

FELLOWSHIP.

Balmoral Mission Station,
Natal, South Africa.

A thought that has followed me of late and brought much blessing and soul food, is the relation of Jesus to the Father as illustrating our's to the Son. In God's word we are taught that the Holy Trinity, though distinct and separate personalities, are yet essentially one in love, agreement, purpose and all the Divine attributes.

It was ordained from the foundation of the world that the Son should empty Himself of His glory (Phil. 2:7) and become a helpless, know-nothing babe, needing the care and protection of His mother and Joseph as well as that of His Father. All Heaven still adored him and the more for his marvelous condescension. Though "His own received him not" as his coming, yet the spiritually minded Jews, as well as the "three wise men," recognized him as the promised Messiah. He grew in knowledge as well as stature, retaining certain limitations which enabled him to understand all our infirmities and temptations.

The real question in my mind is, what was the relation between the Father and the Son during His sojourn with us? For instance, when "Jesus lifted up his eyes unto Heaven" in prayer, as was His custom, did He see the Father? One commentator says "Yes, there was the 'actual vision.'" I am not sure and would like to know. But we can only surmise as the Bible does not tell us. One person I recently asked gives a very emphatic "No!" for he put himself so completely in our place.

There is enough, however, that we may know without conjecture. It is certain that the Son came from the bosom of the Father (Jno. 1-18) for the purpose of manifesting that Father. In order to do this He first of all laid aside, not only his glory, but his own will. In all matters and at all times he did only those things that pleased the Father. Even in prophesy we find this truth (Ps. 40:7-8), "Lo I come to do thy will oh God." It was not always easy or pleasant, for the Son "learned obedience by the things which he suffered," and it was "through suffering that he was made perfect" (Heb. 2:10). Thus we see that the first essential to that wonderful fellowship between the Father and the Son is perfect obedience.

The second element we notice is perfect love. This, too, is not surmise but certainty. "I delight to do thy will." "My meat and my drink is to do the will of Him that sent me." "Who, for the joy that was set before him (of pleasing the Father) endured the cross." Thus this greatest power in the universe, love, drew Him on unflinching to Gethsemane and Calvary, causing Him to triumph, saying: "It is finished!" No wonder that Paul says "love endureth all things," "love never faileth."

The third element in that companionship of the Father and the Son is a common purpose to help the needy. The Father "so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son." The Son so loved that he gave his life and has said "As the Father hath loved me so have I loved you." Where can greater love be found? We think that Abraham would have gladly

been offered in the place of his son, Isaac. But his was a more severe test than martyrdom. So our great God, the Father, looked on the agony of Calvary with bleeding heart, suffering, probably more than His only begotten Son. And he must needs, for a time, withdraw His sustaining fellowship—that was the climax of suffering for the Holy Trinity. Notice that tragic cry from the cross, "My God, My God, why has Thou forsaken me?" It seems that because Christ was then bearing and making atonement for our sins, the Father must needs withdraw and leave the son to "tread the wine-press alone" (Isa. 63:3). How different at Stephen's death! The sustaining conscious and even visible presence of Jesus was his to the last.

Thus, in the common purpose of the Father and the Son to save the lost, is manifest the love of God to usward. This Divine love is imparted to us when we are "made partakers of the Divine nature." "That the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me, may be in them and I in them." This supernatural love has been the drawing and constraining power of all ages. The death of the prophets and the blood of martyrs all cry aloud of this mighty power. Talk about schemes for harnessing the Niagara Falls and generating electric power for lighting cities and running endless machinery—the world forgets that it is the Niagara of God's infinite love that created the much talked of Falls of Niagara as but an atom in His universe, the beautiful abode of His angels and His saints. "All the beasts on Jewish altars slain" and the glorious cross of Calvary, shew one thing—that "God is love" and gave His best, His only Son, His all that you and I and all the lost sons of Adam "might not perish, but have everlasting life." What more can love do? This is the condemnation, the spurning of this love, the rejection of its Personification, the Christ of Calvary. This rejection is spiritual and eternal suicide. It is the wilful, headstrong going on, having one's own way; trampling rough shod over the Father's love and the crucified body of His beloved Son—on to Hell!

This is the great catastrophe, to prevent which formed the common purpose of the Godhead during the life of Christ on earth. In the darkest time of the world's history Christ came. "Darkness shall cover the earth and gross darkness the people," was the prophesy. It seemed that evil was to triumph and that hell was let loose. Notice how many cases are recorded where demons were cast out by our Lord and His disciples. Christ came unto his own (people) and His own received him not," because they were backslidden in heart and therefore spiritually blind. His disciples were first sent "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." It was the winning back of these lost sheep that formed the common purpose of the Father and the Son. Isaiah spoke of it thus: "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one unto his own way and the Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all."

And this leads us to the fourth element in the Divine fellowship Joy. The return of just one lost sheep gives joy, not only

to the Good Shepherd and the Father, but the joy-bells of all heaven ring, while the angels join in the glad song of praise to Him who laid down His life for that precious lost one. They all rejoice greatly because they love greatly. This great love is further shown by the great purpose and "high calling of God in Christ Jesus" for the precious lost one. The "cloud of witnesses and the angels of God, together with the Holy Trinity, are intensely concerned that the new found-one shall be fully restored to the image of God.. There is the "washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost," which are but first steps in the transforming process. For "Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it that He might purify it by the washing of water by the word; that He might present it unto Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing but that it should be holy and without blemish."

Thus, the lost-found-one is brought right into the family circle and becomes the daughter-in-law of the Father. The very same bond of union existing between the Father and the Son now binds the Son and his bride. In John 17, the Bridegroom in speaking of this matter, says, "the glory that thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one even as we are, I in them and thou in me that they may be made perfect in one."

If we have correctly analysed the relationship between the Father and the Son, we have an idea of what Christ means by this "glory." It signifies all we have said and more. In it are the elements of perfect trust, perfect obedience, perfect love, perfect peace, perfect joy and a common purpose to benefit others.

Another element, which is the most important, remains to be mentioned: "I in them and thou in me." I take this as literally true. The Father, in the person of the Holy Spirit, dwelt in Christ. We repeatedly hear Him saying, "The words I speak unto you I speak not of myself, the Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works." This "is the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations which is Christ in you the hope of glory." The great mission of the Son to this fallen world was to manifest the Father, who was in Him, "reconciling the world to Himself," and this ministry of reconciliation has been committed unto us (I. Cor. 5.) The only way we can properly carry out this commission is to be indwelt by the Son in the person of the Holy Spirit. Notice Paul saying, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." This experience enabled him to add "Be ye followers of me even as I am of Christ." Jesus said, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father," and He wants us to represent and reveal the Son for "As He is so are we in this world."

We should look at just one more element in this communion: The fellowship of suffering. Our object lesson is Calvary. There our Lord voluntarily suffered, "the just for the unjust." That the Father had fellowship in His agony, no one can doubt. Let us briefly recall. The disciple, Judas, had betrayed his Master.

(Continued on Page Seven)