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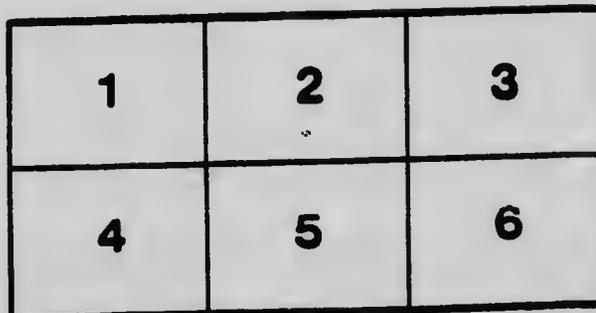
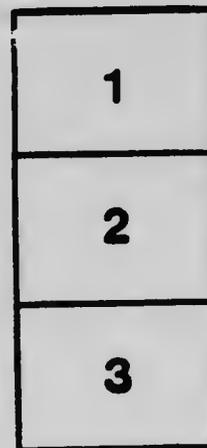
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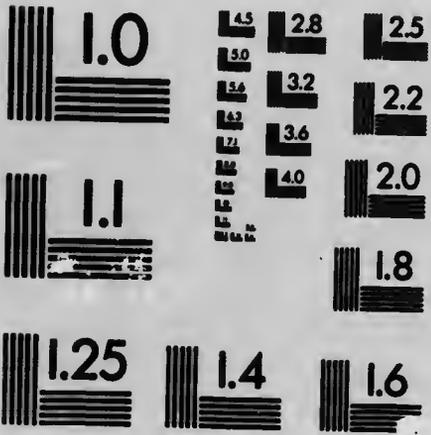
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In Memory of
the Author —

C. J. S.

May, 1911
—

The Holy Trinity

Being the Twenty-Sixth Annual Lecture
before the Theological Union of
the University of Mount
Allison College

BY
REV. CHARLES STEWART, D.D.

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PREFACE.

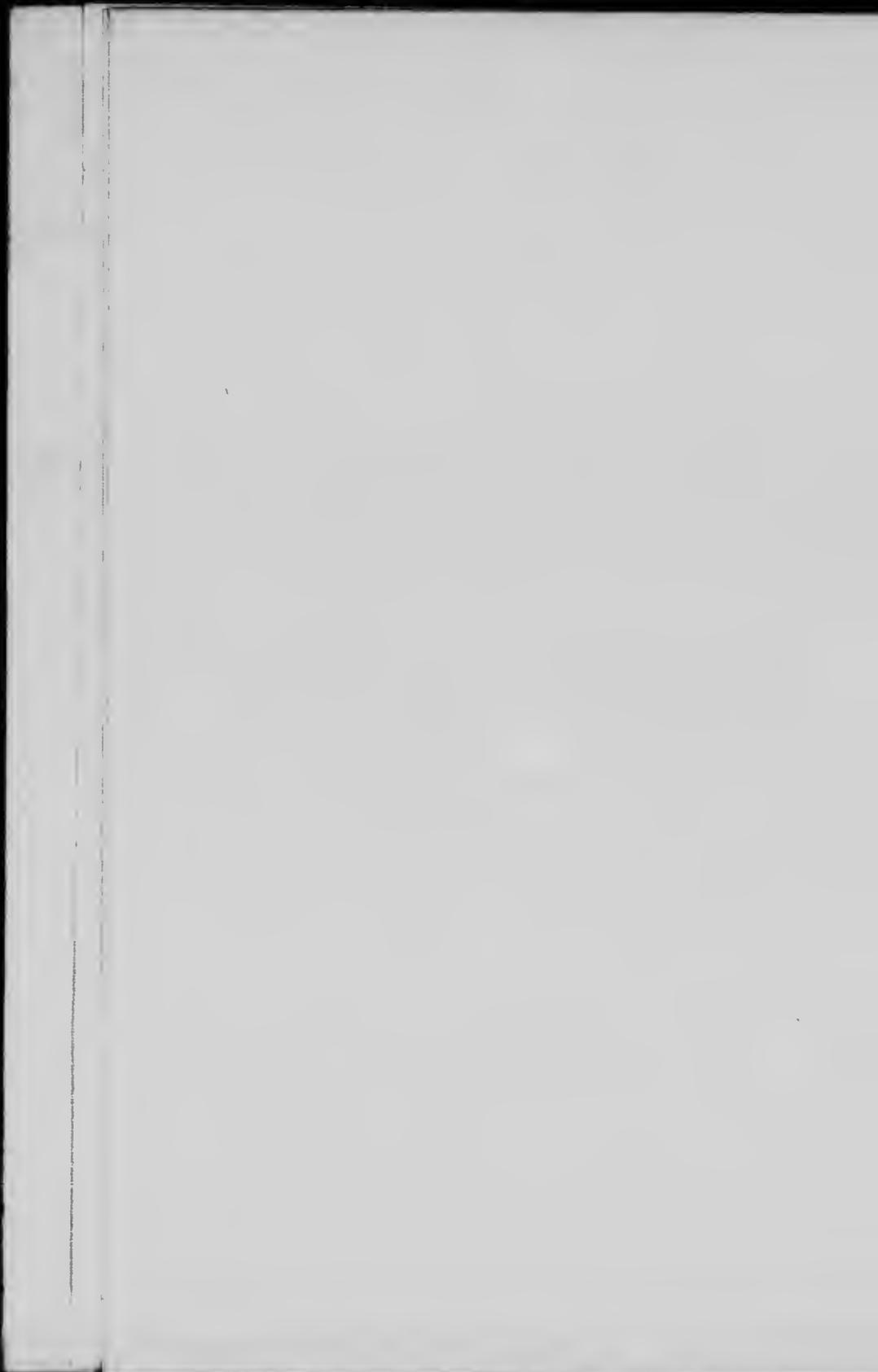
THE following Lecture, delivered before the Theological Union of the University of Mount Allison College, was, by a special vote of the Union, ordered to be printed, because of the great importance of its theme, as well as on account of the excellence of the treatment.

The Union further wished to give expression to its appreciation of the value to the Church of the faithful and devoted labors of the Author, who for more than thirty years had, as Professor of Theology in the University, been engaged in the work of training candidates for the ministry.

CHARLES H. PAISLEY,
President of the Theological Union.

SACKVILLE, N. B.,

September 1, 1881.



THE HOLY TRINITY

1. THE purpose of this lecture is not to define or expound the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, much less to attempt either to establish or to defend it. Rather would we seek to view it as it is presented in that revelation which God has been pleased to give of Himself, and to ascertain, in like manner, its relation to personal faith, and to the life and power of the Christian religion.

2. The postulates to our discussion of this subject are few and simple.

(1) We assume the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be true and trustworthy. On this subject we cannot now enter, at any length, upon an argument. Holy Scripture and Christianity are bound up together, and together they have a peculiar authentication of their own. They live, and give life. They have

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endured, notwithstanding many and fierce oppositions, and are as vigorous, and more extensively vigorous to-day than ever. For the progress and well-being of our race they are in the ascendant, for while other books and systems are localized and temporary, these are of universal adaptation, and always outstrip the good which they create. We accept their Divine authority as a sufficient working principle.

(2) We accept as the true rule of interpretation of these Scriptures, that which addresses itself to our common sense. The underlying conception of the Bible, from beginning to end, is, that in it God speaks to men for their instruction and salvation, and consequently that He means them to understand His teaching. For this very purpose He "spake in times past in the prophets" and in the end of the days "in His Son." The Divine voice employs human words, that we may hear and understand. And while

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ample scope remains for all that reverent criticism, low or high, may seek to explore, leading us to a clearer and more comprehensive knowledge of sacred truth, yet it must be admitted that the best preparation for apprehending revealed truth is a docile spirit, quickened into activity by prayer and an earnest practical purpose. Hence we turn to the book itself with the hope of understanding it, and under the strong conviction that we are held responsible for this very thing. We cannot forget the gentle but cutting reproof of the Great Teacher, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken";¹ or the gracious assurance, wrought out in the experience of one who himself had once doubted, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him."²

(3) Another thing we take for granted

¹ Luke 24. 25.

² James 1. 5.

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is, that whatever on this subject we find to be revealed, ought gratefully to be accepted and recognized. The absence of the larger truth can be no reason for the rejection of the lesser. To be silenced before the question *How?* does not imply that we must reject the answer to the question *What?* The one may be entirely beyond our cognitive powers, the other apprehensible in its true character. The mystery incident to the Divine nature may justly place a bar to speculation, but it presents no valid reason for unbelief. When it is claimed that God hath spoken, let us diligently and with deep reverence test that claim by the use of the powers which He has given us, and then hold to the result. It is as irrational to throw away such conclusions as it is presumptuous to rest on ignorance or rely on mere affirmation.

On such grounds we approach this subject. The Infinite and Eternal has deigned to come forth from His excellent

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glory to speak to us of Himself. In doing so He hath set bounds to our investigation as real as those which at one time circled Mount Sinai. We cannot pass beyond them. Any attempt in this direction must prove a failure to us, as well as a provocation to Him. Yet His purpose is not to drive us off, but to draw us near. He speaks to us. He would have us think right thoughts respecting Himself. To do so is to worship—to prostrate our spirit before Him, to join with the Seraphim in their antiphonal chant, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts," and with the whole church of the redeemed, whether on earth or in heaven, in saying, "We praise Thee, O God; we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord!"

The Old Testament does not specifically teach the doctrine of the Trinity. From beginning to end, as a revelation of God, it is incomplete. It looks forward to the latter days, and declares that then the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed, so that all flesh should see it together. To a certain extent, that which the New Testament sets forth so clearly, was, for a time, designedly withheld; for, the immediate purpose of the call of Abraham, of the constitution of Israel, of the giving of the law,—both moral and ceremonial,—of the inspiration of the prophets, and the exhibition of the whole series of marvels which were wrought in the history of that people, from Egypt to Babylon and back again, was to keep alive the belief in one true and only God, and to make prominent and place

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beyond a doubt the supremacy of His rule, in righteousness and benevolence. All idolatry was essentially a contradiction of this great truth. Therefore, as against idolatry, the besetting sin of our race, the unity of God must be held, and taught, and enforced, till, as an immovable foundation, there might be built upon it the whole superstructure of Christian truth. But the foundation must be first, the edifice afterward. To have committed the full revelation of personal distinctions in the Godhead to the Patriarchs and to the teaching of Israel would, humanly speaking, have been to confuse the issue, and to render difficult, if not impossible, a full faith in the unity of Jehovah. But while on this account we may not expect, and do not find the teaching of the New Testament unfolded in the Old, yet through all that part of revelation—strenuously monotheistic as it is—we find nothing opposed to that teaching, nothing in any way incom-

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patible with it. The Old Testament is never out of harmony with the New. The latter accepts and maintains as strongly as the former, that there is one,—only and eternally but one,—living and true God. On the other hand, the Old Testament indicates something of the character of those revelations yet to be made. Words are found there, whose full meaning can only be realized when the statements of the New Testament are taken into account. These terms in their original setting shine forth in their own proper light, and that light is not only increased, but presents a new aspect when the Incarnation, the Atonement and the Pentecost are brought to pass. Take, for example, the account of the Creation of Man—“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.”³ The very name God, in the original, is plural and many hypotheses have been framed to account for this form—as, that it had

³ Gen. 1. 26.

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originally a polytheistic meaning; that it included the one God, together with the higher spirits around Him; that it is the quantitative plural, denoting unlimited greatness; and that it is simply the plural of excellence. We need not stay to consider these severally. Some of them are clearly unjustifiable, others are not unworthy of our recognition. But when we find this plural noun construed with a plural verb—though ordinarily with a singular—and followed by personal pronouns also in the plural, we can scarcely resist the impression that it foreshadowed a distinction of persons in the Eternal Godhead. One thing is indisputable, that when the final revelation of the New Testament was given, in which such distinctions appear, this peculiarity of expression is found to be in perfect harmony with it. A similar remark may be made with reference to the language used at the Tower of Babel: "Go to, let us go down and there confound their lan-

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guage.”⁴ Nor, even if we accept a duality of writers as contributing to this history, can it be shown that this is only a matter of style belonging to one of them; for the former citation belongs to the so-called Elohist, while the latter is ascribed to the so-called Jehovist.

Another illustration on this subject is obtained in the account of the staying of Abraham's hand from the sacrifice of Isaac. It was “the Angel”—Messenger—“of Jehovah”⁵ who called to him out of heaven, and said, “Lay not thine hand upon the lad.” But it was the same “Angel of Jehovah,” that “called a second time out of heaven,” and said, “By myself have I sworn, saith Jehovah, because thou hast done this thing . . . that in blessing I will bless thee, . . . because thou hast obeyed my voice.” Here undoubtedly the Angel of Jehovah and Jehovah Himself—the Messenger and the Sender—are mysteriously one!

⁴ Gen. 11. 7.

⁵ Gen. 22. 7-18.

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So to Moses God said—"Behold I send an angel before thee. . . . Take ye heed of him and hearken unto his voice; provoke him not, for he will not pardon your transgressions; for my name is in him."⁶ We have the reproduction and the notable enlargement of this disclosure in the words of Isaiah: "I will make mention of the loving kindnesses of Jehovah. . . . In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of His presence saved them . . . but they rebelled and grieved His holy spirit, therefore He was turned to be their enemy."⁷ In view of these passages, must we not admit that while they do not conflict with the claim, "I am God, and beside Me there is none else," they gradually prepare for the manifestation of Him, who is "the effulgence of His glory and the very image of His substance," as well as for the acknowledgment of Him who is the Paraclete, the Spirit of God and of Christ?

⁶ Exod. 23. 20, 21.

⁷ Isa. 63. 7-10.

II.

From the prophets many other passages might be cited to show that light on this subject was gradually increasing, and that "the glory of the Lord" was coming to be revealed in the sight of all the nations. We shall refer but to one, and this principally because it is so interwoven with the facts of the New Testament on which this revelation began to be made. In the prophecy of Isaiah we read—"The spirit of the Lord is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."^s What then does the history of the later times give us? To begin with, that our

^s Isa. 61. 1, 2.

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Lord Jesus Christ, at His entrance upon His ministry and publicly in the synagogue at Nazareth, affirmed the fulfilment of this prophecy in Himself. This was the place which He "found" on opening the roll, and having read it, and closed the book, "He began to say unto them, To-day hath this Scripture been fulfilled in your ears." So far as the practical part was concerned, a reluctant but none the less powerful testimony was borne by the assembled congregation: "And all bare Him witness and wondered at the words of grace which proceeded out of His mouth." What then does this fulfilment imply but a recognition of the respective offices of each of the Three Persons in the Godhead, and by consequence such personal distinctions in the Divine Existence? The spirit is the Spirit of Jehovah—that is one distinction; He is "upon" one who performs Divine works, works of redemption,—that is an-

9 Luke 4. 17-23.

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other distinction, and gives us the three. Within five years another event took place, which throws a strong additional light upon our narrative. St. Peter is opening the door of faith to the Gentiles. To Cornelius he says,—“I perceive that God is no respecter of persons . . . the word which He sent unto the children of Israel, preaching good tidings of peace by Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all—that saying ye yourselves know, which was published throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; even Jesus of Nazareth, how that God anointed Him with the Holy Ghost and with power, who went about doing good . . . for God was with Him.”¹⁰ This is a most impressive portion of Holy Writ. In the circumstances of the case it was meant to be a setting forth on the part of a specially delegated and authorized Apostle, the elements of the Christian faith. What it does make

¹⁰ Acts 10. 36-38.

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prominent is, that God is the author of human salvation—that the message of peace is by one sent, even Jesus of Nazareth, a man, and yet more, for, as stated in the great parenthesis, “He is Lord of all,” making His Divine nature certain; and still further that in the fulfilment of His mission He was under the influence of the Holy Ghost, with whom as the spirit of power He was anointed. Again this language of St. Peter carries us back to the scene in which our Lord claimed that the prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled in Him. Nazareth is named, the preaching of peace is referred to. Conspicuously, the anointing by the Spirit is mentioned. All three passages, then, the words of Isaiah, of Christ, and of St. Peter, lead our thoughts to another occasion, the narrative of which bears directly upon the point before us. All the Gospels refer to the baptism of the Lord Jesus, and to the endowment of the Holy Spirit which followed immediately upon

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it. We take St. Luke as representing the synoptists. "Now it came to pass . . . that Jesus also having been baptized and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily form, as a dove, upon Him, and a voice came out of heaven, Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased."¹¹ The apostle John gives us the Baptist's testimony respecting this transaction: "And John bare witness saying, I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven; and it abode upon Him . . . and I have seen and borne witness that this is the Son of God."¹²

Now let these parts be put together—the prophecy concerning the spirit of Jehovah, and One on whom, for the purpose of bringing salvation, He should rest; then, centuries after, the endowment of Jesus with the Holy Spirit from heaven, and the voice proclaiming that in an ineffable sense He is the Son

¹¹ Luke 3. 21, 22.

¹² John 1. 32-34.

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of God; then our Saviour's claim forthwith that the Old Scripture is fulfilled, the testimony of His hearers to the effect of His words of grace, and finally St. Peter's affirmation that God had sent Jesus (He is Lord of all) and that His works are wrought as the result of the anointing of the Holy Spirit—and we not only have, after a long dawn, the sunrise of this doctrine of the Three in One, but the true harmony of the two revelations, and the placing of this disclosure of the blessed Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Godhead as of the very essence of the Gospel.

But like other doctrines of Christianity this had not yet reached its meridian. The process, as we trace it throughout the gospels, is very gradual and incidental. In the nature of things our Lord in His teaching gives prominence to His own Divine claims. In the Sermon on the Mount,¹⁸ He quietly but most strongly

¹⁸ Matt. 5. 18 *et al.*

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assumes for Himself the authority and capacity of the Supreme, as against all the human and recognized interpretation of the law of God. His simple affirmation, "I say unto you," opens up a view of that law which, though new, commended itself then, and has ever since, as that of the Lawgiver. Over and over again—thirteen times—is this expression used to impress upon His hearers, that from His word there could be no appeal. So, likewise in the same discourse,¹⁴ He carries forward the thought of His hearers to the final judgment, and in the simplest and most unhesitating manner, makes the events of that day to depend, not merely on His own fiat, but that is itself to be determined by ascertained loyalty, or the want of it, to Himself: "Many will say unto Me, in that day, Lord, Lord . . . And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

¹⁴ Matt. 7. 23.

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Midway in His ministry we find two assertions, given in very different circumstances, which make manifest at once His Divine nature and His relation to the eternal Father. The first is the prologue to the memorable invitation, itself bearing the impress of Divinity,—“Come unto me all ye that labour . . . and I will give you rest,”¹⁵ and is this, “All things have been delivered unto me of my Father, and no one knoweth the Son save the Father, neither doth any know the Father save the Son, and He to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him.” Words these, which, if they bear any meaning, indicate, and are evidently meant to indicate, an unfathomable Oneness of Being, with a corresponding differentiation of Personality, wherein knowledge of each other is shared by each without limitation. The other is meant to confute the gainsayers. “I,” said He, “and the Father are one.” “The

¹⁵ Matt. 11. 27.

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Jews took up stones again to stone Him."¹⁶ He demanded the reason for this procedure. They said—"Because that thou being a man, makest thyself God." Did He intimate that they had mistaken His meaning? Did He repudiate such an assumption? He did neither. "Say ye of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said I am the Son of God? If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do them, though ye believe not me, believe the works." Why? "That ye may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in Him."

And to pass by many statements that are not only in harmony with this view, but cannot be reconciled with any other, let us hear our Lord in the solemn hour of His trial, and in the sight of the cross itself. In regard to minor charges, "Jesus held His peace." Now the true

¹⁶ John 10. 30 *et seq.*

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animus of His accusers appears. The issue is taken on the highest conceivable ground. "And the high priest said unto Him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God?"¹⁷ No circumstances can be imagined more likely to make a man speak the truth. He is before the most sacred tribunal of His nation. He is, in the most solemn manner, put upon His oath. The question is clear and direct. It has respect to a matter that involves either the most atrocious wickedness or the most glorious prerogatives. And well He knows that if He claims the latter, He will be dealt with as guilty of the former, and be put to death for it. No man, capable of sane thought, would in this extremity indulge in falsehood; yet with perfect calmness, "Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said; nevertheless I say unto you, henceforth ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the

¹⁷ Matt. 27. 63 *et seq.*

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right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven." The claim of Divinity is as explicitly made now as afterwards, "by the resurrection of the dead" "He was declared to be the Son of God with power."¹⁸

And in like manner was the Divine Personality of the Holy Spirit gradually disclosed during the ministry of our Lord. An inspired commentator has said, with reference to one great promise of our Lord, "But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believed on Him were to receive: for the Spirit was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified." Until, then, that event had transpired we are not warranted to expect a full revelation of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Yet, as we have seen that He descended upon our Saviour just after His baptism, so throughout our Lord's ministry the Spirit's person and His gracious influence became clearer and more definite. In

¹⁸ Rom. 1. 4.

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His instruction upon prayer our Lord says, "How much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him."¹⁹ Referring again to the future persecution of His disciples by rulers and authorities, He says, "The Holy Spirit shall teach you in that very hour what ye ought to say."²⁰ And once more, as showing that the power which wrought in Him implied the personal agency of one truly God, and that to ascribe it to demoniacal influence was knowingly to pervert the power which makes for salvation, He said, "Everyone who shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Spirit it shall not be forgiven."²¹ Such words forbid the supposition of a creaturely personality as being thus the object of unpardonable sin.

But it is in the 14th, 15th and 16th

¹⁹ Luke 11. 13.

²⁰ Luke 12. 12.

²¹ Luke 12. 10.

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chapters of the gospel according to St. John, that before the actual event of our redemption, we find the most distinct utterances with which our Lord has favored us, respecting the Son and the Holy Spirit. More than these thus given He could not then impart, simply because His disciples could not bear them then.

But what a treasure do they contain! And how obviously they prepare the way for the subsequent more perfect teaching!²² First, "I will pray"—make request of—"the Father, and He shall give you another Paraclete that He may be with you for ever." Who is this other Paraclete? "But the Paraclete, even the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance, all that I said to you."²³ Here is the personal designation and the sending by the Father, yet in the name of the Son, and with reference to the full and vital teach-

²² John 14. 16.

²³ John 14. 26.

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ing of His ministry. And, secondly, "When the Paraclete is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father, He shall bear witness of me."²⁴ And once more, "Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come. . . . He shall glorify me for He shall take of mine and shall declare it unto you. All things whatsoever the Father hath, are mine, therefore said I, that he taketh of mine and shall declare it unto you."

These sayings are all emphatic, they are a new revelation. In them the Holy Spirit is distinctly a Person, exercising intelligent and volitional powers—He shall teach, bring back to memory, and taking of the things of Christ should glorify Him. And this He should do among the disciples, not as our Saviour did, for a limited time, but "forever." These characterizations are, by their very nature, such as no creature however ex-

²⁴ John 16. 13-15.

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alted could possess. They belong to Divinity exclusively. And yet there is an obvious inter-communion between the Spirit, the Son and the Father that shuts out the conception of three separate existences. The Spirit is, for the accomplishment of His peculiar work, "sent." But this sending again is equally by both the Father and the Son. Expressly He proceedeth from the Father, but even so, the Father sendeth Him in "the name of the Son"; and in glorifying the Son, which is the office assigned to Him, He takes of the things which are equally those of both the Father and the Son, for "all" that the one hath the other hath likewise. In all of this we find a testimony from the "faithful and true witness," to be received and welcomed, not a thesis for speculation or demonstration. It is a statement of fact, the cognition of which is within our mental grasp; it is not a description of method, as to how this fact

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can be, for that transcends our intellectual power.

But now we pass from the upper room in Jerusalem to the mountain in Galilee.²⁵ The speaker is the same, yet changed in His appearance. He became dead, but is alive again. The eleven are there, but on this occasion many others—probably this was the time when “He appeared to above five hundred brethren at once.”²⁶ His apostles worshipped Him, but “some” of the others doubted. Then “Jesus came to them,” and in words such as never besides were spoken on this planet, “spake unto them saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth, Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I command you; and

²⁵ Matt. 28. 16-20.

²⁶ 1 Cor. 15. 6.

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lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world.”

Here then we find the most explicit, comprehensive and peremptory of our Lord's utterances on the subject before us. It was the announcement of that to which all previous revelation respecting the Godhead had led up, and so it became the very formulation of the Christian faith. More than this, it is the very last, as well as the greatest word said on this mysterious subject. Not an iota, by way of definition or exposition, is added in any subsequent portion of the New Testament. What we do find, whether in the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles, or the Book of Revelation, is but the use or the acknowledgment of these terms, and their application in the process of redemption to the whole system of Christian truth—this and no more, but, we may add, this and no less. A careful examination of the words will give us, in brief: 1. There are personal distinctions in the Godhead.

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Each has a name peculiar to Himself. Not one of these terms can be exchanged for another. The conception intended for the term Father cannot be transferred to that of the term Son. Nor can that of the Holy Spirit be applied to either of the others. Accepting the terms, we cannot leave out the distinction.

2. In respect of these we observe equality. There is no greater or lesser, no caused or uncaused. No difference as objects of regard and trust. Whatever is due to one is likewise due to each of the others—for the claim is one.

3. And that claim is for Divine honour. For not only does this declaration stand in the very forefront of the message of mercy to a lost world, but its recognition, as the very essence of that message, is provided for in the act of submission, of acceptance, of worship required in the admission of every member to the Church of God. For what is baptism but the sign and the seal of consecration to God—to

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God on His own terms, to God in the provision and the procuration, and the impartation of salvation, in which each of the all-glorious three has His own appropriate part!

4. Yet, finally, we are taught by the use of the One Name, which embraces all the Three Persons, that the object of this dedication is not to any one of the three exclusively, or to all three as separate deities, but to the three in an ineffable but real unity. One is the name, for one is God. Not less than any part of the Old Testament, or than all of it together, does this simple ordinance, instituted by the Saviour, Christ, declare that there is one God, and none other than He. The echoes of the law and the prophets are heard here. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."²⁷ "Look unto me, and be ye saved, for I am God and there is none else."²⁸ His Son from heaven commands, "Baptize into the name."

²⁷ Deut. 6. 4.

²⁸ Isa. 45. 22.

III.

We pass to the later literature of the New Testament, in order that we may discover in what light the Apostles and early Christians regarded the teaching of our Lord on this great subject. The Acts of the Apostles first claims our attention. It is but a fragment of Church History, but is of great value, not only as giving an account of the beginnings of the Christian Church, but as showing that the power of Christianity consisted in a new life, a Divine life, in a more perfect energy than mankind had previously known. That life, that energy was the power of the Holy Spirit. The book itself might more aptly be called The Acts of the Holy Spirit. The teaching of the Apostles, their personal influence, and the sacred name which they proclaimed, according to this narrative, obtained force and produced results only by the presence and direct

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agency of the Holy Spirit. On this fact, as evidence of the Divinity, authority and energy of the Third Person in the Holy Trinity, the writer lays constant stress. "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost."²⁹ "Why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Ghost . . . thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God."³⁰ "The Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."³¹ "And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden of the Holy Ghost to speak the word in Asia."³²

But on this aspect we do not dwell. Rather we turn to the record to ascertain whether the doctrine which closes the Gospel, reappears in the history of the Church, and if so, in what light it is presented to us.

Now it is somewhat remarkable that, in

²⁹ Acts 2. 4.

³¹ Acts 13. 2.

³⁰ Acts 5. 3, 4.

³² Acts 16. 6.

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the simplest historical statements of the beginning of the Acts, we find the echoes, very distinct, of the memorable words of our Lord in the great commission. In the first eight verses of the book we have the Sacred Three named twice over, in such a way as to present the Divine personality of each in its relation to human salvation. "The former treatise . . . concerning all that Jesus began to do and to teach . . . after that He had given commandment through the Holy Ghost. . . . He charged them"—the apostles—"not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye have heard from me."³³ This is St. Luke's preface to his narrative. It is no theological dogma, nor does it appear to be charged with any special form of religious belief. It is a plain matter-of-fact statement, introductory to the subsequent history. Yet it is interpreted with the recognition of the honour due to each

³³ Acts 1. 1-5.

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one of the Holy Three. So also the words following. Still largely under the dominance of their crude notions of an earthly sovereignty for their Lord, the disciples ask whether at this time the kingdom would be restored to Israel? Our Lord's appropriate and prophetic answer was, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father hath set within His own authority. But ye shall receive power when the Holy Ghost is come upon you and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."³⁴ Here the Father is supreme, but the Holy Ghost is the source of apostolic energy, and the calling of the apostles, when endued with this power, is to bear testimony to Christ their Lord. Thus the history of our Lord on earth is connected with the triumph of His cause after His ascension to heaven, by an acknowledgment of the part sustained

³⁴ Acts 1. 6-8.

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by each one of the adorable Three, in the working out of the gospel salvation. So again in the Pentecostal sermon. When St. Peter explained the wonders of that great day he said, "This Jesus did God raise up,"³⁵ thus demonstrating the truth of His claim to be Divine, and for the assertion of which He had been put to death; "Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father," thus paying due homage to God the Father; "The promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath poured forth this," thus rendering honour at once to the proper Personality and Deity of the Holy Spirit, by whom in circumstances most unlikely, multitudes were pricked to the heart with an appalling sense of sin in rejecting Christ; and on the same day, three thousand of them, by the same agency, were united to their Saviour and changed in the very character of their spiritual nature. We have already re-

³⁵ Acts 2. 32, 33.

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ferred to St. Peter's other sermon when he opened the door of faith to the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius, and have seen how in like manner the same great truth was made equally conspicuous. But we may also refer to the narrative of the conversion of the great Apostle of the Gentiles in its bearing on this subject,—“And Ananias said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, who appeared unto thee in the way . . . hath sent me that thou mayest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost . . . and straightway in the synagogues he proclaimed Jesus, that He is the Son of God.”³⁶ It is not of small moment that in connection with this signal event in the history of Christianity, there should be such explicit notice of each of the Three. The effect that was produced on the mind of the Apostle appears in the character of his ministry as St. Luke has recorded it. Take, for instance, his address to the elders of

³⁶ Acts 9. 17-20.

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Ephesus. "For I shrank not from declaring unto you the whole counsel of God. Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock in the which the Holy Ghost hath made you bishops to feed the Church of God, which He purchased with His own blood."³⁷ God, and the Holy Ghost, and the redeeming Lord are thus specially named, and unitedly honored, and this was essential to the whole counsel of God. But as the Acts of the Apostles³⁸ begins, so it ends, with a statement bearing most directly upon this doctrine. It informs us that St. Paul, the prisoner at Rome, had expounded and testified the kingdom of God to a select company of Jews in that city. Some of these believed, but some did not. Ere they left, he spoke one word of warning. Quoting the familiar passage contained in the vision of Isaiah, when the prophet beheld the glory of Jehovah of Hosts in the temple and heard His words, "By hearing ye shall

³⁷ Acts 20. 27, 28. ³⁸ Acts 28. 25-27.

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hear and shall in no wise understand," he now attributes this message to the Holy Ghost, as elsewhere St. John does to the Saviour Himself. "These things said Isaiah because he saw His glory, and spake of Him."³⁹ Isaiah, John, and here St. Paul attribute this oracle to Jehovah of the Old Testament, and to Christ and the Holy Ghost of the New.

The Epistles of the New Testament are of great and permanent value to the Christian Church. Called forth by the circumstances of the several churches and persons to whom they were addressed, they not only met their peculiar necessities, but by the providence of God were adapted to the various conditions of subsequent times. They contain great principles, and moreover they show how these may be applied. Being addressed to those who were mostly recent converts to the Christian faith, they embodied, and often directly taught Chris-

³⁹ John 12. 41.

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tian doctrine. Hence their value to us. To get back to the teaching of the Apostles, as that is built on Jesus Christ, must, on all points of theology, of ethics, and of church government, be our highest aim; for the Apostles, according to our Saviour's promise, should have by the Holy Spirit's grace a Divine illumination that during His presence in their midst they were not able to receive.⁴⁰

With regard to the doctrine before us we shall hear St. Paul first, and we shall begin with his earliest letter, the first to the Thessalonians.⁴¹

(1) In the forefront of it we meet with a remarkable passage. His address is to the church "in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Note the conjunction. Then follow acts of Divine worship. "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers." Why? Because there was a ceaseless remembering of the evidence of their con-

⁴⁰ John 16. 12, 13.

⁴¹ 1 Thess. 1. 1-5.

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version and transformation by the grace of God—"Work of faith, labour of love, patience of hope, in our Lord Jesus Christ before our God and Father"; and this through the gospel, which came to them "not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." Here, then, the Three are recognized, and these disciples were in the Father and the Lord Jesus equally, and were partakers of the love of God, as the result of the Almighty energy of the Holy Spirit. Further on the Apostle says, "Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way unto you"⁴²—that is a prayer for providential guidance in reference to himself and his companions, and now he adds another for them to whom he wrote, "and the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another and toward all men." The first is worship of both the Father and the Son, and the second would seem to

⁴² 1 Thess. 3. 11, 12.

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refer particularly to the Holy Spirit, for He is the agent by whom specifically "the love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts."⁴³ If it be said that the Third Person is not usually called Lord, we may admit this, and yet remember not only that if Divine, He is entitled to this appellation, but that St. Paul has emphatically used it respecting Him, in writing to the Corinthians, "Now the Lord is the Spirit."⁴⁴ Towards the close of this epistle we have another remarkable conjunction of the same terms.⁴⁵ The Apostle is exhorting to the experience and use of the highest graces of the Christian life. His aim is ultimately an ethical one—he would have these friends happy that they might be holy—"Rejoice always," he says, "Pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks, for this is the will of God, in Christ Jesus to youward. Quench not the Spirit."

⁴³ Rom. 5. 5.

⁴⁴ 2 Cor. 3. 17.

⁴⁵ 1 Thess. 5. 17-19.

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(2) The second Epistle to the Thessalonians must have been written not long after the first. In that also we find the Sacred Three similarly introduced. "But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you . . . for that God chose you . . . unto salvation, in sanctification of the Spirit . . . to the obtaining the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."⁴⁶ Thus in the matter of salvation the choice is of God, the work of sanctification is of the Holy Spirit, and the issue is the participation of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, and so the whole is referable to the undivided Three in One. In this epistle also a similar prayer to that in the first is offered up, "And the Lord direct your heart into the love of God, and the patience of Christ." Lord is here used again evidently of the Holy Spirit. Prayer is made to Him, and the direction of the heart by His operation is to the love of God, and the patience of Christ—fruits of

⁴⁶ 2 Thess. 2. 13, 14.

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the Spirit, then of highest moment to the persecuted believers at Thessalonica. We have thus dwelt upon these first epistles of Paul to show how he viewed this subject in his earlier ministry and on his entrance upon his European mission. It cannot be said that this doctrine was an afterthought with him, or that it was reserved from the common people to be entrusted to the advanced few. It was prominent at the very beginning. It entered essentially into his conception of the gospel of salvation, and coloured all his views of Divine truth. However else it might be regarded, coming from his pen it was eminently practical. It gave point to every appeal and force to every encouragement.

In St. Paul's great doctrinal epistle, that is, to the Romans, we have from the commencement explicit and frequent reference to the unity of the Father and the Son; but from the nature of the argument, which was chiefly of sin and redemption,

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there was not occasion to say so much of the Divine Spirit. But when the Apostle shows that expiation was completed and he begins to make the application of this great truth, he dwells very largely upon the saving work of the Holy Ghost. Yet in one part of his earlier treatment there is a well-known passage, which unites fact, doctrine and experience together, and binds them so closely with the Sacred Three, that the connection cannot be severed. "Being therefore justified by faith, let us have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."⁴⁷ And in exposition of this "God commendeth His own love toward us, that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." So that even in tribulations we rejoice, "because the love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Ghost which was given unto us."

So in another place—"God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh"

⁴⁷ Rom. 5. 1-5.

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has its saving effect in "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, making free from the law of sin and death."⁴⁸ And how wonderfully the threefold Divine Personality is involved in Christian experience comes out once more in words soon following. "They that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His."⁴⁹ Here the Spirit of God and of Christ are one, and His indwelling alone makes us pleasing to God. Further, "the Spirit Himself who witnesses to our sonship, and cries within us, Abba Father," assures us that being sons, we are also heirs, "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ."⁵⁰

The epistles to the Corinthians abound in passages of great interest. Here St. Paul assures us that "Jesus Christ and

⁴⁸ Rom. 8. 2, 3.

⁴⁹ Rom. 8. 8, 9.

⁵⁰ Rom. 8. 16, 17.

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Him crucified”⁵¹ is the substance of his preaching, but this he declares to be “the mystery of God,” and his success with it he attributes not to “persuasive words of wisdom,” but to “demonstrations of the Spirit and of power.” Then he shows that this “mystery” was “God’s wisdom foreordained before the worlds,” but of which the rulers of this world were ignorant, for had they known it they would not have “crucified the Lord of glory.” “But unto us God revealed it through the Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.”⁵² Some of these Corinthians who had been cleansed from the abominable impurity for which their city was notorious, were evidently in danger of falling back into their old courses, and when the Apostle would prevent this great evil he urges this highest truth of our holy religion. “He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit . . . your body is a temple of the Holy Ghost

⁵¹ 1 Cor. 2. 1-5.

⁵² 1 Cor. 2. 6-13.

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. . . glorify God therefore in your body.'"⁵³ But in this epistle we have this great truth placed in antithesis to all idolatry, "Ye know that . . . ye were Gentiles led away unto those dumb idols. Wherefore I give you to understand that no man speaking in the Spirit of God saith, Jesus is anathema, and no man can say that Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit; and there are diversities of ministrations, and the same Lord. And there are diversities of workings, but the same God who worketh all things in all.'"⁵⁴ It is obvious that the Apostle found no difference in believing that there are three Persons in One Divine Existence.

In the second Epistle to the Corinthians we refer but to two brief sentences, standing one at the beginning and the other at the end, both as expressive and important as they are brief, "Now He that stablisheth us with you in Christ, and anointed us is God; who also sealed us, and gave us

⁵³ 1 Cor. 6. 17-19.

⁵⁴ 1 Cor. 12. 2-6.

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the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.'⁵⁵
This may be tested by personal experience,
and "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God, and the communion
of the Holy Ghost, be with you all."⁵⁶
This is the worship perpetuated in the
Christian Church universally, and it is the
worship of the Holy Three in One.

In his great polemic to the Galatians, St. Paul brings his argument to a conclusion in these words: "No man is justified by the law in the sight of God . . . Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law . . . that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith";⁵⁷ "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba Father."⁵⁸

Of St. Paul's prison epistles we select that to the Ephesians for citation, and in regard to that our references will be far

⁵⁵ 2 Cor. 1. 21, 22.

⁵⁷ Gal. 3. 11-14.

⁵⁶ 2 Cor. 13.14.

⁵⁸ Gal. 4. 6.

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from exhaustive.⁵⁹ Not to dwell upon the impartation of "every spiritual blessing," from "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the heavenly places in Christ" Himself, in whom true believers are "sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise," we have here one of the most comprehensive and compact of all the New Testament texts on this subject. "For through Him," Christ Jesus, "we both have our access in one Spirit, unto the Father." Surely everything of privilege for the child of God is found in that one word "access," but this is alike for Jew and Gentile, through the mediation of Christ, and by the gracious operation of the Spirit of God. Then the Apostle changes his figure, and represents these component parts as "fellow citizens," and of the household of God, "built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone. . . . A holy temple in the Lord,

⁵⁹ Eph. 1. 3-13.

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a habitation of God in the Spirit.” Whether therefore we view believers separately or collectively, whether in regard to their fellowship with God, or their consecration to the glory of God, the grace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is made conspicuous. Prolonging his theme, the Apostle soon after glides into his own experience as one of the worshippers built into this holy temple, and as having “boldness and access in confidence through faith in” Christ.⁶⁰ Marvellous as are his expressions of desire and thought, he acknowledges something as exceeding abundantly above even these, but he connects all with the Triune Jehovah: “I bow my knees unto the Father . . . that ye may be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inward man. . . . That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.” Then turning to the ethical side he exhorts his brethren to “walk worthily

⁶⁰ Eph. 3. 14-21.

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of the calling wherewith they were called," "giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."⁶¹ Why? Specially Why? Here again we come upon this great Christian doctrine: "There is one body and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling: One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all and in all." So also again, "Be filled with the Spirit . . . giving thanks for all things, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God even the Father."⁶² Christian duty down to its minutest details circles round the ever-blessed Three in One.

The pastoral epistles are vocal with the same high theme. Writing to Timothy, the Apostle reminds him that "the Spirit saith expressly that in later times some shall fall away from the faith,"⁶³ but in opposition to their views "every creature

⁶¹ Eph. 4. 1-6.

⁶² Eph. 5. 18-20.

⁶³ 1 Tim. 4. 1-4.

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of God is good for it is sanctified through the word of God and prayer"; and "if thou put the brethren in mind of these things thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ." The collocation of terms here is significant, nor is it less so in another advice given to the same young evangelist—it is in respect of "that gift of God that is in thee"⁶⁴ and of "His purpose and grace which was given in Christ Jesus," and the application is made, "that good thing which was committed unto thee, guard through the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us."

To Titus, too, the Apostle sets forth the Sacred Three in the bestowment of personal salvation: "The kindness and love of God our Saviour is manifested by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost,"⁶⁵ and this is "poured upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour." The stress of the importance of these words is found in the immediately

⁶⁴ 2 Tim. 1. 6-14.

⁶⁵ Tit. 3. 4-7.

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following utterance—"Faithful is the saying, and concerning these things I will that thou affirm confidently, to the end that they which have believed God may be careful to maintain good works."⁶⁶

Besides St. Paul's writings we have other epistles in the New Testament, but our space will only admit of brief reference to them. One of the most important, especially as connecting the former dispensations with the Christian, the epistle to the Hebrews, is peculiarly emphatic in its evidence for the Godhead of Christ. But the love of the Father and the work of the Holy Spirit are not overlooked. Of the great salvation this writer says: "Which at the first" had "been spoken through the Lord . . . God also bearing witness . . . by gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will."⁶⁷ So again "We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all . . . but He, when He had

⁶⁶ Tit. 3. 8.

⁶⁷ Heb. 2. 3, 4.

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offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God. . . . And the Holy Ghost also beareth witness to us."⁶⁸

No greater or more solemn warning could be given than that conveyed by this writer and founded upon the equality of the Three. "Of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God . . . and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace. . . . It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."⁶⁹

St. Peter, too, writes to the "elect of the dispersion according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."⁷⁰ And "if," says he, "ye are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are ye, because . . . the Spirit of God resteth

⁶⁸ Heb. 10. 10-16 ⁶⁹ Heb. 10. 29-31.

⁷⁰ 1 Pet. 1. 1, 2.

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upon you . . . Wherefore let them also that suffer according to the will of God commit their souls in well doing unto a faithful Creator."⁷¹

The testimony of St. John in his first epistle is clear and outspoken: "Ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye know all things. . . . Who is the liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? This is the Antichrist, even he that denieth the Father and the Son."⁷² Once more "Hereby know we that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit. And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father hath sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world."⁷³ Even in the short letter of Jude we have the direction, "Ye, beloved . . . praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."⁷⁴ And now this

71 1 Pet. 4. 14-19.

73 1 John 4. 13, 14.

72 1 John 2. 20-22.

74 Jude, 20, 21.

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catena of quotations appropriately terminates with a reference to that revelation made to John, "who bare witness of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ,"⁷⁵ but he received it while "in the Spirit on the Lord's day," and seven times over he conveyed the command and delivered it to the churches then, and afterward, "He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches." And so at the close, "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things for the churches. . . . And the Spirit and the bride say come,"⁷⁶ but "If any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book, and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the Holy City."

⁷⁵ Rev. 1. 1, 2, *et seq*

⁷⁶ Rev. 22. 16-19.

IV.

Our rapid sketch is necessarily incomplete. There are two lines of teaching upon which we have scarcely touched—those which are taken up with the descriptions of the work of Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit respectively. These would of themselves constitute a sufficient argument for the Deity of each, and these, with the constant affirmation of the Unity of God, would lead us to the conclusion represented by the Scripture quotations passed in review. What we have done is simply to show in what a variety of aspects the Three Persons in the Godhead are named together—how in the history of the Apostolic Church, in its doctrinal teaching, in its living experience, and in its moral obligations, the Distinction and the Unity are constantly kept in view. It will now devolve on us to draw our inferences and state our con-

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clusions. First, then, we note the absence in Holy Scripture of any specific formula on this subject. Not one of the inspired writers professed to put the doctrine in a dogmatic form. This was not their way of teaching saving truth. They were not anxious to define, or guard from misconception. Their method was to proclaim and to testify; to open and allege to others what they themselves had been taught of God. To the truth itself, and to the power of the Holy Spirit behind it, and in it and through it, they looked for its demonstration to the conscience and heart of their hearers. Nor did they look in vain. "Whether then it be I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed."⁷⁷ Hence the very terms Trinity, or Triunity, which may be regarded as excellent symbols, and in this way have been long and widely recognized, are not of New Testament origin, or, as terms, of imperative force. They simply suffice to show what

⁷⁷ 1 Cor. 15. 11.

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we deem to be the teaching of the several Scriptural texts. But with the texts themselves we have ultimately to reckon, and it devolves on each believer, as best he can, to make their contents his own.

Second, it is clear that the sacred writers did not attempt to prove this doctrine or to simplify it by illustration. In some respects, by its very nature, it transcends not only all human but even all creaturely conception. It cannot therefore be demonstrated. And as it is affirmed of God alone, it cannot be illustrated by any of His works. To our faith it is addressed and by our faith it must be received. Yet though received by faith alone, it does not rest alone in faith. Through this it reaches our entire spiritual nature,—to illumine, to energize, to refine, and to regulate all its instincts and operations. And this fact, at the present time especially, is worthy of our most candid and patient thought. For men often speak and write as if the Christian re-

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ligion—and this part of it particularly—were merely a system of belief or opinion, that in some way grew up out of a chaos of desire, hope, prejudice and enthusiasm, until gradually it assumed the form apparent at the close of the first century, and then enshrined itself in the Gospels and Epistles. But it is, and always has been, more than a mere belief. The prime factor in its origin is not the human mind, but the Personal Divine Mind. This has made itself known in the great facts and the omnipotent power of redemption, and the human soul, subject to those influences, has responded in faith, in hope, in love.

In the revelation of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in their respective offices, there was no appeal to selfish motives or to the pride of intellect, but to man's sinful condition, his need and danger.

Great and unwelcome truths were lodged in the soul, and prepared it to receive a hitherto unheard-of deliverance.

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That deliverance embraced the whole Trinity, and carried the belief in it to the deepest depths of human nature. It was this that produced such a transformation of character and life as the world had never before seen.

Third. This then brings us to observe that while the Apostles did not attempt to put this doctrine in dogmatic form, or to prove or to illustrate it, they nevertheless held it to be axiomatic, and not only capable of universal application in Christian experience and practice, but that of necessity it must be so applied. They and those to whom they wrote were worshippers of one God. No Unitarian, so called, could hold more tenaciously to the Divine Unity than did Peter and John and Paul, and those with whom they were in church fellowship. Yet in common they use the personal distinctions of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and ascribe supreme dignity to each.

These two facts, in harmony, supply

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them with what may fittingly be called their working principle. They never lose sight of it. They represent it as lying at the foundation of redemption, and as touching the process of salvation at every point. It is of the very essence of the Gospel, and without it we find neither Christian worship, nor a Christian church. Apart from the three Persons in the One Name, and with their several offices on human behalf, we find no glow of Christian experience, no devotion of Christian service, and no illumination of Christian hope.

In a word, everything characteristic of Apostolic Christianity or of New Testament teaching presupposes, includes and enforces all the statements of our Lord in His great commission.

And now we may turn to enquire what bearing this has or ought to have on modern Christianity.

Are we quite warranted in using the prefix modern in this connection? Is not

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Christianity, like its Author, "the same yesterday, to-day and forever"? In its essence it undoubtedly is. But in its presentation to the mind and heart of men it is indisputably capable of adaptation according to both time and place. The question of its adaptation to our times, without sacrificing its inherent and necessary qualities, is one of the largest and most pressing to which we can address ourselves, but its adequate treatment is at present altogether beyond our power. We can but touch it in relation to our present subject.

It will be admitted that this age is characterized by ceaseless, strenuous activity. Men are eager for results, and intolerant of abstract thought. They are attracted by the visible, the tangible, and especially by the convenient; and in regard to this life there is much to gratify their desires. Hence it is hard to win men over to thoughts of God, of holiness, and of eternity. We do not suppose, in-

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deed we cannot allow, that Christianity has seen its best days, or that a spiritual paralysis has seized upon the Church of Christ in the present day. The devotion of much wealth to pious purposes, a quickened missionary zeal, associated enterprise for Sabbath School instruction, for the guarding and training of young men and women, and for the rescue of the lapsed and dangerous classes of society, forbid any such unworthy thought. But are we not in danger of forgetting that all this Christian activity is largely the effect of forces operating in the past—of forces that must always operate beneath the surface, and that unless we sustain the hidden energy, the spiritual power, the grace which now carries forward our philanthropic measures, these will soon become a spent force?

A school of thinkers has in recent times taken the ground that it is wise to let mysteries alone, and among these they would include the very doctrine be-

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fore us, and its correlates, the Incarnation, the Sacrificial Death, and the Resurrection of our blessed Lord; and without attempting either to vindicate or to deny these, they would confine the Christian minister to what they regard as the practical parts of our religion, its ethics and its consolations. Perhaps they fail to see that no such line of demarcation can possibly be drawn; or that to ignore the mysteries is practically to deny them. But however this may be, there is a kind of plausibility about this theory that has probably given it currency far beyond the region of its advocates. Has not doctrinal truth been somewhat placed at a discount? Is there not a growing tendency to neglect public worship, and correspondingly to require where it is observed, that the entire service be bright and entertaining, and especially that the sermon be short, and not such as to demand too great mental effort to receive or digest it? And perhaps even impercep-

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tibly the pulpit itself has come to be more or less influenced by this state of feeling. The outside atmosphere of science, of invention, of literary taste, of music, has pressed in upon it, and it would be strange if it produced no sensible effect.

All this may be turned to advantage, but it must be strictly held in a subordinate relation. On the other hand, doctrinal sermons are not so common as they once were. They are sometimes disparaged. Have not instances been found when the very persons charged with the responsibility of maintaining sound doctrine have spoken slightingly of theology, and held up theologians to contempt? Are we not in danger of losing our power and sacrificing the glory of the true evangelist by taking it for granted that our people know the doctrines of Christianity sufficiently, and that all we have to do is to put beautiful ideals before them? But we know that this is not enough. There are things in the religion of the New

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Testament which cannot be shaken. These are not by any means the themes most popular, most willingly learned or most easily remembered. Nevertheless we must iterate and reiterate them. There is always a generation growing up around us that needs instruction on the initial and vital truths of our holy religion, and we must see that we give it to them. Line must be upon line and precept upon precept. Now if we ask what those great truths are for which so much is claimed, we trust it has been shown by the treatment of our present subject that they are those which centre in, and radiate from, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Our all too rapid survey of its Apostolic treatment has shown us that it is the most essential, the most vitalizing, the most practical of doctrines, and is therefore the best adapted to all sorts and conditions of men and to all times and all localities. When the Christian missionary first confronts a heathen audience and

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opens his lips to proclaim the gospel, his first note is of the love of the Divine Father "who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all," and then he speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ, "who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity," and for success in his effort he relies upon that tender yet almighty energy of which he tells his hearers that it comes from God, the Holy Ghost. And there is no child in our home, no labourer in our field, or artizan in our workshop, no merchant in our mart, no student in our laboratory, no sufferer in our sick room, no mourner at our open graves, that can do with any other gospel than this. Each and all need the resources of the Trinity. Whatever else, therefore, is omitted, this must be included, repeated, emphasized.

Not that we think of set discourses upon this great subject. These may sometimes be valuable, sometimes, perhaps, necessary. Yet probably, rarely so. What

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is of importance is the ingrafting of every discourse into it. It is only in right thoughts respecting God that we can find the true measure of man, and understand his need, or find relief and rest for his soul.

Let us be sure, then, that we speak more of God to man than of man to himself. Do we dwell on the Fatherhood of God? Yes, but let us point to the still higher one in the Divine nature, and say, "Herein was the love of God manifested in us, that God hath sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him . . . that He sent His Son for the propitiation for our sins."

Do we speak of Jesus Christ as wise teacher, spotless example, sympathizing brother, and perfect ideal? Yes, but let us remember that "in Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" and that "He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." Do we speak of a gracious

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influence? Yes, but let us always do honour to the Person and Deity of the Holy Ghost, who proceedeth from the Father, and is also the Spirit of Christ. On these subjects we need never be tame or uninteresting. And if the preacher will not glow and burn when such thoughts are before him, what under the whole heaven can be expected to kindle him! Let us but faithfully declare the whole counsel of God, and God will see that His own truth is made effectual—"He is faithful, He cannot deny Himself."

To this subject we, as Methodists, are specially drawn by the history and the hymns of the Wesleys. And if what the speaker has said to-day be in any way deemed too assertive or hortatory in expression, let this be his apology, that for a generation he has sought to impress these sacred truths, as best he could, upon the rising ministry of our church, and in passing away from the responsibilities of office he is jealous, with a godly jealousy

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for the maintenance of the Wesleyan, and as he understands it, the New Testament Theology. He knows it, from personal experience, to be saving, faithful, satisfying. It was so in the case of our venerable founder. The very first utterance of praise that came from his lips on that day on which he felt his heart "strangely warmed" by the witness of the Spirit to his adoption was—

" To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
Who sweetly all agree
To save a world of sinners lost,
Eternal glory be."

That he and his brother Charles equally recognized the importance of this revelation to fallen and sinful men is evident from the fact, that so many of their hymns are full of it, and all are suffused with its fragrance. Four, in our own collection, begin with the invocation, "Come, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost," and one of these (No. 19) is particularly rich and full of the doctrine before us:

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**“ Come, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
Whom one all-perfect God we own,
Restorer of thine image lost,
Thy various offices make known ;
Display, our fallen souls to raise,
Thy whole economy of grace.”**

Now whatever in the future, ecclesiastically, lies before us, may the members of our church and their successors never cease intelligently and heartily to offer this prayer! But we are already more than Methodists. We belong to the Holy Catholic Church, part of which, with ourselves, is militant, and part, by the grace of God, is made triumphant. We catch the echo from above, and join with an innumerable multitude in saying—

“ We praise thee, O God : we acknowledge thee to be the Lord.

The holy Church throughout all the world : doth acknowledge thee,

The Father : of an infinite majesty ;

Thine honourable, true : and only Son ; also the Holy Ghost, the Comforter.”

“ Glory be to the Father, and to the Son : and to the Holy Ghost ;

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen.”



