

# “GOD IS ONE.”

(1 TIM. II. 5.)

(Thoughts on the Truth of the Godhead.)

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LONDON :  
G. MORRISH, 20, PATERNOSTER SQUARE.

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1916.

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## ITS FORESHADOWING IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

GENESIS I. 26, III. 22, XI. 7.

WE sometimes sing of “Glorying in the Trinity”; that expresses what I desire to bring before you at this time. My exercise is to seek to develop from scripture the truth of the highest mystery of Christianity, which is yet its great fundamental basis, that is, the doctrine of the blessed Godhead as revealed in Christianity. I am conscious of the deep seriousness of attempting to speak upon it, and of the need of having one’s heart and mind kept under the control of the Spirit; but I am encouraged to this line of truth by the evident need of souls, and by the sense of the blessedness of having a definite link in one’s own soul with divine Persons as revealed and known.

We may turn first to a few passages in the Old Testament, not that the doctrine is un-

folded there, but because it is suggested. Indeed the very fact that God dwelt in the thick darkness, and that He was hidden behind the veil, suggests that there was in Him that which should afterwards be revealed. God was pleased to give certain foreshadowings of the truth anticipatively, and I would like to dwell on one or two of these, as preparatory to the full revelation of the truth in the New Testament.

The central truth of the Old Testament is expressed in Deuteronomy vi. 4. "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord." The divine names occur three times in that verse. Every Jew repeated it every day; it embodied the creed of the Jew, that there was one God. It was the central thought of the Old Testament scriptures. There was but one supreme Object of worship, that was GOD.

But now when we come on to the central truth of Christianity we shall see that it goes very much further than this, involving that God is revealed; the truth is that "God is one." In 1 Timothy ii. 5 we read, "For God is one, and the mediator of God and men one, the man Christ Jesus." That "*God is one*" is an immense advance on what we had in the Old Testament. You may say you do not see much difference, but there is an immense difference.

The truth that there was *one* God was the

setting aside of idolatry, which had many gods. It shewed that the absolute Object of worship was but One—*God*. Yet in turning to Genesis a godly Jew, opening the Hebrew scriptures, would have been startled by a seeming anomaly in the first three words. He would have found that the word Elohim (God) was a plural word, whereas the startling fact was that the verb “created” was in the singular. “In the beginning God [Elohim] created the heaven and the earth.” It would have raised exercise with a godly soul as to why the scripture should be so worded. I would suggest as a matter of exercise, have we not in these opening words of holy scripture the foreshadowing of the blessed mystery of the Godhead, in which, though the Persons are distinct, yet they are *one* in activity, in will, in counsel? Our blessing, our salvation, everything depends upon this truth that “God is one.” God was never revealed as one in the Old Testament, though the blessed fact that there is one God, or one Lord, is abundantly stated, but the fact remained that He could not be *revealed* as one God, for that revelation awaited the coming of the Revealer, One competent to reveal God, because He was Himself God. So the truth was veiled; yet, just as on a sunless day, when clouds cover the sky, the mighty influence of the heavenly luminary makes

itself felt among men, so in the Old Testament the existence and nature of the blessed Godhead is felt in its effects, and therefore we, in the full light of the revelation of Christianity, can trace the foreshadowing and discover in anticipation suggestions of the full truth.

Now the three passages we have read in Genesis are striking in this, that in each one of them we have the word "us" on the lips of the Deity. The first is, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness"; the second, "The man is become as one of us, to know good and evil"; and the third, "Let us go down, and there confound their language." Now I do not pretend for a moment that we have there any revelation of the Godhead, but I do think that room is left for the foreshadowing of it, and faith can gladly appropriate it.

I take the first expression, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." It is God that is speaking, the Elohim. Note the "us" and the "our." It reveals a divine counsel, it involves that there were Persons in deliberation as to the creation of man. Genesis i. 2 tells us that the earth "was without form, and void," and that the "Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters"; it moved in activities which found no resting-place upon the face of the deep. So we have there the

first mention of the *Spirit* of God, spoken of distinctly, though not yet revealed in Person. Then in the next chapter we find the "Lord God," the *Jehovah* Elohim, foreshadowing, anticipatively no doubt, the blessed Person of Him who was to become Man, the Lord Jesus Christ. So when we read "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness," we must admit the thought of divine Persons in counsel. The words require much prayerful weighing, I could not attempt to unfold them in all their greatness.

The thought of 'image' is distinct from 'likeness,' it is something that has a prototype; something in the character of which it is formed that it may become representative of the original. Now a new creature—man—was to be formed in the divine image to represent God. That thought runs right through scripture; it looks forward to Christ and to those who are formed after Him. In 1 Corinthians xv. we shall find, "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly"—*that* man is an entirely new creation. We can hardly conceive of that to-day in our mixed condition, to think of man as bearing the image of the heavenly One, representative of Christ, because formed in His image. God was surrounded by His holy myriads, angels who did His command-

ments, hearkening to the voice of His word. When this earth was created we read that "the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy." One might have thought that they would have satisfied the heart of the blessed God; but not so. The nature of God was such that angels could not meet it: I speak reverently. Another order of being must be created, man, to the end that God might secure an answer to His own nature, that He might secure intelligent, adoring love. The Lord Jesus in Luke vii. lets us into the mighty secret when He says, "Which of them will love him most"; it was love He sought.

Well, here in Genesis we find God, the blessed God, creating man, as it says, "In our image, after our likeness"; creating man that he might be the representative of God. The thought of likeness is not exactly representing an original, but it has a more moral bearing; it suggests that the moral nature unfolded in the man was to display the character and nature of God. God made it possible that in this new creature there might be the setting forth of what was divinely perfect in man; alas, never realised save in that one perfect, peerless Man, God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. But for a moment I would dwell on the thought of the Godhead in thus creating man.

Think of Adam, the result of divine workmanship, set up here in unfallen beauty, the expression of intelligence, the expression of headship, the representative of God! Was there ever a man like this wonderful Adam, the crown of divine workmanship? A being fresh from the hand of God, in whom was the possibility of the development of every moral purpose. You may say, but what about Christ? I am speaking of what was created, and Christ was not created. He was a Man—perfect, peerless Man, but He came here when man had fallen, not in the beauty of innocent, un-fallen manhood, but when the testing and the fall had come in; then this Man appears, taking His place among men, come “in the likeness of sinful flesh,” yet apart from sin. There was nothing to mark Him out from men; there was no halo around Him, yet He was there, the perfect expression of God’s thought in Man.

Now I take the second expression I have read. What has come in between these two passages is the terrible fall of man. Men speak lightly of the fall to-day; they will speak profanely of a fall upwards, if there were one at all. But it was no fall upwards, it was terrible degradation, man had come under the power of evil. The next chapter tells us “the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil.”

The blessed Godhead, because they *are* God, can know good perfectly; but then there is the knowledge of evil, of that which is absolutely abhorrent to them—abhorrent to the holy nature of God; this too they know, for it is measured from the standpoint of divine holiness and goodness in God. But man came into that knowledge surreptitiously, disobeying the prohibition of God, and in that very act proved that he was not intrinsically good or holy, and thus had come under the power of the evil since he had no power against it. Sin had preceded the creation of man and God knew it. We do not know its origin, save in so far as we are told that "the devil sinneth from the outset," but God knew it as that which was antagonistic to Him, as that which was abhorrent to His nature, and He was bound to regard it and to register its existence in the creation. For this cause He placed the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the midst of the garden, but He said, as it were, to man, You must never touch it, it is too great for you: if you do you will come under its power. Only perfect good can dare to know evil, and there was no intrinsic holiness in man: he was only good while he abode in God. Well, we all know man did not heed the prohibition of divine love and goodness, he took of the tree and he fell under the power of evil.

Now the Lord God said—mark the change in the title here; it is not now simply Elohim, but Jehovah-Elohim; it is God in relation to fallen man—"Man is become as one of us, to know good and evil." What was involved in that was that the man knew evil and knew it hopelessly. The Gentile nations are spoken of as "without hope" in the world, that was because they were without God. Have you ever been hopeless—recognising the power of evil over you, and hopeless in that position? Such is the position of the man in Romans vii., "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Man having intruded into the secret of knowledge proper only to the Godhead, finds himself powerless against the floodtide of evil, and Jehovah-Elohim says, "And now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever." We might have said, What more blessed than to take of the tree of life and live on earth for ever? But that would have been to perpetuate lawlessness, to go on in evil, to be for ever without God. No, that which had never been barred before must be withheld now, man must be shut out from the tree lest he perpetuate his existence apart from the will of God—God will not brook that. Man was created for the perpetual fulfilling of the will of God; he was to walk

with God, but now having intelligence he asserts his will, he becomes insubject to God, and in that way insubject to good, and throws in his lot with evil. The will of God is good, and acceptable, and perfect, and to be outside the will of God is to be outside all that is good and acceptable and perfect. That is my position even as a Christian if my will is at work, if I am not subject to God. If I am not walking as one who obeys God—and the Spirit is only given to such as obey God—then I lose the support of the Spirit, I lose the sense of my link with God.

Well, now, we have looked at the "us" of the Godhead as foreshadowed in regard to the creation of man, and again in regard to the shameful fall of man, and now I would proceed a step further and look at chapter xi. 7, where we find the Godhead in activity in regard to the judgment of man, "Let us go down, and there confound their language." I think what we see in this passage is man putting himself in the place of God; instead of there being one God there must be one man, man of one lip, one language, man united against God. They had ceased to hold God in their reverence and esteem; they had ceased to consider for God, and that principle is carried down to the present day. It was the principle of indepen-

dence of God and the usurping of the place of God. "Go to, let *us* build *us* a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let *us* make *us* a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth."

That was the principle of sin, man would exalt himself to be as God. Think of man, standing as he did in the full light of the terrible devastation of the fall; and further standing on a new earth, an earth swept by the flood, standing in the light of the judgment of God when it expressed itself summarily against men whose every imagination and thought was evil continually. Yet in spite of all that was exposed he exalts himself, he would make himself a name, he would reach up to heaven. That was the principle of Babel, introduced then and still found in man's evil heart, still operating in the world to-day. God stepped in here, He broke up their confederacy, He confounded their language and men left off to build the tower. The moment for the full development of evil had not yet arrived. God would yet further expose man; He would yet further demonstrate to him the utter impossibility of the reinstatement of man in the flesh; the cross must be brought in; there must be the full exposure in the rejection and murder of God's Son, of all that is in the heart of man, but *that* testimony refused, the rejection of

Christ denied and repudiated by an apostate Christendom, the judgment of the cross refused, then the climax will be reached, Babel will reach its full issue, it will be remodelled and revived by Satan's power, and there will be the public and complete casting off of God, while man will claim to be God. But to-day, thank God, Jerusalem above is still in the ascendant, not Babylon; there are those who take character not from Babylon in its pride and its darkness, but from the divine system centred in Christ raised from the dead and glorified at the right hand of God.

Where are we, beloved fellow saints, as to all this? Are we still caught by man's system of pride and lawlessness, or are we deriving from God's system set up in the hands of God's Son?

God said here in Genesis, "Let us go down"—go down for what purpose? To see if there were hearts ready to acknowledge His judgment as just—to see if there were those ready to let in the light of God, and ready to submit to THE NAME—the blessed name? No; there were none such. Man was engrossed in his own name, he was blind to the just judgment of God. Terrible indeed is the darkness into which man had come!

If you turn to the history of the children of Israel I think you find another foreshadowing

of the truth of the Godhead in Numbers vi.—but I would say first that I know of no scripture which gives us the truth in a dogmatic, doctrinal way apart from a moral connection which is to have its bearing on us. There is no such statement in scripture as “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost”—as giving the Christian’s creed, though we do get scriptures which bring in all three divine Persons. In Matthew xxviii. 19 the disciples are told: “Go [therefore] and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them to the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have enjoined you,” but even there the truth is not stated dogmatically but in a moral way, shewing that the path of discipleship brings in the full light of God revealed, and that baptism commits such to the full truth of the Godhead. They have begun as disciples, learners, and they continue on that line as having been baptised, and in that way committed to the activities of each divine Person as revealed in Christianity. It is a system of divine education in the light of God fully revealed. It affects the conscience and the heart and mind, and a new moral being results to the glory of God.

So in Numbers vi., following on the law of the Nazarite, who was one set apart in a

special way for the will of God, and which answers in a sense to the path of discipleship for us, we have the blessing :

"The Lord bless thee, and keep thee :

"The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee :

"The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."

That presents a wonderful trinity of blessing, each one connected with the divine name, and each dual in character. If we know anything of the place of separation to God it implies the recognition on our part of the holiness of God and of our subjection to these claims of that holiness. It is only in this way that we can claim the blessing as answering in a moral way to the name that is put upon us. It is so also in Deuteronomy vi., immediately after the announcement that "The Lord our God is one Lord" we have this: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might"—the demand in that way of a threefold state in the man in answer to the threefold declaration of God's name.

But the fact is that even though God had been fully revealed as Father, Son and Holy Ghost in an objective way, and man left to lay hold of the revelation in his own strength, it

would have been fruitless; we should have been in a hopeless position. Man's intelligence, man's heart, man's mind, are powerless to lay hold of the truth of God apart from the activities of the Spirit of God within him. There must be the acceptance of the just judgment of God on all that is of flesh, the acceptance of its irremediable badness as witnessed in the cross of God's Son, that in subjection to God, as *obeying* Him, we may receive the Spirit and so be brought into all the blessed truth of the Godhead as operative on our behalf for the glory of God, to bring us into accord with His purpose in the creation of man, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." But for this to be realised there was the necessity for the activities of each blessed, divine Person, so that as the subjects of divine workmanship we might come into that good and acceptable and perfect will of God, for "For thy pleasure they are, and were created."

But there is just one more passage in the Old Testament to which I would like to turn, in Isaiah vi. It shews the Lord sitting upon His throne, "high and lifted up." John xii. connects this with our Lord Jesus Christ, it says, "These things said Esaias because he saw his glory and spoke of him." "His train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims." They celebrated the divine position,

and the One who was on the throne; they said "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts." They celebrate the holiness in a threefold way, as though leaving room for the truth of the Godhead, but mark that it is not Jehovah here, but Adonai, and it is He who says in verse 8, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for *us*?" But if we have the Lord here we have not far to go to find the introduction of the Spirit also in figure. In chapter viii. we find the prophet bemoaning that "Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly" — what are these waters that go softly but the blessed Spirit of God moving in the activity of divine love in accord with the purpose and pleasure of God? There is *no* knowledge of God apart from these waters; we are shut up to the Spirit of God that we may be inducted into the blessed mystery of God revealed.



## THE GODHEAD IN REVELATION AND ACTIVITY.

(MATT. XI. 27 ; LUKE XXII. 41, 42 ; 1 COR. XII. 4-7, 11.)

You will remember that what I had before me as an exercise in speaking at this time was the revelation of the Godhead, the revelation of the one God as Triune. I speak of it again with reverence as the holiest mystery of Christianity—mystery indeed and holy indeed, yet that on which all our present and future blessing and happiness reposes. We cannot afford to neglect it, yet it is the truth which has been the special object of the attack of Satan in order that God's people may be turned aside from the truth, and led into various forms of error which would rob them of their christian privilege of standing in the light of God revealed. The Old Testament is rather declaration than revelation. God is there presented as "one Lord." For the truth that "God is one" (1 Tim. ii. 5), to come out, the revelation of the three blessed Persons of the Godhead—Father, Son and Holy Ghost is necessitated, and that could only be in One who came *from* God and who *was* God.

Yet to appreciate the revelation when brought here in Christ, we need the activities of the Holy Spirit of God. We need the renewing of "the waters of Shiloah that go softly," blessed foreshadowing, as we saw last week, of the power of the Spirit to make the revelation effective in our souls. Had the man in John ix. not gone and washed in the pool of Siloam, and so come under the influence of the Spirit, his eyes would not have been opened to appreciate the One "sent." The Spirit alone avails to open our eyes to take in the revelation that God has been pleased to give of Himself; if we refuse the waters of Shiloah we shall find ourselves in the same position as Israel, outside the revelation of God, as totally unable to fathom it as darkness was unable to fathom light when it was brought here by Christ. The blessed Spirit of God is here to unseal our eyes that the revelation of the Godhead in its fulness of moral expression may find an entrance in our souls.

My desire to-night is that we might get a little light as to the holy revelation of divine Persons as one God. The greater portion of Christendom, while remaining faithful, in a measure, to the letter of the truth, hardly understands what that revelation involves. They think of the blessed God as three Persons, but each presented to the soul objectively as an object of

worship. Hence we have what is well known in Christendom as the doxology: "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost." That is not the way in which scripture presents the truth of the blessed Godhead having come out. When it is a question of *how* they are revealed, we have to consider what place these divine Persons have taken in the economy of Christianity.

We must ever remember that we can never enter on what God is essentially in His Being. The blessed and only Potentate dwells in light unapproachable, as we see in 1 Timothy. But that is not God in *revelation*, but God in His own essential being. All we can enter upon is the light of the revelation of God. God has made Himself known—He has taken a certain way by which to make Himself known. God has come out and we have now "the unity of the Father and the Son in the Spirit." "That is, when it says, 'God is one' it is not simply One Being, but it is unity."\* The Spirit takes up a place as conducting us into the light of the revelation of God in Christ. It is the Spirit that qualifies us and makes us capable of receiving the light, yet the blessed Persons are One in nature, one in being, one in object, one in counsel and desire—they are indeed but *one*

\* Readings and Addresses in U.S.A., 1902, page 505.

*God.* It is of the deepest importance that we should rightly understand the way in which God has made Himself known.

I would like to try to develop one very important truth in connection with the counsel and will of divine Persons. I think you will see how closely it comes home to us, and though part of the deep things of God is of extreme importance to our souls. I read these three scriptures:

"All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."

"And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."

"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. . . . But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."

The first presents the willing of the Son; the second looks at the Father willing; and the third speaks of the Spirit willing.

Now when God created man, to which we made reference last week, He not only said, "Let us make man in our image," but it adds, "after our likeness." The will of God is *one*, and His will was paramount in the creation of this new order of being, *man*. In the thought of "after our likeness" there was embodied the law that this new creature should be found conformable to the will of his Creator. If God was to be glorified in man, the will of the creature must be maintained in unity with the will of the Creator. Now that, I think, we must concede to start with. When God said, "Man is become as one of us," it shewed that disaster had come in in God's creation, and that divergence had taken place. The wedge had been driven in by the enemy between the will of the creature and that of the Creator. Man had asserted a separate will from that of His Creator, and that brought moral disaster into God's universe, the end of which no one could foresee but God. The only possible solution of this would be in judgment, and when man's will and pride has reached a head in the building of Babel, God says, "Let us go down." Thank God, judgment is tempered with mercy,

and when the cross has brought to light the issue of sin in the flesh, He finds means of once more asserting His will in His creature, and of bringing man into conformity with His will. Through the divine work of redemption, as made good by the Spirit in the soul, God has found means whereby to make His will paramount in His creature, but that involved the revelation of the Godhead, for as it was in man that disintegration came in, and departure from the will of God, so it could only be that a Man who was in Himself the full expression of the will of God should bring man once more into conformity to the will of God.

The root of sin is in man's will, and the body is influenced by the will. The root and seed of sin and lawlessness lie in our will, and that question has to be dealt with before we can be brought back to God for His will.

Now, having said so much, I desire to shew how the Godhead is revealed in activities which were operative to meet the question of lawlessness that was here.

Now, when we come to the New Testament, we come to the fact that God is one. God was not *revealed* as one in the Old Testament; He *was* one, but it awaited the full revelation for it to come out that He was three in one, and thereon hangs all our blessing. When

we come to the New Testament the truth is "God is one." Do we lay hold in our souls of this blessed fact? That God is one in counsel, one in mind, one in purpose, one in thought, one and one only. What is the force of that? I mean it in this way; we must know God as one in counsel, one in thought, one in mind and purpose; where we distinguish is this, we distinguish Him in His activities. We can distinguish the blessed Godhead in the activity of willing and acting; hence we speak of three Persons, but those three Persons are one God, dear friends. Profound mystery and blessed revelation! Three Persons, distinguishable yet not separate, one God, one will, one counsel, one mind, one purpose, and yet, as I say, in their acting we see them in distinctness of will and action, and yet we have "one will." Can you explain it? I cannot. But I submit, and I adore!

I would dwell upon that. I see this blessed mystery, and as we look at it a little more I trust we may better follow with worshipping hearts the revelation of God as Father, Son and Spirit.

Now I confine myself to the thought of will, divine will, and there is only one will of God. The will of God is one, and yet we find a Man coming forward,

"Came from Godhead's fullest glory,"

come here to express that will to us in its entirety, but to express it to us in holy manhood.

Now there are two words in scripture which express divine will. One of them is connected more with counsel and purpose, the will of deliberation. But there is another word for will which is not actually that of counsel or purpose, but the will of inclination and pleasure. I will refer to Matthew i. 19 to illustrate this distinction in use. "Then Joseph her husband . . . . not *willing* to make her a publick example, was *minded*"—that is the former word—"to put her away privily." The first word is what I would call the will of inclination, and the second word is the will of deliberation. He was "not *willing* to make her a publick example," but he "was *minded* to put her away."

We have there the distinction of the two words, and I will shew it to you in regard of God in a striking contrast. In 1 Timothy ii. you will find this statement, "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who *will* have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." Now that is the willing of inclination and pleasure. Let me propose to substitute the other word, the word *will*, in the sense of counsel; what would the effect be? Men would be compelled to be

saved, whether they were fit for it or not. Now let me shew you the contrast in 2 Peter iii. 9, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise . . . . not *willing* that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." That word "willing" is the "willing" of counsel or deliberation. He has not counselled that any should perish. Thank God for that!

I think it will be clear now what I want to convey to you, that is, the difference in thought between the will of deliberation and the will of inclination and pleasure. Now both those words are used in regard to the three Persons of the blessed Trinity in revelation, but the word for deliberate counsel is used *once* only of each Person, and I believe it to be used in order to shew us the solemn and necessary truth that each blessed Person in the Godhead is sovereign. The word sovereign implies that they act in supremacy. Each divine Person, known to us as one God, and one God only, is sovereign in His actions and the three scriptures read refer to that sovereignty, yet in those actions expressing the one divine will.

Let me seek here to guard what is a common error that has crept in in Christendom. The error is this (and dates from the early centuries, but I am afraid exists in the twentieth), that the truth of the Trinity consists not in three

Persons known and acting as God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost, not in three Persons, but one God under three names or manifestations. That is not the truth, but a prevalent error. You see the blessed contrast to that in one God made known as Father, Son and Spirit and He could not be known in any other way. The whole truth of Christianity is bound up in that blessed mystery.

Now I turn to these three passages in this connection. Of each divine Person the sovereign word is used, the word of sovereign will. I would like to call your attention to each and look at each in contrast to the other. I take the first one, Matthew. As far as I know it is the only time this word is used of the Son (except, of course, in the parallel passage of Luke x.), and you will find it at the end of the verse we read in chapter xi. "He to whomsoever the Son *will* reveal him" (*wills* to reveal Him). That is the word of sovereign will. Now that is very remarkable, and we might not have expected to come across that word there. It is one of the most solemn verses in scripture. That verse tells us of the authority of the Son. "That no man knoweth the Son save the Father." Now that statement is without qualification. "*No man knoweth the Son save the Father.*" What can it mean? We

know the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We can say :

“ Came from Godhead’s fullest glory,  
Down to Calvary’s depth of woe,”

and yet can it be true that no man knoweth the Son save the Father? Absolutely true. We know Him as come into manhood, and all that has come into manhood is for our appropriation; what lies behind that holy manhood is the blessed truth of His holy Person, which is incomprehensible. How we are pulled up! “No man knoweth the Son,” and yet He *is* known. By whom? By the Father. And we have the blessed Spirit of the Father and the Son. The Father knoweth the Son perfectly.

But now we come to the other part of the verse. “No man knoweth the Father, but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son *will* reveal him.” That will is the will of sovereignty. Speaking in that way it is the unity and oneness of the Godhead counsel. It is the will of the Godhead. He wills to reveal Him. How wonderful it makes that revelation of the Father connected with the sovereignty of the Son. Do we ever so connect it in our souls? How effective that revelation must be! Not merely the will of Christ that the revelation should be made, but it is His will in the blessed unity of the Godhead. Ponder it! I cannot say much

about it. Take these scriptures and let them sink into your soul.

I take these thoughts in Matthew: we get the leper previously—the leper is a man marked by his own will, full of self-will. Full of sin and self-will, and he is conscious that he is thus unclean, but he is conscious that Jesus can heal. "Lord, if thou be willing, thou canst make me clean." Now I call your attention to the Lord revealed as Jesus. "Jesus, moved with compassion, touched him," identified Himself, freely and fully, with the man's condition, and then He said, "I will: be thou clean." Now that is the will, not of sovereignty, but of pleasure. You see the contrast. Now that is where you see a divine Person come into manhood. You can distinguish each in His acting and willing, though not apart from the divine will. That is where divine Persons are placed before us that we may distinguish them in their willing and acting and yet that willing and acting was never outside the divine will, one will. Divine Persons in revelation have not the *same* will merely with the Godhead, but they have the "one will" of the Godhead, and whether it be the willing of counsel or of pleasure all is in divine accord. Was this the will of God as to the leper? Certainly it was. God is willing (as 1 Tim. ii. affirms), Christ is willing, not in the same will, but *one will*,

but it was distinguished in its expression; yet that blessed Person is one in the Godhead with the Father.

I turn now to the other passages. The second one is a very solemn word, referring to the Father, and again it is the only time that this word is used of the Father. I ask your attention to Luke xxii. We find ourselves here in Gethsemane, and seeing the blessed Lord there in deep agony, it says, He was praying being in deep agony, and He said, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." "Father, if *thou* wilt." Now the "willing" there is the will of God's sovereignty. We might not have thought that here the Father's will in sovereignty is in question. In Acts, speaking of the delivering up of the Lord Jesus Christ by the will and counsel of God, it says, "He, being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." The Jews thought they were carrying out their will, they were but carrying out the deliberate counsel and foreknowledge of God. That is what the Lord said here, "Father, if thou be willing." If Thou hast counselled to remove. What a holy place of submission He takes! Blessed contrast, "Not my will, but thine, be done"—not My pleasure or inclination but Thine be.

done. There we have both thoughts. In the first clause it is the deliberate counsel of the Father, but when it is for the carrying out of that counsel, mark, it is the Father's pleasure and willing that would be effected. Is it not beautiful!

The two things go together. Had it been possible that Christ should have asserted a will, disaster would have been brought in. What is so exquisite is this, that divine counsel and divine will as the pleasure of the Father are absolutely in accord. It shews us that the Father is sovereign in His willing and acting, but it shews us also that He may be distinguished from other divine Persons, though never separated. We may distinguish, but we must never separate. And yet these three Persons are not merely three names, but distinct Persons revealed in unity.

Now I pass on to the Holy Spirit, often spoken of as the third Person of the Trinity, though I do not say I use the expression. We must turn now to 1 Corinthians xii. Here again we shall find the word to be that used only once of divine Persons. We now come to the truth of Christianity set up by the Lord Jesus after His death and resurrection, and He has sent forth the Holy Ghost. It is not my thought in these addresses to take up a distinct pre-

sentation of each Person, but rather of the Godhead as one in revelation. Christianity had just been set up here on earth, and this chapter is concerned with the manifestation and administration of divine Persons with regard to the church. I only touch upon it, His assembly, a thing distinct altogether from anything that had ever preceded it. "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." This is the practical working out of this fact, of a company on earth. God is known as Father, the Father is known to us as God. We find three blessed Persons come into view. "Diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; differences of administrations, but the same Lord [evidently referring to the Lord Jesus Christ], but it is the same God that worketh all in all."

There we have the activities of the blessed Godhead, in that practical way, in this newly formed company on earth, each blessed Person of the Trinity having His part in it: administration on earth by the Lord, and it is God that worketh all in all, or, as it has been aptly put: God the Operator, Christ the

Administrator, the Spirit the Dispenser. I merely draw attention to the fact that every step in advance in Christianity is based upon this foundation truth. I ask you to place yourself unreservedly under the influences of the "waters of Shiloah that go softly"—beautiful type of the Spirit's quiet working.

Now when we come to verse 11: "All these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit," and then we get the word, "dividing to every man severally *as he will.*" The will there is in the sense of counsel or deliberate willing, the will of the Godhead. Had we no other verse to tell us, this verse would be of paramount interest to us as shewing that the Holy Ghost is sovereign in His activity. There are other aspects of the Holy Spirit's work which present Him as the servant of Christ, but here His supremacy of action is affirmed. Other passages confirm this as well. There is that one in Acts, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul." If we rightly hold the truth of the blessed Godhead, each is sovereign in His willing, and yet every one in the will of God. Again I say, blessed mystery. Yet he distributeth to each severally as He will. Is it much wonder that gifts are effective! Much may have come in—man's will—to render them ineffective, but, dear friends, if we were recipients of those gifts of the Spirit, accord-

ing to the power in which they are given, they would be absolutely irresistible, because they are distributed, not merely according to pleasure, but counsel. Why was Stephen irresistible? Because he got his gift from the Holy Ghost in divine sovereignty that was irresistible. He distributed to Stephen, full of the Holy Ghost; no self-will was in Stephen to resist it, no leakage in the vessel in which that gift was conveyed—the Holy Ghost distributed to him, and they could not withstand him.

Now the great contrast to that scripture is in John iii. 8, "The wind bloweth where it listeth." Another word equally conveys it: The Spirit blows where it pleases. The wind here is a picture of the Spirit, and blows where it lists. Not the word of sovereignty, but of inclination. The Spirit is necessary to the carrying out of the will of God, but He is in accord with it, yet what joy to the soul if we find what the Spirit has effected. You cannot tell whence it comes or where it goes. We cannot tell, but it is the pleasure of the Spirit of God in continuing God's work. He moves as He will. Think of the day of Pentecost! There came from heaven a rushing mighty wind. I think the word is literally, "a violent, impetuous blowing." It was the blessed Spirit of God. What was He doing?

Blowing where He pleased, and that was on that new holy company on earth, where it was His pleasure and inclination to move. But beyond all that is the fact that the Holy Spirit of God is sovereign and one in the Godhead with the Father and the Son.

I have sought to dwell on one aspect of the truth as it touches us, and I am sure that if we surrender to the Spirit in that way we shall better understand the revelation of the blessed Godhead in the distinction of divine persons, and the irresistible power which results for ourselves.



## DIVINITY AND DEITY: A DISTINCTION.

(ROM I. 18-20; ACTS XVII. 22-29; COL. I. 18-20; II. 8-10.)

MY desire is to try to present a further thought on the subject of the Godhead in the distinction between the two words used in the New Testament, *Divinity* and *Deity*—between what is divine and the Godhead in blessed revelation. If I fail in simplicity of speech I can but plead the depth of a subject so vast and so important as this greatest underlying truth of Christianity—that of the Godhead. The revelation of the Godhead is a truth as to which we are entirely cast upon the Spirit for understanding, even in its simplest elements. In the distinction I desire to bring before you we shall, I trust, find much food for profitable meditation.

Each of the words—*Divinity* and *Deity*, as applied to the Godhead, occurs only once in the New Testament in the language in which it was written. It should be “divinity” and not Godhead in the passage read in Romans,

"his eternal power and divinity." The word "Godhead" is found in Colossians ii., "in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead [Deity] bodily." The main difference between the two is this—the former is what may be called *attributive*—it deals with the attributes of God—what is attributed to Him; the latter is *absolute* and brings before us what God is as God, not what can be attributed to Him, but what He is essentially and intrinsically. The former (Divinity) does not give us a presentation of God personally, it tells us about Him; the latter (Deity or Godhead) is God, absolute and personal.

There are many who have heard and know about God and can speak with reverence of His attributes, such as His being the Almighty, but that is not *knowing God*—it is knowing Him in one of His attributes—but the Spirit would always lead us to know God as personally *revealed*. It is not that we are brought to know Him in His absolute being, because we are only finite creatures with finite minds, for if we could know Him absolutely we should be divine. If we would test the fact of our minds being finite, we have only to seek to picture eternity and we are pulled up at once by what is infinite.

1 Timothy vi. 16 shews how the creature can never know the Deity in His absolute

being, blessedly though He be revealed in the Son.

“ Who only has immortality,  
Dwelling in unapproachable light ;  
Whom no man has seen, nor is able to see ;  
To whom be honour and eternal might.  
Amen.”

How then can we know God? Just in so far only as He has been pleased to reveal Himself, and He has revealed Himself in everything essential to His own complacency and our eternal joy.

Now in Romans i. we are told that “ there is revealed wrath of God from heaven upon all impiety, and unrighteousness of men holding the truth in unrighteousness. Because what is known of God is manifest among them, for God has manifested it to them,—for from the world’s creation the invisible things of him are perceived, being apprehended by the mind through the things that are made.” But what are the invisible things? They are to be known by the things that are made—creation sets them before us—“ his eternal power and divinity.” (This word “ eternal ” is only used here and in Jude, where it speaks of the fallen angels being kept in eternal chains.) These are the things made known to men, and the

Spirit is not required for that purpose; but "what is [or may be] known of God is manifest among them, for God has manifested it to them."

In the creation we have a testimony rendered to God's eternal power and divinity, but it is not in itself a saving revelation of God, though men have a responsibility in regard to it. Romans gives us such a testimony to God that we cannot plead ignorance, and it is on this ground the heathen will be taken up, because it leaves men without excuse, and every man will be judged according to the light received from God. Paul's addresses to the heathen in Athens and elsewhere are models for our study. God did not leave Himself without witness, doing good and giving to them from heaven rain and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness, thus proving that there must be a God. Every tribe of men must perceive by the mind that the stars and the firmament of the heavens involve a Creator; men could not make what is seen in the heavens, but God has placed in them His testimony to us of His eternal power and divinity. In Acts xvii., where Paul is speaking to the most enlightened heathen, he takes up this line and shews that it is God in regard to His attributes who is in question. He found in their midst an altar "to the unknown God," an acknowledgment

on their part that there was an unknown God. They were not in the light of revelation, but there was the acknowledgment of ignorance, and that was a good start. When people acknowledge their ignorance it is something to go upon. Paul seeks to enlighten them in regard of God, and shews them how He is Lord of heaven and earth, not dwelling in temples made with hands nor served by men's hands as needing something. God does not need anything. Many think they can patronise God, but He needs nothing, and nothing can be added to Him. He is absolutely self-sufficient, and nothing could add to His blessedness. He is perfectly blessed and does not need anything, nothing can be attributed to Him by man's hands, He gives to all life and breath and all things, and though men at this moment are considering for a greater place in the earth and wider empire, for which millions have already been slain, yet God has appointed the bounds of their habitations.

“Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold,” &c. The word “Godhead” here is not the same as in Colossians ii. : it is cognate with that in Romans i., “what is divine.” The Creator made the gold and the silver and the stone, and it is not possible that

He can be compassed by His own handiwork; therefore to make God and the creation one is a fatal error. In Romans we are told that men substituted the creature for the Creator. They reprobated God in their minds, and He gave them up to a reprobate mind (or reprobated them) in His government. They cast Him away, and He in His government cast them away. But are *we* wholly free from this snare? Have we any idols? living idols, it may be, those who are very dear to us. Is there any creature who is greater to us than God? Is there any one we should miss more than God? He has made known His eternal power and divinity: who can be like Him? Who has shone out in such an unmistakable manner as He, in divine creatorial power, blessed attribute of an infinite God! Yet such outshining is not Himself; it is not God, but the attributes of God.

It is rather remarkable that Peter, too, uses this word. In 2 Peter i. 3, 4 we read, "As his *divine* power has given to us all things which relate to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that has called us by glory and virtue, through which he has given to us the greatest and precious promises, that through these ye may become partakers of the *divine* nature." This word "divine" is used with accuracy, and, if we apprehend this, it will

guard us against a common error among some of God's people—that we become partakers of Deity, an utter impossibility. Through divine power, we are made partakers of the divine nature, formed by the Spirit in the moral character of God, a very different thing from the error of partaking in Deity. This word (I have quoted all its occurrences) is one used with the greatest precision in scripture, and is characteristic of God in His blessed activity. Now the saints are formed in divine holiness by His power—they come into and are made partakers of the divine nature; they become characterised by life and godliness.

Now we come to Colossians i. 19: "For in him all the fulness [of the Godhead] was pleased to dwell." The word "Father" in our version is supplied here, while J. N. D. inserts the word "Godhead." The translators put in the word "Father" probably because the pronoun in verse 20, "himself," is in the masculine. The Fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell in Christ. In whom? In Him who is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the Son of the Father's love, God's own dear Son; the Fulness had its delight to dwell in Him. Now we have come to the *revelation* of Deity or Godhead—they are the same. We know the Godhead in a Man; there is

nothing abstract about that, for it comes close to us. All the Fulness of the Godhead found its delight in dwelling in Him when He was here. The blessed and unapproachable God—hitherto known only by His works of creation—had come so close to men that all the Fulness found its delight to dwell in Jesus as Man. God could not come within the range of man but in a man; but there must be a vessel great enough to express the substance of God, and Jesus was that. He came in the fulness of time, God's Son come of woman, come under law, and in that Man all the Fulness dwelt, as we can adoringly see when we turn to the Gospels.

In John, we see the Word became flesh, not "made." He *became* flesh and tabernacled among us (a tabernacle is something which can be taken down). He came on that line, and dwelt here full of grace and truth, and we beheld His glory, "as of an only-begotten with a father;" a human illustration in itself, but one that lifts our hearts to the Father Himself. The only-begotten Son is one who is cherished, one in whom the Father's affections are centred and whose responsive affections flow out to the Father. There was a Man here in whom all the Fulness found its delight, so that when He took His place with the godly in Israel and passed into the Jordan to be baptised, the

heavens were rent asunder, the Spirit descended and came upon Him, and a voice from heaven was heard, saying, "*Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*" He is saluted by the Father as the Son of His love. There we have the full revelation of the Godhead in that blessed Man—God is made known to us in Jesus. Last time, I was calling attention to the truth that each of the divine Persons acts in His own sovereignty but never outside the divine mind, will, thought and purpose; and here we see the Father pouring out His love upon the Son, and the Spirit sealing Him in Manhood. The Spirit was always with Him; the Father and Son ever abide in the unity of the Spirit, but the Spirit came here like a dove and abode upon Him, and so is for ever identified with that blessed Man.

All the Fulness dwelt in Him, but to what end? The incarnation was not an aimless act: we see the scope and end of it to be the reconciliation of all things "unto himself." (Note that the pronoun is masculine.) When we come to the Godhead we come to a personal God. People to-day speak of the Deity, but their thought of God never goes beyond a God of power, and then only as subservient to their own ends; but the Fulness of the Godhead reveals a *personal God*, one who "*is.*" The point for us is to know God personally. The

reconciliation of all things is to Himself and by Himself; that is the Godhead, but it is a personal God. Peace has been made by the blood of the cross, of Him who was Son of the Father's love, because there was no other way possible. God, as God, could not die, nor do angels die; He is the incorruptible God who only hath immortality, and angels are created beings upheld by His power. Yet such was our condition that God had to come out in self-sacrificing love to make peace; He came out in the person of the Son and made peace by the blood of His cross, that cross which was the summing up of all the shame and opprobrium of the world, the cross of God's dear Son.

There, too, the foundation was laid for the eternal blessing of the universe, for the reconciliation of all things, whether of things in earth or things in heaven. "And you . . . *now* hath he reconciled." All the distance between God and man has been removed in a Man great enough to bring in the full revelation of God, of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and, having made peace by the blood of His cross, He has come forth in resurrection with all power in heaven and earth given to Him, and He sends forth His disciples to make disciples of all the nations, and to baptise them "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost," but all that power was

resident in that blessed Man when He was here.

Dear brethren, the God of Christianity is a personal God. False religion has gods many and lords many, but none of them has a revealed God, a personal God, which is the central truth and life of Christianity.

I pass on now to Colossians ii., and what we find there is all in direct contrast to the working of man's mind, formed after the thoughts and traditions of men, philosophy and the like. Philosophy must necessarily leave God out, or else it is not philosophy; it is a scheme which does not bring God in, but which works out from man's mind and is limited by man's mind. Philosophy is not after Christ, in whom dwells all the Fulness of the Godhead *bodily* where He is. In that blessed Man all the completeness of the Godhead dwells in a body, He will never cease to be Man nor cease to have His part in Deity: all the Fulness dwells in Him in a body. Do we thus think of Him? Is He so real to us that we know Him to be in glorified manhood in heaven? How real it ought to be to us that all the completeness of the Godhead dwells in Him there *bodily*. He is no longer in humiliation as when here in flesh and blood, but still of the same order in which He came

here, unchanged, yet outside of all that is of man as of the earth, He subsists the "second man out of heaven," and the revelation of divine Persons is completely made known in Him. How blessed is the divine answer in Christians to this abounding reality, "since ye are complete—filled full—in him." The Holy Godhead seeks no other expression than through Him, and on our side we need no other filling full than in Him; for the revelation in Him is all-sufficing to us, and in Him we are complete toward God. Thus God secures His response in men.

In John xiv. Philip says to the Lord, "shew us the Father and it suffices us." The knowledge of the Father must suffice us; for to know His presence is to be outside of every kind of need, and when we are sufficed the outflow of worship is the blessed result. Worship is the overflow of satisfied hearts. The Lord replies to Philip, "Hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?" The point was for Philip to know Him in whom the Father was seen. Do *we* know the Father in that way? seen in the Son, a distinct personality, yet never separable; ever one God—Father, Son and Spirit—one will, one counsel, one mind, one blessed God known to us in three Persons

(who are yet but one God), distinguishable but inseparable. Divine Persons have not the *same* will and counsel, but *one* will and *one* counsel, for they are *One*.

How holy a mystery ; and yet it has been so set before us that the Lord could say, " He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Eternity will never exhaust this knowledge, and our reverent study of it will promote the truth in our souls and our consequent joy.



## THE RESULTS FLOWING FROM THE REVELATION.

(HEB. IX. 14.)

THE subject I had before me in these addresses, I need hardly say, is in no way exhausted, and I find myself on this last occasion of our being together faced with innumerable scriptures bearing most blessedly on the subject before me. But my desire has been to exercise my hearers, and to promote private study and exercise, rather than attempt an exhaustive presentation of such a vast and blessed subject as the truth of the Godhead.

You will recall that I sought first to shew the foreshadowing of the truth in the Old Testament. We traced it a little through the Old Testament, by no means exhausting the passages, but shewing that it was foreshadowed there, in the fact of God hiding Himself as He did behind the veil, which drew out the affections and godly desires of men for the full revelation, which faith, no doubt, knew was to come. We saw the foreshadowing of the truth even in the divine title "Elohim," the form of

which as the name of God would have raised exercise in any godly soul.

On the second occasion we saw the fact of the unity of the Godhead, we saw that "God is one" in the New Testament—one in thought, one in counsel, one in mind, one in purpose—and that that revelation came to light in the Lord Jesus Christ in holy Manhood. It could not have come to light before. God was revealed as one. We could distinguish that there are three Persons in the Godhead, always remembering that they are distinct, but not separate, and we could distinguish them as such in their acting and willing. I endeavoured to shew that in both cases, while the will of God is one, yet we can distinguish these blessed Persons as co-equal, co-eternal, co-majestic, in their willing and acting. We traced how the word that is used of each of these Persons shews that they are each sovereign in their action, though not acting outside the one blessed will of the Godhead.

On the third occasion I was endeavouring to shew what may seem to be rather abstruse, but which is very necessary—that is, to distinguish between divinity and Deity. Romans i. shews what the heathen could understand through what God had set forth in nature—they could understand His eternal power and divinity. This does not require the Spirit; the

natural man could discern God's eternal power and divinity as well as one who knows God. But we are told in that passage that they reprobated God in their minds, so that they sank lower than the beasts. Then in Colossians we traced the truth of the Deity, of the Godhead, not only there of divinity. The truth of the Godhead is what is personal. Divinity is not exactly personal; it reveals God in His attributes. When I come to the Godhead, it is God absolute, not what is attributive; it does not speak of what can be attributed to Him, such as His power, His grace, His longsuffering. What Christianity brings us to is to know God personally and to know Him revealed in the Son. In Him all the fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell, and to dwell bodily. Beloved friends, it is of deep importance to see that the Godhead is absolute, not only attributive. You take the holy mount; the glory that shone there was no mere external radiance gilding His Person for a moment with a glory which was not His own. It was nothing of that kind; but what shone out there, in this blessed Man, was absolute Godhead—Deity.

Now to-night we shall find a wealth of material still untouched, and my thought, in closing what I hope have been simple addresses, is to endeavour to touch upon

the blessings which flow to us in Christianity from that revelation. They are immense, for they comprise all christian blessings, and I need not impress the fact that they all flow to us through the revelation that was sealed in the death of Christ. That is why I read the first scripture in Hebrews ix. There the two economies are contrasted—the Jewish and Christian. The blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of an heifer sanctified for the purifying of the flesh—that is, of man in flesh—but we go very much further than that to-day. “*How much more shall the blood of Christ*”—that carries us over to Christianity; that marks the transition, “the blood of Christ”—His death—there is the divine work—“who by the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” You have there the Holy Trinity—Christ, the eternal Spirit and God.

Christ offered Himself by the eternal Spirit; He presented Himself, He proffered Himself. The contrast there is with the blood of bulls and of goats. They were unconscious substitutes. They could in no way enter into the sacrifice of which they were the unconscious types. The victim in that way had no Spirit in which to enter into that for which it was provisionally set apart. But a blessed Being has

entered into God's universe—One who, though uncreated, has come into the position of a creature, yet the blessed Son of God. It was in the fulness of that divine substitution that Christ could, in the perfect sensibilities of the eternal Spirit, offer Himself spotless to God. The earlier victims were spotless in kind, but this One was spotless in intrinsic holiness. We need no greater proof of that than Gethsemane. There we see His holy soul poured out. There He *tasted* death, and tasted it as no man ever tasted it. So in the sensibilities of the eternal Spirit, Christ offered Himself. That blood sufficed for us. It is perfect, and cleanses us from dead works, to serve the living God. That is our position, that is the position into which we are put by the revelation. We see the Son acting in the eternal Spirit, offering Himself to God, that our consciences might be purified from dead works, and that we might be brought to serve God. But for that the Son must die, Christ's blood must come in to cleanse us.

I pass onward, but I would just establish that as the basis of the blessing resulting to us from the full revelation of the Godhead. I am not developing the thought of distinct Persons, but of one God, one in counsel, thought, and mind, yet God could be revealed in no other

way. One God, three Persons. I turn for a moment to Luke ii. I have said before that the doctrine of the Trinity is never presented in a dogmatic way. I mean by that, it is never presented merely as doctrine, but always in such a way as to touch our moral being and to quicken our affections. In Galatians iv. you will remember it says, "When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, come of woman, come under law . . . that we might receive sonship." "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." There again we have the blessed Trinity acting in unity. We have *God* sending forth *His Son*, and the *Spirit* of His Son given to us, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

Now how was the fulness of the time marked by God? God is outside of time. What would have marked it out for God? Would He gather it from the readiness of the Jews to receive the revelation? On the contrary. Would He gather it from the Gentiles under the power of the Roman Empire of the day, would they be ready to welcome the revelation? On the contrary; they were crushing the Jews under their heel and only too ready to cast out Christ and to put Him to death. In what way, then, was the fulness of time come? If we glance at Luke ii. 25 I think we shall get the answer.

"Behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was just and pious, awaiting the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him." Now there we get a most lovely scene, and there again we get the Trinity, we may say, not yet in a way revealed, but the revelation was there in the Babe, not yet developed, I am fully aware, but it was all there—the Babe was the Revealer. Simeon can say, "A light to lighten [for the revelation of] the nations." He was to bring everything to light. It is a beautiful picture. Here was one waiting with others for the consolation of Israel. Anna, too, in the next paragraph, is speaking of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Israel. That is what marked the fulness of time.

There were expectant hearts, waiting hearts, and the divine eye could rest upon them; the blessed Godhead was occupied with these two or three aged saints. Anna was a widow of about four score and four years, and there was this just and pious man, the blessed Godhead was occupied with *them*. The Holy Spirit is mentioned three times in this passage; the Holy Ghost was upon him; and it was revealed to him by the Holy Ghost that he should not see death till he had seen the Lord's Christ; and he came by the Spirit into the temple. Three times over the Spirit is mentioned. Then

we find he glorifies God. Think of the greatness of the Godhead—of the mystery of the Godhead—and yet they were measuring the time, so to speak, and connecting it with these outwardly insignificant two or three. The time was full come for the sending of the Son.

Not Herod, not the priests nor the scribes, but Simeon took Him up in his arms, and said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." "A light to lighten the Gentiles" (for the revelation of the Gentiles)—One who would bring God to light, and bring the nations into view for blessing. *We* are of "the nations"—the truth of the Godhead was revealed to the nations for blessing. This aged man asked to depart in peace for he had got all he wanted. He had seen the Lord's Christ. Have *we* seen Him? The Book of Malachi closes with: "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard."

Now I pass on to another instance in Luke xv. which is familiar to us all. The Lord takes up that threefold parable, and in it brings to light and vindicates the present activities of the Godhead. They are not presented in any dogmatic way, nor presented as three Persons, so to speak, *objectively* to our souls for worship, though they are all eternal, all equal, all

majestic ; although they are one, yet that is not the presentation of this scripture, it is a moral presentation. We see the Son in activity, the Spirit in activity, and the Father in activity. Behind the parable we read what the blessed Lord Jesus was bringing forth to these proud religionists. I think in the three parts of this parable we may see the blessed activity of the Deity to bring us, so to speak, to the goal of our blessing. The close is a scene of blessing for to-day, not the Father's house of the future exactly. We see the sheep laid on the shoulders of the Shepherd. We are brought into a condition of subdued will. Sheep are the most wilful of creatures. If one sheep leaves the track the whole flock will follow it. The Lord takes up the sheep and puts it in a position where it has no possibility of exercising its self-will. That is where the Lord would put us and test us. If we are to distinguish the blessed activities of the God-head, we must sit still in quietness. That is where we have to start. We shall never understand the activities of divine love, as expressed by divine Persons, unless first of all our own wills are subdued. If my will is in activity I shall never understand the activities of divine Persons. It is a hopeless task. It is a wonderful position to be brought into, to be put upon His shoulders, to have my will subdued. That is

where the discipline of our path comes in. God is concerned with man's will. God is putting things right by the introduction of the divine will: that will is carried into effect.

In the second and third parts of this parable we get an answer to what we began with—the US of divine counsel. “Let *us* make man.” The woman having ten pieces of silver and losing one lights a candle and seeks for it. (Vers. 8, 9.) Now I think we may see there the activity of the Spirit in searching for the image of God in man. A coin always bears the image of the sovereign, that is what marks it. It is hall-marked in that way, and that guarantees its currency. If you take a florin to-day, its total weight is not two shillings worth of silver, but you get that amount for it in value, because it is a given guarantee of the sovereign. Now this coin was lost. Man was made in the image of God; how very soon that image was defaced we know well. The Spirit is searching for the image of God in man. The great aim of the Spirit is to bring in man as current coin for God; he is not current coin to-day. What the Spirit is seeking for is to produce once more the divine image in man, that man may once more become current coin for God. Dear friends, I would say, are we the subjects of that? Have we been found in that way by the Spirit? Have we been the

occasion of divine joy in our restoration to the divine image?

Now I pass on to the third section, and I think there we get restoration after the divine likeness. I do not dwell on the well-known incident, but one thing is evident, the prodigal could not enter the Father's house unsuited to it. There could be no thought of incongruity in one that entered the house; there must be restoration to the divine likeness, there must be moral accord. I have no doubt that suitability is brought about by the Spirit. What we were as after the flesh must be dealt with and removed in the death of Christ, that we may be welcomed with divine complacency, not in regard to what we are, but as to what we are in Christ. Though the prodigal is in a far country he can still remember his father's house, but when he comes to it he must be suitably dressed before he can enter. The kiss of reconciliation meets him, and the servants are bade to bring forth the best robe and the shoes and the ring that he may be in suitability to the Father's house. All of which is symbolical of the blessed work of the Spirit of God to bring us into the gain of reconciliation.

Image is something having a prototype, something after which it is formed; but likeness is different, it lies in the moral being. All the saints will be alike, for they will be

after the likeness of God morally. You can trace the working out of that in Ephesians. In this parable we see the activities of God in regard of man. We shall never know recovery to the image and likeness of God unless we first know what it is to have our wills subdued ; to come through divine power into a position in which we cannot struggle. It is no good struggling, and we come to appreciate the activities of divine love. We learn that God is one in mind, one in counsel, one in purpose, and yet that that will and mind, and purpose, and counsel, is expressed and distinguished in the activities of those of whom we speak as the Persons of the blessed Godhead.

It is a terrible thing to think that Satan is here, and it is plain that he will at the close of things effect his counsel, and will crush the the light of God out of man's soul. We see that in Revelation xii. and xiii. He will bring in by his Satanic power the very opposite to this truth, the evil trinity of the dragon, the beast and the false prophet, and he will through their means hold sway over men's hearts. You will remember in chapter xii. the dragon seeks to devour the man-child, that is Christ. The devil stands, I suppose, in opposition to the Father. Instead of the Father's acclamation of Christ, "This is my beloved

Son," we see the activities of the dragon put forth to devour the man-child. Then we have "the first beast," displaying the terrible features of the Roman Empire which will subsequently oppose Christ. This beast will stand up against Christ and will cause his own mark to be seen. He will shew himself as the subject of a mock resurrection, he will suffer a wound of death and yet be miraculously healed. His mark will be engraven on every hand or forehead, so that he brings men by brute force under his rule. Then the second beast, the false prophet, will be introduced as answering to the Holy Spirit, the "other Comforter," the One who would take the place of Christ. Just as the Spirit draws attention to Christ, so this blasphemous beast draws attention to the first beast. That is what Satan's power will bring you to; if you refuse the truth of God you will stand exposed to the lie. There is no option if the truth be refused. Young people may say, "We shall never be deceived by that." If you refuse the light there will be no choice then.

We might pass on, perhaps, to the Epistle to the Ephesians. I only just refer to it, desiring that you should look at it for yourselves and see how the blessed Godhead is there presented. There are two passages I should like

to dwell on, the first in chapter ii. 18: "Through him [the One spoken of is Christ] we both have access by one Spirit to the Father." There we have the top-stone of blessing, the height of blessing to which we are conducted through this blessed revelation. We cannot go higher than: "Through him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father." There we have the consummation for us of the revelation of the blessed Trinity. Jew and Gentile are builded together—one new man has come to pass, and we have access to the Father. But we have to learn what it is to be shut out of man's temple if we are to have access to God. Paul, before he was fitted to write these church epistles, had to know what it was to be excluded from the temple. The last time he entered it, there was a hue and cry brought against him, and the effect was he was excluded from the temple; the great gates were shut upon him, and shut for ever, never to be reopened, thank God! What brought that about was his being seen in company with one Trophimus, an Ephesian, and men close the temple upon him, but now he can tell them, writing from prison, that "Through him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father." That links us up with Luke xv., but it carries us much further—we have liberty of access to the Father's presence in conscious suitability.

I would like to press for a moment the blessedness of it. Where do we approach the Father? Do we in any way, in our thoughts, turn aside from Christ? Are we seeking the Father on this side of Christ, or on that side of Christ? No! it is "*through* him." "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" We may ask, How could there be distinction of persons there, if in seeing Christ we see the Father? The answer is: We distinguish them in their willing and acting. The Son directs to the Father; it is *through* Him we reach the Father.

God is a Spirit. The Father is known to us as God, and God as the Father. He is revealed in that blessed Man. We see the Father in seeing Him, and it is through Him we both have access to the Father. And how? By "one Spirit." We could not have access to the Father by the flesh, it is by the Spirit. Colossians shews us how we are made competent to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. That is, as subject to the Spirit. By one Spirit, through Him, we have access. That, I say, is the goal, the top-stone of all blessing.

Now I would just ask your attention for a moment to Ephesians iv. 3. "Using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting

bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, as ye have been also called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in us all." There again we get mention of the Spirit, the Lord, and the Father: not presented dogmatically, but brought before us in a moral way, according to their activities. I think that these three verses develop for us the truth of the unity of the Spirit. "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace": it depends upon and is consequent upon the revelation. Verse 4 does not begin with the Spirit; it does not state, "One Spirit, one body." If man had written verse 4 he would probably have so worded it. If the truth of the Godhead consisted in the presentation of these three Persons objectively to our souls, it would have been written that way. But the blessed truth of the Godhead is the presentation to us of the unity of the Father and the Son, in the Spirit, and yet these three Persons, equally sovereign, equally eternal, equally majestic, are *one God*. What the Spirit has come here for is not His own glory, but to form the glory of Christ. His body is here composed of Jew and Gentile; it is *one* body and *one* Spirit—that is the truth. It would not be the truth if it were one Spirit, one body. The body of Christ is being

formed. "There is one body, one Spirit, one hope of your calling." Then in the next verse, "one Lord." He comes forth there as the Son presented to us objectively, for the submission of our souls. "One Lord, one faith." There is no other, there is but one *faith*. Not one religion, but *one faith*, unswerving loyalty. No confidence in yourself, but implicit confidence in Him. One Lord, one faith, one baptism. What does one baptism mean? The acceptance of death. "One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Not Father of the world; do not be deceived: people think this is what is named the universal Fatherhood of God. But this refers to Christianity. "One God and Father of all . . . in you all." In *all Christians* there is the linking up of the effect of the revelation of the Godhead, *in us all*. That shews how God and Christ are known in the unity of the Spirit, and in no other way.

I will turn to one more passage, in Jude, the closing epistle, where apostasy is viewed as having already set in, where there is open departure from the light and truth. There are sources of blessing to-day, where are they? "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost." Not religion, but "your most holy

faith." It is not here, *their* most holy faith, but "*your* most holy faith." Have you got it? That most holy faith centres in the revelation of the Godhead; so you immediately find all three Persons brought in. "Praying in *the Holy Ghost*." You cannot pray in the Holy Ghost if your will is at work. You must be as a sheep on the shoulders of Christ to pray in the Holy Ghost.

Now the next thing is, "Keep yourselves in the love of *God*," walk on the sunny side of the street; keep yourself in the sense of the love of God. And then there is a third thing, "Awaiting the mercy of *our Lord Jesus Christ* unto eternal life." What a mercy eternal life is! Do you think that it is peculiar to the Jews? Oh, no, Christians come into it, too. We shall assuredly stand here, it may be but for a moment, in the triumph of eternal life at His coming, ere we are caught up to be for ever with Him. That is my hope, and it is the hope of every Christian. All this is our resource where apostasy has already set in.

In closing I would like to contrast the wonderful blessing in Numbers vi., to which we alluded on a previous occasion, with the christian blessing pronounced in 2 Corinthians. You will remember the blessing of Israel followed the unfolding of what was connected

with the Nazarite: one separate to God who would not follow the order of nature at all. And it was in the light of such that the blessing was pronounced. "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." (Num. vi. 24-26.) The name is invoked three times in the dual blessing of each verse, and I do not doubt that the name was the same, it was "my name," and the threefold statement of it suggests how God would reveal Himself.

Now we come to the blessing of Christianity in 2 Corinthians xiii. I would ask you to mark the order in the way divine Persons are mentioned here. (2 Cor. xiii. 14.) We should have written them differently. We should have begun with God, but it is "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion [fellowship] of the Holy Ghost, be with you all." That is the consummation of *the christian blessing*. May these things mark us, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost."

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