

Christ and Deity



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THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD

“FOR US there is one God, the Father, out of Whom all is, and we for Him, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through Whom all is, and we through Him” (1 Cor.8:6). We have here a marvelously exact and concise definition of the relationship which we sustain to God and to the Lord, which, in turn, throws much light on their respective relationship to each other. Briefly put, God is the *Source* and *Object* of all; Christ is the *Channel* of all; Thus it is always found. We are never said to come *out of* Christ, but *out of* God. Indeed, Christ asserts that He Himself came out of God (John 8:42). All is out of God (Rom.11:36). But God never deals with us except *through* His Anointed. Creation began *in* the Son of God and was carried out *through* Him. He has the same place in redemption. There is no conflict, for, while the Son, as the Image of the Father, is entitled to be called God and to receive the same honor as the Father, yet He Himself insists that His Father is greater than all (John 10:29). All that He had was received from His Father. His very life was a gift (John 5:26), and He lived by the Father (John 6:57). He did the Father’s will, not His own. He sought the Father’s glory, not His own. He was one with the Father, and desired that the disciples might become partakers of that unity (John 17:22). So that He Himself was in every way, *out of* the Father. On the other hand, He is the only Way to the Father, the

only means through Whom we may know God. Hence, while all is sourced in God the Father, all is channeled through the Son. It is only by clinging closely to the exact language of Holy Writ that we may hope to gain a clear conception of the relation of the Father to the Son.

The ringing insistence of the Scriptures that there is only one God has been subtly undermined by the prevailing teaching concerning a "triune deity." When we inquire into the relation of the three members of the "trinity" to one another, we are met by meaningless and incomprehensible, as well as unscriptural, phrases. But the Scriptures are written that we should know God and His Christ, and it is of utmost importance that we give to each the place assigned Him in Holy Writ.

CHRIST COMPARED WITH DEITY

The revelation of God comes to us through two of our senses, sight and sound. His message is received through our eyes or our ears. We listen to it read or we look into its pages. We hear it expounded or we study its exposition in written form. Christ is the living revelation of God. When He is seen and heard we behold and hear the absolute Deity Whom He represents. Our ears cannot perceive the inaudible. Our eyes cannot view the invisible. In Christ, as the Image of God and as the Word of God, we see His likeness and hear His sayings.

The Scriptures definitely assure us that God is invisible and inaudible. This applies, of course, only to absolute Deity, not to those who are so called in a subordinate sense. It certainly does not apply to the Son of God, for He is the Image of the invisible God (Col.1:15). Paul, in writing to Timothy, concerning his

own gracious call, bursts out into a doxology, "Now to the King of the eons, the incorruptible, *invisible*, only, and wise God, be honor and glory for the eons of the eons! Amen!" (1 Tim.1:17). Moses, we are told, deemed the reproaches of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the fury of the king, for he is staunch, as seeing the *Invisible* (Heb.11:26,27).

There is no hint that this invisibility is due to human disability. It is true that human vision is very restricted. It covers only a small range. It is probable that some of the lower animals see more and further than humanity. Invisibility is one of the essentials of absolute Deity. He is Spirit. He pervades the universe. The moment we seek to visualize Him we constrict and contract Him to human proportions and He loses the transcendence which is exclusive to the Absolute. We shall never see Him, in a literal sense. Like Moses, we shall see the Invisible, in a figurative sense. The means provided for this is Christ. God is *absolutely* invisible, not merely in relation to our present powers. This is important, if we wish to appreciate the part that Christ plays in His revelation.

Many passages can be produced which seem to contradict the invisibility of God. There are two explanations which cover most of them. Men cannot understand any language that is not human. Hence the figure *anthropopatheta* is freely used, in which God is treated as a man. He is continually given human attributes and furnished with various members of the human body. Messengers behold His *face* (Matt.18:10). We read of His *eyes* (Psa.11:4), His *ears* (Psa.18:6), His *mouth* (Deut.8:3), His *lips* (Job 11:5), His *arms* (Isa.62:8), His *hands* (Psa.8:6), His *feet* (Isa.60:13). Besides this He is given human feelings,

and ignorance, and many other traits which humanize Him so that we may understand Him.

THE IMAGE OF GOD

In some cases, however, He is represented by His Image. Adam saw God in the garden, Abraham entertained Him in his tent, Moses met Him on the mount, Joshua encountered Him at Jericho. These were literal, tangible, material, visible visits of Him Who is the Image and the Word of God. They actually saw His appearance and heard His voice. This, says our Lord, is not possible of the Father (John 5:37). When Philip wished to be shown the Father, our Lord directed him to Himself. "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:8-10). Then He goes on to show that He is not only the Image, but the Word of God. "I am not speaking from Myself." "I am in the Father and the Father is in Me."

In a few cases we have both the Son and the Father visible at the same time. This occurs only in visions. In the great opening vision of the throne in Revelation, Christ is seen as a Lambkin, while there is Another Who sits on the throne. We may be sure that this is not literal. It is a vision. Christ will never be actually metamorphosed into an animal, nor will the Supreme be turned into an august man. Visions are not made of tangible objects. They are, essentially, a sight which has no substantial existence.

When men set up the worship of an invisible deity, they usually make an image to represent it. This is one of the charges against humanity: that their images degrade the Deity to their own level or below (Rom. 1:23). Hence the law forbade all graven images, and Israel, as a rule, has kept clear of them. But this widespread, almost universal, desire to have some

tangible, visible representation of God is not wrong in itself. It is an instinctive, God-implanted longing, and God satisfies it by giving mankind a true and adequate Image of Himself in Christ.

Perhaps no other subject demands so insistently that we cleave fast to the pattern of sound words. If we start out with an unscriptural theological term, we can only hope to land in the misty mud in which theology is mired. An instance of this is at hand. In commencing this theme, a recent writer says: "While God absolutely is Spirit and invisible, Whom no man has seen or can see, yet for the purpose of creation He assumed the *limitations* suggested by the titles, 'The Image of the Invisible God,' 'The Form of God,' and 'the Word,' and for the purpose of redemption He yet further *limited* Himself by being made flesh and tabernacling among us as the Only Begotten of the Father. In spite of all such *limitations*"

The italics are ours, for we wish to call attention to the unscriptural term *limitation*, which is the key to the theory propounded. If this were true then one of the greatest doctrines in Holy Writ would be the Limitations of the Deity. But there is no such teaching. It is always *Christ*, not *God*, Who empties Himself or humbles Himself. The thought of *limitation* is not conveyed by the titles enumerated. The Image of God made Him *visible*, the Word gave Him *expression*, the Form *manifested* His glory. Instead of imposing divine boundaries, they *removed* human limitations. The word "limitation" is so vague and vacuous that it gives us no clear idea. On the contrary, Image, Word, Form are all filled with meaning. If we should choose a single word to represent all three, we would say that they set forth a *revelation* of God, but by no means a limitation.

In order to clarify our thoughts, let us study a few occurrences of the word "image" in the Scriptures. He Who is God's Image, and Who spoke as no man ever spoke, used it in contending with the Jews. Taking a minted piece of money, a denarius, He asked, "Whose is this image and the inscription?" Their reply was, "Caesar's." He responded, "Be paying, then, Caesar's to Caesar, and God's to God" (Matt.22:21). The image was probably like that on modern coins, possibly a head or bust delineated on the metal by indentations or embossing, which suggested the emperor to the mind. The whole point of the passage lies in the word image. The fact that they were using money minted by Rome indicated their subjection to Rome. They were under obligations to the one whose image appeared on their coins. This image was only a partial likeness. It was made of metal, not flesh and blood. It was only a miniature of the original. It probably depicted only a part of his body, and that in hardly more than two dimensions. Yet it symbolized all that he was, especially what he was to those who used the coin.

From this illustration, supplied by the divine Image Himself, we may readily deduce that, as the Image of God, He need *not* be of the "same substance," as the theologians assert, He need *not* be of the same dimensions, He need *not* reveal every phase of God's existence, but He *must* be a symbol of God's relationship to mankind—His love, His power, His wisdom, and His grace. A sight of Him should impress us with all that we could get by a vision of God.

While seeking thus to define and limit the exact thought which lies in the term *image*, let no one imagine that Christ is not more than this. He is the Effulgence of God's glory. Indeed the effigy of Caesar on

the coin of the realm probably was not much to look at, much less to admire. But Christ is not a lifeless representation but a life-giving illumination. If our eyes are open, we see Him as He appeared on the mount, not with a halo above His head, but enveloped in an aura of glory, which is God's. In fact, the glory of the Deity is not within the range of human sight, so He is the Effulgence of the radiant glory of the invisible Deity (Heb.1:3). He is all that an image ought to be, the ideal representation of the most marvelous Original. Seeing Christ, we see Him Whom no man has seen or can see. Instead of being stricken to death by the sight, as we surely would were it the absolute Deity, we are given life, and the power to look upon His glory, yea, we ourselves partake of it and become like Him.

The fact that we, in turn, are to become conformed to the image of God's Son should help our hearts to understand this likeness of Christ to His God. Our Lord is not alone in this relationship. He is to be the great Firstborn and we His lesser brethren. God seeks to fill His creation with images of Himself in the process of universal reconciliation. That is the object God has in view. He does not predestinate anyone to be *saved*. That would not suit His purpose. We are saved in order to reach others. Our destiny is not a negative one. It is conformation to God's Son. We shall have the precious privilege of being minted likenesses of the visible God. This is the highest pinnacle of individual salvation, the summit of Paul's personal revelation (Rom.8:29). We wear the image of the soilish now. We shall wear the image of the Celestial (1 Cor.15:49). It is a process now. "With uncovered face, mirroring the Lord's glory, we are being transformed into the same image, from glory to glory,

even as from the Lord, the spirit" (2 Cor.3:18). We are being renewed into recognition, to accord with the Image of the One Who creates us (Col.3:10). When this mortal is swallowed up by life, then we shall shine as the image of God's Beloved.

That we shall partake of this dignity with Him should keep our weak mentality from inferring that the Image of God must be identical with Deity. Real reasoning would insist that the same must eventually be true of us. It would lead at last to absorption into the Deity, a philosophical Nirvana, and endless futile speculations, degrading, not only to the Deity, but to His Image, our Lord Jesus Christ. Let it suffice to say, so perfect is His presentation of the Father, that our eyes are satisfied with seeing God in Him. There are innumerable idols in the world. Each one successfully conceals Him. The Son alone reveals Him.

CHRIST AS THE WORD

IN the prologue to John's account, our Lord is called "the Word" (Greek: *Logos*). This term is here employed in a figure of speech called Implication (*Hypocatastasis*), in which a likeness is assumed. Our Lord is like a word spoken by God which reveals His mind. As the Word, or Expression, Christ brings a revelation of God through sound, which appeals to the ears of His creatures. Although this is inferior to and in contrast with the revelation in which Christ is presented to sight, as the Image of God, nevertheless we find in this figure of speech an important testimony concerning the relationship of Christ to Deity.

In approaching John 1:1-5 we should take the attitude of those to whom John wrote, who knew the Hebrew Scriptures and to whom John wished to demonstrate that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God (John 20:31). He does not begin with an independent philosophical discussion, but shows the connection of the Son with all previous revelation, before the Expression became flesh.

It is of vital moment to us, whether we surround this text with the haze of mystic philosophy or the aura of ancient revelation. The philosophical *Logos* is the source of unsatisfactory discussions which darken the intellect and harden the heart; the scriptural *Logos* mellows the affections and illuminates the mind, and is fruitful in the knowledge and appreciation of God.

While it is not vital, it will be helpful to use the term "Expression" in place of "Word." The theme of the passage is God's Expression—the means of His manifestation or revelation. God wishes to be known, to speak to His creatures. John commences by introducing us to this Logos, or Word, or Expression. Before John wrote, God had already manifested Himself, as revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures. John wishes to connect his further revelation with that which preceded it, so he introduces us to the One Who is the subject of both.

"WITH" OR "TOWARD"?

The usual rendering of John 1:1 is incomprehensible. "The Word was *with* God, and the Word *was* God" is not a revelation. It is an obscuration. No single object can be *with* itself. One statement implies a difference, the other identity.

The connective *with* ordinarily signifies nearness and association. This is the thought usually found in the expression "with God." We propose to show, however, that this is not the case in the prologue to John's gospel. It is not that the Expression was near God or in association with God, but that it directed *toward* God. In the third verse of the thirteenth chapter the same phrase occurs. It is the opposite of *from*. The Word came from God, and went *toward* (not *with*) God.

Perhaps the best method of acquiring an exact conception of the force of this phrase is to study it in all its other occurrences. The following list gives every passage where the Greek phrase *pros ton Theon* occurs. It will be noted that it has usually been rendered *to* or *toward*. In most cases it is impossible to substitute *with*. The difficulty in rendering it *to* arises

from the fact that, in English, we may speak of any action, such as prayer, as *to* God, but we are not accustomed to speaking of *being to* or *toward* God.

- John 1: 1 the Word was *with* God,
 2 was in the beginning *with* God.
 13: 3 He was come from God and went *to* God;
 Acts 4:24 they lifted up their voice *to* God
 12: 5 prayer was made . . . *unto* God for him.
 24:16 a conscience void of offense *toward* God
 Rom. 5: 1 We have peace *with* God
 10: 1 my heart's desire and prayer *to* God
 15:17 in those things which pertain *to* God
 30 strive together with me in your prayers *to* God
 2 Cor. 3: 4 such trust have we . . . *to* Godward:
 13: 7 Now I pray *to* God
 Phil. 4: 6 let your requests be made known *unto* God
 1 Th. 1: 8 your faith *to* Godward
 9 you turned *to* God from idols
 Heb. 2:17 a . . . high priest in things pertaining *to* God
 5: 1 every high priest . . . in things pertaining *to* God
 1 Jn. 3:21 then have we confidence *toward* God
 Rev. 12: 5 and her child was caught up *unto* God
 13: 6 he opened his mouth in blaspheming *against* God

The English "with" is the most versatile of connectives. It is used to render thirteen different Greek prepositions. These have such diverse meanings as *toward* and *from*, *into* and *out of*, *in* and *about*, *through* and *against*, *on* and *besides*, *together* and *by*. Only five connectives, which are seldom used, are not claimed by *with*. These are *over*, *up*, *in place of*, *before*, and *behind*. Let us not lean too hard on any *with* in our versions until we are sure of the meaning of the original which underlies it.

In the Authorized Version *pros* is given thirty-five variations, as follows: *toward*, *to try*, *for to*, *to this end*, *that*, *that . . . may*, *that . . . could*, *because . . . would*,

to do, to give, unto, nigh unto, at, against, before, by, whereby, with, to be compared with, within, in, between, among, the things which belong unto, those things which pertain to, things that pertain unto, in things pertaining, about, conditions of, sufficient to, what one hath against, according to, for, for what intent, because of, and of. When used with the verb *was, is, etc.*, the tendency is to render *pros* "with" in English, but it is usually translated *to* or *unto*, for it indicates motion *toward* an object. In this same chapter John sees Jesus coming *unto* him (29), Andrew brought Simon *to* Jesus (42), Jesus saw Nathaniel coming *to* Him (47). Later on He spoke often of going *to* the Father (13:1; 14:12,28; 16:10,17,28). As the Lord went *to* the Father so the Expression was *to* God.

Can we not see the drift of this, even though our tongue cannot express it? To tell us that the Expression was *with* God does not seem suited to the thought which the word conveys, but if we read that the Expression was *toward* God in the sense that It pointed to Him, it helps us to see that the real thought is not the nearness of the Expression to God but the directing of others toward God. And is not this just what an expression is intended to accomplish?

In brief, "the Expression" is a comprehensive term embracing all those manifestations of God which the Hebrew associates with the various titles, such as Elohim and Yahweh, Eloah and Yah, El and Shaddai, Adon and Adonai, the living Being Who is recognized as the visible and audible God of the written record to which John, as a minister of the Circumcision, must appeal, when writing to his fellow religionists.

John was a minister to the Circumcision (Gal.2:9). He wrote for the Jews. This introduction is intended to bridge the gap between the previous revelation in the

Hebrew Scriptures and the incarnation of Christ. The Word became flesh. This Logos, or Expression of God, was seen in the theophanies of the God of Israel in ancient times. The verbs are in the past. *Then* the Word *was toward* God. We do not apologize for using this connective here. The Greek *pros* always has this meaning, and is changed in translation only to conform with English idiom. Very little of vital significance can be extracted from *with*. Not so with *toward*. It explains the relation of the Logos to God.

GOD WAS THE WORD

God Himself is inaudible and invisible. We may look or listen for Him without result. The only way we can discover the direction in which He is, is to listen to His Word, the Logos. It is on the line between us and God. When Abraham turned his ear to Yahweh, he was not listening to the Deity, but to His Word. When Adam heard Him in the garden, it was God's Expression from which he hid. So when Isaiah saw His glory, it was the manifestation of Christ, which pointed him to God. The theophanies of the "Old Testament," the articulate God of the Hebrew people, Whose voice shook Mount Sinai, was the Logos, the Word, the Expression.

Therefore, he says, "God *was* the Word." That God, with Whom they were acquainted through their holy writings, Who appeared to the patriarchs and dwelt in the tabernacle and the temple—He was the Logos *in the past*. He was not the Deity, but His Expression. God is invisible; He was visible. God is Spirit; He appeared to be a Man. Just as the bread *represents* the body of Christ, so He represented the imperceptible Deity. As far back as we have any revelation He was (the One Who pointed) toward God. Elohim (plural)

created (singular) the heavens and the earth, i.e., the creation originated in El, yet all life and light came through the Son. Now He becomes flesh.

John is not seeking to prove the identity of the Word with the unapproachable Deity. The very title, "Logos," is a denial of such a supposition. He is concerned to identify Christ with the God revealed to the Hebrew people in their Scriptures. He wishes to show that God is using the same Mediator that He had used before in His dealings with His earthly people. The God Who appeared to Adam, to Abel, to Noah, to Abraham, to Jacob, to Samuel, to David and to all the prophets is now come in flesh to finish the revelation He had begun.

THE FORM OF GOD

CHRIST appears in many forms. He goes through many transformations. In His humiliation He was in the form of a slave, though He never was in bondage. He merely had the appearance of a slave. His service Godward was that of a Son; manward it was that of a servitor. His obedience was never blind or forced. It was always intelligent and free. On the mount He was transformed so that His very raiment became radiant with His effulgence. He took a special form on His way to Emmaus, so that His own disciples perceived no visible evidence of His identity. It is important to note that none of these forms occurring during His time on earth were in the form of *God*. Though the Image and Word of God, He was not, at that time, manifestly so.

PHILIPPIANS 2:5-8

However, that Christ was previously in the form of God is made clear in an important passage dealing with the conduct of the believer: "For let this disposition be in you, which is in Christ Jesus also, Who, being inherently in the form of God, deems it not pillaging to be equal with God, nevertheless empties Himself, taking the form of a slave, coming to be in the likeness of humanity, and, being found in fashion as a human, He humbles Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil.2:5-8).

The influence of the creeds has been powerfully

16 "Form" Speaks of External Appearance

present in the attempt of many orthodox theologians to give the word "form" a special and extraordinary significance in this passage. In fact the Nicene creed did little else than to repudiate the word "form" and substitute "substance" (or *homoousion*, "like-estate"), and add other confirmatory phrases. Form refers to external appearance. They insist that it must include internal essence. We ourselves were carried along with this traditional view, notwithstanding the concordant evidence against it. The following passages constitute the scriptural evidence:

morphé, FORM

- Mk. 16:12 He was manifested in a different form to two of them
Ph. 2: 6 being inherently in the form of God
: 7 taking the form of a slave

morphōō, FORM

- Ga. 4:19 until Christ may be formed in you

morphōstis, FORMING

- Ro. 2:20 having the form of knowledge and truth in the law
2 Ti. 3: 5 having a form of devoutness, yet denying its power

Leaving the Philippian text out of consideration, only one of these passages will allow the popular idea that "form" is intrinsic and essential, and is "indicative of the interior nature." In Galatians Paul is certainly speaking of an inward work of grace, not a mere outward copy. He desired to see Christ formed *in* them. This passage satisfied us, at one time, that the word "form" meant more than what strikes the eye. We failed to note that this sense is conveyed by the word *in*, not by the verb *form*. Its presence is against our supposition. *It would not be needed if form itself meant an inward work.* It proves positively that "in" is absent from its meaning.

The other occurrences are most helpful and suggestive, for in each case there is a decided contrast. In Romans (2:20) the word *form* is used of the opposite of reality. The Jews did not actually possess the knowledge and truth in the law. All they had was the outward form. This usage of the word should be conclusive, yet it is no more so than Paul's description of the men in the "last days" who have a *form* of devoutness, *yet deny its power*. If that "form" is not superficial, lacking the corresponding inward grace, it certainly would not be devoid of power. What could be more conclusive than these two contrasts? In each the form is in contrast to the reality. It does *not* correspond to that which is within.

We must recognize that our Lord's descent from the form of God to the form of a slave is not the only change of form which He experienced. On the holy mount He was transformed (*metamorphoō*, Matt.17:2; Mark 9:2). After His resurrection He was manifested in a different form to two of them (Mark 16:12). A careful consideration of these incidents will lead to the conviction that there was no intrinsic change in Him on these occasions. His face shone and His garments became white as the light, but there was not the least indication of inward alteration when He was transformed.

After He rose from the dead, He was seen by Mary Magdalene. He was evidently the same in appearance as before His death, for she eventually recognized Him even though she was not expecting to see Him alive. But when He accompanied the two disciples to Emmaus, He assumed a different *form*. For the purpose in hand there was no necessity for Him to make any essential change in His "nature" or essence. All He needed was an appearance which they would not

recognize. Indeed, they partly pierced His disguise, for their hearts responded to that which came from within Him, which the outward form failed to affect.

For our purpose it is sufficient to insist that our Lord is not confined to the two forms of which the apostle speaks in Philippians. After He appeared in the form of a slave He was temporarily transformed before some of His disciples in the midst of His ministry, and He assumed an unusual form after His resurrection. We might insist that His subsequent appearances in glory, such as blinded Saul of Tarsus, and caused the beloved apostle to fall at His feet as dead, are still different forms, suited to His new glories. Certainly He is no longer in the form of a slave. In His future unveiling He will be invested with a form in keeping with the might and majesty of His universal empire.

But one more occurrence remains. This is found in the passage itself. At first sight it seems to contradict all that we have learned concerning the true meaning of the word "form." Our Lord took the form of a slave. Are we to understand that He became a servant only in appearance, not in fact? All are agreed that Christ is the ideal Servant. He was not merely clothed in the garb of service, but He served. He Himself assures us that "the Son of Mankind came, not to be served, but to serve . . ." (Matt.20:28; Mark 10:45). Paul gives Him the title "Servant of the Circumcision" (Rom.15:8). There can be no question that Christ is the supreme Servant of God and of men. Why then merely assume the *form* of a *servant*, as it is usually translated.

The solution is simple. He did not take the form of a *servant*, but of a *slave*. The Revisers insert "bondservant" in their margin. Nor is this a trivial distinction. And it is maintained throughout the Greek Scriptures.

Nowhere else in the more than one hundred and twenty occurrences of the word slave (*doulos*) is it ever applied to our Lord. He was a slave extrinsically, not intrinsically. He appeared as a slave, but He was never in bondage. His own characterization of slavery was never true of Him. "The slave is not aware what his lord is doing" (John 15:15). His was intelligent, voluntary service.

Moreover, the expression "slave" falls far short of indicating what He really was. Even "servant" deals with nothing more than His work. It does not tell us Who the Servant is. As a matter of fact, all will agree that His service was *not* that of a slave but that of a Son. If "form" indicates the inward reality, He should have appeared as the Son of God. If we apply the evidence of this phrase logically, we must admit that, actually, He was far, far above a slave, and, therefore, when He was in the form of God, He must have been far, far above God. But if the "form" is *assumed* in each case for the purpose of divine revelation, all is clear. It is not the function of Christ to display Himself, but to reveal God.

To put the matter bluntly, the form of God was not an outward indication of what He was Himself, but a representation of His God. The word "form" is out of place if we simply mean that His external appearance was consistent with His internal essence. That would not even need to be stated. The mere use of the term *form* should be enough to prove that outwardly He appeared to be Another. His exaltation consisted, not in actually being that Other, but in having the visible appearance proper to the Deity.

Furthermore, just as the Philippian passage does not give all the forms in which He appeared after His incarnation, so it does not refer us to all the forms which

He took prior to His emptying. Besides appearing in the form of God He also appeared in the form of a man and as a messenger. In Philippians we are called upon to consider His highest and His lowest manifestations, for these alone are called for by the exhortation. This discussion has been almost paralyzed by the assumption that Christ had one settled pre-incarnate form, and one fixed form on earth, and a single unalterable form in the resurrection. This is contrary to the facts.

"INHERENTLY"

The force of the word "inherently," used here, is not that the form was inward but that this outward appearance *belonged* to Him by right. His appearance in the form of God before He was born in Bethlehem was not improper but was by authority. Then, there were times when His outward appearance was such as became the Deity, and He was as much like God in the eyes of men as it was possible for Another to become. It was the pinnacle of pre-incarnate glory, from which He descended to the accursed cross.

It is evident that, when He was in the form of God, He was closest to the conception of those who would, in some occult manner, make Him of the very "substance" of the Deity, who desire, indeed, to identify Him with His God, except as to His "personality." At that time, so lofty was His station, that it was not at all wrong for Him to assume equality with God.

This statement concerning equality with God, however, does not identify Him with the Deity. Rather it distinguishes Him from His God. If He were, in substance, all that this form indicated, the question of pillaging the One Whom He represented could not arise. God cannot rob Himself. If that form had been

unwarranted by the Supreme, if His actions had been unauthorized, if He had not been a revelation of the Deity, then He would have been the greatest usurper within the realm of creation.

There is far more than a distinction of "personality" between God and the One Who was in His form. Though, in appearance, equal, that equality depends entirely on the fact that the form was only in appearance, and the Invisible was its reality. It has close counterparts in the future, for Christ is to be clothed with the glory that was His in the past. He will not only appear as God, but will exercise all of God's power.

After all this investigation we come back to the simple, natural, unforced meaning of the words. The form of God was the material, visible representation of the invisible spiritual Deity. No one has ever seen God (John 1:18), for He is invisible (Col.1:15). In Colossians the Son of God supplies the needed link with creation because He is the Image of God. In Philippians we have the same thought with only a slight variation, to suit the context. Both the Form and the Image appeal to the eye. This is after the manner of Paul. John appeals to the ear, for he calls Him the *Logos*, or Word of God. In each case Christ is the Mediator of God and mankind. Human ears cannot hear God and human eyes cannot see Him, but they can listen to the living Word and perceive the Image and the Form.

The Form, however, was not the means of communication, but the evidence of exaltation. When Isaiah saw Yahweh, exalted and uplifted on His glorious throne, with all the accompaniments of Deity, he was overwhelmed by the awful sublimity and magnificent majesty of Him Who sits on the throne.

22 Christ Reveals God's Glory and Affection

Though he was the great prophet who rebuked the failings of his people, he is utterly humiliated by the sight and cries out in dismay, " 'My eyes have seen the King, Yahweh of hosts!' " (6:5). The representation he saw was the Image of Yahweh. The Form that he saw was the glory of God. The marvel for us to discern is this: that this glorious One was not disposed to exploit that glory for His own ends. He had the *heart* of God as well as the form of Deity, and was disposed to vacate it, empty Himself of it, and take the form of a slave in order to reveal God's most inmost affections even further.

THE MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND MAN

THE UNIQUE GLORY of Christ Jesus as the Mediator of God and mankind has often been obscured by explanations made in defense of "the Deity of Christ." In his book entitled, *THE LORD FROM HEAVEN*, Sir Robert Anderson says, "With us, therefore, the issue is a definite and simple one, namely, whether Christ is God or only man." This statement neither defines nor clarifies the theme, for the evidence is abundant on both sides. Moreover, this declaration disregards the special place of Christ as the divine Link between God and man. The Scriptures are emphatic concerning His work of mediation. "There is *one* God, and *one* Mediator of God and mankind, a Man, Christ Jesus . . ." (1 Tim.2:5). Those who make Him either Deity absolute or merely human must do so by avoiding this truth and all the divine explanations of those relationships by which Christ bridges the chasm between us and God.

CHRIST'S UNIQUE POSITION

All saints believe that, in some sense, Christ is a Mediator between God and man. Some hold Him to be absolute Deity, yet are compelled to acknowledge some limitations. Others make Him a mere man, yet more than all other men. His true place is seldom clearly defined. The solution lies in the great truth

that our Lord is unique, quite unlike any other personage in the universe. We do not need to effect a compromise between the conflicting views concerning Him, for both are wrong, though each contains elements of truth. Let us not allow such explanations to rob us of the Mediator, the Christ we need.

The key to His present constitution is very simple. He is derived from two distinct sources. His spirit is directly from God, unlike any other man. His body, however, is purely human. His soul, which is the consciousness resulting from this combination, is a thing unmatched, capable of direct communion with the Supreme Spirit, and condescending to the corrupt condition of mortal men.

The point we wish to press is this, that the likeness of Christ to God, instead of incorporating Him into the so-called "Godhead," is itself the most satisfying evidence that He is not the Supreme. Nothing is similar to itself, except in a rhetorical figure. Likeness disappears in identity. Nor can this be limited to "personality," for Christ and God are alike apart from "personality."

CHRIST'S RELATIONSHIP TO GOD

The knowledge of God is the ultimate goal of the human intellect, the one lesson of creation and revelation, the object of all life and experience. We may learn a little of His attributes through His works, but a full orb'd revelation of God comes only through His Word. In it we see His Son, and seeing Him we behold the Father (John 14:9). As we become acquainted with Christ, we get to know God. Usually the saints are engrossed with Christ in His relation to themselves and to mankind as Saviour and Lord. It is hoped that all who read these lines are acquainted

with His grace on their behalf,* and are ready to enter the highest realm of His relation to His God and Father. That is the subject of this meditation.

God is revealed through Christ by a series of likenesses and contrasts. He is the Mediator between mankind and God, Who presents the Deity to us so that our senses can perceive Him. Our eyes see God in His visible Image. Our ears hear God through His incarnate Word. But, at the same time, we recognize a vast difference between them, for God is the Source of all, while Christ is the universal Channel.

All knowledge is relative, and is the result of comparative contrasts. What can be higher or more helpful than a careful consideration of the two most exalted Personages in the universe? Strange to say, it is usually much easier to learn two things than one, if they can be related to each other. It is practically impossible to study God apart from Christ. Theology has attempted it by clothing Him with philosophical attributes, such as omnipotence and omnipresence, but without practical results. It is equally impossible to learn much of our Lord apart from His relation to God. The most profitable way is to consider them together.

Our study naturally falls into two divisions, likeness and contrast. If the Son were not like the Father, how could we see the Father in Him? If He were not at all unlike the Father, they would be identical, and the Son would be as inscrutable as the One He is intended to reveal. His office as Mediator demands that He be both similar and dissimilar. If God is invisible, the Son must be visible. If God cannot be heard, the Word must be audible. Yet in both cases the sight and sound

*Note: we have appended to this article some selections from A. E. Knoch's writings on the Subject of the Mediator's work on our behalf.

must be such as God would produce on our senses if He were within the range of our faculties.

Christ is the Image and Expression of the Deity. Without any reasoning whatever, the spirit of a sane mind concludes that, therefore, He is not Himself the Deity. The statue of Christ high up in the Andes is not Christ Himself, though it is correctly called "the Christ of the Andes." The office of Mediator demands that our Lord be the God of our souls, a manifestation of the Deity in terms within the scope of our comprehensions, in sights and sounds suited to our sensations. *We must see God! We must hear God!* That is impossible absolutely. It is realized relatively in the One Mediator. In Him we see, *not Himself* merely, but His God. Through Him we hear, *not His words*, but His Father's. O, that men would not seek to tie their tinsel to His glory! No greater shame could be His than to reveal Himself, to speak His own words, to obey His own will, though these are the essentials of Deity. Though *like* the Deity, His essential excellence lies in self-effacement and subjection to His God and Father. He is not a mere man or absolute Deity, but the Mediator between them.

THE SON OF GOD

WHILE preeminently *the* Son of God, Christ shares this title with others, who, in a more restricted sense, have a similar relation to God. Sonship, in the East, and in the Scriptures, is a position betokening likeness and dignity. A child may not resemble its father. A son is supposed to follow in his father's footsteps. He may not even be a child, for sonship sometimes implies no more than adoption. We are children of God by faith, whatever our works may be. But only those who are led by God's spirit, are sons of His (Rom.8:14). Indeed, "the sonship" is applied to our future manifestation when we will be fully controlled by God's spirit, and be like Christ in our conduct.

Spirit beings or messengers are called sons of God. The "gods" of Psalm 82 are given this title also. Satan is specifically named as coming among them in Job (1:6; 2:1). They shouted for joy at the creation (Job 38:7). These sons were not born but created.

"Son" is applied to human beings in a variety of ways. Adam is called a son of God (Luke 3:38), for he came directly from His hands, and was given divine dignities on the earth. Israel as a nation is called by this title to denote their special sovereignty among the nations (Hos.1:10; 11:1). Moses was instructed to say to Pharaoh, "My son, My firstborn, is Israel" (Ex.

4:22). God will give them the place of honor because they are His, and have received His law, and will be filled with His spirit.

- It is evident, from these cases, that divine sonship does not involve absolute deity. Sonship is a figure taken from human relationships. In the East a son, especially the firstborn, is honored above all others in the family. If a man has no child he may adopt a son to carry on his dignities. Such of His creatures as are related to Him in this eminent manner God calls His sons. Of all of these there is only one Firstborn. This is still a figure. It does not necessarily imply that He was *born* first. There were many sons of God before His *generation* as a Man. He is the first in reference to creation and the only begotten in regard to generation.

Under this title Christ comes into contact with the spirit realm. Search through the accounts of our Lord's life and note how often the unseen world acknowledged Him to be the Son of God, when men, even His disciples, needed a special revelation that they might grasp it (Matt.16:17). Satan used this title, "If you are God's Son . . ." (Matt.4:3,6; Luke 4:3). The demons of Gergesa cried, ". . . Son of God! Didst Thou come here to torment us before the season?" (Matt.8:29). Unclean spirits, whenever they beheld Him, prostrated to Him and cried, saying that "You are the Son of God!" (Mark 3:11). Demons came out of many, clamoring and saying that "You are the Christ, the Son of God!" (Luke 4:41).

THE SON OF THE FATHER

In the Orient a son has a high place in the affections of a father, much more so than in the Occident. This is especially the case when there is only one. No doubt

God has brought this about in order to give a human expression to His own affection for the Son of His love (Col.1:13). We have lost the force of this among us when we divide our affection equally among our children, or have a special pet among the younger ones. More than that, the very word *son* conveys a thought of much wider and richer scope in the East. It includes close concord and congeniality between father and son, so much so that Easterners can say "You are no son of mine." They merely mean that one in the family, although their offspring, is unlike his father and unsympathetic to him. That is why the term son is so frequently used in a figure. A son of stubbornness is not the offspring of a quality, but one who possesses that quality to a marked degree. The Authorized Version "children" confuses the figure (Eph.2:2). A son of God may be one by adoption, but he is not entitled to be called a son unless His character conforms to that of his Father.

An appeal to the son's special place in the father's affections was made by our Lord when He addressed the throngs in His mountain message concerning the kingdom (Matt.7:9). "What man is there among you from whom his son will be requesting bread—no stone will he be handing him!" Something very near to that might be done to a daughter, but not to a son in those lands. The son usually has the preference in food. *Christ*, as God's Executive, receives great glory from God for what He *does*. But, as His *Son*, He has a much nearer and dearer relation to the Father, and is given high honor for what He *is*. It is not necessary that a son should *earn* his keep in order to be fed. He is rather pampered because of his relationship. This is true even among wicked men. It is nowhere more true than in the relations between God and His Beloved, for all

the others are but feeble figures of His place and portion.

THE BELOVED SON

"Beloved" is never used of our Lord except in His character as the *Son* of God, His only Father. Under the title Christ He is never termed beloved, nor is it applied to Him as Lord or Teacher. He is the *Son* of God's love (Col.1:13). He is in the *bosom* of the Father (John 1:18). God's love to us was expressed in the gift of His only begotten Son (John 3:16). We are told that the Father is *loving* the Son (John 3:35). While, as *sinners*, we are *justified* in the blood of *Christ*, it is as *enemies* that we are *conciliated* through the death of God's *Son* (Rom.5:10). It was the Son Who loved us and gave Himself for us (Gal.2:20).

God's *delight* is associated with His Son, the Beloved. When He was baptized the heavens opened, and a voice came out of the empyrean in order to introduce the Messiah to the people of Israel (Mark 1:11). Thus, at the outset, was answered the oft-recurring question, "Who is the Christ?" He is not only the Son of David, but the Son of God. And, because He is His Son, He is Beloved, and His *delight*. This is not approbation or praise for service performed, but tenderness and attachment due to relationship and affection.

One of the tragedies of theology is the use of this title in the so-called "Trinity." We are given to understand that each "person" in this arrangement is co-equal and underived. Whatever our Lord may be under other names, He certainly is not co-equal as the Son, nor can such a one be underived. No son is equal with his father. Normally, he has sprung from his father. If there must be a trinity, the Son can have no

part in it, for it figures a relationship quite incompatible with those which, of necessity, must govern a triune deity. The expression "God, the Son" is self-destructive. It may as well be "the Father, the Son," for, in the trinity, we are dealing only with absolute Deity. Yet in the Scriptures the Son is called God only in a relative and not in an absolute sense.

"MY SON ART THOU!"

The glory of Christ's relationship to God as Son is very much obscured by the claims of trinitarian teaching. The unity of Father and Son cannot lie in oneness of "Substance" or "Essence" but in the Son's loving obedience to the Father's will. "Lo! I am arriving—in the summary of the scroll it is written concerning Me—to do Thy will, O God" (Heb.10:7).

We must turn away from the creeds of man in order to appreciate such a passage as Hebrews 1. The Son is the Speaker to Whom the Hebrews are directed. His glories as they relate to the kingdom and their blessing, is the great theme of the epistle. Beginning with a brilliant cluster showing His relationship to God, He is given a place superior to angels, and to all the great figures in Hebrew history.

"In the last of these days [God] speaks to us in a Son. . . . My Son art Thou! I, today have begotten Thee I shall be to Him for a Father, and He shall be to Me for a Son" (Heb.1:2,5). We speak of seeing the sun, but it is hid behind its brilliant beams. So the Son is the Effulgence of the invisible God (Heb.1:3). The glory which filled the temple was a token of His presence. God condescends to assume certain characters in relation to His creatures in order to reveal Himself to them. Even as Father, He cannot be known except through the Son (*cf* John 14:9,10). The particular

point in Hebrews 1 is the introduction of God's Son, not by creation, but by begetting. He is His only begotten Son (Psa.2:7; Matt.1:23; Luke 1:32; John 1:14). As such He is infinitely better fitted to communicate the heart of God to man. Let us honor Him in clarity of thought and sincerity of heart for His faithful activity and obedient position as the Son of God.

THE COMPLEMENT OF THE DEITY

THE greatest need to an understanding of such themes as "the deity of Christ" is a concordant vocabulary. The Authorized Version (and the Revised to a lesser extent) has so thoroughly juggled the essential words that it is foolish to expect clarity from their use. The subjoined concordance of the special terms used is given, not to clarify, but to show the source of the confusion. The word "Godhead" is freely used of terms which should be distinguished. Very few who use the terms "deity," "divinity," "divine" and "Godhead," can give definitions of them sufficiently exact to keep them distinct.

thetos, adjective

Acts 17:29 that the *Godhead* is like unto gold or silver or stone
2 Pet. 1:3,4 According as his *divine* power hath given unto us
that by these ye might be partakers of the *divine*
nature

theotēs

Rom. 1:20 his eternal power and *Godhead*;

theotēs

Col. 2: 9 in him dwelleth all the fulness of the *Godhead* bodily

Careful analysis and investigation has revealed the fact that English possesses close equivalents for each

of these Greek words. We have the terms *divinity* *deity*, as well as *divine*. In view of the supreme importance of this theme, it seems inexcusable to use one vague, misleading, obsolete compound for all three Greek words when appropriate English expressions were constantly being used in theological literature. We will now give the concordant renderings of these words in their contexts, so that everyone may judge for himself of their suitability.

thetos, divine

Acts 17:29 we ought not to be inferring that the *Divine* is like gold, or silver, or stone

2 Pet. 1:3,4 So has all of His *divine* power . . . been presented to us . . . that through these you may become participants of the *divine* nature

theotēs, divinity

Rom. 1:20 For His invisible attributes are described from the creation of the world, being apprehended by His achievements, as well as His imperceptible power and *divinity*

theotēs, deity

Col. 2: 9 Christ, seeing that in Him the entire complement of the *Deity* is dwelling bodily

Concerning the meaning of *divine*, the adjective, there can be no question. It may be used of power, of nature, of objects of worship, even of idols, which are supposed to be *like* that which God is. Paul did not speak to the Athenians about a "Godhead" of which they had never heard. He had never heard of it himself. He objected to the pedestals of stone, and the statues wrought with precious metals, which they thought God-like or divine. These things are not *like God*. They are not *divine*.

The English word "divinity" is particularly well

suited to the context in Romans. There is a broad scope about it which accords well with the glimpses of God we get in creation. In it we learn of His imperceptible power and divinity. Everywhere in nature are evidences of superhuman attributes, beyond the powers and comprehensions of His creatures. We see a Divinity in nature and a Deity in revelation. This is the force which divine usage gives to these words. Let us not use them in any other sense.

The third word, "deity," is specially before us in our present considerations. The single occurrence is sufficient to fix its meaning clearly. It supplies a term greatly needed in this discussion. It is *not* applied to Christ. It is applied to the Deity Whose complement He is. So far as the revelation of Himself is concerned, the Deity needs a Complement, an Image, a Word, a Mediator, to make Himself known. Christ is the Complement Who fulfills these functions fully. The entire complement of the Deity dwells in Him in bodily form.

Christ is not the complement of Himself. He is not engaged in revealing Himself. He acts for Another. That Other is termed "the Deity" in *contrast* with Christ. To say that the fullness of the Deity dwells in the Deity is not only unscriptural but an affront to the spirit of a sound mind. Outside of Christ there is a Deity. Inside of Him is the complement of this Deity. For the purpose of revelation, so far as our senses are concerned, Christ is that Deity. It is His function to show us the Father. Yet, in so doing, He distinguishes Himself from His God, Who is here given a special term belonging to Himself alone. It will greatly aid us if we also confine the term "Deity" to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, and refrain from applying it to our Lord.

It will be seen from this that it is entirely inadequate to call Christ "divine." This means no more than God-like, which, in some measure, characterizes all His works, and may be used of any of His operations and attributes. He was indeed divine, but in a sense so superior to others that the adjective holds Him down to their level instead of exalting Him to God's. Similarly, there was divinity in all His deeds, but here also, He surpasses the best that is conveyed by the term. The Scriptures use this term of that which is seen in creation, apart from Christ. Hence confusion is easily introduced by speaking of the "divinity of Christ."

The term *theotês, deitty*, however, is used by God in expressing the relationship between Him and His Christ. God claims it for Himself and denies it to His Son. It is the inspired term to note the distinction between them. The *pleroma*, the "fullness," the complement of the *Deitty* dwells bodily in Christ. If He also were Deity, then we would have the useless assertion that the complement of the Deity dwells in the Deity, and we take away all reason for the existence of Christ, making Him identical with His God, and of no real use in the revelation of the Deity.

THE COMPLEMENT

The title "Complement" is Christ's because He brings all to a satisfactory *Completion*. But the final phase of God's purpose has been hid from Christendom, so that the creation manages to bring millions of sentient beings into existence, not for their own happiness or the glory of God, but for their unending torment and the eternal disgrace of the Deity. Any philosophy based on the creeds of Christendom must lead to desperation and insanity. Even when death is

made to end all, oblivion is no jewel in God's crown, and is no rational apology for creation. Reason and revelation demand that God be glorified, that suffering receive a satisfactory explanation, and that a *completed*, not shattered universe crown the efforts of Deity and the intervention of His Anointed.

Perhaps the greatest treasure of which the saints have been despoiled is the reconciliation of all. Almost precisely the same words as are used here in Colossians 2:9 are used to introduce this glorious truth in 1:18-20, ". . . that in all He may be becoming first, seeing that the entire complement delights to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all to Him . . ." It is because He is God's Complement that all will be reconciled. If He does not reconcile all, then all will not be complete and He is not God's Complement. The full force of "complement" or "fullness" is denied by nearly every saint who bears His name. Only a tiny remnant dares to acknowledge Him as God's Complement. It is a jewel of far more value than any gem in any diadem of any potentate of earth.

TRADITIONS OF MEN

"The deity of Christ" is a mischievous phrase, made by man, intended to glorify Christ, but used as a shibboleth to indict all who will not bow to man's dictum. It is the fruit of ignorance and tradition, and few who use it or who seek to impose it on others are able to give an accurate idea of what it conveys. Used in opposition to the error which makes Christ a mere man, it may be temporarily condoned, but as a positive statement of faith it is out of accord with the Scriptures, a mere human invention, without any claim on our faith, and destructive to a clear understanding of the glories of God and of Christ.

The strength of Trinitarianism lies in a naive assumption that one who rejects it must necessarily go to the opposite extreme, and be a Unitarian. It is taken for granted that, if the Son of God is not, in every way, co-equal with the Father, He must necessarily be nothing but a descendant of Adam. Thus Scripture is ruled out altogether, for in its pages is not a single text for either position. Therein Christ is God's Image and man's Saviour, God's Word and our Redeemer. He is subject to the Deity, yet Lord of all creation. The unique glories of Christ have been eclipsed by both sides of this controversy, each forcing Him to one extreme or the other, when He belongs between, and can lay His hand on both God and man.

The name "Unitarian" is not unscriptural, and some who claim it may not degrade Christ to the level of humankind, but only insist that there is but *one God*, as Scripture emphatically declares. But, now that it is represented by an organization with a creed which practically rejects the supernatural, it is not at all applicable to those who believe in monotheism yet do not drag our Saviour down from His high honors. It is to be regretted that an expression which is Scriptural should become the symbol of much that is not of God. But Trinitarianism is a term which has no place in God's vocabulary, either in intent or fact. The number three is carefully kept from all contexts which concern the Deity.

Seeing that the thought of the Trinity is absent from God's revelation and is only derived from it by a process of inference, it has been found necessary, not only to prop it up, but continually to guard its supports. In addition the word has been invested with a superstitious sanctity, so that it is more sacred than the Scriptures themselves.

Trinitarianism rests, not on the utterances of God, Who alone could have revealed it, but upon the consensus of evangelical creeds, the credulity of good and learned and honored men. It is significant that no argument for the Trinity seems satisfactory to those who propose it. They nearly all fall back upon the fact that it has prevailed ever since men ceased to depend on vital contact with God's Word written, and substituted for it the condensed formulas which could be mumbled by any unbeliever, and which have become the backbone of nominal and apostate "Christianity."

The Fundamentalists boldly and blessedly support the teachings of God's Word concerning creation. But with regard to faith in the Deity, what men have *evolved from the Scriptures* appeals to them far more than the sacred text itself. They cannot understand how a sane man cannot see God in nature, while they themselves fail to give His Word the supreme place in their theology. Being champions of the Bible, they subconsciously include in it the acknowledged creeds and popular interpretations. Let the Fundamentalists and Evangelicals openly declare that their creed is not essential, but only God's Word is fundamental, and they will break down the barrier that holds back God's most abundant blessing.

THE GOD AND FATHER OF CHRIST

THE distinctions between Deity absolute and relative abound in the Scriptures. Along with the impressive likenesses are emphatic contrasts. Some of these latter are essential to the manifestations of the likenesses. A Mediator Who is invisible and inaudible could not mediate. He must be the opposite of His God in these necessary concomitants of absolute Deity. The Supreme knows no Deity above Him. The Son continually acknowledges that He has a God. The glory of Christ was to do the will of Another. What is more splendid in all His words than the great renunciation, "Not My will, but Thine"? Could His God have said the same? Quite the opposite. God's will must be carried out and Christ's submitted.

The deity of God is the fundamental of fundamentals. It underlies all truth and is lacking in all error. Departure from it is the first phase of human depravity. Knowing God, men do not glorify or thank Him *as God* (Rom. 1:21). This is the source of all mental and moral degradation. This fundamental failing is not confined to unbelievers. It vitiates much theology and darkens the minds of many saints. It is not merely the belief in a deity—few sane intelligences deny that there is a God. Nevertheless few, if any, of mankind fully acknowledge all that is implied in glorifying *God*

as God, in recognizing the absolute deity of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Deity is established by *relationship*. One Who has a God is not the Deity. He Who, in the absolute sense, *gives*, is God. He who *receives* is not. No one can give God anything that is not already His. We receive everything from Him. Paul announced this basic truth to the Athenian philosophers. "Neither is He attended by human hands, as if requiring anything, since He Himself gives to all life and breath and all" (Acts 17:25). He is the Sender. He is not sent. He is *Supreme*. He is not subject. His will is invincible. He does not yield to the will of another. It is in these relative attitudes that absolute Deity reveals itself in the Scriptures.

God has no God. He is the Supreme. His deity would be destroyed should He acknowledge a superior. No one who has a God is absolute Deity. The Son is God in a restricted, relative sense. His cry, "My God, My God, why didst Thou forsake Me?" (Matt.27:46) could never have come from the God He implored. The Supreme cannot appeal to a higher Power. He could not be left helpless to His enemies by another. He could not suffer the death that followed this heartbroken cry, for He is the life of all that lives. Although Christ manifests God in many vital ways, there are clear points of contrast between Him and His God, especially on Golgotha.

Absolute Deity cannot acknowledge or appeal to another God. Yet this is the crowning glory of Christ. He has a God. God Himself has no more splendid title than "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." To be the God of Christ is His greatest glory. To be known as the Father of His Son is the deepest desire of His heart.

He is the *God* of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is not the great Unknown, Unloving Creator and Operator of all, but the God Who has revealed His heart through a Mediator, *through* Whom He will save and reconcile all to Himself. He is the God of the One Who, through His humiliation and shame, as well as His glorious reign, will restore sevenfold what seemed to have been utterly lost. On several occasions, Paul commences an epistle with this, the fullest and finest of all the titles of the Deity (2 Cor.1:3; Eph.1:3; Col.1:3). It has a richness and preciousness which appeals to all who would like to look beyond their own happiness and revel in the blessings which our Lord Jesus Christ has brought to our God and Father.

In His intercourse with His disciples our Lord continually referred to God as Another, not Himself. But He not only established a relationship between God and His disciples, and associated Himself with them in it, but specifically spoke of One Who was His Arbiter, Whom He invoked in prayer, Whom He acclaimed in thanksgiving. We need not be surprised that a glimpse of this relationship should be seldom given. Rather we should be astonished that the veil was ever lifted, so that we may enter into the intimacies of the fellowship between the Father and His Beloved.

It is striking to note that the contrast between Christ and God was sharpest at the two crises in His ministry, when His work seemed to have failed. After His rejection by Capernaum He relieved His feelings by retiring to consider the divine intention. He recognized that His apparent failure was only a phase of God's success. So He acclaimed His Father Lord of heaven and earth, because He had *hid* the message from the wise and intelligent (Matt.11:25,26). Apparently, they were working at cross purposes. Christ

was revealing. God was concealing. How marvelous to see Christ thanking the Father for this apparent failure in His earthly career! He was willing to fail if it delighted the Deity. Had He been the Deity, He could not have failed.

The fullest display of Christ's dependence on His God and Father is found in His prayer for the disciples (John 17). He takes a place utterly impossible to Deity in submitting Himself and all His work to His Father. He does not for a moment assume the place of equality. His authority is a gift (17:2). He is carrying out a commission (17:3). He does not glorify Himself, but God (17:4). He does a work, not His own (17:4). The unity existing between the Son and the Father is defined in verse 22 in relation to His desire for oneness for His disciples. It is a unity of spirit and a community of interests which characterized the early disciples. There is no thought of identity. Throughout this marvelous prayer we hear the humble, dependent petition of a Son and a Servant to One Who is surpassingly supreme. May we never obscure the glorious significance of this relationship between Christ and His God and Father.

SOURCE AND CHANNEL

THAT GREAT RUBRIC which authoritatively reveals the status of God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, defines their relation to the universe by means of two connectives. All is *out of* God. All is *through* our Lord. Hence we read, "For us there is one God, the Father, out of Whom all is, and we for Him, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through Whom all is, and we through Him" (1 Cor.8:6). The contrast here is sharp and clear. It is the key to the part played by Christ in the course of the eons. Nothing *originates out of* Him or *consummates into* Him, though He is the Origin and the Consummation. All comes *through* Him, from the beginning to the end. He is the Channel, not the Source or the Object of all things. It is a proof of divine inspiration that the Scriptures always maintain this point. It is true of Christ in all of His assumptions.

We are never said to come *out of* Christ, but *out of* God. Indeed, Christ asserts that He Himself came out of God (John 8:42). All is out of God (Rom.11:36). But God never deals with us except *through* His Anointed. Hence, while all is sourced in God the Father, all is channeled through the Son. It is only by clinging closely to the exact language of Holy Writ that we may hope to gain a clear conception of the relation of the Father to the Son.

Our common version, however, misleads us on this matter. In the first chapter of John's account we read

that "All things were made *by* him" (John 1:3), and again, "the world was made *by* him" (John 1:10). In both cases it should be *through*. The Logos, or Word, of God was the *means* of making all, not the efficient first Cause of all. Christ is never set forth as the absolute Source. Such a role is destructive of His mission as Mediator. It is heresy against the Highest. It has led to the dogmatic confusion which clouds Christian theology. It has turned it into a superstition to be accepted at the expense of sense and sanity.

Peter, in addressing his fellow Israelites on the day of Pentecost, averred that the powers and miracles and signs wrought during Messiah's ministry, were performed by God *through* Christ (Acts 2:22), just as later miracles and signs came to pass *through* the apostles (Acts 2:43). Again we read that God will judge the hidden things of humanity *through* Jesus Christ (Rom.2:16).

In presenting the great truth of the conciliation, the apostle Paul lays special stress on the fact that it is *out of* God (2 Cor.5:18), and it is *through* His Son (Rom.5:10,11; 2 Cor.5:18). Similarly, the great achievement of the reconciliation of all is channeled *through* Him Who is the Son of God's love (Col.1:13,20).

We need hardly insist that salvation is *through* Christ. God Himself is our Saviour (*cf* 1 Tim.1:1; 4:10). He spared not His Son. He wrought deliverance *through* His Beloved (Eph.1:6,7). The same is true of creation.

ALL CREATED THROUGH THE SON

This is confirmed by the highest revelations concerning Christ, in Paul's Colossian epistle. The AV misreads it thus (1:15-17): "Who is the image of the

invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For *by* him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in the earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created *by* him, and for him: And he is before all things, and *by* him all things *const.*” But how much clarity and consistency is gained if we translate, as elsewhere, *in* Him is all created, and all is created *through* Him and *for* Him, and He is before all, and all has its cohesion *in* Him. As elsewhere expressed, He is God’s creative Original (Rev.3:14), or as the AV renders it, the beginning of the creation of God.

Still further light is thrown upon the mediacy of Christ in Hebrews 1:2 where He is presented as the Channel *through* Whom the eons are made, so that time as well as matter and force are brought into the world through Him.

NOT IN ALL IS THERE THIS KNOWLEDGE

As vital as all this is to our appreciation of the glories of our God and of His Christ, we must never forget Paul’s reminder in 1 Corinthians 8 where he first makes this distinction between God and Christ clear. “Knowledge puffs up, yet love builds up. If anyone is presuming to know anything, he knew not as yet according as he must know” (1 Cor.8:1,2).

Today, also, there seem to be very few who have some of the knowledge here referred to. Had these Corinthians known that there is only one God, out of Whom *all* is (including idol sacrifices), their consciences would not have bothered them had they eaten these sacrifices. But true love will consider others, who do not know this, and are disturbed if they see us doing anything which seems to be contrary to

the will of God. Most of us are not likely to be eating sacrifices which have been offered to idols, but we might do things like "breaking the sabbath" (working on Saturday or Sunday) which many saints consider offensive to God and contrary to His Word. Some even consider the statement that all is out of God, a dangerous heresy, worse than any other sin.

Let us be careful lest our knowledge become a stumbling block to the weak in faith, and bear with that which is due to immaturity and unbelief. Let us never show a false and offensive spirit, which is the hallmark of error. Let us bear even with those who seek to expunge God's greatest glories from the pages of His Word. Apart from His grace we would be guilty of the same thing. And let us pray that our conduct will be such as to win some to consider and accept His deeper truth, for He has made it plain in His Word that, at present, He is not imparting this knowledge to all.

Yet, for ourselves, we are rejoicing in this great light which He has graciously granted to us. All is *out of* God, and all is *through* the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

NOT MY WILL

GOD is operating the universe in accord with the counsel of His will (Eph.1:11). We are not told of this until He reveals the mystery of Christ, that He is to head up the universe in the final eon. Apart from that revelation it is well nigh incredible. It is only as we believe the promise, that He will bring the present chaos to an end and subject all to the rule of His Anointed, that we can entertain the thought that the present confusion is working out His purpose. There is so much that seems utterly and incurably opposed to God's will that we are inclined rather to think that the universe is being operated by Satan in opposition to His intention.

It is of prime importance that we do not miss the force of the word *counsel*. The world is *not* in line with God's will. It *is* in accord with the *counsel* of His will. In the wisdom of God He uses the opposition to His revealed will to work out His hidden intention. The forces of evil are contrary to His will; nevertheless they are bringing about the end He has in view. Men imagine that they can defy God. The worst crime they ever committed against Him was the crucifixion of Christ. That certainly was contrary to His will! But it was according to His definite *counsel*. Instead of hindering the progress of His purpose it helped it as no other act has ever done. So with all other opposition to God's will. He will conform it to His counsel, and use it to attain His purpose.

Let us note that Christ is active only on the positive side of God's purpose. His acts conform to God's revealed will. Satan and all the influences flowing from him furnish the negative side. They fulfill God's counsel by withstanding His will. Christ does it only by conforming fully to it. Hence, in that future eon of the eons, Satan is banished and Christ is crowned the Head of all creation. Then God's will and the counsel of His will will no longer be distinct. His purpose will no longer require opposition for its fulfillment. Under the beneficent rule of God's Son, evil will no longer be essential to His revelation. His will will then be done.

It is essential to our present inquiry to see that Christ is not actively associated with God's underlying intention. He knows of it, but He does not plan it or put it into practice. One incident in His ministry will make this clear. When the cities in which most of His powerful deeds had been done did not repent, He is not disappointed, but worships God, saying, "I am acclaiming to Thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hidest these things from the wise and intelligent, and Thou dost reveal them to minors. Yea, Father, seeing that thus it became a delight in front of Thee!" (Matt.11:25). Our Lord did not hide His words from the people. He was in God's will in making them known. While He reveals, God conceals. They work counter to one another. Christ does not change His methods to conform with God's operations. He acquiesces and worships, but continues to act according to God's revealed will, not the operation of His counsel or intention. In this matter Christ is active on only one side of God's operations.

One of the most astonishing and enlightening facts concerning Christ is the utter abnegation of His will. The only human being Who could be trusted to act in

accord with His own volition utterly renounced the right to do so. He never carried out His own will. It is true that He was almost always in complete harmony with God's will, so that there was no clash. But even so, the Lord's will originated in God, not in Himself.

Throughout His earthly ministry our Lord never proposed that His will should be followed. It was His mission to fulfill the will of Another. When entering into the world, He said, "Lo! I am arriving . . . to do Thy will, O God!" (Heb.10:7). This is one of His most gracious glories. Let us not rob Him of it, by making Him identical with the Deity in this regard. If we do He will vanish. The Christ of God cannot be conceived with a will of equal force with the Father. Yet, of all the distinctive attributes of Deity, what is more conclusive than an adamant will? If there is any "essence" which constitutes deity, it must be largely composed of determination.

"Not My will, but Thine" is the illuminating flash which reveals the relation existing between the will of Christ and His God. It is in contrast to the ignorant arrogance of stupid men who cry "I want what I want when I want it!" Christ recognized the fact that there is room for only one supreme will in a universe which is operated according to the counsel of God's will (Eph.1:11). He insists that His own will is not supreme. When He finds Himself out of line with the will of God, He bows to it. In that one act He makes His position clear. As the divine Executive and Representative, His will coincided with the Deity, but, when called upon to suffer as the Saviour, He had to subordinate His own will to the will of God.

The possession of a will is not an exclusive attribute of deity. Probably all of God's sentient creatures are possessed of some degree of volition. But none of them

can carry out their wills except in the measure in which these agree with God's intention. God's will is absolute and ultimately triumphant. It never subordinates itself to another. He who aligns his will with the divine purpose is Godlike, but not God. The very fact that he yields to Another is proof positive that his will is not sovereign.

The conclusive proof that Christ did not arrogate to Himself the direction of affairs, even in His own ministry, is found in His repeated assurances that He did *not* follow His own volition. "I am not seeking My own will" (John 5:30), He told the Jews who questioned His Messiahship. The Anointed is not in Himself the Deity Who decides the course of history. He is the One Who carries out the decrees of Him Whose will is supreme. Again He protests to them, "I have descended from heaven, not that I should be doing My will . . ." (John 6:38).

That He had a will of His own, independent of God's, is evident from the texts already quoted. But it was always so thoroughly in harmony with His Father's that they were practically one in operation. The time came, however, when the will of the Son did not coincide with the will of His Father. In view of the supreme suffering of the cross, His soul shrank back, and His will could not acquiesce. Hence His bitter cry, "Father, if it is Thy intention, carry aside this cup from Me" (Luke 22:42). He did not want the awful agonies that lay within the path which God had prepared for His feet. He recoiled in terror at the dark shadow which should separate Him from fellowship with God. *He was outside the will of His Father.* One of them must yield.

It is at this crisis that we see most clearly the wide gulf between God's will and His. God could not say,

“Not My will.” Had He yielded, all of His plans would have failed. The whole purpose of creation would have miscarried. The Sacrifice must be offered, or sin would dethrone the Deity. The hopes of a universe depended at this point on the inflexibility of God's will. And the expectation of all creation likewise depended on the pliability of the will of Christ. It is just as necessary that the Son should yield as that the Father should be adamant. The glory of God is His resistless determination. The glory of the Son His subjection.

How few of us know the mighty import of that self-effacing cry: **“Not My will, but Thine!”** At all times, this is the glory of Christ. Before His incarnation, during His earthly life, in resurrection glory, in His final subjection at the consummation, He always yields to the will of Another. Is this the proper function of absolute Deity? It cannot be. Moreover, when, once in His career, He finds Himself athwart the will of God, does He assert His will, as God would do? He does not. The only time that He desired to act independently of God, He submerged His will, and preferred His Father's.

GIVER AND RECEIVER

GOD and Christ are related to each other as Giver and Receiver. God gave Him the actual words He spoke, the very spirit with which He uttered them, the disciples which they won, His power and His throne and His glory. All are gifts to Him from God. Absolute Deity cannot receive gifts such as these, for He is Himself the Owner and Source of all. In "giving" to God we are only returning or acknowledging what is already His. Christ, however, can receive. That is His proper glory, in relation to God.

The declarations which fell from the lips of Christ seemed as spontaneous as though they sprang from His own mind even as they issued from His mouth. Yet they were inspired in a superior sense. When others spoke, the *record* of their words was usually inspired. But in His case the words themselves are God's gift to Him, and through Him to His disciples. He did not formulate a philosophy of life and pass it on to His followers. He had a divine outlook, and spoke as no other man ever spoke, because His words were a gift from above. He said, "the declarations which Thou hast given Me I have given them" (John 17:8). Again, "I have given them Thy word" (John 17:14).

He received all of His disciples as a gift from God. He did not claim to win them by His own powers of persuasion. Indeed, He had no expectation that any

would follow Him unless His Father had given them to Him (John 6:37). Being the gift of the Father, they were not dependent on His own protection alone, but on His Father's (John 10:29). His intercessory prayer, in the seventeenth chapter of John, is full of references to those whom the Father had given Him. They receive eonian life (John 17:2). He manifests God's name to them (verse 6). They are still the Father's (verse 9). He will keep them (verse 11). Christ had guarded them (verse 12). They shall behold His glory (verse 24).

Judgment is *given* to the Son. It is not His inherent right. That belongs to absolute Deity. It is delegated to the Christ because of His humanity (John 5:22,26,27). All governmental authority is His as a gift also (Matt.28:18; John 17:2). The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David (Luke 1:32). All the glories which are His now and in the future come to Him from the Father's hand (John 17:22,24; 1 Pet.1:21). All this marks Him as the great *Recipient*. God is lavish in His presents to His Son. It does not dim His glory in the least degree to "give" God His true place as the great *Giver*.

The prayer that He taught His disciples transferred to them His own attitude toward God's will (Matt.6:10; Luke 11:2). He did not pray the Father for help to carry out His own will. The disciples, likewise, are to have no will of their own, but to submit to God's will and seek its fulfillment. Our Lord never sought to put His own will on His disciples. He required obedience to Himself only as obedience was *given* to Him. He came, not in His own name, but in the name of His God and Father. It is His function to efface Himself, so that, eventually, all will be directly subject to God's will, without His intervention.

It will be objected that we must distinguish between the pre-incarnate Christ and His earthly career, as well as His present and future glories. It is usually insisted that His *kenōsis*, or emptying, will explain His subjection while on the earth. The question can be settled very simply and satisfactorily by determining His final relation to God after the eons are past. Will He then regain His full place in the "trinity" and leave the place of subjection for the supremacy of Deity? Quite the opposite is true. Little as is revealed of that glorious consummation, His final place in the universe is clearly and definitely stated. The Son also will be *subject* to God, along with the rest of the universe (1 Cor.15:28).

Subjection is the highest, the ultimate glory of the Son of God. During the last two eons He will exercise power and authority, so that myriads will be subordinate to Him. He will be the Sovereign of the universe. He will subject all of God's creatures to Him. In doing this He acts like God, He uses the power and prerogatives of God. While He does it He is called God. But when He has accomplished it, He does not return to a state of absolute Deity, as the trinitarian theory must insist, but He resigns the very functions which pertain to Deity. He voluntarily abdicates His throne. He relinquishes His authority over creation, and takes a place subordinate.

It has been suggested that this subjection applies only to His mediatorial work. But the fact is that His work as Mediator is finished at that time. He is neither King nor Priest. He is not even Prophet. All of His mediatorial offices have been fulfilled. They vanish at the consummation, because their object has been accomplished. The subjection is strictly personal. He is not called Christ, but the *Son*. The Son *Himself* also

shall be subject. He has subjected all else to God, and He joins the company of subjects in order that God may be All in *all*. He is the One Who, added to the rest of the universe, makes subjection to God universal.

THE SENDER AND THE SENT

THE DEITY sends, but is not sent. His Son is sent, and never sends His Father. This relationship is basic. It is not a temporary mediatorial arrangement. It exists throughout the course of revelation. These functions are never reversed. The Deity is always the Sender, and the Son is always the Sent One. This is an essential or fundamental relationship which illuminates and reflects the glories of each. The Deity would not be such if He were sent. Christ would be naught if He were not sent by God.

We cannot conceive of absolute Deity being sent. Who is there to send Him? Who has the right to tell Him to go from one place to another? Who has wisdom to decide His location for Him? And how can He obey, seeing that He is present everywhere?

One of the "verily, verilies" of our Lord insists that a slave is not greater than his lord, neither is an apostle greater than He Who sends him (John 13:16). The one sent is always subordinate to the one who sends him. There may be a mutual agreement among equals, but their equality vanishes when one goes hence in obedience to orders given by the other.

The Son came to do the will of Him Who *sent* Him (John 6:38,39,40). It was His very food (John 4:34). He made it the basis of His appeal to the people. He told

them, "I can do nothing of Myself. According as I am hearing am I judging; and My judgment is just, seeing that I am not seeking My will, but the will of Him Who *sends Me*" (John 5:30). The Absolute Deity cannot be *sent* by another. He goes where He goes, without let or hindrance, if indeed we may speak of Him in this way, for He is present everywhere. He sends, but is not sent. He commissions, but cannot be commissioned, for there is no one who has authority to delegate Him. In relation to the Deity, Christ is not the Sender, but the Sent.

The discourse of our Lord to the Jews, when they asked for a sign, reiterates His reliance on the will of God Who *sent* Him. He told them, "I have descended from heaven, not that I should be doing My will, but the will of Him Who *sends Me*. Now this is the will of Him Who *sends Me*, that all which He has given to Me, of it I should be losing nothing, but I shall be raising it in the last day" (John 6:38-40). His own will was entirely eclipsed in all that He did. He was occupied entirely with the will of God.

THE ESSENTIALS OF DEITY

The word "essence" is often used in reasoning about the so-called "Godhead." The word "essential" is far clearer. We have been considering several of these essentials, and in every case the Supreme Deity possesses them and our Lord Jesus Christ does not. Hence He is not "one in essence" with the Deity. He has a God, Whom He serves and worships. He is the Channel, but not the Source. He has a will but is subject to a higher. He is a Recipient from One above Him. He is sent and commissioned by a Superior. None of these is compatible with Deity. The Supreme has no God, worships none, sources all, is subject to no

other will, gives and sends, but cannot be commissioned, because He *is* supreme, and there is no God above Him.

The fact that our Saviour adores and acclaims Another, that He is not the first Cause, that He is subject to God's will, that He receives all from His Father and that He is empowered with authority by Him, does not dim His glory by a single beam, for *these are His glories*. He is not God's rival, but His Revealer. He is not His master, but our Mediator. God's glory is in self-revelation. Christ's glory lies in self-abnegation. After all His mediatorial work is finished, then the Son will be subject, not supreme. The furthest reach of faith's telescope finds Him first, not in eclipsing the Deity, or in sharing His sovereignty, but in such subjection as will make God All in *all*.

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