

THE DEITY OF GOD

PART ONE

THE ONLY TRUE GOD

The great French composer, Charles Gounod, once paid a generous tribute to his Austrian counterpart, Mozart. Gounod remarked, "When I was twenty, I used to say, 'I.' When I was thirty, I said, 'I and Mozart.' When I was forty, I said, 'Mozart and I.' But now I am sixty, I say, simply and sincerely, 'Mozart.'"

Our spiritual growth into a realization of God may be expressed in a similar way. When we are young, we say, "I." God scarcely enters into our thoughts. After a time, we begin to take account of the Deity, and our contemplations are modified to the conception of "I and God," though we probably would not give public expression to this. Later on, God's Spirit begins to take a greater hold on us, and exercises our minds "to *will* as well as to work for the sake of His delight" (Phil.2:13). Then He is placed first, and we say, "God and I." But the highest pinnacle of spiritual perception is not reached until the "I" has completely faded out of the picture, and we say, simply and sincerely, "God."

This is the pinnacle to which the apostle Paul is directing our thoughts when he states, as he does on several occasions, that "*All is of God*" (1 Cor.11:12; 2 Cor.5:18; Rom.11:36); when he declares that the evangel is "*God's power for salvation*" (Rom.1:16); and when he emphasizes that God is "operating all, in accord with the counsel of His will" (Eph.1:11).

It is particularly significant that it is in the prison letters, the most spiritually advanced of Paul's writings, that he prays most earnestly that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may be giving you a spirit of wisdom and revelation *in the realization of Him*" (Eph.1:17) and "that you may be filled full with the realization of His will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, you to walk worthily of the Lord for all pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and growing *in the realization of God*" (Col.1:9,10).

The Greek word, here translated "realization," is *epignosis*, (lit. *on-knowledge*). In the King James (Authorized) Version, it is generally translated "knowledge," thus ignoring the prefix *epi*, though three times the word is rendered "acknowledging" and once "acknowledgment." But the prefix indicates that there is more in the word than mere knowledge, and the Concordant Version renders it either "recognition" or "realization," depending upon the context (cf Keyword Concordance, p. 242).

Humanity as a whole does not "test God to have Him in recognition" (Rom.1:28). Humanity is not ignorant of God (v. 21), but "knowing God, not *as God* do they glorify or thank Him." Because of this, their unintelligent heart is darkened, and God "gives them over to a disqualified mind."

In contrast to this general trend, the eyes of our hearts have been enlightened (Eph.1:17), and Paul prays that we may be growing "into a realization of Him," that we may become "competent for a part of the allotment of the saints, in light" (Col.1:10-12).

And let us note that it is "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory" Who gives us "a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the realization of Him" (Eph.1:17), and it is the same God and Father Who makes us "competent for a part of the allotment of the saints, in light" (Col.1:12). Thus is the deity of God manifested in the believers, and thus we see the importance of our subject.

THE DEITY

The word "deity" only occurs once in the Greek Scriptures, in Colossians 2:9, where they speak of the entire complement of the Deity dwelling bodily in Christ. The word is defined in the Keyword Concordance as "that which pertains to God," and when we speak of "the deity of God," it is a way of expressing "the godness of God." (There is no word "godness" in English, so we have to use the word "deity.") As we understand it, it is a means of ascribing to God all that is rightly His, whatever field of His operations we may be considering, and, in particular, in attributing to Him all the glory to which He alone is entitled.

The Scriptures are emphatic in placing God first and foremost. The initial commandment to Israel was, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me" (Ex.20:3). Through one of His major prophets, Isaiah, God challenged His people, Israel, with the question, "To whom will you liken Me, and make Me equal, and compare Me, and we shall be alike?" And again, "I am leue, and there is none else." And yet again, "I am leue, the Alueim! That is My name, and I will not give My glory to another, nor My praises to carvings" (Isa.46:5; 45:18; 42:8 CV).

Let us beware lest we detract from God the glory that is His due! This is easier done than we may think.

GENESIS 1:1

The very first sentence of Scripture is of supreme importance in establishing the deity of God. "Created by the Elohim were the heavens and the earth." This is the Concordant rendering of Genesis 1:1, which places the words in their Hebrew order and gives the correct title of the Deity in this connection. The corresponding and more familiar phrase in the King James Version is "God created the heavens and the earth," and because this is the rendering that has been in use over the centuries, it is the one that has been specifically attacked, as we will endeavor to show.

"God created the heavens and the earth." This is a plain, simple, straightforward statement; no words could be more specific, nor less open to misunderstanding. And yet they have been challenged by no less than seven human philosophies, and, as all human philosophies are inspired by the Adversary, this means that Satan considers this Divine statement of fact so important that he has attacked it from seven different directions. Let us consider the statement in detail.

God

This word repudiates

- 1. *Atheism*, the philosophy of "No God." Atheism *denies* God.
- 2. *Polytheism*, the philosophy of "Many Gods." Polytheism *divides* God into many smaller deities. The Egyptians, Greeks and Romans all had many gods, and the cultures of these earlier civilizations still find their way into the thinking of today, and especially into the fields of literature and the arts.
- 3. *Agnosticism*, which says that it cannot be known whether there is a God or not. Agnosticism *doubts* God.

These three philosophies (Atheism, Polytheism and Agnosticism, or the theories of "No God," "Many Gods" and "The Unknown God") all seek to rob God of His glory as a unique Being. God answers their challenge in Isaiah 45:5, "I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside Me" ("I am Yahweh Alueim, and there is none else. There is no Elohim except Me" CV).

God Created

These words repudiate philosophies four and five, namely,

- 4. *Fatalism*, which says that everything came into being by chance. Fatalism disputes creation.
- 5. *Evolution*, which says that one thing just grew out of another. Evolution debars creation.

These two philosophies would rob God of His glory as a Creator. God answers their challenge in Isaiah 40:26,28. "Lift up your eyes to the height and see; Who created all these? Who is bringing forth their host by number? . . . Do you not know? Should you not hear? The Elohim eonian is leue, Creator of the ends of the earth. He is not fainting, nor is He wearying. And there is no investigating of His understanding."

This whole phrase repudiates philosophies six and seven, namely,

- 6. Pantheism, which makes God and nature one and the same, and
- 7. Materialism, which claims that matter is eternal

These philosophies, by reducing God to the level of His creation, deny Him the glory of His supremacy. He answers their challenge in Isaiah 40:25 and Isaiah 45:5, "Then to whom will ye liken Me, and whose equal will I be? Saying is the Holy One . . . I am Yahweh Alueim, and there is none else."

The fact that this opening verse of Scripture is attacked by so many human philosophies shows how determined are the efforts that have been made to undermine the validity of God's Word. But even more to the point is that it shows how determined and ruthless have been the attempts of the Adversary to destroy the absoluteness of the deity of God. And those who proclaim these philosophies are only following the lead, consciously or unconsciously, of their father, the Adversary. And those who believe them are only too clearly showing themselves to be his dupes.

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

When God gave His law to the nation that had just entered into covenant relationship with Him, He made the first commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me!" And He followed this up by forbidding them to make, worship or serve any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven or earth or in the water. That is to say, they were not to give to any creature the glory and adoration that was due to Him as the Creator. He must be Supreme, and the glory of His supremacy He will not give to another, for all others are creatures, while He alone is the Creator.

Yet, while Moses was actually receiving this commandment at the top of the mountain, the people below were flagrantly flouting its principle by constructing and worshiping a golden calf, and they even persuaded Aaron to connive with them. No wonder Moses was wroth, and broke the tables of stone on which the commandment was written. The people had already broken it before ever they had received it in writing (they had already received verbal instruction from God, and had agreed to obey it—see Ex.19:7,8—so they were without excuse). And God was wroth with the people, too, and there was a great judgment in which about three thousand died (Ex.32:1-28).

But this state of affairs is not a symptom peculiar to Israel; it is to be found in all humanity. Paul tells us in Romans 1 that God's great dispute with mankind, which brings down His indignation upon them, lies in the fact that "knowing God, not as God do they glorify or thank Him," but rather, "they change the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of an image of a corruptible human being and flying creatures and quadrupeds and reptiles" (Rom.1:21-23). Two verses later they are spoken of as those "who alter the truth of God into the lie, and are venerated, and offer divine service to the creature rather than the Creator."

This is the great lie referred to in Romans 1:25—altering the truth of God to make it seem proper for worship to be given to a creature rather than to the Creator. It is the same great lie which is spoken of in 2 Thessalonians 2:11, where, upon those who are perishing because they do not receive the love of the truth for their salvation, God is sending "an operation of deception for them to believe the lie." The love of the truth would direct them to the knowledge that "all is of God"—that the evangel is His power for salvation, based on the preaching of the cross; but the lie, backed up by all kinds of false signs and miracles, inspired by the Adversary, leads them into all sorts of false philosophies, which have as their basis the thought that man is capable of higher things, that he can achieve his own salvation independently of God, that he can work out his own destiny. This is worship of the creature rather than the Creator, and is an affront to the deity of God.

John H Essex

THE DEITY OF GOD

PART TWO

THE SUPREME GOD, HIS SPIRIT, AND HIS SON

IN THIS current era of grace, believers in Christ are no longer under law; this is the position emphasized by Paul in Galatians. We are under grace, and it is very good for us that we are, for if we were still under law, we would be bound by all its terms and be subject to all its penalties for breaking it.

GOD'S LAW

The great example of law in the Scriptures is the one given by God to Israel through Moses, and those who were subject to it had to study it in detail to make sure that they obeyed it, for the penalties for its non-observance were severe, and the Scriptures make it clear that the law, if it were to be kept at all, must be kept in its entirety. Indeed, James goes so far as to declare that “anyone who should be keeping the whole law, yet should be tripping in one thing, has become *liable for all*” (James 2:10). What a sweeping statement!

God's law is infinitely more exacting than men's laws. God's law makes no allowances for human weaknesses; it accepts no excuses for human failure. It demands absolute perfection in its observance, and admits of no relaxation. It does not matter what part, or particle, of the law one fails to observe, such a failure makes one a lawbreaker—a transgressor of law, and subject to the just verdict of God.

Let us then be thankful that we are not under law but under grace. “By works of law, no flesh at all shall be justified in His [God's] sight, for through law is the recognition of sin” (Rom.3: 20). Yet we are “being justified gratuitously in His grace, through the deliverance which is in Christ Jesus” (v.24). This again is an evidence of the supremacy and deity of God, for He alone has brought us into this position in which we are accepted in the Beloved. God has demonstrated to us that the law has been nailed to the cross of Christ, and that we are regarded as having passed beyond the cross and into a new creation (2 Cor.5:17).

But this does not mean that we should ignore the righteous principles contained in the law, and just please ourselves. We should not continue in sin that grace might abound to cover it up. The law itself is holy, and the precept holy and just and good (cf Rom.7:12).

Should we kill? Should we commit adultery? Should we steal? Should we bear false witness against one another? Should we covet? Of course not! Should we honor our parents? By all means, it is ideal if we do.

These are the six precepts governing human relationships, and make for good living. Paul has much to say about human relationships, and about our conduct towards one another while we are still in the flesh, but he does not use the language of law but rather that of grace. What was a stern command through Moses becomes a gentle entreaty in the hands of Paul. As we have occasion, we should be working for the good of all, yet specially for the family of faith (Gal.6:10).

But what about the four precepts relating to man's relationships towards God? Are we to put any other gods before Him? Are we to worship graven images? Are we to take the name of the Lord, our God, in vain? Surely the answer must be No. Though, again, we are not under law, as was Israel, regarding these matters, and will not suffer any legal penalties if we fail to observe their principles. But our consciences would surely be grieved, and we would be causing sorrow to the holy Spirit of God by which we are sealed. And we do well to keep one day holy to the Lord—not one Sabbath day out of seven, but the *whole day* of one's earthly life—by presenting our bodies a sacrifice, “living, holy, well pleasing to God” and not being “configured to this eon” in which we now dwell (Rom.12:1,2).

But apart from the literal observance of these precepts, there is a figurative way in which we can fail to observe

the principles that lie behind them—a way which denies God the glory which is His and diminishes the value of His deity. For example:

We should not kill, but we often do! We kill the truth of God every time we give support to the lie, which offers divine service, in whole or in part, to the creature rather than to the Creator— whenever we begin to think that any being, other than God, has the slightest influence on the out-working of that purpose which He is operating entirely according to the counsel of His will.

We should not commit adultery, but we often do! We adulterate the truth of God whenever we mix it with human philosophies, or allow thoughts of our own to divert us from what the Scriptures are saying. We should not flirt with these, but rather give our whole attention and devotion to God and His Word.

We should not steal, but we often do! Israel was accused of robbing God by not taking their tithes to the storehouse. We rob God whenever we fail to give Him the honor and the glory that is due to Him—when we fail to give Him the credit for the operation that He is performing in us, and take some part of the merit for ourselves.

We should not bear false witness, but we often do! We bear false witness whenever we fail to tell the truth concerning the Scriptures, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. We should be extremely vigilant lest we “alter the truth of God,” for this cannot be permitted, since every alteration, however slight, detracts from His deity. He stands by His Word in its entirety, and will suffer no deviation from it (Isa.55:11; Rom.3:4).

We should not covet, but we often do! We covet whenever we desire for ourselves some of that glory which God has plainly declared that he will not give to another—whenever we talk, for example, of “winning souls for Christ”—as though we were achieving something for God. God will give us a glory of our own, but it will not be the glory (or even part of the glory) that He reserves for Himself as the Deity. We shall never be gods, but sons of God.

All this is summed up by the words of that first commandment given to Israel, “Thou shalt have no other gods before Me!” This is a principle that we should always be diligent to observe. It is a principle that is carried through into the writings of Paul, for the apostle declares, in 1 Corinthians 8:6, “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.” But then the apostle adds, with some significance, “But not in all is there this knowledge.”

THE SUPREME GOD

“For us there is one God.” It is not sufficient that we should just recognize this; we must add the further truth, “out of Whom all is,” and this additional truth is meaningless unless we stress the comprehensiveness of the word *all*. We cannot have *part* out of God and *part* from someone else. This scripture is in line with Romans 11, verses 33-36, where the thought is expanded. “O, the depth of the riches and the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How inscrutable are His judgments, and untraceable His ways! For who knew the mind of the Lord? or, who became His adviser? or, who gives to Him first, and it will be repaid him? seeing that out of Him and through Him and for Him is all: to Him be the glory for the eons! Amen!” These verses declare, in an absolute sense, the deity of God. They are majestic in their conception, they are all-embracing in their scope.

They cover the whole of God’s purpose from its origin to its consummation—from the beginning when all was in God to the ultimate when God will be All in all. All is out of God; and this not only includes all that was created at the beginning, but also all that is needed to direct and sustain that creation until it has reached its final goal—all is through Him. What a wonderful picture!

Well may we say:

God is supreme, all-knowing and all-wise.
Who can advise Him, or to Him dictate?
None is like Him, so glorious and so great.
His Name is written in the star-filled skies,
And in the earth His power unerring lies.

His was the Mind to purpose and create,
And to allot to each His humble state.
In Him all live, Who every need supplies.

“To Whom shall I be equal?” saith the Lord.
Before His challenge other claims must fall.
His declarations stand; His sovereign word
May not return in vain, but must fulfil
The purpose of the One, Who worketh all
According to the counsel of His will.

This is the God Who could appear to Abram as the “God Who Suffices;” Who could declare to Israel through Isaiah that He was the only Saviour; and yet could lock up all together in stubbornness and, indeed, subject the whole creation to vanity.

Yet in locking up both the nations and Israel “all together in stubbornness” it is so that “He should be merciful to all,” for mercy can be best demonstrated against a background of stubbornness (see also Eph.2:1-7). And in subjecting the whole creation to vanity, it is so that it might have an expectation. A creation subject to vanity would suggest that all is futile and that there is no expectation whatever; and this is exactly how it would be if it were not for the all-sufficiency of God, Who Himself provides the expectation (see also Eph.2:8-10). In the ultimate, when creation has attained to its realization, it will be “God’s achievement,” just as the ecclesia, which is the body of Christ, is “God’s achievement” now. All is of God!

1 CORINTHIANS 8:6

Yes, to us there is one God, and one God only, the Father, out of Whom all is. This One is quite separate and distinct from the Lord Jesus Christ, though, of course, there is a close relationship between them. The One is the Father, the other is the Son. The One is Supreme, the other is termed Sovereign (Col.1:18). But let us note this; the Lord Jesus Christ is Sovereign only because God, the Supreme One, has made Him so. Peter explained this to Israel when he stated most emphatically, as recorded in Acts 2:36, “Let all the house of Israel know certainly, then, that God makes Him Lord as well as Christ—this Jesus Whom you crucify.” Paul also tells us this (in Phil.2:9), “wherefore, also, God highly exalts Him, and graces Him with the name that is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should be bowing, celestial and terrestrial and subterranean, and every tongue should be acclaiming that Jesus Christ is Lord, for the glory of God, the Father.”

What room is there here for the conception of the Trinity— three gods in one and one three, and all co-eternal and co-equal? (In none of the passages we have quoted is God’s holy Spirit even mentioned.)

The doctrine of the Trinity, as generally understood, is a most pernicious one, and is yet another attempt by the Adversary to undermine the deity of God. The words Father and Son lose their meaning if the Father does not precede the Son, and if the Father is not greater than the Son. Jesus Himself said, “The Father is greater than I” (John 14:28), and spoke of the Father as His God (John 20:17).

It is surprising how widespread this undermining doctrine has become, and how many believers it has deceived. We get into real difficulties whenever we use terms that are not in the Scriptures to describe scriptural matters. “Trinity” is a term invented by theologians; it has its origin in their creeds and finds expression in their hymns. We should be very wary of using terms which are unscriptural, and even more wary of building doctrines upon them. It is true that there is a Father and there is a Son and there is a holy Spirit, but they are not three Beings in one, still less are they one in three.

The Father is God in absolute right; He was, is, and always will be, the Supreme. As such, He is entitled to the worship and adoration and affection of all.

The Son is God in a relative sense only. He is “the only-begotten God” (John 1:18). As the Original of God’s creation (Rev.3:14), the Firstborn of every creature (Col.1:15), He appeared before creation “in the form of God”

(Phil.2:6) so that He might reveal to creation the God Whose true Image He is. But invariably the Son is pointing to the Father, and directing that glory be given to Him. It is the Father, Who (subsequent to obedience of His Son on the cross) ordains that acclamation be given to Christ, when He highly exalts Him, and gives Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow. It is clearly stated that this acclamation is "for the glory of God, the Father."

GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT

The holy Spirit is not a god at all, but simply the power of God as manifested in His invisible, intangible operations. For example, it operated invisibly in order to bring about the conception of the babe Jesus (Matt.1:18). It operated, too, on the minds of the various ones chosen by God to write down His Word (2 Peter 1:21). Now it dwells in the hearts of God's saints (1 Cor.3:16). It is never, in itself, an object of worship, but directs praise and acclamation to God and to His Son.

The beautiful relationship which exists between the Father and the Son was most aptly expressed by Jesus, when He said, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30), but this can by no means be used to support the theory of the Trinity, for later Jesus prayed that His disciples may also "be one, according as We are" (John 17:11), and later in the same chapter, "that they may all be one, according as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us" (v.21).

Jesus always recognized the deity of His Father, and will always do so, for at the consummation He gives up the kingdom to His God and Father, and Himself is subject to the One Who has subjected all to Him, that God may be All in all (1 Cor.15:24-28).

Let this disposition, which is in Christ Jesus, be in us also, and let us give all honor and glory to God, realizing and acknowledging that we can do nothing of ourselves. Thus may we subject ourselves to Him, that He may be All in us now.

John H. Essex

THE DEITY OF GOD

PART THREE

GOD'S WILL AND COUNSEL

WE pointed out in the last article under this title that we get into difficulties whenever we use terms that are not in the Scriptures to describe scriptural matters, and we instanced the word "Trinity" as one such case. Another term which is unscriptural, yet even more widespread in its use, is the term "fall" when applied to Adam and to humanity. Where do the Scriptures say that Adam "fell" when he disobeyed God? Yet we tend to speak of "fallen man" and "fallen humanity," and to refer to the event which occurred in the garden of Eden as "the Fall" (often with a capital 'F' to emphasize it).

Another word which we should be very chary about using is "failure." From one point of view, we may be correct in saying that humanity has failed—failed to keep the law—failed to live up to God's standard; but never let it be said that humanity has failed to fulfill the purpose for which God created it. God's purpose has been crowned with success from the very first moment of its conception to its ultimate conclusion. It is a success story from first to last. The deity of God demands that it should be so.

God's purpose is not a brilliant recovery from partial failure, but an unqualified success story throughout. It was just as much an essential element in God's purpose that Adam should transgress as it was an essential feature that the last Adam should be crucified. The one was a prerequisite of the other.

Are we then saying that Adam had no choice in the matter? That he could not help himself? That he could not avoid missing the mark? Indeed, we are saying just that. But let us look into this question of choice for a moment or two.

It is part of our human nature for us to feel and imagine that we have a considerable freedom of choice. From the moment when, as very young children, we learn to say, "Give me this," or "I want that," we are making decisions, and we tend to imagine that these decisions are entirely our own.

For instance, you who are reading this article, all decided to have a look at "Unsearchable Riches" at this particular moment. You could have picked up the magazine, or you could have chosen something else to read. *Or could you?*

Did you pick up this particular magazine to read, rather than something else, simply and solely because *you* decided to do so, or was it because *God* was operating in you to will as well as to work for the sake of His delight (Phil.2:13)? If you claim that the decision was solely yours, then you are refusing to admit the power of God's Spirit operating in you.

When we come to look carefully at the question of choice, we find how very few of the major factors that govern our lives can even remotely be considered to be of our own choosing. The main issues that have made us what we are, are not decided by us at all.

In the first place, *we* did not decide that we were to be humans. God has many creations—some spirit, some human, some animal. We remember being taught, when very young, a little bit of verse, which ran something like this, "I might have been a cow or a pig, and sold for beef or ham" and this particular stanza ended, "I'm glad I'm what I am." Well, we are what we are only because *God* made us so, and not because we had any say in the matter.

Again, we had no choice as to whether we were to be male or female, and if we had been of the sex opposite to what we are, our whole lives would obviously have been entirely different. Nor had we any choice as to whether we were Jew or Gentile, colored or white, prince or pauper; nor in what century we were born (and we may well remind ourselves that we could not be of that ecclesia, which is the body of Christ, if we had lived and died before the crucifixion). So the time of our coming into the world is very important, yet we had no say in the matter. And so we could go on listing other items in which we have had no choice whatever—our

nationality, our parentage, our early home life and education.

But still we tend to think that we have the freedom to choose, and certain scriptures seem to support that idea. "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve," Joshua told the Israelites, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15)

One of the most forthright scriptures seeming to support the idea of freedom of choice is that in Deuteronomy 30:19, where God says to the nation of Israel, "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."

Therefore choose life! But the fact of the matter was that not one in the nation was capable of choosing life. Why? Because of the inherent weakness of the flesh.

THE FIRST ADAM

Paul throws the whole position into proper perspective when he says, in his Roman epistle, that there was no fault whatever in the law which God gave to His people, yet it could not give life because of the weakness of the flesh. The law itself is holy, and the precept holy and just and good, yet the law was producing indignation from God because no one could keep it. But why was no one able to keep it?

This is the crux of the matter. In the past, we have tended to put all the blame for human failure on Adam. If only Adam had not transgressed, we say! But we are suggesting that the cause of human failure is much more basic than that. The vital scripture, which gives us the clue to the whole matter, is in 1 Corinthians 15, verses 45 and 46. Let us read them carefully, and weigh every word.

"If there is a soulish body, there is a spiritual also. . . . The first man, Adam 'became a living soul;' the last Adam a vivifying Spirit. But not first the spiritual, but the soulish, thereupon the spiritual."

The first man, Adam, "became a living soul." In that statement lies the explanation for all our problems. When God made Adam a living *soul*, He put into him all those soulish tendencies that would make it impossible for him to please God.

Man was created for a purpose, and that purpose was that he might provide a form of creation in which death could operate, in order that God's own Son might come in human form and suffer death for the whole of creation. We have discussed this in earlier articles, where we have considered the question, "What is man?" asked by David in Psalm 8, and we have connected it with the reply given by the writer of Hebrews, where, in the second chapter, he repeats the question and then goes on to enlarge upon the answer, "Yet we are observing Jesus, Who has been made some bit inferior to the messengers, *because of the suffering of death. . .*" The creation of humanity was made in order to pave the way for the crucifixion of the Firstborn of all creation.

And man was created a living soul. That is, he had placed within him those senses of sight, hearing, taste, smell and feeling which, in themselves, evoke passions which are opposed to God, and which can only be kept subject by the Spirit of God. "Those of Christ Jesus," says Paul, in Galatians 5:24, "crucify the flesh together with its passions and lusts." These passions and lusts are not the outcome of Adam's transgression, though they may well be increased as a result of death working through us from Adam, but they are the basic passions and lusts that are *inherent* in a fleshly creation. In Romans 8:6, Paul tells us that "the disposition of the flesh is death, yet the disposition of the spirit is life and peace, because the disposition of the flesh is enmity to God, for it is not subject to the law of God, for *neither is it able*. Now those who are in flesh are *not able* to please God."

And Adam was in the flesh, and as such, was *not able* to please God. Yet God had declared, when He had created Adam, that he was "*very good*" (Gen.1:31). What do we understand by this? Adam (like all the rest of creation) was very good in the sense that he was exactly what God required at the particular stage in His purpose when he was created. Humanity has a vital function to play in the purpose of God, but it is a function which requires it to be first *soulish* (with all the evoking of God's displeasure that this involves) and then *spiritual*.

Adam was created soulish, and "the soulish man is not receiving those things which are of the Spirit of God, for

they are stupidity to him, and he is *not able* to know them, seeing that they are spiritually examined." This is Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:14. See how again the writings of Paul illuminate the picture.

Adam was soulish, and his very soulishness obstructed his freedom of choice, the same as it has done with all humanity since. Jesus emphasized this when He said, "No one *can* come to Me if ever the Father Who sends Me should not be drawing him," and "No one *can* be coming to Me if it should not be given him of the Father" (John 6:44,65). The power of God is needed to draw anyone to Christ; the flesh, of itself, tends to oppose Christ, and prevents us from choosing Him.

In Paul's letter to the Romans, this conflict between flesh and spirit is one of the main themes, and in the seventh chapter the apostle describes how this conflict was operating within himself. He willed to do one thing, yet the flesh was continually pulling him back, so that he was putting into practice things that he was not willing to do. And the important point was that *the flesh was winning*; so much so that, in despair, he asks "What will rescue me out of this body of death?" Thank God that there is an answer, though it is omitted from the King James (Authorized) Version: *Grace!* "I thank God," says the apostle, "through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Consequently, then, I myself, with the mind, indeed, am slaving for God's law, yet with the flesh for Sin's law" (Rom.7:24,25).

The flesh was created for Sin—it was created to miss the mark, to fall short of God's glory, to fail to please God—and Adam, created fleshly, a living soul, could not help but fall short of God's requirements. And neither could Israel help but fall short, as regards the God-given law. Not one of them could keep the law because of the inherent soulish qualities of the flesh that prevented them from attaining to God's standards. And neither can we help but fall short of God's standard of righteousness because of the same inherent soulish qualities of the flesh. Without exception, in the flesh, all have sinned and are wanting of the glory of God (Rom.3:23). How charitable we should be to each other!

THE LAST ADAM

But there has been One, Who has come in the likeness of sin's flesh, yet Who was not soulish, but Whose being was completely controlled and dominated by the Spirit of God. The last Adam was a vivifying Spirit. Though He came in the likeness of sin's flesh, He knew no sin; yet He became Sin for our sakes that we might be becoming God's righteousness in Him (2 Cor.5:21). The flesh was made for Sin, and the flesh fulfilled its most vital function in God's purpose when it became the vehicle in which God's own Son could become Sin for the sake of those who had been created through Him and for Him.

The first man, Adam, was soulish, and as such could not please God. It was not Adam's fault; it was how he was made. The last Adam was quite different. He was a vivifying Spirit; and, though He came in the likeness of sin's flesh, He was, in fact, the One in Whom God was well pleased—in Whom He delighted. The first Adam walked according to the flesh; the last Adam walked according to spirit.

THE OLD AND THE NEW HUMANITY

Humanity as a whole continues to walk according to the flesh; man remains soulish, and as such cannot understand the things which are of the Spirit of God, for they are stupidity to him, and he is not able to know them, seeing that they are spiritually examined (1 Cor.2:14). The majority of men have not, as yet, been given God's Spirit to discern His ways. They will receive of His Spirit later on, when the earth is filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea (Hab.2:14), but for now, the Scriptures are speaking of those who are chosen and called to be believers. These are truly in a privileged position, for they are, in God's sight, delivered from their bodies of flesh in which they cannot please God, into a new humanity—a new creation, in which God can take delight. Let us note Paul again in 2 Corinthians 5:16-18, "So that we, from now on, are acquainted with no one according to flesh. Yet even if we have known Christ according to flesh, nevertheless now we know Him so no longer. So that, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: the primitive passed by. Lo! there has come new! *Yet all is of God, Who conciliates us to Himself through Christ.*"

The primitive passed by! The fleshly discarded! The soulish ignored! That which is displeasing to God is

finished with. "Nothing, consequently, is now condemnation to those in Christ Jesus. Not according to flesh are they walking, but according to spirit, for the spirit's law of life in Christ Jesus frees you from the law of sin and death.... You are not in flesh, but in spirit, if so be that God's Spirit is making its home in you" (Rom.8:1,2,9).

A EULOGY OF FAITH

It is stated of Enoch, in Hebrews 11:5, that "he is attested to have pleased God well," but, in reality, it is not Enoch as a descendant of Adam that is being praised, but rather Enoch as a man of faith, and in the very next verse it is affirmed that "apart from faith it is impossible to be well pleasing." Faith is a spiritual quality, given by God.

The whole chapter is, in fact, a eulogy of faith, not of people. None of the characters is being praised for what he does in the flesh; on the contrary, they are headed by Abel, whose name means "Vanity," and this indicates again the vanity of all that the flesh stands for.

Those in flesh cannot please God, and Abraham, for example, is not commended for his journey into Egypt to escape the pangs of famine, nor is Moses commended for his anger in striking the Egyptian. It is when the Spirit of God is being manifest in their actions that they are recorded as examples of faith, for then they are acting in full accord with His will, and at the prompting of His directions.

FREE CHOICE?

So coming back to the question of free choice, and to sum up what we have been saying, we are suggesting that what appears on the surface to be a genuine freedom of decision is in reality not so, but is in fact governed by hidden forces within our very natures—forces that were put there by God Himself when He made humanity what it is—when He created us soulish. A man's heart may devise his ways, but, when all is said and done, it is the Lord Who directs his steps (Prov.16:9). This direction may be unperceived at the time, but is there nevertheless.

It was there in the case of Jacob and Esau, whose future actions were decided *before they were born*, in order that God's purpose might "remain as a choice, not out of acts, but of Him Who is calling" (Rom.9:11).

It was there in the case of Pharaoh, who, unknown to himself, was roused up for the specific purpose that God might display His power in him (Rom.9:17).

It was there in the case of humanity in general—vessels of indignation, made by God for dishonor, and adapted by Him for destruction. It is the Divine Potter Who makes them thus (Rom.9: 21,22).

It is there in the case of the ecclesia, vessels of mercy, made ready before for glory, in whom God is operating "both to will as well as to work for the sake of His delight" (Rom.9:23; Phil.2: 13).

It is there in the case of creation itself, subjected to vanity, "not voluntarily, but because of Him Who subjects it" (Rom.8:20). Creation cannot help itself, that all its achievements are futile because of the slavery of corruption, but we take immense comfort from the fact that, in spite of all its present "groaning and travailing," it was subjected to vanity in *expectation* of the eventual realization of that glorious freedom which is now already being enjoyed by the children of God.

It is in the prison epistle of Paul to the Ephesians that we find the most absolute expression of the deity of God in relation to the points we have been considering. Here we find the phrase which puts all other scriptures into their perspective. "According to the purpose of the One Who is operating *all* in accord with the counsel of *His will*" (1:11).

God is the captain of the ship of the universe; all His creatures are its passengers. He is guiding the vessel across the ocean of time from the port that is called "All in God" to the haven that is termed "God in all."

The passengers have wills of their own, but only as much freedom of choice as their Captain permits, which, in the absolute sense, is no freedom at all, since at all times he remains in full command. He may allow them to wander seemingly unhindered about the ship, but even so there are parts of the vessel where they are not

allowed to go, and many things which they are not allowed to do. And all the time they are being carried along inevitably wherever the ship takes them—that is, wherever the Captain directs. When the ship goes wherever they want to go, they feel free, but the moment that it starts to move toward a place where they do not want to go, they know immediately that they are not free at all. But, since they are on the ship, they are under the absolute control of the Captain.

And so it is with creation. It had no choice even as to which ship it should join, or whereabouts on the ship it would find itself, nor has it any say in the direction the ship is taking. For much of its journey it is allowed to think that it is working out its own destiny, but sooner or later it is brought inexorably to the conclusion that God is in control and “is operating *all* in accord with the counsel of His will.” Thus it eventually grows into a “realization of God.” Blessed indeed are those who grow into this realization sooner rather than later.

“*All* is of God,” says Paul in Corinthians. “The One Who is operating *all*,” he says in Ephesians. If God is operating *all* in accord with the counsel of *His* will, can there be another free will in the universe? Can there be two Gods?

“Thou shalt have no other gods before Me,” wrote Moses at God’s dictation. “To us,” says Paul, “there is one God, the Father, out of Whom all is.”

When we have fully grasped the import of these great truths, we shall no longer say “I,” or “I and God,” or even “God and I,” but simply and solely, and majestically, “God.”

His deity will then be fully recognized and acknowledged.

THE DEITY OF GOD

PART FOUR

GIVING GLORY TO GOD

IN OUR STUDIES of the Scriptures, we frequently come across such expressions as “giving glory to God,” or “to God be the glory.” Peter, in one of his letters, uses the phrase, “that in all God may be glorified,” and Paul presses his readers at Corinth to “do all for the glory of God.”

Let us consider together some of the ways by which men, in spite of their fleshly weaknesses and sinning propensities, ought still to be glorifying God, and in particular, how we as believers should be doing so, especially in view of our deeper appreciation of His deity.

One method is by attributing to God all that is rightly His, and by thanking Him accordingly for all the benefits received from Him. This has been stressed in previous studies and is most important. It is the Creator’s demand of His creation.

We are today surrounded on all sides by indifference to God. We are living in what is largely a pagan world. Paul’s great indictment of men as a whole (in Romans 1) is embodied in the phrase that, “knowing God, not *as God* do they glorify or thank Him.”

It is not that they do not know Him. They cannot plead ignorance of His existence. The evidence of God all around, in the things that grow and the things that move, leaves them without excuse. Because of this and because they refuse to glorify God and thank Him, they become subject to His indignation.

GIVING THANKS TO GOD

The glorification of God lies in the creature’s appreciation of Him as the Source from Whom all blessings flow, as well as the Power through which all is sustained; the expressions of thanks are evidences that such appreciation is there, and is genuine. That is why Paul lays such emphasis upon our being thankful. “In everything be giving thanks,” he told the Thessalonians, “for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thess.5:18). “And everything, whatever you may be doing in word and in act,” he wrote to the Colossians, “do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God, the Father, through Him” (Col-3:17). In Ephesians he says, “Be filled full with spirit . . . giving thanks always for all things, in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, to our God and Father” (Eph.5:19-21).

Superabundance of thanksgiving is the apostle’s constant plea. “In everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God” (Phil.4:6). Let us note that our thanks should precede, or at least accompany, our requests to God. We can always thank Him again when our requests are granted.

Thanks are not necessary to God, but they gratify His heart. They are necessary for us, and for several reasons. They remind us constantly of His goodness. They acknowledge Him as the Giver. They help to convince us of our utter dependency upon Him. They inculcate in us a true spirit of subjection, and in all this we glorify Him.

We glorify Him because we acknowledge Him as the Deity. We know Him and add to that knowledge by our recognition of Him *as God*. This is the meaning of the Greek word, *epignoosis* (ON-KNOWLEDGE). In Romans 1:28, it is translated “recognition.” In Colossians 1:9,10 the same word is translated “realization.” This is a further stage of “knowledge.” Mankind as a whole does not have any recognition of God as the Deity; blessed indeed are we if we are growing into a full realization of Him. And the greater that this realization becomes, the deeper will be our thanks to Him Who creates it in our hearts.

There are several cases in Scripture where people are recorded as glorifying God by giving thanks for favors and blessings received. There is for example the case of the Samaritan leper, recorded in Luke 17. He was one of ten who were healed by Jesus, but the only one who perceiving he was healed returned “glorifying God

with a loud voice." And he fell on his face at the feet of Jesus to thank Him. How typical is this of conditions today! For every one who acknowledges God and thanks Him, nine (or perhaps ninety-nine) accept gifts from His hands and take them all as a matter of course.

Another instance, mentioned in Luke 18, concerns the blind beggar outside Jericho, who was given sight by Jesus. In verse 43 we read that he followed Jesus, glorifying God, and that the entire people perceiving it gave praise to God, Our actions in glorifying God, by thankfully acknowledging Him as the Provider of all the blessings we enjoy, may influence others to perceive their own indebtedness to Him.

THE RAISING OF LAZARUS

The two instances just quoted were the result of miracles performed by Jesus when He was on earth, but there was one miracle of His in which God was particularly glorified, and the account of this contains so many wonderful and instructive points that it is well worthy of frequent examination. We refer to the raising of Lazarus in John 11.

"Now there was a certain infirm man, Lazarus from Bethany, of the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Now it was Mary who rubs the Lord with attar and wipes off His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was infirm. The sisters, then, dispatch to Him (Christ), saying, Lord, lo, he of whom Thou art fond is infirm. Yet Jesus, hearing it, said, This infirmity is not to death, but for the glory of God..."

What, can God be glorified in infirmity? Are *our* infirmities also to the glory of God? Let us read on, and see what happens in the case of Lazarus.

"This infirmity is not to death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God should be glorified through it." Here, a new factor is brought into the picture. It is not infirmity, for infirmity's sake, that glorifies God, but that some facet of the Divine character or purpose should be displayed through it. In this case it is the power of God's operations in Christ; on a later occasion it would be the power of God's operations in Paul (2 Cor. 12:9). Here Jesus was being given the opportunity of demonstrating beyond any peradventure that He was indeed the Son of God, with power over death and the grave. And so, as we read on, we find that Jesus remained where He was for two days after hearing the news, although it is specially stressed that He loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

In the meantime we find from verse 19 that Martha and Mary were not lacking in visitors. Many Jews came to comfort them concerning their brother, but the One they wanted most and Who could help them most stayed away with seeming indifference. And when eventually Jesus did arrive—tardily as it seemed to them—each sister reproached Him in turn with identical words, "Lord, if Thou wert here, my brother would not have died." The same theme was also taken up by some of the crowd who said, "Could not this One Who opens the eyes of the blind man, also make it that this man should not be dying?"

How often we, too, think like that! We are living in the days of expectancy of His coming, and all around us our friends are falling asleep. "If only the Lord would come, and gather us to Himself, we need no longer remain in our infirmities! If only the Lord had come sooner, this brother or that brother need not have died." Or again, "Is there any necessity for all the mounting sorrow that there is in the world? If God would only hasten His purpose and cut short this evil day!" Such are often the burdens of our complaints. But God's purpose will not be hurried. Our infirmities are for His glory, and creation's travail is also for His glory.

Which gives the greater glory to God, the healing of the sick or the rousing of the dead? Which is the greater manifestation of His power? Had Jesus not tarried, Martha and Mary might truly have been spared two days of sorrow, but neither they nor we living nearly two thousand years later would have had that demonstration of the resurrection power of God which was provided by the calling forth of a dead Lazarus from the tomb. Neither would we have known that Jesus could weep!

"Jesus weeps" is one of the shortest, if not the shortest, statement in Scripture, but one that reveals much. The heart of the Son of God was touched. Though Jesus knew that He had come to conquer death, the immediate plight of humanity created in Him a tremendous bond of sympathy. And we are not to assume that He was really indifferent during those two days that He had delayed His coming. Doubtless His heart ached to be with

the sorrowing sisters in their distress, but He held back in deference to the greater need of a supreme demonstration of God's glory.

In all this, Jesus mirrors His Father. God is not indifferent to all the suffering of humanity, nor to the afflictions of those who are His chosen ones. He rejoices with us in our joys, and sympathizes with us in our sorrows. Brother A. E. Knoch has a beautiful comment on the matter, "Why does God allow evil? Why does He not hasten to remove it? All that is needed is His presence. But He delays. His delay confirms the great truth that evil as well as good is from Him. It is the necessary foil for the display of His glory."

It would seem from a careful reading of the context that though Jesus indeed tarried, the sisters of Lazarus were not left without consolation. When Jesus eventually arrived, Martha made a remarkable declaration of faith. "Yes, Lord," she said, "I have believed that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, Who is coming into the world."

Now, when Peter made a similar declaration on another occasion, Jesus responded by saying, "Happy are you, Simon Bar-jonah, seeing that flesh and blood does not reveal it to you, but my Father Who is in the heavens" (Matt.16:17). Did Martha's conviction come from any less exalted source than Peter's? Surely to her, it was a Divine revelation as well! And with her assurance came an expectation, and in holding fast to that even in affliction and distress, she glorified God. We too, though surrounded by a world of suffering and often suffering in ourselves, have a yet more glorious expectation than Martha's, which enables us to rise above our environment and to glorify God in seeing beyond present experiences. And (did it but know it) the entire creation, groaning and travailing together until now and subjected to vanity, not voluntarily but because of Him Who subjects it, has an expectation too—an expectation of "being freed from the slavery of corruption into the glorious freedom of the children of God." Would that creation were aware of its wonderful future!

Comparatively little is told us about that happy family of Bethany, and yet all that is said is both interesting and significant. Martha, in spite of that one rebuke from the Lord about her over-worry concerning temporal things (a rebuke which many of us could equally justly apply to ourselves!) was a very lovable character with an exceedingly strong faith. We have seen that both sisters used identical words in upbraiding Jesus for His delay in coming to their succor, but whereas Mary was content to say, "Lord, if Thou wert here, my brother would not have died," Martha supplemented this by adding, "But even now I am aware that whatever Thou shouldst be requesting of God, God will be giving it to Thee." Following this declaration by Martha came that intimate conversation between her and the Lord which ended by Jesus asking, "Are you believing this?" and Martha's reply, "Yes, Lord, I have believed that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, Who is coming into the world." Truly, Martha glorified God in believing, and one of the ways in which we can most truly glorify God is in believing also.

FAITH IN THE DEITY OF GOD

Believe God. Believe Him in times of blessing. Believe Him in times of adversity. Believe Him and trust Him.

By putting our trust in God, we affirm our faith in His deity. We acknowledge Him to be the Supreme, Who is operating all according to the counsel of His will, and Who is working all together for the good of those who are loving Him.

We acknowledge His right to bring afflictions upon us, and to give us the strength and courage to rise above them when they cannot be pushed on one side. None of them are allowed to separate us from His love in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Rather in them we are more than conquering through Him Who loves us.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, Job is the name that stands out as an example of endurance in affliction. It is noteworthy that the term "the One Who suffices" (in the King James Version: The Almighty) first used in connection with Abram in Genesis 17:1, occurs no less than thirty-one times in the book of Job, nearly twice as often as in the rest of the books put together. Through his afflictions, Job grew in the realization of the deity of God, so much so that, when they were over, he was able to say of God, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee" (Job 42:5). Afflictions are beneficial from an educational aspect, and we

may glory in them as such, realizing that they produce endurance, and endurance testedness, and testedness expectation (Rom.5:3,4). Let us not grieve because of them, but rejoice.

TEMPLES OF GOD

When Jesus was walking with His disciples, He said, "In this is My Father glorified, that ye may be bringing forth much fruit" (John 15:8); and the same principle is true of us. Paul desired the Corinthians "by all means" to glorify God in their bodies (1 Cor.6:20), putting away all evil practices and remembering that their bodies had become sacred temples by reason of the Spirit of God which dwelt in them. The promise that God would be a Father to them and that they should be sons and daughters to Him, should be an incentive to them to cleanse themselves from every pollution of flesh and spirit and to complete holiness in the fear of God (2 Cor.6:14-7:1).

But pollution of God's temples is not confined to the continuance of evil practices of the flesh; it is also to be found in the harboring of false prejudices, the cherishing of ideas which are unsupported by Scripture, the building up of theories and doctrines that are dishonoring to God. Each of us has a responsibility in this matter to make sure that he or she believes and proclaims the truth according to the Scriptures.

Having a true foundation is not always enough; even upon this we may build of wood, grass and straw, and in such cases our work will be destroyed, as by fire. How much better to build of gold, silver and precious stones, that our work may abide in the day of testing!

It is in 1 Corinthians 3 that Paul describes this testing process, and following verse 15 where he says, "if anyone's work shall be burned up, he will forfeit it, yet he shall be saved, yet thus, as through fire," he immediately adds, "Are you not aware that you are a temple of God and the Spirit of God is making its home in you? If anyone is corrupting the temple of God, God will be corrupting him, for the temple of God is holy, which you are. Let no one be deluding himself. If anyone among you is presuming to be wise in this eon, let him become stupid, that he may be becoming wise, for the wisdom of this world is stupidity with God."

QUALIFIED TO GOD

How it behoves us to stand by the Word of God in its truth and purity and accuracy—by doing so, we glorify Him Who has given it to us. Let us not be engaging in controversy for nothing useful, to the upsetting of those who are hearing and reading, but rather let us be continually endeavoring to present ourselves qualified to God, unashamed workers, correctly cutting the word of truth. We should stand aloof from profane prattlings, for they will only lead on to more irreverence, especially in an era like the present, when men will not tolerate sound teaching, but their hearing being tickled, will heap up for themselves teachers in accord with their own desires, and indeed will turn away their hearing from the truth and will be turned aside to myths. (See 2 Tim.2:14-16; 4:2-4).

To Paul was committed an evangel based on the word of the cross. It was God's power for salvation, and Paul was in no way ashamed of it. As his ministry approached its end, he committed it to Timothy with an injunction to guard it through the holy spirit which is making its home in us (2 Tim.1:13,14). Timothy, in turn, was to commit it to faithful men who would be competent to teach others also. It was an evangel in which works of flesh have no part whatever—in which, on the contrary, "All is of God." Let us not adulterate the Word of God, but, by manifestation of the truth concerning the evangel, commend ourselves to every man's conscience in God's sight (2 Cor.4:2).

THE TIE OF MATURITY

Finally, another way in which we can give glory to God is in the manner of our treatment of each other. A hasty criticism, an unkind word, a thoughtless action, may give pain to someone with whom we associate. In his Colossian letter, Paul tells us to "put on, then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, pitiful compassions, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, bearing with one another and dealing graciously among yourselves, if anyone should be having a complaint against any." The pattern for this gracious dealing is to be the Lord

Himself. "According as the Lord also deals graciously with you, thus also you. Now over all these put on love, which is the tie of maturity" (Col.3:12-14).

In short, we are to be "mutually disposed" towards one another. Paul uses this expression several times. In 2 Corinthians 13:11 he says, "Furthermore, brethren, rejoice, adjust, be entreated, be mutually disposed, be at peace, and the God of love and of peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss." A holy kiss is not just putting your lips against someone else. This is common practice in the world. A holy kiss is when you can greet another, knowing full well that what emanates from your mouth is truth and always in love and in the interests of the one you are greeting. A mouth that will never speak evil of a brother can give that brother a holy kiss. In Philippians 2, Paul says again, "If, then, there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any communion of spirit, if any compassion and pity, fill my joy full, that you may be mutually disposed, having mutual love, joined in soul, being disposed to one thing—nothing according with faction, nor yet according with vainglory—but with humility, deeming one another superior to one's self, not each noting that which is his own, but each that of the others also." And once more the pattern is to be our Lord Himself, "for," continues Paul, "let this disposition be in you which is in Christ Jesus also, Who being inherently in the form of God . . . nevertheless empties Himself, taking the form of a slave" (Phil.2:5-7).

Christ pleased not Himself, Paul told the Romans before continuing, "Now may the God of endurance and consolation grant you to be mutually disposed to one another, according to Christ Jesus, that, with one accord, with one mouth, you may be glorifying the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore be taking one another to yourselves according as Christ also took you to Himself, for the glory of God" (Rom.15:3,5-7).

Yes, we may truly glorify God by walking in love, one with another, by striving earnestly to observe the terms of that hymn we delight to sing:

Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love.
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above.

Blest are the sons of peace
Whose hearts and hopes are one,
Whose kind designs to serve and please
Through *all* their actions run.

Truly, the standard is a high one, but then, we are claiming to be sons of God!

To sum up, we have tried to show various ways in which we may exercise our privilege of glorifying God. This can be done by our subjecting ourselves to Him, by acknowledging Him in all things and thanking Him, by accepting evil (when it comes) as necessary in the outworking of His designs, by believing Him and trusting Him in all circumstances, by accepting infirmities and afflictions and living above them through holding fast to our glorious expectation, by developing the fruit of the spirit within ourselves, by standing by the unadulterated Word of God, and by walking in love with one another, dealing graciously with each other at all times.

And this we are praying, "that your love may be superabounding still more and more in realization and all sensibility, for you to be testing what things are of consequence, that you may be sincere and no stumbling block for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that is through Jesus Christ for the glory and laud of God" (Phil.1:9-11).

"And to Him be glory in the ecclesia, and in Christ Jesus, for all the generations of the eon of the eons! Amen!" (Eph.3: 21).

THE DEITY OF GOD

PART FIVE

THE RELATIVE AND THE ABSOLUTE

ONE of our great difficulties in understanding Scripture comes about through our unwillingness or inability to distinguish between the relative and the absolute⁽¹⁾. Because of this, we come up against seeming contradictions, and the general tendency is to accept the relative rather than the absolute. Both are true, but in different circumstances, and it is necessary that we should take these differing circumstances into account.

For example, let us note that the Scriptures speak of Abel, Lot, Zechariah, Joseph (husband of Mary) and Joseph of Arimathea (and others) as being *just* or *righteous*—the word is the same in the Greek—yet Paul is emphatic in declaring that “Not one is just, not even one” for “All sinned and are wanting of the glory of God” (Rom.3:10,23). How can both of these conditions be true? The answer is that the first is relative while the second is absolute.

The righteousness of each of the men we have mentioned is being judged against a particular set of circumstances operative at the time he lived. The righteousness of Abel, for instance, is in connection with the oblation which he made to God, and is in contrast to the unrighteousness of Cain in respect to his offering. Lot was righteous in respect to his witness to God in Sodom, and to his keeping aloof from the general wickedness prevailing in the city. Zechariah was without blame in the manner in which he conducted his priestly office, as distinct from the generally corrupt priesthood of his day, of which Ananias and Caiaphas were later examples. But none of these righteous men was completely without sin in his life, for when Paul contemplates the whole of humanity against the background of the absolute righteousness of God, he makes no exceptions, but finds them all wanting. “Not one is just, not even one . . . all sinned and are wanting of the glory of God.”

THE WORD OF THE CROSS

It is the apostle Paul who consistently proclaims the absolute; the other writers of Scripture generally confine themselves to the relative. This is because it is Paul alone who speaks of the *Word of the Cross* (1 Cor.1:18), and until this truth is proclaimed, the absolute cannot even be revealed, let alone understood. Indeed, it is not until after his preaching of the Cross that Paul can even mention the purpose of God, which has a culmination that is gloriously absolute, for the end of God’s purpose is that He may be “All in all.”

It is generally accepted that the Corinthian letters, and also Galatians, were written before Romans. In Corinthians, the word of the cross is declared to be, to us who are being saved, “the power of God,” and this links up with Romans 1:16, where Paul proclaims an evangel which is “God’s power for salvation.” In this evangel, “a righteousness of God is being revealed,” and this righteousness is so absolute that it makes all humanity unrighteous. “All sinned and are wanting of the glory of God.” From this, it follows immediately that no one can justify or save himself; in Paul’s evangel the righteousness to which all believers attain is not acquired through works, but by faith alone. It is “a righteousness of God through Jesus Christ’s faith, for all, and on all who are believing” (Rom.3:22), and bestowed upon them “gratuitously” (that is, without any cause in themselves that would enable them to lay claim to it). Works are completely excluded, for Paul reckons “a man to be justified by faith apart from works of law.” Indeed, he declares that “by works of law, no flesh at all shall be justified in His (God’s) sight, for through law is the recognition of sin” (Rom.3:19-28).

In the writings of James, on the contrary, justification is by works. In the relative context of the kingdom evangel this is perfectly true. James writes to those who are still under the law (and have, therefore, not yet come to the cross of Christ), for he says, “For anyone who should be keeping the whole law, yet should be tripping in one thing, has become liable for all” (Jas.2:10). But Paul writes to those who are “free from the law” (Gal.3:21-25). It is the very liability of humanity to trip that makes it impossible for a law to be given which can

vivify, and which can produce that absolute righteousness which satisfies God. The fault is not in the law, for "the law, indeed, is holy, and the precept holy and just and good" (Rom.7:12), but in the inability of humanity to keep it. Therefore, the promise has to be "out of Jesus Christ's faith," for He alone could keep the law. Now God is able to manifest, *apart from law*, a righteousness of His own through Jesus Christ's faith, and to bestow it freely upon all who believe.

The law can only produce a relative righteousness, for no one can keep the law to perfection. Those who strive to do so may be described as "just," in contrast to their fellows who do not endeavor to keep it. They may even be described as "becoming blameless," as Paul so pictured himself in Philippians 3:6, yet elsewhere he designates himself as "a calumniator and a persecutor and an outrager" and "the foremost of sinners" (1 Tim.1:13-15). The righteousness which is in law is actually one of the things which he deems to be forfeit because of Christ. This is the distinction between the relative and the absolute.

We may perhaps illustrate this by reference to sunspots. These are really masses of brilliant flame, but against the absolute brilliance of the sun itself, they appear as dark spots on the sun's surface—hence the name that is given to them. Against any other background, they would appear as luminaries, not spots. And so it is when the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is in Paul's evangel. Much that appeared before to be righteous, now assumes a different complexion when seen against the glory of God's own righteousness.

THE WILL AND PURPOSE OF GOD

In the letters of Paul, the absolute is consistently being proclaimed, for in them we are introduced to a God Who is seen to be "operating all in accord with the counsel of His will" (Eph.1:11). Can *anything* be more absolute than this? Though in other parts of Scripture, men may appear to have a free choice (for example, Joshua is recorded as saying, "Choose you this day whom you will serve . . . as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" Joshua 24:15), here in this scripture it is made clear that every choice that men may appear to have is, in reality, subservient to the absolute will of God. And it is in this context that God can speak of a "purpose of the eons"—that is, a purpose which spans the whole of the eons—for such a purpose, to be effective, presupposes the absoluteness of the will of God. Nothing is ever allowed to thwart Him, even for an instant. This makes God's purpose itself absolute, and so Paul is able to refer to it with the definite article, "the purpose of the eons," "the purpose of the One Who is operating all in accord with the counsel of His will."

Let us then briefly see how Paul presses home the absolute. In the matter of salvation, for example, whereas the teaching in other parts of Scripture is that "He that shall endure to the consummation, the same shall be saved," with Paul the teaching is, "God wills that *all mankind* be saved, and come into a realization of the truth" and "We rely on the living God, Who is the Saviour of *all mankind*" (1 Tim.2:4 and 4:10).

James makes works a requisite of salvation (James 2:14-26), yet Paul speaks of salvation as being entirely "in grace," and not out of us at all "not of works lest anyone should be boasting." In Paul's evangel, we contribute nothing to our salvation, but find ourselves to be entirely God's achievement (Eph.2:8-10).

In other matters, Paul is equally emphatic. If we want an absolute expression of subjection, we find it in 1 Corinthians 15:20-28, where Paul goes to some pains to point out that, in the final analysis, only God Himself may be excluded from those who are to be made subject to His Son. This of necessity, includes the Adversary, who in other parts of Scripture is given some measure of control and influence. It also far exceeds the relative dominion given to man in Genesis 1:28-31 and Psalm 8:4-8. Even when this is enlarged in Hebrews 2:5-8, we still do not see all subject to Him.

Again, if we want an absolute expression of vivification, we find it in 1 Corinthians 15:22. For even as, in Adam, all are dying, thus also, in Christ, shall all be vivified. In other parts of Scripture, vivification is relative. "For even as the Father is rousing the dead and vivifying, thus the Son also is vivifying *whom He will*" (John 5:21). In Revelation 20:6 it is only those who have part in the former resurrection, and whose names, consequently, are written in the scroll of life, on whom the second death has no jurisdiction.

THE DEITY AND THE "ALL"

The tendency, mentioned earlier, to accept the relative rather than the absolute, often means that we fail to give full value to the absolute when we come up against it. Nowhere has this been more frequently demonstrated than in the text quoted in the last paragraph (1 Cor. 15:22). The words of Scripture have been twisted in the minds of many sincere believers to read, "For even as, in Adam, all are dying, thus also shall *all in Christ* be vivified." This would limit vivification to the believers of today. No, the "all" in the second half of the comparison is just as comprehensive as the "all" in the first part. In Adam ALL are dying; in Christ ALL will be vivified. Unless this is the true meaning, Christ's sacrifice becomes, in part, unavailing.

Others, while accepting the all-embracing nature of the word "all," have questioned the true meaning of the word "vivify" (or "make alive" in the King James Version). They have qualified it to mean "rouse from the dead," with the possibility of dying again, as Lazarus was roused. But in the context of the whole passage from verse 20 to verse 28, which begins with the rousing of Christ from the dead and ends with God being All in all, and includes within it the final destruction of death itself, such a restriction of meaning of the word "vivify" is not admissible. The basis of comparison is Christ's own rousing from the dead. We know that He dies no more, hence neither do those who are vivified in Him.

A similar reluctance to give full value to the absolute is seen in the common interpretation of the passage in 1 Timothy 2:4, "God wills that all mankind be saved." In the minds of many, the overriding will of God is reduced to a wish or a desire, in part dependent upon the wills of mankind, the thought being that "God will have all men to be saved, if they will only let Him." How far short is this from the truth of Scripture, and how detracting from the conception of the deity of God, Whom Paul declares to be "The Saviour of all mankind, *especially* of those who believe!" Many would make Him the Saviour *only* of those who believe.

People who think in this way, would also, of necessity, put a restriction on the absolute expression of reconciliation as found in Colossians 1:20, where no being in the whole universe is excluded. God is making peace with all, both in heaven and earth, through the blood of Christ's cross.

The whole passage of Colossians 1, verses 15 to 20, is full of expressions that are absolute, both in the field of creation and in the field of reconciliation. Notice how frequently the word *all* occurs, and how, in three cases, it is expanded to make it quite clear that nothing is to be left out. In our quotation of the scripture, we have put the word "all" in capitals, to bring it out, and have shown the three expansions in italics.

"Who is the Image of the invisible God, Firstborn of every creature, for in Him is ALL created, *that in the heavens and that on the earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones, or lordships, or sovereignties, or authorities, ALL* is Created through Him and for Him, and He is before ALL, and ALL has its cohesion in Him.

"And He is the Head of the body, the ecclesia, Who is Sovereign, Firstborn from among the dead, that in ALL He may be becoming first, *for in Him the entire complement delights to dwell*, and through Him to reconcile ALL to Him (making peace through the blood of His cross), through Him, *whether those on the earth or those in the heavens.*"

A parallel scripture, but with a vital difference, is Romans 11:36, "Seeing that out of Him and through Him and for Him is ALL: to Him be the glory for the eons! Amen!"

The vital difference between this passage and the one in Colossians lies in the phrase "out of Him." The scripture in Romans refers to God Himself; the one in Colossians refers to the Son of His love. All is out of God, and through Him and for Him; all is through Christ and for Him. Such is the oneness between God and His Son that the "through" and the "for" can be attributed to both; but by the nature of the case, the "out of" must refer to the Father only.

In this passage in Romans, the word "all" is used only once, but it is an absolute expression. Whatever is out of God is "for Him" at the ultimate, and is "through Him" during the intervening period. Nothing gets lost on the way, but is safely brought through all the disruptive factors of the eons until it finds its place in that most absolute of all scriptural expressions, "That God may be ALL in ALL."

Dare we here limit the completeness of the first ALL? Can we limit the comprehensiveness of the second ALL?

If we seek to limit either, we cast doubts on the other.

THE WORD OF GOD COMPLETED

Wherever we turn in Paul's writings, we find them full of absolutes. That is because he was the one appointed to complete the Word of God (Col.1:25). We note a few more:

"Nothing, consequently, is now condemnation to those in Christ Jesus" (Rom.8:1).

"Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who blesses us with EVERY spiritual blessing among the celestials, in Christ" (Eph.1:3).

" . . . and subjects ALL under HIS feet, and gives Him, as Head over ALL, to the ecclesia which is His body, the complement by which ALL in ALL is being completed" (Eph.1:22,23).

"Wherefore, also, God highly exalts Him, and graces Him with the name that is above EVERY name, that in the name of Jesus EVERY knee should be bowing, celestial and terrestrial and subterranean, and EVERY tongue should be acclaiming that Jesus Christ is Lord, for the glory of God, the Father" (Phil.2:9-11).

Let us conclude this particular article by looking again at Romans 8, from verse 28, "Now we are aware that God is working ALL together for the good of those who are loving God," who are here defined as those who are called according to His purpose. Actually their calling is the middle stage of their spiritual experience, as outlined in these verses. Before they were called, they were foreknown and predestinated, and after their calling they are justified and glorified. Where, in any of these stages, do any fall away? Where is there any room for failure when God is working ALL together for their good? Any suggestion of this kind immediately casts doubt on the foreknowledge of God, and on His ability to carry through to the end what He has designated beforehand in accord with His purpose.

"How shall He not, together with Him, also be graciously granting US ALL?" (Rom.8:32).

"For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor messengers, nor sovereignties, nor the present, nor what is impending, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, *nor any other creation*, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord" (Rom.8:38,39).

What a glorious absolute this is! When asking the question, in verse 35, "What shall be separating us from the love of God in Christ Jesus?" Paul lists seven things which are grievous in themselves, but are the common lot of many in humanity. He deals with them quickly by saying that "in ALL these we are more than conquering through Him Who loves us." They are all the outcome of man's own inhumanity to man, and we are granted the strength to deal with these through our faith in God, Who gives us so many evidences of His love for us.

But then Paul goes on to list a series of nine other things which are outside of humanity's control, and then, just in case anything in the wide universe has been omitted, he adds a tenth, "*nor any other creation*," and gives us an assurance that not one of these, nor all combined, "will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord."

Paul can only say this because the power of the Deity is absolute, and because God is ever true to Himself. Let our appreciation of the deity of God enhance this assurance in our hearts.

(1) The dictionary defines *absolute* as "unconditional and unlimited" and *relative* as "having relation to something else." For the purposes of this study, we may regard *absolute* as that which is in accord with, or depends solely upon, the Deity, and in which no other factors may intrude. Thus the deity of God will be stressed in every mention of the absolute.

THE DEITY OF GOD

PART SIX

GOD AND SATAN

IN THIS SERIES of studies upon the deity of God, we have endeavored to show that we have a God Who is Supreme at all times, never for one moment giving up the glory of His supremacy to another. Our God is a God Who is operating all in accord with the counsel of His own will, progressing in stately and unfaltering steps towards the consummation of a purpose conceived in the depths of His own heart and mind before the eons began.

GOD MAY DELEGATE SOVEREIGNTY BUT NOT HIS SUPREMACY

In the course of the out-working of this purpose, God has at times allowed some to exercise a certain amount of sovereignty and control over others, but never to the extent of undermining, even to the slightest degree, His own supremacy.

This is shown most forcefully in His dealings with Satan, for in the book of Job, God drew clear lines of demarcation over which the Adversary might not trespass. In Job 1:12, Satan was permitted to touch all that Job had but not the man himself; later, in 2:6, he was permitted to afflict Job himself but not to take his life. The fact that God could erect such barriers over which His chief opponent might not pass is a clear demonstration of the deity of God.

This is the whole meaning and purpose of the book of Job. It is the oldest lesson in the world. It is not primarily about Job, or about his friends, or even about Satan, *but about God*. God is revealing Himself in this book as the Supreme One, to Whom all others must be subject, and this includes Satan, who is seen to be an instrument through whom God is operating to bring Job to a realization of Himself. And let us concede, as we contemplate Job's experiences, that his friends could furnish no satisfactory answer to his problems. They are only brought into the drama to emphasize the inadequacy of human wisdom and the futility of human counsel. Job must learn from God alone, and the result of it all is shown in chapter 42, verses 5 and 6, "Verily with the ear I heard Thee, yet now my eyes see Thee. Therefore I am rejecting myself, and I regret on soil and ashes."

Evil is brought into God's purpose that creation might be drawn nearer to God Himself—that instead of just hearing Him, it might truly see Him for what He is—a loving Father Who always has the welfare of His creatures close to His heart. But evil can only be introduced if God is always able to control it and use it to His glory. The story of Job demonstrates this completely.

THE POWER OF SATAN

It is comforting to realize that the Adversary does not have unlimited power. Only God has this. Yet the power of Satan should not be minimized. It is recorded that even Michael, the chief messenger, when doubting the Adversary concerning the body of Moses, dared not bring a calumniating judging, but said, "May the Lord rebuke you" (Jude 9). Michael was high in the hierarchy of heaven (see Dan.12:1; Rev.12:7), but the Adversary was evidently higher.

It is, in fact, necessary for the Adversary to be greater and more powerful than any other created being in God's universe with the exception of the Son of God's love. No lesser being could hope to challenge the headship of the Lord Jesus, for any such would inevitably be challenged in turn by others; no lesser being could hope to deceive hosts of messengers and draw them away from God; no lesser being could recruit the sovereignties

and authorities among the celestials among his subjects (Eph.6:12); no lesser being could sustain an unremitting opposition to God throughout the period covered by the eons; against no lesser being could God demonstrate so fully His absolute supremacy.

For it is in the control and subjection of Satan that the deity of God is most surely manifested. All down the Scriptures, we have moments when the Adversary seems to come close to achieving his designs, yet he never quite succeeds. Let us note a few of these and see how, in every case, the circumstances are overruled by God to further His own purpose. Yet in saying that circumstances are overruled by God, we must make it clear that we do not mean that God improvises. He makes no fresh alignments to suit the turns of events since He Himself controls every turn. It is God Who determines how His purpose is to be worked out, not the Adversary. God does not adjust matters to counteract Satan's machinations; He defines them beforehand.

THE DISRUPTION OF THE WORLD (KOSMOS)

An apparent triumph of Satan is seen in the chaos and darkness to which the original order of things is reduced by the disruption of the world (kosmos). God created the heavens and the earth in light, for He is light, and all is out of Him. Yet a disruption is brought about, and darkness ensues. Can we imagine a more desolate and impossible scene? The land in chaos, submerged by water, and the whole covered by darkness! Was God's purpose thwarted?

When the foundations of the earth had been laid there had been great jubilation among some of the leading figures of the celestial realms (Job 38:7). Did they perceive the earth as a stage upon which God's purpose was to be enacted? We are not told, but it is evident that they saw in it a cause for great rejoicing. In actuality it was to be the platform for the enactment of the greatest drama of all time, which would eventuate in the bringing of great blessings to all of God's creation including themselves. What must have been their impressions when they saw the work laid desolate? Yet God was not appalled, for even this desolation lay within the concept of His purpose.

Subsequently we find the Spirit of God vibrating over the surface of the water which had submerged the chaos, and it is becoming light again. This action of God is used by Paul as an illustration of the way He shines in our hearts, replacing the innate darkness by "an illumination of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor.3:6). But let us note that, though the darkness of the disruption was evidently a consequence of a rebellion against God (otherwise why should darkness appear at all?) nevertheless in the final analysis, it is God Who is the Creator of darkness, just as He is also the Creator of evil (Isa.45:7). Notice particularly the force of all the words used in this verse, and how emphatic the concept of Creator is in reference to those things (darkness and evil) which are in opposition to the inherent nature of God. This emphasis should completely dispel any idea that opposition to God finds its origin in the upsurge of a malignant being entirely independent of Him.

THE DECEIVING OF HUMANITY

With the removal from the earth of many of the adverse effects of the disruption, man was brought on to the scene. Humanity was, as we have seen in earlier studies, God's special creation, made in His image, with the ultimate objective of providing a form in which His own Son could offer Himself for all His creation, and thus eventually reconcile all to God, both that in the earth and that in the heavens also (Col.1:20). If humanity were to miss the mark, surely that would thwart God's intentions! Satan may have thought so. But no! Again God had, provided for this—nay more, He had intended this, for in creating humanity He had placed within it those very tendencies which would be unable to resist outside adverse pressures, and thus man would sin (miss the mark) when these pressures were applied. Satan's attack upon Eve was directed against those senses which are incorporated in the term "soulish," yet clever and cunning though he was, Satan in this episode, as in all others, was nevertheless another instrument in God's hands, unwittingly carrying out God's designs to the letter. If man had not sinned there would have been none to crucify the Lord of Glory! Nor would there have been any to whom God could later have shown His mercy; still less would there have been any in which He could have displayed His grace. Yet His purpose is to display in the oncoming eons, "the transcendent riches of His grace"

among the celestials, and He does this by showing them “His kindness to us in Christ Jesus.” How could He do this if we had not once all behaved ourselves “in the lusts of our flesh, doing the will of the flesh and of the comprehension, and were, in our nature, children of indignation, even as the rest” (Eph.2:1-8).

FURTHER ATTACKS BY THE ADVERSARY

As we proceed through the Scriptures we come across many more attempts by Satan to obstruct God’s will. In fact, whenever and wherever God’s intentions are revealed, the Adversary is always on hand to oppose. That was what he was created to do—to oppose God at every turn of His purpose, for he must carry out the functions of his office. We can only refer briefly to a few instances.

Once it had been made known to the Adversary, masquerading in the guise of a serpent, that his head would be hurt by the seed of the woman, Satan has attacked the line of the seed at every conceivable opportunity.

He attacked through Sarai (Sarah), by preying on Abram’s (Abraham’s) fears, so that he announced her as his sister, thereby causing first Pharaoh, and then Abimelech, to want her to be his wife. The intervention of God prevented this in each case (Gen.12: 11-20; 20:1-18).

He attacked through Rebecca by inducing her to deceive Isaac regarding Jacob, and so get the birthright and its accompanying blessing transferred away from the firstborn, Esau. He was obviously oblivious of the fact that God had already decided that “not as yet being born, nor yet putting into practice anything good or bad, that the purpose of God may be remaining as a choice, not out of acts, but of Him Who is calling, it was declared to her that ‘The greater shall be slaving for the inferior,’ according as it is written, ‘Jacob I love, yet Esau I hate’” (Rom.9:11-13; Gen.25:23).

He attacked through Pharaoh by putting it into his mind to issue commands which condemned to death all the male children of the Israelites as soon as they were born. Although the line of Judah through which the promised seed should come does not appear to have been in immediate peril, the infant Moses who was to be the future deliverer of Israel most certainly was. But he was saved by being taken into Pharaoh’s own household where he grew up and was trained in all the wisdom of the Egyptians (Acts 7:22). This was an infiltration into the Adversary’s territory if ever there was one.

Later when the Israelites came to be a nation in their own land and desired a king, God gave them Saul, a man head and shoulders taller than any of his subjects. Yet the Adversary brought a blaspheming giant against him in an effort to make the newly formed kingdom subject to the Philistines. Saul quailed before Goliath, but God provided David, a mere lad, to dispose of him. The encounter between David and Goliath was in fact the most decisive one in Israel’s history up to that point, for all God’s promises concerning that nation were centered in David and would have been nullified had he been destroyed.

THE MEETING BETWEEN JESUS AND SATAN

The most decisive battle in the world’s history was that between the Adversary and Jesus. To this battle Satan came in person; he appointed no intermediary. Having failed to slay the Lord at birth through Herod, he now mounted a frontal attack at a moment when the Lord was weak through fasting. But Jesus successfully resisted all the testings of His opponent, and in doing so He took the opportunity to proclaim a great truth concerning His Father. For He told Satan, “The Lord your God shall you be worshipping, and to Him only shall you be offering divine service” (Matt.4:10).

This was a quotation from the fifth book of Moses, Deuteronomy (6:13 and 10:20). In fact, all the quotations which Jesus used with such telling effect against Satan are from the same book. David had taken five stones from the brook, and presumably slew Goliath with the fifth, else why did he need five? The last one in the scrip was probably the first to be taken out. Jesus selected five stones from the running water of the Word of God—the five books of Moses, and defeated Satan with apt quotations from the last one.

Satan offered Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and their glory if Jesus would only worship him. In this, the Adversary was doing what many despots and dictators have done, who have sought divine worship in

addition to allegiance as sovereign. Nebuchadnezzar did this when he built his image, but he came to see the error of his ways before he died (Dan.3:4-6; 4:37). Though God might offer the kingdom to Nebuchadnezzar, He retained to Himself the right to be worshipped. And though the kingdoms of this world may (for the time being) be under the jurisdiction of Satan (and it was no imaginary offer that he made to Jesus), God has never conceded to him or to anybody else the right of worship as the One Who is the Supreme.

For God is God, and His glory He will not give to another, least of all to Satan. His deity is absolute.

It is not without significance that Jesus told Satan, "The Lord your God shall you be worshipping, and to Him only shall you be offering divine service." If the instruction to "Go away" is meant for Satan personally, then so may be the rest of the verse. "The Lord your God shall you be worshipping, and to Him only shall you be offering divine service." This utterance from the Word of God, handled authoritatively by Jesus, spells the final doom of Satan as an Adversary, but retains him as a creature who will ultimately worship God. Thus will the Deity be glorified.

THE GREATEST ORDEAL OF ALL

This command to Satan to "Go away" was immediately obeyed, and then we read that "Lo! messengers approached and waited on Him."

This seems to support our previous contention regarding the eminence of Satan. Messengers could not approach and wait upon Jesus while he was there, but as soon as he was gone they came and ministered to Jesus. Only Jesus Himself could command Satan, and the latter did not approach Jesus again, nor did he do Him any harm, either directly or through intermediaries, until the appointed "hour and the jurisdiction of darkness" was declared (Luke 22:53).

From this moment everything seemed to be going right for Satan. He claimed Peter, the chief of the apostles, and Jesus did not dispute his claim, but merely prayed that his faith might not be defaulting (Luke 22:31,32). From another of His disciples Jesus was betrayed by a kiss; the rest left Him and fled (Matt.26:56). Jesus was given up to be crucified; to be numbered among the transgressors; to be forsaken on that dreadful cross even by God Himself. Was this not Satan's greatest triumph? Yet in all this Satan was only carrying out God's intention, and the word of the cross becomes both the power of God and the wisdom of God. Such is the supremacy of the Deity that He can turn even the Adversary's fury into praise for Him. In the experience of the cross, above all else in Scripture, we can see once again that Satan can only be an instrument in God's hands. His greatest act of opposition only furthers God's purpose.

THE LURE OF SATAN TODAY

The ecclesia is Satan's target today. He is continually trying to lure us away from our loyalty and devotion to God, and to turn us away from a clear understanding of His purpose, and especially from a realization of God Himself and of the greatness of the calling with which He has called us. We do indeed need the whole panoply of God to enable us to stand up to the stratagems of the Adversary. It is not ours to wrestle with blood and flesh (so let us not waste our energies in disputes among ourselves) but with the sovereignties, with the authorities, with the worldmights of this darkness, with the spiritual forces of wickedness among the celestials. Therefore let us then take up the panoply of God that we may be able to withstand in the wicked day, and having effected all, to stand. We are not entreated to charge or be aggressive, but just to stand firm. All our armor is defensive; even the sword of the spirit is not to be used aggressively, but rather to parry the blows of our opponents. The sword of the spirit is the Word of God.

We cannot use this sword effectively unless we are familiar with it. Let us remember that all Scripture is inspired by God, and is beneficial for teaching, for exposure, for correction, for discipline in righteousness, that the man of God may be equipped, fitted out for every good act (2 Tim.3:16,17).

Paul struggled to present every man mature in Christ Jesus. He prayed that we might walk worthily of the Lord for all pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and growing in the realization of God.

So we pray that these articles on the deity of God may help us toward a deeper realization of Him.

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