

SCALE HOW "MEDITATIONS."
_____ [section divider]

Dominus Illuminatio Mea.

No. 16.

TRINITY SUNDAY.

"As is the Father so is the Son."

(*S. John v., 17–24.*)

(v. 17.) "My Father worketh." It is not quite easy to follow the argument, and see how Christ is answering the accusation of Sabbath-breaking. "The Sabbath is sacred," said the Jews, and Christ answered, And work also is sacred, for my Father, whom you call your God, worketh always, even until now, and I work. That work which is fitting and right is fitting and right on the Sabbath as on other days. The principle of Sabbath-keeping does not lie in the fact that the Sabbath is "sacred" and work is "secular." Where it does lie our Lord tells us elsewhere, but here we have what we may call the sanctification of work, a doctrine which men and women are perhaps more ready to receive to-day than at any time in the world's history. We understand the blessedness of work for its own sake as distinct from wages, and the people who do work without wages are made to know that their work shall be at least as thorough and methodical as that of the wage earner, because the work should be its own reward, and in doing any task of hand or brain—however lowly—faithfully and dutifully, we enter into the blessedness of God. Community of work is Christ's first claim of equality with the Father, and in that light the Jews understand His saying.

(v. 18.) "For this cause the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because ... He called God His Father, making Himself equal with God."

(v. 19.) "Jesus answered." The rest of the chapter is occupied with a revelation of unspeakable interest. Our Lord's own setting forth of the conditions of unity and of diversity which exist between the divine Father and the divine Son. It is perhaps a little difficult to most of us to realise the fact which we commemorate to-day (Trinity Sunday) as the truth by which we live, and which affects all the relations of our life. Our Lord's setting forth of the relations between two Persons of the blessed Trinity—the Father and the Son—gives us insight and strength, and enables us to conceive what the Trinity in Unity and the Unity in Trinity may mean. "The Son can do nothing of Himself," &c. Our Lord first sets forth the subjection and obedience of the Son to the Father, the pattern of all true human subjection and obedience. The oneness of mind between the Father and the Son is so perfect that it is impossible for the Son to think, and therefore to do, a separate thing. Unity is strength and happiness; separateness is weakness and misery. We know it in our own lives. We know the soreness and irritation of soul that come to us when we are what we call "cross" with anybody, even with a person indifferent to us. The more we believe ourselves to be in the right the more sore and miserable we feel, because we are forsaking the pattern of the divine Unity, and separating

ourselves from even one of the people we know. The moment we think ourselves in the wrong, the soreness and irritation go. We are at one with our offending brother, and at one with all the world and at one with God in Christ. A little act of atonement has taken place which should help to picture to us the great Atonement; we bear the blame of the sin ourselves and unity and peace return. Unity is power; we two are enabled for the best work only when we are at one with our fellows; let us “keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.”

(v. 20.) “For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth,” &c. This is a very gratifying saying. Even as a human son delights in the confidence of the father he honours, so Christ would have us know that He too takes delight in the confidence of His Father. We are admitted into the secret of the divine relations; and human relations of love and reverence are strengthened by the vision.

“All things.” “Greater works.” All things would appear to refer to the works of healing and help continually being done by the almighty Father for the creatures of His hand. Every parched lily of the field that recovers itself under healing dew, every sufferer recovered from his sickness,—these are among the “all things” that the Father doeth and just such a thing has Christ done, only perhaps more immediately, in the recovering of the impotent man. “Greater works” apparently refers to the three whom He will raise from the dead, thus prefiguring His own resurrection. “That ye may marvel.” We have already seen that the object of miracles is to arrest the attention, and thus to turn men’s thoughts to Christ.

(v. 21.) The Father raiseth the dead. Every life of plant or animal, every human life is a raising from the dead. Every stirring of the higher life in the human soul is a quickening. “Even so the Son also quickeneth whom He will.” “Whom He will”—no arbitrary selection is, we may believe, implied, but he that *wills* to believe is he whom the Son *wills* to quicken. As in the work of the Father and the Son, so in the work of the Saviour and the sinner, unity of will is the necessary condition.

(v. 22.) We have seen how the Son is in subjection to the Father, in so far that He cannot separate His will or His act from the Father, because there is perfect union; because, again, the Father “sheweth,” teacheth, the Son. We have seen the equality of the Son with the Father, because, as the Father has the power of giving life to the dead, so also has the Son. Now we are told of a diversity of operation, of a power which rests in the Son alone, the power of judging men. “He hath given all judgment unto the Son.” “For we have not” a judge “that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was tempted in all points like as we are.” Neither have we a judge who watches and waits, and keeps the memory of our offences until the day of doom; but we have a Judge who condemns the transgression at the moment, while there is time to repent; Who reaches us as the Word, quick and powerful, able to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart.

“That all men may honour the Son even as they honour the Father.” How the Jews, who already accused Christ of blasphemy, must have writhed under the exceeding boldness of this claim! It would be impossible to put into words a more direct and unmistakable assertion of absolute equality; and yet, that which was the stumbling-block to the Jews has been more or less a stumbling-block to the Church ever since. Now, men choose to honour the Father, and to recognise in our Lord no more than a very faultless man, our example indeed, a prophet even, but, after all, such an one as ourselves. Again, all honour is done unto the Son. “Jesus only” is made the object of all love and of all hope, and the Father is thought of as giving a more or less

reluctant consent to the great sacrifice of love accomplished by the Son. When men honour the Father and not the Son, love grows cold; when men honour the Son and not the Father, reverence fails; and it is for our sake that our Lord claims this *equal* love, for it is only as we honour the Son, even as we honour the Father, that we can enter into the fulness of spiritual life provided for us and possible to us. "He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which sent Him." Our Lord here speaks in the character of an ambassador from Heaven in whose person the King is honoured or dishonoured.

(v. 24.) "He that heareth My word." The allusion is, in the first place, to the word our Lord was at the moment speaking, then to all living words of His gathered up in the Gospels. But there is more than this; we live below our privileges. We are too apt to think that the commerce of speech between ourselves and our blessed Lord must be all on one side, that speaking is for us and hearing is for Him, that we may ask in prayer and He will answer in blessing; and this is true; but there is a more intimate truth, a fuller blessedness,—

Well, if we pray till Thou awake!
A word, a breath, of Thee
Soft silence in the soul will wake
Calm peace upon the sea.
(KEBLE.)