

A

STATEMENT OF REASONS

AMERICAN
UNITARIAN
FOR ASSOCIATION BELIEVING

BOSTON, MASS

THE DOCTRINES OF TRINITARIANS,

CONCERNING

THE NATURE OF GOD AND THE PERSON OF CHRIST.

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TENTH EDITION,

WITH ADDITIONS, AND A BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE
OF THE AUTHOR.

BOSTON:
AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION;
1877.

SECTION IV.

ON THE ORIGIN OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

*WE can trace the history of this doctrine, and discover its source, not in the Christian revelation, but in the Platonic philosophy;** which was the prevalent philosophy during the first ages after the introduction of Christianity, and of which all the more eminent Christian writers, the Fathers as they are called, were, in a greater or less degree, disciples. They, as others have often done, blended their philosophy and their religion into one complex and heterogeneous system; and taught the doctrines of the former as those of the latter. In this manner, they introduced errors into the popular faith. "It is an old complaint of learned men," says Mosheim, "that the Fathers, or teachers of the ancient church, were too much inclined to the philosophy of Plato, and rashly confounded what was taught by that philosopher with the doctrines of Christ, our Saviour; in consequence of which, the religion of Heaven was greatly corrupted, and

* I state the proposition in this general form, in which the authorities to be adduced directly apply to it. But it is to be observed, that the doctrine of the personality of the Logos, and of his divinity, in an inferior sense of that term, which was the germ of the Trinity, was immediately derived from Philo, the Jewish Plato as he has been called, which fact I shall hereafter have occasion to advert to.

in any way indoctrinated in the Platonic philosophy. They are to be separated into two classes. One consists of such as, properly speaking, were unworthy the name of Christians, being heretics. The other, of those who were true Christians, Catholics, and saints; but who, through the circumstances of their age, the mystery not yet being properly understood, threw out dangerous propositions concerning it."

The very Orthodox Gale, in his Court of the Gentiles, says: "The learned Christians, *Clemens Alexandrinus, Origen, &c.*, made use of the *Pythagorean* and *Platonic* philosophy, which was at this time wholly in request, as a *medium* to illustrate and prove the great mysteries of faith, touching the Divine *λόγος, word*, mentioned John i. 1, hoping by such *symbolisings*, and claiming kindred with these philosophic notions and traditions (originally Jewish) touching the Platonic *λόγος, νοῦς*, and *τριάς*, [the Platonic trinity,] they might gain very much credit and interest amongst these *Platonic Sophistes*."*

Beausobre, in his History of Manichæism, adverts to this subject. His opinion concerning the resemblance of the Platonic and Christian Trinity appears in the following passage.

"Such, according to Chalcidius,† was the Platonic Trinity. It has been justly regarded as defective. 1. It speaks of a *first*, a *second*, and a

* Part III. B. II. c. 1. § 9.

† Chalcidius was a Platonic philosopher, who lived before the close of the fourth century.