

THE ONENESS OF THE DIVINE FAMILY

**"I pray for them...which thou hast given me; for they are thine; and thou hast given them to me; and I am glorified in them."
– John 17:9,10.**

There is a touching pathos in this prayer of our Lord for his disciples as he was about to leave them which draws us very near to his loving heart; especially when he adds, "Neither pray I for these alone [then present with him], but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one – I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them as thou hast loved me." – Verses 20-23.

As we come to consider this beautiful expression of the Lord's sentiments with reference to the Church, we catch a glimpse of the glory of the blessed oneness of the divine family. It is a oneness of purpose, a oneness of confidence, a oneness of sympathy, a oneness of love, a oneness of honor, and a oneness of mutual possession. This oneness our Lord described as already existing between himself and the Father, but so far as his disciples were concerned it was and still is only prospective; and its full accomplishment is the ideal goal towards which we are taught to aspire.

But let us study this exemplified oneness more closely that we may be enabled the more fully to enter into it. In the first place we notice that the one purpose which is common to both the Father and the Son is the Father's purpose, which was gradually

revealed to the Son in due time and order, whose it also became by adoption. Since Jesus himself said, "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" only (Mark 13:32), it is manifest that the revelation of that plan to him was a gradual one; and that he was led into the knowledge of its various features as they became due to be worked out through his instrumentality. Thus he was allowed to **grow** in knowledge; and thus, too, he was spared the sad spectacle of subsequent trouble which also lay along the pathway of the divine plan. Thus, while he joyfully worked out the grand plan of creation (John 1:3; Prov. 8:22-31), he probably knew nothing of God's purpose for the subsequent permission of evil and the necessity for the great work of redemption. Before he came to that test of faith in God his confidence in his almighty power, wisdom and love had been firmly established by the experiences of the past. For centuries he had seen his mighty works, marked his wondrous wisdom and experienced his tender love. Could he doubt him then when another feature of his plan made manifest the great work of redemption and restitution, and gave to him the privilege of undertaking this work, also for the joy that the Father set before him? No: doubtless he did not at first realize the depths of humiliation and sorrow through which he must pass, but, step by step, along the painful way of humiliation and suffering, his faith in the Father, founded upon his previous experimental knowledge, sustained him, as it is written – "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many." – Isa. 53:11.

We next notice between the Father and the Son a beautiful oneness of confidence. The Son trusted the Father fully – at first, because it was easy and natural. Created in the likeness of God, trust in the Being who brought him into existence was spontaneous, and experience served but to develop and establish it. And the Father trusted the Son fully – first, because he recognized in him the inherent principles of righteousness and

truth and filial loyalty which [R1505 : page 87] he himself had given him; and, as the course of time and experience developed and the more firmly established his Son in righteousness, his confidence in him became firmly established. And so strong was the Father's confidence in the subsequent fidelity of his beloved Son, that he did not hesitate to declare the results of his faithfulness thousands of years before he even began the work of redemption. He even declared all the special features of his work, by the mouth of his holy prophets at various intervals for four thousand years before he began the work. And still he declares that the work shall in due time be gloriously accomplished. How wonderful and how beautiful is this mutual confidence!

We further notice a oneness of sympathy between the Father and the Son. The Son glories in the Father's plan, saying, "I *delight* to do thy will, O my God." He delighted in it because he discovered therein the worthy features of his Father's glorious character; and though his faith may have been temporarily tested by the permission of evil, his knowledge of God's character and resources and of the depth of his wisdom did not permit him to doubt, but held him still in loving trust in his infinite goodness and grace, and therefore in readiness to acquiesce fully in the measures proposed for the final triumph of righteousness and truth.

And the Father was likewise in loving sympathy with the Son, not permitting him to be tried above what he was able to bear; and not leaving him to bear any trial alone, but always granting him the light of his countenance and a joyful sense of admiring approval (John 11:42; Matt. 3:17), except when, for our sakes, he permitted him for a moment to feel that he was forsaken; when, in the anguish of his soul, he cried out at this unusual experience, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Now mark the oneness of love manifested. In every act we have already noted we have seen it expressed. It was mutual love that delighted to manifest and express mutual confidence, that gloried in the same loving and benevolent purposes, that sympathized fully with each other's thoughts and feelings, and that delighted in the close and blessed relationship of Father and Son. The Father did not treat the Son as a servant and hide his purposes from him, but delighted to take him into his confidence in so far as his wisdom and prudence dictated – *i.e.*, as the truth became meat in due season to him. And, in turn, the Son did not serve the Father as a hireling, but as a son with a common interest. The Father declared, "This is my beloved Son;" and the Son said, "I *delight* to do thy will."

How blessed the fellowship! It was a fellowship of joy and a fellowship of suffering – of joy in a common anticipation of the future glory; and of suffering in mutual participation of the preliminary trials to secure that end. The Son suffered in his humiliation and his dying agony; and the Father suffered in giving his only begotten Son – an intensity of suffering which the loving, yearning hearts of devoted parents can best imagine and appreciate.

There was further a recognized oneness of possessions clearly expressed by our Lord, who declared, "All things that the Father hath are mine." (John 16:15.) And the Apostle says, God hath appointed the Son the "heir of all things," and hath "set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." – Heb. 1:1,2; Eph. 1:20,21.

And lastly we notice a oneness of honor. In honor each seems to prefer the other. The Father says, Let all men honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. (John 5:23.) God has made

him the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person, and exalted him to his own right hand, to the chief seat of power in his kingdom, giving him all power in heaven and in earth. – Heb. 1:2,3; Matt. 28:18.

In the work of creation he has set him forth in great prominence and glory, saying, "Without him was not anything made that was made." In the work of redemption and restitution God has set him forth so prominently that his name is the theme on every tongue, almost to the eclipse of the Father's own glory, who of necessity is himself greater than the Son (1 Cor. 15:27), **[R1505 : page 88]** and to whom the glory pre-eminently belongs, as the Son also declares, saying, "My Father is greater than I;" and again, "I can of mine own self do nothing...The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." – John 5:30; 14:10.

The Son's corresponding anxiety to glorify the Father is most marked in the instance when, realizing that he was approaching the dreadful hour of his dying agony, he exclaimed, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father save me from this hour? But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father glorify thy name" – even at this cost to me. (John 12:27,28.) Again we hear him say, "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee." (John 17:1.) And when the great work of redemption and restitution is accomplished we see him delivering up the kingdom to God, the Father, and subjecting himself to his further direction that Jehovah himself may be universally recognized as all in all. (1 Cor. 15:24,28.) And we, like him, may surely trust that his purposes for the ages to follow will but the further express and emphasize the same lines of his glorious character – his justice, his wisdom, his love and his power.

Glorious oneness! who could suggest an improvement to its wondrous beauty and completeness? But the wonder and joy

increase when we learn that it is also *our* privilege to come into this same blessed oneness with God. What! we inquire – the very same oneness as above described? Yes; undoubtedly it is our privilege to enter into the very same relationship and privileges and blessings. To this end consider the exceeding great and precious promises and see that it is ours to have the same oneness with God – of purpose, of confidence, of sympathy, of love, of honor and of possession.

The same plan of God is presented to and adopted by us, and we also are invited to become co-workers with God in carrying it out (2 Cor. 6:1); and in so doing we are counted in with Christ Jesus as filling up the measure of the sufferings of the anointed body necessary to the accomplishment of that plan. Our heavenly Father also similarly manifests his confidence in us – in the loyalty of our hearts toward him and in the sincerity of our consecration to him – even though he recognizes our inherent weaknesses and inability to carry out fully our own determinations. But, notwithstanding this, so great is his confidence in our sincerity and integrity of heart, that, on our profession of faith and consecration, he fully accepts us as his sons and heirs, supplementing our weaknesses and shortcomings with the all-sufficient merit of our Redeemer, in whom we humbly trust. And not only so, but as sons, honored and beloved, he makes known to us also, his secret counsels, which others cannot know (Matt. 13:11), and invites us to confide in him as children and to speak to him freely of all that concerns us, in full assurance of his loving interest even in our smallest affairs. (Psa. 103:13,14.) And then he commits a portion of his great work to us. He gives us certain talents, certain portions of his goods, and tells us to invest them for him according to our best judgment as to the profitableness of the results, not dictating all the minutiae of the management as to hiring servants, but merely submitting to us the general principles which should govern us. Thus, for instance, he gives us his plan as to the work in hand with such

general directions as, not to cast our pearls before swine; to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves; to give meat *in due season*; to do good to all men as we have opportunity, but especially to the household of faith; and to observe the times and seasons, and the character of the work in each – seed-sowing in the spring and reaping in the harvest time; etc., etc. Thus with general directions he sends us forth – not like machines to do a monotonous treadmill service, but as intelligent beings, to use our brains as well as our hands and feet. So he counsels us to "*study*" to show ourselves workmen approved, and to *consider* and *think*, and not to be "as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle." (Psa. 32:9.) Then, according to our zeal and faithfulness, not only in the use of our hands, but also of our brains, in the Lord's service his confidence in us increases and we are entrusted with more and more of his goods and given a **[R1505 : page 89]** corresponding sense of our heavenly Father's approval. And the mutual confidence and fellowship of purpose and work, draw our hearts closer and closer to the heart of the Eternal, and the joyful realization of sonship and mutual interest and confidence and sympathy fills our hearts.

We are also assured of the same love from our heavenly Father which he exercises toward our Lord Jesus. The statement seems almost startling; but yet, hearken to our Lord's prayer – "I pray for them...that they may be one ...that they may be made perfect in one... that the world may know that thou hast... loved them *as thou hast loved me.*" (John 17:20-23.) In amazement we inquire, How can this be? Our Lord Jesus was always in perfect harmony with the Father, a son which gloriously reflected his likeness; but it has not been so with us: we were sinners and had nothing in us worthy of love. Yes, but we have been washed and cleansed, and, however imperfect our earthen vessels may still be, our hearts are perfect in his sight who is able to read the heart. And, as he sees us with a perfect heart – a perfect purpose and

intention – striving to overcome the weaknesses and disabilities of our imperfect flesh, and with painful, yet determined, effort to do his will, and humbly trusting in the provision which he has made for our redemption from the fall, God recognizes in us that which is worthy of his love. And so our Lord Jesus gives us clearly to understand that the Father loves us, even as he loves the Son.

And not only is this equality of the Father's love for us as for Christ Jesus thus declared, but it is also manifested; for we are called to be *joint heirs* with his Son and partakers of his glory; and even as all things are his, they are also said to be ours. – Rom. 8:17; 1 Cor. 3:21-23.

While such is the oneness between the heavenly Father and all his anointed sons, it is blessed also to mark the same oneness between Christ Jesus and his anointed brethren. The Lord Jesus does not selfishly grasp all the glory and seek to retain it for himself, but the rather with admiration he contemplates their acquired worthiness and says, They "are mine and I am glorified in them" (John 17:10); and he would have them all bound up together with himself in the Father's love. He would also have them with him, beholding and sharing the glory which the Father had given him from the foundation of the world – the glory of his mighty creative works, with all the other evidences of his Father's love. – John 17:22-24.

Thus all the divine family are bound together in one bond of love and fellowship and confidence and sympathy and harmony and common interest; and the honor and glory of one are the honor and glory of all. The Lord's prayer abounds with petitions for this oneness. Mark the expression (verse 21) – "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee" [thy spirit or disposition and purposes and aim being common to us all]. Hence he would have us adopt the same Father's spirit, aim and purpose,

and devote all our powers with zeal and faithfulness to the accomplishment of the Father's will. Amen, so let it be.
