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THE INDWELLING TRINITY.

THE form in which the doctrine of the Trinity has been authoritatively presented to the Church in the Athanasian Creed is admirable as a summing up on the Catholic side of the great controversies determined by the conciliar utterances of the fourth and fifth centuries. To any one acquainted with the theological expression of that epoch this document satisfies every demand with its exactness of definition and logical consistency. But to the average Christian of the present day its terminology presents insuperable difficulty. Not only is the language in itself unintelligible, but it creates the impression that the whole subject lies out of the range of ordinary religious thought, and is to be approached only by the trained theological expert. Such words as "Person," "substance," "incomprehensible" which have passed from the Greek through the Latin to the English language not only fail to convey their true meaning, but even suggest an entirely false one. In this way the revelation concerning the Trinity, so far from being made clearer by the Athanasian Creed, has been for most people obscured and darkened by its language. On the other hand, the value and authority of the Creed as an exponent of the doctrine have so dominated religious thought on the subject as to debar, or at least discourage, a fresh statement of this great truth derived more immediately from the language of Scripture.

An unequalled source for such a re-examination and re-statement of this belief is to be found in the fourteenth chapter of St. John's Gospel. There is the surpassing advantage in going to that source that the revelation comes direct from the Master's own lips; that light is thrown upon it by the context; and that a relation is shown to exist be-

tween this truth and the nature of man, purified and exalted through the Incarnation, and the indwelling God.

The revelation was made at the last Supper, at a moment of utmost sorrow of parting. It was preceded by the revelation of the "many mansions" in the Father's House, but the immediate occasion was the demand of St. Philip, "Lord, shew us the Father." The answer to that demand refuted for the Christian believer decisively and for ever the Arian position, and affirmed the oneness of Christ with God: "Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in Me?" (v. 10). Then the mission of the Comforter is announced from the Father at the prayer of the Son. This completes the revelation of the Trinity to the disciples from the lips of Jesus so far as it concerns the mode of Divine existence. The disciple who saw Jesus *saw* God in Christ, the Father co-existing with the Son and potentially with the Holy Spirit, the Comforter who is the Spirit of God and of Christ.

The next revelation is still more wonderful, and one which affects the innermost secret of human nature enriched and sanctified by the Incarnation. "In that day," Jesus said, "ye shall know that I am in the Father, and ye in Me, and I in you" (v. 20). No wonder that in the presence of so astounding a revelation the Apostle Jude should ask, "What is come to pass that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" The answer of Jesus is of the last importance, and has to do with the whole of Christian life. "If a man love Me," He said, "he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him" (v. 23). Thus in near connexion with the Divine indwelling love and obedience are shewn to be closely linked together, as they are in the first Epistle of St. John—often the best Commentary on the words of the Gospel, "This is the love of God, that we keep

His commandments " (1 John v. 3, and compare iii. 24). Obedience is the test of love, and love to God is the assurance of the divine indwelling, not only of the Father and of the Son, but of the Holy Spirit (v. 26).

If, then, the words of Christ are unreservedly accepted as a revelation of the Trinity regarded as the mode of the Divine existence and also as a constituent part of human nature, the doctrine can no longer be considered as abstract, remote and unpractical. It is presented to us in words, simple indeed, but profound and full of mystery. But the Master has shewn that the solution of the mystery lies in the nature of man made after the image of God, and primarily and supremely in perfected human nature exhibited in Christ Jesus.

The mystery of the indwelling Trinity had already been foreshadowed and illustrated by the threefold nature of man, in which mind, will and the affections (of which love is chief) wonderfully co-exist, invisible, intangible and inseparable, and yet each capable of being conceived as a distinct element or force. A man's intellect or mind may act apart from his will. He may know what is right and not will to do it (Rom. vii. 19). Again, his affections may act quite apart from what he thinks to be right and may divert his will, as they often do, from a settled purpose. Again, a man may be known in different ways to different people and in different capacities. One may know him as an intellectual teacher or thinker; another may know him as a master or ruler with a strong will determined to have his own way; and a third may know him only as an affectionate friend or father. He is, as the common phrase goes, a different *person* when he is lecturing, for instance, and when he is at home surrounded by his children. Familiar as these facts are, they are mysterious and suggestive, and, rightly considered, are preparations to

the deeper mystery revealed in Christ. St. John speaks of this indwelling as a communion with the Father and the Son based on love and obedience or service through which the revelation is made. It is interesting to note that this conception of union of humanity on the basis of service had already entered into Greek philosophical thought. In his treatise on Politics (i. 6) Aristotle, discussing the subject of slavery, puts forth his well known theory that some men are by nature (*φύσει*) slaves while others are by nature appointed to rule. "Between these two classes there is a marked distinction, rendering it expedient and right for the one to be slave and the others to be masters, the one practising obedience, the others exercising the authority which nature intended them to have." He goes on to say: "The abuse of this authority is injurious to both; for the interests of part and whole, of body and soul, are the same, and *the slave is a part of the master, a living but separated part of his bodily frame* ¹ (*ὁ δὲ δούλος μέρος τι τοῦ δεσπότητος, ὅλον ἔμψυχόν τι τοῦ σώματος κεχωρισμένον δὲ μέρος*). These last words are remarkable, and bear closely on the fellowship or communion (*κοινωνία*) of the believer with Christ, and in Him with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Aristotle's contention is that, if the relations are perfectly sustained between master and slave, together they form one entity as body and soul. It is an intuitive anticipation of the unity of the body of believers with one another and with God in Christ.

Aristotle's words also throw light in an interesting way on the revealed thought of love, or service, which is another word for love, as the basis of union. "Where," says Aristotle, "the relation between them (master and slave) is natural *they are friends* and have a common interest, but where it rests merely on law and force the reverse is true." Compare with this our Lord's words: "Ye are My friends

¹ Jowett's Translation.

if ye do the things which I command you. No longer do I call you servants (or slaves), for the servant (or slave) knoweth not what his Lord doeth : but I have called you friends " (John xv. 14, 15).

Nevertheless the Apostles in their humility prefer to describe themselves as " slaves " of Christ rather than friends or even disciples. It was a recognition of a relation at once higher and lowlier than discipleship. No Jew would call himself the slave of a Gamaliel or a Hillel ; no Greek would deign to be the slave of a Socrates or a Cleanthes. It is therefore a significant word carrying with it the conception of service and obedience, which is the secret of union with God in Christ (1 John ii. 5, 6). To be a slave of Christ was to be a bondservant of One who was more than man.

The revelation of the Trinity, then, as presented by Jesus Christ is not only the solution of the mystery of the Godhead ; it is also a revelation about regenerate human nature. It throws light on such expressions as : " If any man is in Christ he is a new creature " (2 Cor. v. 17), or, " Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost " (1 Cor. vi. 19) ; or, " Partakers of the divine nature " (2 Pet. i. 4) ; or, " It is not ye that speak, but the spirit of your Father which speaketh in you " (Matt. x. 20).

In the light of this revelation the doctrine of the Holy Trinity ceases to be a distant or theoretical dogma. It comes very near to practical everyday life. The believer is as certain of the indwelling God as he is of the indwelling mind and will and feeling :—

" Pray to Him, thou, for He hears, and spirit with spirit can meet ;
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet."

The supreme practical use of this momentous revelation is indicated by the connexion in which it occurs. It comes in a train of thought, the keynote of which is : " Let not your heart be troubled : ye believe in God, believe also in Me "

(v. 1), and the consolation for the sorrowing disciples is centred not so much in the mansions or resting-places in the Father's house, as in the inseparable union with Christ, and through Him with the Father and the Holy Spirit. For after all there was to be no parting of friends. The fellowship would remain for ever unbroken. Again, God revealed in His three-fold nature would be for ever present as the Teacher and Remembrancer of His people (*vv.* 26, 27) ; and peace would be the enduring gift to every soul that has perfect trust. And so the great discourse ends as it began : " Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful " (*v.* 27).

ARTHUR CARR.