

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 fulfill
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.

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