the world, and to predestinate them to the adoption of children by him, in whom they are accepted with him, (Eph. 1:3-6) and where Christ is spoken of as the author of redemption through his blood, which includes forgiveness of sin, and a justifying righteousness; which entitles to the heavenly inheritance, (Eph. 1:7, 11) and then the Holy Spirit, in distinction from them both, is said to be the earnest of their inheritance, and by whom they are sealed until they come to the full possession of it (Eph. 1:13,14).

The doctrine of the Trinity is often represented as a speculative point, of no great moment whether it is believed or not, too mysterious and curious to be pried into, and that it had better be let alone than meddled with; but, alas! it enters into the whole of our salvation, and all the parts of it; into all the doctrines of the gospel, and into the experience of the saints; there is no doing without it; as soon as ever a man is convinced of his sinful and miserable estate by nature, he perceives there is a divine person that he has offended, and that there is need of another divine person to make satisfaction for his offences, and a third to sanctify him; to begin and carry on a work of grace in him, and to make him meet for eternal glory and happiness. 2d.

A Trinity of persons in the Godhead may be plainly discovered in all things relating to the office and work of Christ, as the Redeemer and Saviour. In the mission of him into this world on that account: he, the Son of God, was sent by agreement, with his own consent, by the Father and the Spirit; this is affirmed by himself, (Isa. 48:16) "Now the Lord God, and his Spirit, hath sent me"; even he who says, (Isa. 48:12, 13) "I am the first and the last", and whose hand laid the foundation of the earth, and whose right hand spanned the heaven, and who is continued speaking to (Isa. 48:16) and must be a divine person; the mighty God, who is said to be sent by Jehovah the Lord God, and by his Spirit; who therefore must be three distinct persons, and not one only; or otherwise the sense must be, "now I and myself have sent myself", which is none at all.

Christ the Son of God, sent to be the Saviour, in the fulness of time was made of a woman, or became incarnate; and though he only took flesh, the three divine persons were concerned in this affair; the Father provided a body for him in his purposes and decrees, council and covenant; the Word or Son was made flesh, and dwelt among men, and that which was conceived in the Virgin, was of the Holy Ghost, (Heb. 10:5; John 1:14; Matthew 1:20) and in the message to the Virgin, and the declaration of this mysterious affair to her by the angel, mention is made distinctly of all the three Persons; there is the "highest", Jehovah the Father; and "the Son of the highest", who took flesh of the Virgin; and the Holy Ghost, or "the power of the highest", to whose overshadowing influence, the mysterious incarnation is ascribed (Luke 1:32,35).

Christ, the Son of God, being incarnate, was anointed with the Holy Ghost, his gifts and graces without measure; whereby, as man, he was fitted and qualified for his office as Mediator. The anointer is said to be God, his God, the great Jehovah; the anointed, the Son of God in human nature, called therefore the Christ of God, the true Messiah; what he was anointed with was the Holy Ghost, his gifts and grace, signified by the oil of gladness; see (Ps. 45:7; Isa. 61:1; Acts 10:38) when he was thirty years of age he was baptized of John in Jordan, where all the three divine persons appeared; the Son in human nature, submitting to the ordinance of baptism: the Father, by a voice from heaven, declaring him to be his beloved Son; and the Holy Spirit, descending on him as a dove (Matthew 3:16, 17).

This was always reckoned so full and clear a proof of the Trinity of Persons in the Godhead, that it was a common saying with the ancients, go to Jordan, and there learn the doctrine of the Trinity. Before our Lord's sufferings and death, he gave out various promises to his disciples, that he would send the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, to them; in which there are plain traces of a Trinity of Persons; as when he says, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter" (John 14:16).

Here is God the Father of Christ, who is prayed unto, who is one Person; and here is the Son in human nature, praying, a second Person, the Son of God; and because he was so, his prayer was always prevalent; nor could he be a mere creature, who speaks so positively and authoritatively, he shall give you; and then there is another Comforter prayed for, even the Spirit of truth, distinct from the Father and the Son; the same may be observed in and in (John 15:26, 16:7). Christ by his sufferings and death, obtained eternal redemption for men.

The price that was paid for it, was paid to God the Father so it is said, "hath redeemed us to God by thy blood" (Rev. 5:9). What gave the price a sufficient value was, the dignity of his person, as the Son of God, (1 John 1:7) and it was "through the eternal Spirit" he offered himself to God, (Heb. 9:14) which some understand of the divine nature; but it is not usual to say, Christ did this, or the other thing, through the divine nature, but by the Spirit, as in (Matthew 12:28; Acts 1:2) besides, in some copies of (Heb. 9:14) it is read, "through the Holy Spirit".

Again, Christ having suffered and died for men, he rose again for their justification; in which all the three persons were concerned; God the Father raised him from the dead, and gave him glory, (1 Peter 1:21) and he raised himself by his own power, according to his own prediction, (John 2:19) and was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness" or the Holy Spirit, "by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4, see also Rom. 8:11). 2e. This truth of a Trinity in the Godhead, shines in all the acts of grace towards or in men; in the act of justification; it is God the Father that justifies, by imputing the righteousness of his Son, without works, (Rom. 3:30, 4:6, 8:33) and it is not only by the righteousness of Christ that men are justified; but he himself justifies by his knowledge, or by faith in him, (Isa. 53:11) and it is the Spirit of God that pronounces the sentence of justification in the conscience of believers; hence they are "justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God", (1 Cor. 6:11) in the act of adoption; the grace of the Father in bestowing such a favour on any of the children of men, is owned, (1 John 3:1) and through the grace of Christ, a way is opened, by redemption wrought out by him, for the reception of this blessing; and he it is that gives power to those that believe in him, to become the sons of God, (Gal. 4:4, 5; John 1:12) and the Holy Spirit witnesses, their adoption to them; hence he is called the Spirit of adoption, (Rom. 8:15, 16) and all three appear in one text, respecting this blessing of grace; "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father", (Gal. 4:6) where the Father is spoken of as distinct from the Son, and the Son from the Father, and the Spirit from them both, and all three bear their part in this wonderful favour.

Regeneration is an evidence of adoption; and an instance of the great love and abundant mercy of God; and which is sometimes ascribed to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, (1 Peter 1:3) and sometimes to the Son of God, who regenerates and quickens whom he will, (John 5:21; 1 John 2:29) and sometimes to the Spirit of God, (John 3:3, 5) and all three are mentioned together in (Titus 3: 4-6) where God the Father called our Saviour, is said to save by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost; which grace of his is shed abroad in men through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Once more, their unction, or anointing, which they receive from the Holy One, is from God the Father, in and through Christ, and by the Spirit; "Now he which establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts", (2 Cor. 1:21, 22) where God the Father is represented as the establisher and anointer, and Jesus Christ, as a distinct person, in whom the saints are established and anointed; and the Spirit, distinct from them both, as the earnest of their future glory. 2f.

It plainly appears that there is a Trinity of persons in the Godhead, from the worship and duties of religion enjoined good men, and performed by them. The ordinance of baptism, a very solemn part of divine worship, is ordered to be administered, and is administered, when done rightly, "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost", (Matthew 28:19) which are to be understood, not of three names and characters, but of three persons distinctly named and described, and who are but one God, as the singular word "name", prefixed to them, signifies; men are to be baptised in one name of three persons; but not into one of three names, as an ancient writer[19] has observed; nor into three incarnates; but into three of equal honour and glory.

God alone is to be invoked in prayer, and petitions are directed sometimes to one Person, and sometimes to another; sometimes to the first Person, the God and Father of Christ, (Eph. 3:14) sometimes to Christ himself, the second Person, as by Stephen, (Acts 7:59) and sometimes to the Lord the Spirit, the third Person, (2 Thess. 3:5) and sometimes to all three together, (Rev. 1:4, 5) and whereas the saints, who are made light in the Lord, need an increase of light, prayer is made for them, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give unto them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, that is, of Christ, (Eph. 1:17, 18) where the Father of Christ is prayed to; the Spirit of wisdom is prayed for; and that for an increase in the knowledge of Christ, distinct from them both: and whereas the saints need an increase of strength, as well as light, prayer is made for them, that the Father of Christ would strengthen them by his Spirit in the inward man, (Eph. 3:14-16; Zech. 10:12) and in a formentioned text, prayer is made to the divine Spirit, to direct the hearts of good men into the love of God, and patient waiting for Christ, (2 Thess. 3:5) where again the three divine Persons are plainly distinguished; and who may easily be discerned as distinct Persons, in the benedictory prayer of the apostle, (2 Cor. 13:14) with which I shall conclude the proof from scripture, of a Trinity of Persons in the unity of the divine essence; "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all".

Amen. To which may be added; that a plurality of Persons in the Godhead, seems necessary from the nature of God himself, and his most complete happiness; for as he is the best, the greatest and most perfect of Beings, his happiness in himself must be the most perfect and complete; now happiness lies not in solitude, but in society; hence the three personal distinctions in Deity, seem necessary to perfect happiness, which lies in that most glorious, inconceivable, and inexpressible communion the three Persons have with one another; and which arises from the, incomprehensible in being and unspeakable nearness they have to each other (John 10:38 14:10, 11). ENDNOTES:

- [1] In voce agiov.
- [2] Vid. Alting. Dissert. Philolog. 4. s. 6, 7, 8.
- [3] Allix's Judgment of the Jewish Church, p. 124.
- [4] See my Doctrine of the Trinity, p. 30.
- [5] Gloss. in T. Bab. Yebamot, fol. 46. 2.
- [6] T. Bab. Betacot, fol. 6. 1. & Gloss. in ibid.
- [7] Kidder's Demonstration of the Messiah, part 3. p. 90. edit. fol.
- [8] See my Doctrine of the Trinity, p. 35, 36.
- [9] tou poihswnen plhyov emfainontov, De Confus. Ling. p. 344, 345.
- [10] In Philebo, p. 372, 378. Ed. Ficin. Vid. Parmenidem, p. 1111, 1112, 1117, 1120, 1122.
- [11] Works, vol. 1. p. 13.
- [12] Vid. Wittichii Theolog. Pacific. c. 17. s. 254.
- [13] Vid. Socrat. Eccl. Hist. I. 7. c. 32.
- [14] Respons. contr. Arian. Obj. 10. & de Trinitate, c. 4.
- [15] Contr. Arium, p. 109. de Unit. Deitat. Trin. ad Theoph. I. 1. p. 399.
- [16] De Unitat. Eccles. p. 255. & in Ep. 73. ad Iubajan. p. 184.
- [17] Adv. Praxeam, c. 25.
- [18] Paedagog. I. 3. in fine.
- [19] Ignat. Epist. ad Philip. Ascript. p. 100/ Ed. Voss.

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