

**A HISTORY OF THE ORIGIN
OF THE DOCTRINE
OF THE TRINITY IN
THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH**

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A History of the Origin of the Doctrine of the Trinity in the Christian Church by Hugh H. Stannus & R. Spears

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IN
THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

BY HUGH H. STANNUS.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND APPENDIX
BY THE REV. R. SPEARS.

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PREFATORY STATEMENTS.

BIBLE TRUTHS.

"Hear, O Israel! Jehovah our God is ONE Jehovah".—
MOSES.

*"The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel, the
Lord our God is one Lord".—CHRIST.*

*"We know there is none other God but one". "One God
and Father of all who is above all". "One God and one
Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus".—*
PAUL.

THE TESTIMONY OF EMINENT MEN.

*"For my own part I adhere to the Holy Scripture alone ;
I follow no other heresy or sect. If, therefore, the Father
be the God of Christ, and the same be our God, and if there
be none other God but one, there can be no God besides the
Father".—JOHN MILTON.*

*"Because it [the Trinity] is inconsistent with the rule of
prayer directed in the sacred Scriptures. For if God be
three persons how can we pray to Him through His son for
His spirit. . . . For though there be many imaginary
nominal gods, both in heaven and earth, as are indeed all
their many gods and many lords, which are merely*

"titular; yet to us Christians there is but only ONE GOD
 "THE FATHER, and Author of all things, to whom alone we
 "address all our worship and service".—JOHN LOCKE.

"There is ONE GOD, the Father, ever loving, omnipresent,
 "omniscient, almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth; and
 "one Mediator between God and men—the man Christ Jesus.
 "The Father is the invisible God. . . . Christ came not
 "to diminish the worship of the Father. It is not necessary
 "to direct our prayers to any other than the Father in the
 "name of the Son".—SIR ISAAC NEWTON.

"Surely I ought to know the God whom I worship—
 "whether he be a pure and simple being, or whether Thou art
 "a threefold Deity, consisting of the Father, the Son, and the
 "Holy Spirit". . . . "The Deity is not made up of
 "three such distinct and separate spirits".—DR. ISAAC WATTS.

HISTORICAL QUOTATIONS.

"This doctrine (the Trinity) does not, it appears to me,
 "belong strictly to the fundamental articles of the Christian
 "faith; as it appears from the fact that it is explicitly set forth
 "in no one particular passage of the New Testament. . . .
 "We find in the New Testament no other fundamental article
 "besides that of which the Apostle Paul says that other foun-
 "dation can no man lay than that is laid, the preaching of
 "Jesus as the Messiah; and the foundation of His religion is
 "designated by Christ Himself, the faith in the only true God
 "and in Jesus Christ whom he hath sent".—NEANDER.

"While for so many centuries, of all the Christian doc-
 "trines, that of a Trinity in Unity has been considered the
 "most obscure and mysterious, in the writings of the apostles

“ there is no trace of any scruple which it created. It seems
 “ to have called for no explanation, and it is not even spoken of
 “ as a mystery”.—BISHOP HIND.

“ The whole Christian system was still [2nd century] com-
 “ prised in a few precepts and propositions; nor did the
 “ teachers publicly advance any doctrines besides those contained
 “ in what is called the Apostles’ Creed.” . . . “ The
 “ Council of Constantinople, assembled by Theodosius the Great
 “ [in the fourth century, 381] gave the finishing touch to
 “ what the Council of Nice had left imperfect, and fixed in a
 “ full and determinate manner the doctrine of three persons in
 “ one God”.—MOSHEIM.

“ In the fifth century Christianity had conquered Paganism
 “ and Paganism had infected Christianity. The Church was
 “ now victorious and corrupt. The rites of the Pantheon had
 “ passed into her worship, the subtleties of the Academy into
 “ her creed. In an evil day, though with great pomp and
 “ solemnity—we quote the language of Bacon—was the ill-
 “ starred alliance stricken between the old philosophy and the
 “ new faith. Questions widely different from those which had
 “ employed the ingenuity of Pyrrho and Carneades, but just
 “ as subtle, just as interminable, and just as unprofitable,
 “ exercised the minds of the lively and voluble Greeks. When
 “ learning began to revive in the West, similar trifles occupied
 “ the sharp and vigorous intellects of the schoolmen. There
 “ was another sowing of the wind and another reaping of the
 “ whirlwind”.—MACAULAY.

“ Before I shall conclude this head, it is requisite I should
 “ inform thee, reader, concerning the origin of the Trinitarian
 “ doctrine:—Thou mayest assure thyself, it is not from the
 “ Scriptures nor reason, since so expressly repugnant; although
 “ all broachers of their own inventions strongly endeavour to

"reconcile them with that holy record. Know then, my
 "friend, it was born above three hundred years after the
 "ancient Gospel was declared; it was conceived in ignorance,
 "brought forth and maintained by cruelty; for though he that
 "was strongest imposed his opinion, persecuting the contrary,
 "yet the scale turning on the Trinitarian side, it has there con-
 "tinued through all the Romish generations."—WILLIAM
 PENN.

"The true reformed religion (or, if you please, the truly old
 "religion) is the Holy Scriptures (or the sum of the faith in
 "them, the Apostles' Creed) and holy life. . . . In
 "the appendages and circumstantials of Christianity, in fine,
 "scholastic, improved notions, charity, peace, and meekness
 "become us,—not zeal. . . . Give me leave to demand
 "of the world a reason why Christian communion should not
 "be left at that latitude at which Christ and his apostles in
 "Holy Scripture have left it! To this, if men would addict
 "themselves (and why should they not) all schisms would
 "soon be at an end".—BISHOP WETENHALL.

CONTENTS AND ARGUMENT.

THE strict and absolute unity of God is a first principle of the Bible. The entire scope and spirit of both the Old and New Testament are distinctly on the side of the *uni-personality* of God. The Jews, who made Monotheism their boast and glory, never charge Christ, or the first teachers of Christianity, with originating any new theory of the Godhead. Christ and the apostles spoke of the Father as the "ONLY TRUE GOD". It is repeatedly admitted by Trinitarians that the word "*Trinity*" is not in the Bible; and that in the earliest records of our religion, not only the word *Trinity* is not to be found, but no equivalent of the word, nor any proposition that intimates God is three persons. An additional fact, confirmatory of the sole Deity of God the Father, is found in Christ's instruction and example of prayer, which were followed during the first two centuries. The two or three texts in the Bible supposed by some to *foreshadow*, or *hint at*, or *imply* the Trinity, receive at the hands of Trinitarian scholars a very simple and rational explanation, which lends no countenance to the theory of a plurality of persons in the Godhead. The doctrine of the Primitive Church is found in the Scripture, and also in the Apostles' Creed; the doctrine of later times in the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds. The word *Trinity*, familiar to schools of philosophy, was introduced into Christian literature about the close of the second century. The Pagan Trinities of the Egyptian, Assyrian, and Hindoo systems of religion (and also of Platonic philosophy) were popular at the time of the first planting of Christianity. The origin and development of the doctrine of a Triune Deity in the Church is clearly traced to Platonic and other influences during the third and fourth centuries. Its introduction caused considerable discussion, agitation, and strife during the period named. The Council of Nice (A.D. 325) voted in favour of the Deity of Christ; the Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381) fixed the doctrine of the Trinity. From that time the Roman Emperors resolved and proclaimed they would punish all Christians who would not believe in and worship three persons in one God. The following chronological data may aid the reader of this treatise to mark the progress of the doctrine, from the close of the second to the close of the fourth century:—

A. D.

- 1.—Monotheism the boast and glory of the Jews.
- 29.—About this time Jesus said, "The first commandment is, the Lord
"our God is one Lord"* * * * "The true worshippers shall
"worship the Father".