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*“The Entrance of THY WORDS Giveth Light”*

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# THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.—2

ROWLAND H. C. HILL

Having briefly considered the Unity of the Godhead, expressed by a term that not only permits but requires a plurality of Persons, the Threeness of the Godhead may next engage our attention:

We bear in mind, of course, that the doctrine of the Trinity does not depend upon the meaning of a word nor the use of a plural form such as *Elohim*, but upon the plain unequivocal statements of the Lord Jesus Christ. These are supplemented by ascriptions of Deity to the Son and the Holy Spirit by the Apostles. Before approaching these, however, we may gather up some of the testimony freely scattered throughout the Old Testament. We shall begin with Moses, the great Exponent of the doctrine of the *Unity* of the Godhead.

Scholars have differed as to whether or not the plural form for God, *Elohim*, is merely a plural of majesty or may be adduced as a proof of the Trinity. At least as far back as A.D. 1150 the texts with *Elohim*, as "Elohim said, Let us make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness" were advocated as teaching the plurality of Persons in the Godhead. Others, like Calvin, considered such uses of the plural to indicate the greatness and infinity of the Deity, thus being a plural of majesty. Neither position need be argued at the expense of the other. Both may stand for, both may be considered to teach the plurality of the Persons in the Godhead.

Considering the word as a plural of majesty what is implied? Is it not that the singular is inadequate to the purpose of describing Deity? Does it not imply that the Infinite is more than can be adequately expressed by the singular number? In like manner, the idea of the Plurality of Persons in the Godhead is more adequately conveyed by the plural, *Elohim*, because the singular is not full enough. The argument for the plural of majesty is no more established than the argument for a plurality of Persons. Neither cancels out the other.

The use of the singular verb with the word in the plural form when used of God, rules out the idea of polytheism, though

the plural *Elohim* may be claimed to teach the Plurality of Persons in the Godhead. As is surely without need of demonstration, the doctrine of the Trinity does not permit the idea that there are three Gods. Asserting the Threeness of the Persons in the Godhead is not to imply a *class* as when a distinction of three human persons is considered. Distinctions of Person in the Godhead does not imply any such class as with men. Human ideas of persons cannot be used in the same sense as when the word persons is applied to the Godhead.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit are not three persons in the sense that Peter, James and John are three individuals. Peter, James and John cannot be made one. What the Bible teaches is not that three persons are one person but that *one* Being exists in three persons. The facts regarding the relation between Father, Son and Holy Spirit are clearly taught in the Scriptures and the word person seems the best available to express them. However, care must be exercised in the use of the word lest God be spoken of as "person." Ordinarily a person is "a centre of consciousness localized in a physical and psychical body." God is "three Personal centres of consciousness in One Being."

Originally the Latin for person did not mean what the English word means today. The danger in the use of the word "persons" is that in colloquial speech it implies a species. There is no species of Gods outside polytheism. God is one substance, and in that one substance there are three subsistencies; but the subsistencies are not individuals. The subsistencies must not be unified nor the substance divided.

Calvin said he would be willing that the word person be dropped forever out of the discussions of the doctrine of the Trinity, if only the truth could be retained that there are in God three distinctions, each with a peculiarity or a property incommunicable to the others, and each, with the others, GOD.

Let us remember that a mystery is not a contradiction. It has been said, "We may know that a mystery *is* although we do not know *how* it is." There is no contradiction in the doctrine of the Trinity; only a mystery.

### The Truth Declared

In Isaiah 48:16 there is a striking instance of the work of the Trinity: "and now the Lord God hath sent me and His Spirit." "That Christ is the Speaker, and not the prophet, is to be gathered from a comparison with ch. 61:1 (ch. 11:2, 42:1). His words are undoubtedly a prelude to what He is about to declare of Himself in chapter 49: 5-6. Jehovah, having prepared for the deliverance of His people by Cyrus, has sent His Servant acting by His Holy Spirit to accomplish a great deliverance for the nation and meanwhile to instruct and lead them." (*Isaiah*, by W. E. Vine, M.A.)

Isaiah 61:1 is another instance, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me. . . . The Lord hath appointed me to preach good tidings." This Scripture and Isaiah 11:1-3 are both stated by the Lord Jesus as being fulfilled in Himself, (Luke 4:17-21). Thus in His first sermon He establishes the doctrine of the Trinity and from Old Testament passages. Here again, (Isaiah 61:1) the Speaker is Christ the Messiah. In His words we find reference to Himself as the Sent One, to the Lord, (Adonai Jehovah) and to the Holy Spirit.

These passages together with the one in Zech. 2:8-9 declare the doctrine and require it. Further, the

### Truth is Displayed

In Genesis 1:1-3 we have God seen as the Author of Creation. The Spirit moves on the waters, and the Word (the God-said), is the Agent of the Divine activities. "By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made." (Psalm 33:6).

Again the truth is displayed in the Divine activity in Exodus 12-13. The Lord Jehovah delivered the people, the blood of the Lamb of God sheltered them, and the Cloud (symbol of the Holy Spirit) led them by day and night. All were baptized unto Moses in the cloud.

One further instance must suffice. In Isaiah 63:7-10, God's loving-kindness is celebrated (in v. 7-8). The Angel of His presence is mentioned in v. 9, and is none other than Christ Himself. Verse 10 declares that they grieved the Holy Spirit. Thus graphically is the doctrine displayed in the Old Testament.

Our Teacher regarding the Trinity is the Lord Jesus Christ and not a Creed, but the Creed of Athanasius sets forth the Scriptural doctrine: 'But this is the catholic faith, that we worship one God in trinity, and trinity in unity. Neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance. For the person of the Father is one, of the Son another, of the Holy Spirit another. But the divinity of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost is one, the glory equal, the majesty equal. Such as is the Father, such also is the Son, and such the Holy Spirit. The Father is uncreated, the Son is uncreated, the Holy Spirit is uncreated. The Father is infinite, the Son is infinite, the Holy Ghost is infinite. The Father is eternal, the Son is eternal, the Holy Ghost is eternal. And yet there are not three eternal beings, but one eternal Being. As also there are not three uncreated beings nor three infinite beings, but one uncreated and one infinite Being.'

There is no analogy to this doctrine of the Holy Trinity as found in the Scriptures. Triads or even trinities, if found in pagan philosophies are utterly different and utterly useless in connection with this Scriptural doctrine. It is not a mere theological discussion. It is not a philosophy of God. It is a vital truth and the most practical in the Bible. Apart from it we cannot understand the fulness of God's Fatherhood. We cannot have clear ideas of the work of Christ apart from it. Only through this doctrine can the meaning of the Holy Spirit and His ministry be understood. To deny this vital doctrine **is to blaspheme God**. Failure to pass on the knowledge of it brought censure on the Corinthian church. 1 Cor. 15:34.

Denial of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity denies the Deity of Christ. Athanasius defended this truth of the Deity of Christ against what virtually was the world of his day, claiming that in contending for it he "was contending for all." Its importance in all the Scriptures may be visualized in the following diagram. It sets forth what may be considered as the relation of the members of the Trinity to four great epochs in Scripture history and prophecy, and the pre-eminence of Christ.

*(Diagram next page)*

## THE HOLY TRINITY—A DIAGRAM

IN TIME PAST	IN GOSPEL TIMES	IN CHURCH TIMES	IN KINGDOM TIMES
"I AM" Gen. 17: 1. Ex. 3: 14. Christ Promised. JEHOVAH Prominent	"THOU ART" Matt. 17: 5 Christ Presented "Emmanuel" Matt. 1: 23	"HE IS" John 14: 6 Christ Proclaimed "The Comforter"— Jn. 15: 26	THE TRIUNE GOD Rev. 1: 4 Christ Pre-eminent "The Lord thy God" Isa. 60: 9
The Father pro- mises the Son shall be sent Psa. 40: 7-8 Deut. 18: 18	The Son acts as Servant of the Father Jn. 8: 29	The Spirit acts as Servant of the Son. Jn. 15: 26	The Revelation of Jesus Christ which the Father will give Him
<b>1</b> GOD speaks LAW from SINAI Emphasis on Unity in the Godhead	<b>2</b> CHRIST'S SALVATION Emphasis on Redemption	<b>3</b> THE SPIRIT REGENERATES Emphasis on Witnessing	<b>4</b> ETERNALLY CHRIST COMES AGAIN Emphasis on the Kingdom

## EXEGETICAL STUDY OF COLOSSIANS

## Chapter 2, verse 3

*en hō eisin pantes hoi thēsauroi tēs sophias kai gnōseōs apokruphoi.* (in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden). If the 'mystery' is identified with Christ, it is natural to connect *en hō* with *Christos*, as in A.V. and R.V. (cf. also ch. 1:14; 2:11, 12). Alford, Eadie, Meyer and some others would prefer, on the other hand, to read 'the mystery' as the antecedent. We accept the former, viewing Christ as the "Treasury of all . . ." All *spiritual* truth is essentially *personal*. It is the communion of the mind of God with the mind of man, but realizable only *in Christ*.

*Eisin* is not a mere copula construed with *apokruphoi* as a direct predicate—"are hid" (merely), but rather as a substantive verb, almost our "lie" or "reside"—"in whom *reside* ('are') all the