

# THE SHRINE *of* WISDOM

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## A DISCUSSION ON THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

From the *Phaedo* of Plato

In this dialogue Socrates, on the day of his death in prison at Athens, is represented as discoursing with his friends on the immortality of the soul. The story of this last day was told by Phaedo to his friend Echecrates some time after the death of Socrates. Describing his emotions at the time, he said: "I remember the strange feeling which came over me at being with him. For I could hardly believe that I was present at the death of a friend, and therefore I did not pity him, Echecrates; his mien and his language were so noble and fearless in the hour of death that to me he appeared blessed. I thought that in going to the other world he could not be without a Divine call, and that he would be happy, if any man ever was, when he arrived there; and therefore I did not pity him, as might seem natural at such a time. But neither could I feel the pleasure which I usually felt in philosophical discourse (for philosophy was the theme of which we spoke). I was pleased and I was also pained because I knew that he was soon to die, and this strange mixture of feeling was shared by us all—we were laughing and weeping by turns."\*

Phaedo then told Echecrates how he and many of his friends had been accustomed to meet early in the morning at a place near the prison and go in as soon as the prison doors were opened, and spend the day with Socrates. On this morning, knowing that it would probably be his last day, they had met

\* The translations used are those of Thomas Taylor and Benjamin Jowett.



earlier than usual. When they were admitted they found Socrates newly freed from his chains, as was the custom on the day of execution. His wife was with him, weeping and lamenting loudly, his child in her arms. Socrates asked his old friend Crito to see that they were taken home, and when they had gone he sat up and began to rub his leg, remarking at the same time upon the close connection between pleasure and pain—the one following upon the other, as the pain caused by the chain had been followed by pleasure at its removal. "They are two," he said, "and yet they grow together out of one head or stem; and I cannot help thinking that if Aesop had noticed them, he would have made a fable about God trying to reconcile their strife, and when he could not, he fastened their heads together; and this is the reason why when one comes the other follows."

The mention of Aesop reminded Cebes of a message from Evenus the poet who wished to know why Socrates, who had never before written a line of poetry, had begun in prison to put Aesop into verse and had also composed a hymn in honour of Apollo. To this Socrates answered that in the course of his life he had often had intimations in dreams that he should 'make music' and that he had always considered that they were meant to exhort and encourage him to the pursuit of philosophy, the noblest and best of music. But being under sentence of death, and being saved from execution during the festival of Apollo, which holy season might not be polluted by public executions, he thought it wise to fulfil literally the injunction of his dreams, and therefore first composed a hymn to Apollo in honour of the festival, and then, considering that a poet should also make stories, had taken some fables of Aesop, and put them into verse. "Tell Evenus this," he said, "and bid him be of good cheer; say that I would have him come after me if he be a wise man, and not tarry; and that to-day I am likely to be going, for the Athenians say that I must."

At this, Simmias protested that Evenus, whom he knew well, would never willingly comply with such a request. "Why," said Socrates, "is not Evenus a philosopher?"

"I think that he is," said Simmias.

"Then he, or any man who has the spirit of philosophy, will



be willing to die, though he will not take his own life, for that is held not to be right."

A discussion followed with Cebes and Simmias who did not understand his meaning, and Socrates undertook to defend his statement. "I am quite ready to acknowledge, Simmias and Cebes, that I ought to be grieved at death if I were not persuaded that I am going to other Gods who are wise and good (of this I am as certain as I can be of anything of the sort) and to men departed (though I am not so certain of this) who are better than those whom I leave behind; and therefore I do not grieve as I might have done, for I have good hope that there is yet something remaining for the dead, and as has been said of old, some far better thing for the good than the evil."

Employing his usual method of questioning, Socrates asked Simmias "Do you think that there is such a thing as death?"

"Most certainly," said Simmias.

"Is it anything else than a liberation of the soul from the body? and is not this to die: for the body to be liberated from the soul and to exist apart by itself and for the soul to be liberated from the body and to be essentially separate?"

Simmias agreed, and Socrates continued, "And what do you say of another question, my friend, about which I should like to have your opinion, and the answer to which will probably throw light on our present inquiry: do you think that the philosopher ought to care about the pleasures—if they are to be called pleasures—of eating and drinking?"

"Certainly not," said Simmias.

"And what do you say about the pleasures of love—should he care about them?"

"By no means."

"And will he think much of the ways of indulging the body, for example, the acquisition of costly raiment or sandals or other adornments of the body? Instead of caring about them, does he not rather despise anything more than nature needs?"

"I should say that the true philosopher would despise them."

"Would you not say that he is entirely concerned with the soul and not with the body? He would like, as far as he can, to be quit of the body and turn to the soul."

"That is true."

"Is it not therefore first of all evident, in things of this kind,



that a philosopher, in a manner far surpassing other men, separates his soul in the highest degree from communion with the body?"

"That is true."

"Whereas, Simmias, the rest of the world are of opinion that a life which has no bodily pleasures and no part in them is not worth having; but that he who thinks nothing of bodily pleasures is almost as if he were dead."

"That is quite true."

"What, again, shall we say of the actual acquirement of wisdom? Is the body, if invited to share in the inquiry, a hinderer or a helper?"

It was agreed that truth was best attained through reasoning, and reasoning was best when the mind was gathered into itself and was untroubled by sounds, sights, pains or pleasures—when it had as little as possible to do with the body and had no bodily sense or feeling, but was aspiring after real being. In the search for truth the mind seemed to flee from the body.

Another point was raised—"Is there, or is there not, Simmias," asked Socrates, "an absolute justice?" Simmias agreed that there was not only an absolute justice, but also an absolute beauty and good, none of which was visible, any more than the real essence of anything was perceptible to the senses, but that the nearest approach to the knowledge of such true essences was through intellectual vision; that they were to be sought in their highest purity in the mind alone without the intrusion of the senses, so that the real light of the mind in its brightness penetrated into the real light of truth in each essence. Because of this, lovers of wisdom, if they would have pure knowledge of anything, must be free of the body, and the soul in itself must behold all things in themselves.

Socrates then pointed out that even when there was time and inclination for philosophy, the body with its appetites and diseases, its fears, fancies, and idols, brought turmoil and confusion into the course of meditation and prevented the seeker from seeing the truth. Hence, one of two things seemed to follow—either wisdom could not be gained at all, or if at all, only after death; for then, and not till then, would the soul be in itself alone and without the body. "In this life," said he, "I reckon that we make the nearest approach to knowledge



when we have the least possible concern or interest in the body and are not saturated with the bodily nature, but remain pure until the hour when God Himself is pleased to release us. And then the foolishness of the body will be cleared away and we shall be pure and hold converse with other pure souls and know of ourselves the clear light everywhere; and this is surely the light of truth; for no impure thing is allowed to approach the pure. These are the sort of words, Simmias, which the true lovers of wisdom cannot help saying to one another and thinking. You will agree with me in that?"

"Certainly, Socrates."

"But if this is true, O my friend, then there is great hope that, going whither I go, I shall there be satisfied with what has been the chief concern of you and me in our past lives. And now that the hour of departure is appointed to me, this is the hope with which I depart, and not I only, but every man who believes that he has his mind purified."

It followed that the true philosopher, and only he, would study to release the soul and be eager to release it, and to such a man, of all men, death would be least terrible.\* The fear of death was a proof that love of wisdom was, in him who was afraid, less strong than love of body, or money, or power, or all three.

Socrates then pointed out that courage and temperance were especially characteristic of the philosopher, and that the courage and temperance of other men were really contradictory; for men who were said to have these virtues† would endure death

\* Thomas Taylor in his introduction to the *Phaedo* says: The death so much inculcated in this dialogue is a philosophic, and not a natural death. There are scarcely any at the present day who know that it is one thing for the soul to be separated from the body and another for the body to be separated from the soul, and that the former is by no means a necessary consequence of the latter.

This philosophic death, or separation of the soul from the body, which forms one of the most leading particulars of the dialogue, is no other than the exercise of the cathartic virtues . . . and the employment of cathartic virtue entirely consists in purifying the soul and liberating it from all attachment to the body, as far as its union with it will permit.

† Thomas Taylor gives the following note on this subject: The first of the virtues are the physical, which are common to brutes,



rather than suffer evils they thought worse than death, and would abstain from certain pleasures for the sake of other pleasures they had and feared to lose. But the highest virtue was to cling to wisdom, no matter what pain or pleasure, good or evil, might attend the pursuit of it.

"And I conceive," said he, "that the founders of the Mysteries had a real meaning and were not mere triflers when they intimated in a figure long ago that he who passes unsanctified and uninitiated into the world below will live in a slough, but that he who arrives there after purification and initiation will dwell with the Gods. For 'many', as they say in the Mysteries 'are the thyrsus-bearers,\* but few are the mystics'—meaning, being mingled with the temperaments, and for the most part contrary to each other; or rather pertaining to the animal. Or it may be said that they are illuminations from reason, when not impeded by a certain bad temperament. Of these Plato speaks in the *Politicus* and the *Laws*. The ethical virtues, which are above these, are ingenerated by custom and a certain right opinion, and are the virtues of children when well educated. These virtues are also to be found in some brute animals. They likewise transcend the temperaments, and on this account are not contrary to each other. These virtues Plato delivers in the *Laws*. They pertain, however, at the same time both to reason and the irrational nature. In the third rank above these are the political virtues, which pertain to reason alone, for they are scientific. But they are the virtues of reason adorning the irrational part as its instrument; through prudence adorning the gnostic; through fortitude the irascible, and through temperance the desiderative power; but adorning all the parts of the irrational nature through justice. And of these virtues Plato speaks much in the *Republic*. These virtues, too, follow each other. Above these are the cathartic virtues which pertain to reason alone, withdrawing from other things to itself . . . and liberating the soul from the bonds of generation. Plato particularly delivers to us these virtues in this dialogue. Prior to these, however, are the theoretic virtues, which pertain to the soul introducing itself to natures superior to itself, not only gnostically, as someone may be inclined to think from the name, but also orectically: for it hastens to become as it were intellect instead of soul; and intellect, as we have before observed, possesses both desire and knowledge. These virtues Plato delivers in the *Theaetetus*.

\* According to Olympiodorus, the thyrsus, a rod with ivy twined about it, was a symbol of material and partible fabrication because it had both a separate and continuous characteristic. It was carried before Bacchus as an image of the descent of the Divine into a partial nature. (Thomas Taylor's note.)



as I interpret the words, the true philosophers, in the number of whom I have been seeking, according to my ability, to find a place during my whole life."

Cebes, though feeling in agreement with Socrates, yet had a desire for some proof that the soul continued to exist and to possess life and intelligence after the body died; Socrates therefore suggested that they should discuss the probability of the soul's immortality. During the course of the discussion three kinds of argument were used. The first was the argument from ancient tradition which made an appeal to the doxastic or opinionative faculty which can know *that* a thing is. This argument was combined with a consideration of the dualistic principle in nature.

The second argument, which appealed to the reasoning faculty which can know *why* a thing is, was based upon the principle of innate ideas which was shown to be the cause of all human knowledge of abstract essential conceptions. This argument proved that the soul lived before the physical birth of man.

The third argument, which also appealed to the reason, completed the demonstration of the soul's immortality by showing that the soul continued to live after the death of the body because it belonged to a class of things not subject to change, time, generation or corruption.

Next followed an appeal to the intuition based on a mythical account, such as might be gathered from the ancient Mystery teachings, of the nature of the other world, of the life of the soul after physical death, and of its rewards, punishment, and purification.

The first argument was introduced by Socrates, who said: "The ancient Mystery teaching affirms that men go hence into the other world and then return to this world and are as it were born from the dead. If this be true, our souls must be living in the other world or they could not be born from thence."

Socrates then placed under review the whole of generated natures and drew attention to their participation in the opposed conditions of this world of relativity and duality in which nothing was free from change. If things, he said, became greater, they did so after having been smaller; if they became smaller, they had previously been greater; if stronger, they



had before been weaker, and so on, whether things grew colder, hotter, better, or worse. So that all these particular and relative conditions in existing things were generated from their opposites by means of increase or decrease. Then, asked Socrates, "Is there anything contrary to being alive, as sleeping is contrary to waking?" Cebes answered that to be dead was the contrary of being alive. Thus it was admitted that just as the waking were generated from the sleeping, and the sleeping from the waking, so the dead must be generated from the living, and the living from the dead; for natural life and death could not be the only natural contrary conditions which did not participate in the process of generation from opposites.

Socrates summed up the matter by saying, "Take notice, then, Cebes, that we have not unjustly conceded this, as it appears to me; for if other things when generated were not always restored in the place of others, revolving as it were in a circle, but generation existed according to the straight line—proceeding from one thing to its opposite without recurring again to the other and completing the cycle, you know that all things would at last be in the same condition and would cease to be generated."

"How is this?" said Cebes.

"It is by no means difficult to understand—but just as if there should be such a thing as falling asleep without awakening again after having wakened from sleep, all things would at last be asleep; and if all things were mingled together without ever being separated, things would finally all be amalgamated together in a heap. Similarly if all living things should die and not revive again, would there not be a great necessity that all things should at last die and that nothing should live?"

"It appears to me, Socrates," said Cebes, "that it cannot be otherwise; and in my opinion you perfectly speak the truth."

"To me, Cebes," said Socrates, "it seems to be so more than anything, and that we have not assented to this through deception; but that there is such a thing in reality as reviving again; that the souls of the dead have a subsistence; and that the condition of the good after this life will be better than at present; but of the evil, worse."

The second argument was introduced by Cebes who brought forward the theory of reminiscence as an argument for the



immortality of the soul. "According to that doctrine, Socrates, which you are frequently accustomed to employ, if it is true that learning, with respect to us, is nothing else than reminiscence; according to this, it is necessary that we must have learned the things which we now call to mind in some former period of time. But this is impossible unless our soul subsisted somewhere before it took up its residence in this human form; so that from hence the soul will appear to be a certain immortal nature."

"But tell me, Cebes," said Simmias, interposing, "what proofs are given of this doctrine of recollection? I am not very sure at this time that I remember them."

"One excellent proof," said Cebes, "is afforded by questions. If you put a question to a person in a right way, he will give a true answer of himself; but how could he do this unless there were knowledge and right reason already in him? and this is most clearly shown when he is taken to a diagram or anything of that sort." Simmias replied that he was not unbelieving, but that he would like to have the doctrine of recollection brought to his own recollection.

Socrates began by defining the meaning of the term recollection, and it was agreed that what was recollected must have been known at some previous time. The next point made was that the thing brought to mind might or might not be similar to that which prompted the remembrance. For example, a lover, from seeing a lyre belonging to or connected with his beloved, might call to mind an image of the beloved. The same would follow when a man saw a picture of one whom he had known. Many other instances were given, all of which, whether derived from things like or unlike that which was remembered, showed that recollection was, in general, a process of recovering that which had been forgotten through time and inattention.

When the recollection was through similar things, another question followed—whether the likeness of that which was recollected was in any way deficient, or was exactly equal to the original.

Socrates then asked whether they would affirm that there was such a thing as equality, not of wood with wood or stone with stone, but equality in the abstract.



"Affirm, yes, and swear to it," said Simmias, "with all the confidence in life."

"And do we know the nature of this abstract essence?"

"To be sure," he said.

"And whence do we obtain this knowledge? Did we not see equalities of material things and gather from them the idea of an equality which is different from them? You will admit that? Or look at the matter again in this way. Do not the same pieces of wood and stone appear at one time equal and at another unequal?"

"That is certain."

"But are real equals ever unequal? Or is the idea of equality ever inequality?"

"I should say certainly not, Socrates."

"And yet from these equals, though differing from the idea of equality, you conceived and attained that idea?"

"Very true."

"Which might be like or might be unlike them?"

"Yes."

"But that makes no difference: whenever from seeing one thing you conceived another, whether like or unlike, there must surely have been an act of recollection."

"Very true."

It was also allowed that material equals fell very far short of abstract equality, and that when anyone perceived this inferiority it followed that he must have previously known that to which the material equality was inferior, namely absolute equality. And since this recognition came about through the medium of sense impressions, the knowledge of absolute equality must have been possessed before anything was heard or seen or perceived in any way—in fact before birth.

This was conceded, and it was seen that the same was true of all other ideas—of absolute beauty, goodness, justice, holiness, and the rest, and that the process of learning was really a process of recovering something forgotten: for either the soul had this knowledge at birth or had possessed it before birth and then had lost it. If the soul had the knowledge at birth, why did not people continue to know, and why were they unable to give reasons for such matters as those under discussion? It appeared that the soul evidently had not this



knowledge at birth, but previously to birth, and therefore souls must have existed before they had human bodies, and they must have had intelligence.

Simmius suggested the only other possibility—that the knowledge might have been given at the moment of birth, but if so, the soul must have lost it at the very moment of receiving it—an absurd conclusion. Hence, all absolute ideas and essence, as well as the soul, must have subsisted before man's physical birth.

This was generally agreed to be true. Cebes next admitted a lingering doubt as to whether the soul might not cease to exist after the body died. Socrates reminded him of the earlier argument from the cycles of opposites, adding: "Still, I suspect that you and Simmius would be glad to probe the argument further: like children, you are haunted with a fear that when the soul leaves the body the wind may really blow her away and scatter her; especially if a man should happen to die in stormy weather."

With a smile Cebes answered, "Then, Socrates, you must argue us out of our fears, but there is a child within us to whom death is a sort of hobgoblin; him, too, we must persuade not to be afraid when he is alone with him in the dark."

"Let the voice of the charmer be applied daily," said Socrates, "until you have charmed him away."

"And where shall we find a good charmer of our fears, Socrates, when you are gone?"

"Hellas is a large place, Cebes, and has many good men, and there are barbarous races not a few: seek for him amongst them all, far and wide, sparing neither pains nor money; for there is no better way of using your money. And you must not forget to seek him among yourselves too, for he is nowhere more likely to be found."

Socrates then asked what was that kind of thing which was likely to be scattered, and what was the opposite of this, and to which of these classes did the soul belong? It was seen on examination of the matter that compound and composite things were capable of dissolution, but the uncompound would be indissoluble, if anything were so; and that the uncompound might be assumed to be simple and changeless, whereas compounded things would be for ever in a state of change.



Socrates then asked whether such things as they had previously called essences, such as absolute beauty, equality, justice, or any absolute essence were liable to change, and it was agreed that these were changeless, but that the multitude of material existences which partook of the beautiful, the equal, the just, and so on, were always in a condition of change. The unchanging things, also, were such as could only be perceived by the mind, while the changing things were perceptible to the senses. It followed that if two kinds of existences were assumed—the visible and the invisible—then the invisible were unchanging, while the visible were changeable. Body would thus be put in the class of changing things, and soul in that of the invisible and changeless.

Recalling to their minds what had been already said, he told them that the soul, when using the body as an instrument of perception, was dragged by the body into the realm of the changeable, and wandered and was confused; but when, returning into herself, she engaged in reflection, she passed into the realm of purity and eternity and immortality and unchangeableness which were akin to her; and when, having ceased from erring ways, she lived in perpetual communion with those absolute essences, she was unchanging, and this state was called wisdom.

Again, from the consideration of ruler and the ruled, it was clear that soul was ruler and the body was ruled. Of these two functions, that of the soul as ruler was more like the Divine, while that of the body was like the mortal.

“Then reflect, Cebes,” said Socrates, “is not the conclusion of the whole matter this—that the soul is in the very likeness of the Divine and immortal, and intelligible, and uniform, and indissoluble, and unchangeable; and the body in the very likeness of the human, and mortal, and unintelligible, and multi-form, and dissoluble, and changeable? Can this, my dear Cebes, be denied?”

“No, indeed.”

“But if this be true, is not the body liable to speedy dissolution, and is not the soul almost or altogether indissoluble?”

“Certainly.”

It was pointed out that even the corruptible body did not dissolve at once—“And are we to suppose that the soul, which



is invisible, in passing to the true Hades, which like her is invisible and pure and noble, and on her way to the good and wise God—whither, if God wills, my soul is also soon to go—that the soul, I repeat, if this be her nature and origin, is blown away and perishes immediately on quitting the body, as the many say? That can never be, my dear Simmias and Cebes. The truth rather is that the soul which is pure at departing draws after her no bodily taint . . . that soul, herself invisible, departs to the invisible world—to the Divine, immortal and rational. Thither arriving, she lives in bliss and is released from the error and folly of men, their fears and wild passions and other human ills, and forever dwells, as they say of the initiated, in company with the Gods.”

The soul, on the other hand, which had been the servant of the body, infatuated by bodily desires and pleasures, and had turned away from that which was intelligible and philosophical, would be contaminated by the corporeal nature and would not depart pure, and after death it would still hanker after body and the world of bodies and be dragged down again to wander near the visible world until the desire which possessed it was satisfied and it was imprisoned in another body which would correspond to its nature: gluttons, drunkards, and the wanton would pass into the life of asses and animals of that kind; the unjust and tyrannous and violent into the lives of wolves, hawks and kites; and others according to their natural propensities, those who had practised the civil and social virtues, through habit and opinion, without philosophy, into a social nature such as bees or ants,\* or even again into the life of man.

But the lover of wisdom did not fear the loss of health or of property, for he was not attached to body and its pleasures and desires. He sought rather to behold the true and the Divine.

\* “The soul of man never becomes the soul of a brute,” says Thomas Taylor in a note on the *Republic*, “but it may, through a certain sympathy with the brutal nature, live a depraved life.” Such a man is here regarded as living the life of a brute and not of a true man, just as the tyrant in the *Republic* is called a wolf. As the *Chaldean Oracles* declare: “The human soul completes its life again in men and not in beasts.”

(To be continued)



## TRIADS OF WISDOM\*

Translated from the Welsh for *The Shrine of Wisdom* from the Myvyrian Archæology

81. Three things without love in a man: trickery, petulance, and slander.

82. Three of man's diabolical characteristics: oppression, jealousy, and pride.

83. Three things which feed on deceit: oppression, jealousy, and pride.

84. Three things from which follow diligence: worldly success, bodily health, and civic honours.

85. Three things from which follow ordinance: honour from the wise, civic dignity, and the mind's gladness.

86. Three things which knowledge brings: civic supremacy, worldly profit, and the consolation of conscience.

87. Three things which the happy attain: the hatred of the wicked, the love of the wise, and heavenly bliss for ever.

88. Three things unwise for a man to do: to fight white hot iron with naked fists, to fondle the head of a mad dog, and to joke with a country bumpkin.

89. Three indiscretions of the wise: to argue with the foolish, to have secrets with the foolish, and to try and force honour and politeness on the foolish.

90. Three things which will undoubtedly be obtained: some success from much effort, a little respect to anyone who deserves it greatly, and some wisdom where one studies a subject from the love of it.

91. Three things which see in the dark: love, creative *Awen*,† and a clean conscience seeing truth and justice.

\* For previous Triads of this Series see *Shrine of Wisdom*, Nos. 75, 94, 95 and 96.

† *Awen* signifies inspirational genius.

(To be continued)



# THE DIVINE NAMES\*

BY DIONYSIUS THE AREOPAGITE

## CHAPTER II

*Concerning the undifferentiated and the differentiated in theology and the nature of the Divine union and distinction*

Let the Absolute Goodness be celebrated from the Scriptures as revealing and defining the whole essential Being of the Godhead; for in what other sense shall we understand holy Scripture when it says that the Godhead Itself said of Itself, "Why dost thou ask Me concerning the Good? None is Good save God alone." Now we have fully demonstrated this elsewhere and have shown that all the Divine Names proper to God are set forth in the Scriptures as applying, not partially, but to the Wholeness, Perfection, Integrality and Plenitude of the Godhead and that they all refer impartibly, absolutely unreservedly and entirely to the fullness of the whole completeness of Divinity. Indeed, if anyone should say that they do not refer to the whole of Deity, he would blaspheme and dare unlawfully to divide the absolute Unity of the One.

We must therefore take them as attributes of the wholeness of Deity, for not only did the Word Which is Goodness Itself say "I am Good," but also one of the inspired prophets praises the Spirit as Good. And again, with regard to the saying "I am He Who is," if instead of applying this to the whole Godhead they attempt to restrict it to one part only, how will they understand the sayings "Thus saith He that is, that was, and is to come, the Almighty"? and "Thou art the same," and "The Spirit of Truth Which is, Which proceedeth from the Father"? And unless they assert that the whole Godhead is Life, how can that sacred Scripture be true which said "As the Father raiseth the dead and quickeneth, even so the Son quickeneth whom He will," and "It is the Spirit that quickeneth"?

\* For previous section see *Shrine of Wisdom*, No. 96.



And as to the Lordship of the whole Godhead over all, in relation to the Divine Father and the Divine Son, it is impossible, I think, to say in how many passages in holy Scripture the name Lord is given to the Father and the Son: the Spirit also is named Lord. The whole Godhead is also called the Beautiful and the Wise, Light, and That Which deifies, and Cause; and whatever belongs to the whole Godhead is introduced in the holy Scriptures collectively in the praises of the Supreme Godhead, as in the saying "All things are from God," but specifically when they say "All things are made through Him and in Him," "In Him all things subsist," "Thou shalt send forth Thy Spirit and they shall be created." And in short, the Divine Word Himself said "I and My Father are One," and "All things that the Father hath are Mine," and "All Mine are Thine and Thine Mine." And again, whatever belongs to the Father and Himself He attributes also to the Principle of Divine Spirit in the common union: the Divine Works, the fontal and unfailing Cause, Holiness, the dispensing of good gifts; and I think that none of those nurtured in the Scriptures, who are unprejudiced, will deny that all things meet for God belong to the whole Godhead, according to the Divine Word.

Therefore, having proved and defined these things from the Scriptures—here, indeed, in part, but elsewhere sufficiently—whatever universal Name of God we attempt to explain must be taken as attributed to the wholeness of the Godhead.

But if anyone should suggest that we bring about confusion with regard to the distinctions attributable to Deity, we consider that he would never be able to prove the truth of his opinion. For if he is completely antagonistic to the holy Scriptures, he will also be entirely apart from our philosophy, and if he gives no heed to the Divine Wisdom of the sacred writings, how can he care for our guidance? But if he keeps before his eyes the truth of the Scriptures, we will go forward unwaveringly by that very standard and light to make our defence, as best we may, by asserting that theology hands down some things as undifferentiated and others as differentiated, and that we must neither separate those which are united nor mingle those which are distinct; but following it according to our power, we must rise to the Divine Splendours; and even as



we receive that most beautiful standard of Truth, let us strive to keep its mysteries within ourselves without addition, diminution, or distortion; being ourselves guarded in our preservation of the Scriptures and also receiving from them the power to guard those who defend them.

The Names, then, which belong to the whole Deity are the Supreme Good, the God above Gods, the Supreme Being, the Supreme Life, the Supreme Wisdom, and all other pre-eminent abstractions; also all Names which denote the Cause, the Beautiful, the One, the Life-producer, the Wise, and whatever Names are given, from Its beneficent gifts, to the Cause of all good.

But the differentiated Names are the super-essential Name and Property of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, since these are in no wise interchanged or held in common. Again there is another distinction—the perfect and immutable subsistence of Jesus within us and all its essential mysteries of brotherly love.

But it is, I think, desirable to go further and to explain the whole mode of the Divine Union and Distinction in order that throughout our discourse it may be evident that all that is doubtful and obscure is utterly rejected while, as far as possible, a clear, orderly and appropriate explanation is given. For, as I said elsewhere, the holy initiates of our theological tradition give the name Divine Unions to the hidden and unrevealed mysteries of the ineffable and entirely unknowable transcendental Sameness, and they give the name Divine Distinctions to the beneficent Manifestations and Emanations of the Godhead. And following the sacred Scriptures they say that certain attributes characterize these unions, whilst the distinctions possess both union and differentiation. For instance, in the Divine Union or Super-essentiality, that which is common in the unity of the Principle of the Trinity is the super-essential Hyparxis, the super-Divine Deity, the super-excellent Goodness, the surpassing transcendence of Its whole unique identity, Its Unity beyond the principle of unity, the Voiceless, the Many-voiced, the Unknowable, the all-Intelligible, the universal Affirmation, the universal Negation, abiding wholly above affirmation and negation—the mutual in-dwelling and abiding, as one may say, of Its primary Hypostases in union



absolutely and universally undifferentiated and yet entirely unconfused.

Similarly in a house the lights from lamps, to use a sensible and familiar example, wholly interpenetrate one another, yet have a complete and clear distinction from one another and are united in their distinction and distinct in their unity; and again, we may see in a house in which there are many lamps together that the lights from all are united in one light so that one indivisible radiance shines forth from them all and no one, I think, could distinguish in the air containing all the lights the light of one particular lamp from all the rest, nor could he see the light of one separately from that of another, since the wholes are wholly mingled without being confused. But if anyone should take out of the house one lamp, the whole of its light would be removed without taking with it any light from the others or leaving with them any of its own light. For as I have said, there was a perfect union of all in the whole, entirely unmixed and in no wise confused; and this, indeed, when the light was in body—the air—and arose from material fire.

Therefore we assert that the super-essential union is established not only above unions in bodies, but also even above unions in souls and in the Intelligences of those Godlike and super-celestial Lights, whole permeating whole, in a pure and supermundane manner, through a participation analogous to their powers of participation in the all-transcendent Union.

But there is also a distinction in the super-essential doctrine of the Divine Nature, not only, as I said before, with reference to that union in which each of the fountal Principles is established, most pure and unconfused, but also in that the attributes of the super-essential Divine Generations are not interchangeable. The Father is the sole Fount of the super-essential Deity, and the Father is not the Son, nor the Son the Father, since the hymns reverently guard for each of the hypostatic Divine Principles Its own Attributes.

Such, then, are the unions and distinctions within that unutterable Union and Subsistence. But the Divine Distinction is the Name given to those beneficent Emanations of the Divine Union by which, in the absolute Unity of Its Goodness, It overflows with multiplicity of Being; yet undifferentiated in



this Divine Distinction are the ever-flowing Irradiations imparting Being, Life, Wisdom, and all the other gifts of that Goodness Which is Cause of all, and from these communications and their participants we celebrate those which are impartibly participated.

And this is in common and one and undifferentiated in the whole Deity: that by each of the participants It is participated as a unity and wholly, and by none of them partially, just as the point at the centre of a circle is shared in common by all the radii, and just as the many impressions of a seal all participate in the seal which is their archetype, each impression having the same seal in its entirety, and none having it only in part.

But transcending all these examples is the impartibility of Deity—Cause of all—since nothing has contact with It, nor is It mingled with Its participants in Its communion with them.

But someone may say that the seal is not the same and entire in all its impressions. The seal, however, is not the cause of this, for it imparts itself wholly and alike in each case, but the differences in the participants make the impressions unlike, although the archetype is one, whole, and the same. For instance, if the material receiving the impression is soft, plastic, smooth, and unmarked, neither hard and resistant nor melting and fluid, the impression will be clear and sharp and permanent. But if any of the qualities mentioned should be lacking, this would cause the impression to be less clear and perfect, and would produce other faults arising from its inaptitude for participation.

Again, there is a distinction in the beneficent work of God for us by which the Super-essential Word for our sake and from us takes upon Himself wholly and truly our humanity to do and suffer whatever is set apart and chosen as befitting the action of His own Divine Humanity.

In all these things the Father and the Spirit do not participate in common with Him except, perhaps, it might be said that they all share in the benevolent and loving Will of God towards humanity and in that pre-eminent and ineffable Divine Work which He, being immutable, inasmuch as He was God, did when born amongst us.

Thus we also strive to unite and to distinguish with regard



to Divine things in the Scriptures, even as That Which is Divine is united or differentiated.

Now, in the *Outlines of Theology* we have explained to the best of our ability all the causes of these unions and distinctions which the Word has revealed to us, treating each separately: some by unfolding them according to the word of truth and by leading the pure mind to a contemplation of the wonders of the Scriptures; but others as mysteries, devoutly seeking them, according to the Divine tradition, in a manner beyond the processes of the mind. For all Divine things, even those that are revealed to us, are known only by that which they impart, and in their own reality and highest principle they are above mind and all being and knowledge. For instance, if we name that super-essential Mystery God, or Life, or Being, or Light, or Word, we are thinking only that the Powers that flow forth from It to us are deifying, life-giving, essence-bearing, or wisdom-bringing; but we press nearer to Itself by letting go all energies of the mind, since no deification or life or essence perfectly resembles the absolutely transcendent Cause of all things.

Again, we have accepted this truth from the holy Scriptures: that the Father is Deific Source and that Jesus and the Divine Spirit are the Divine Progeny, or as it were Divinely planted Shoots or Flowers or super-essential Lights. But how these things are, we are not able to say or to conceive.

To this point, however, our highest mental energies can reach: we know that all Divine Fatherhood and Sonship are imparted by the all-transcendent Archetypal Fatherhood and Sonship both to us and to the super-celestial Powers, whence it is that the Godlike Minds are born anew and named Gods and Sons of Gods and Fathers of Gods; such fatherhood and sonship being perfected spiritually—that is, incorporeally, immaterially, intelligibly, because the pre-eminently Divine Spirit is established above all intelligible immateriality and deification, and the Father and the Son are supernally exempt from all corresponding Divine fatherhood and sonship.

For there is no exact likeness between the cause and the effect, since the effects possess only according to their capacity the images of the causes, while the causes themselves are exempt from the effects and are elevated above them in the



degree of their similitude to the Primal Word. And, to use examples which apply to ourselves, we say that pleasures and pains give pleasure or pain, but themselves experience neither pleasure nor pain; fire, also, which heats and burns is not itself said to be heated or burned. And if anyone should say that Life Itself lives or that Light Itself is enlightened, I think that he will be incorrect unless he expresses it otherwise—namely, that the effects pre-substist in an essential and superabundant manner in their causes.

And further, that which most clearly shines out in the Scriptures—the Divine Incarnation of Jesus amongst us—is inexpressible by any words and incomprehensible by any mind, even by the very first of the highest ranks of angels. His taking of human substance is accepted by us as a mystery, but we do now know how, by a law other than that of nature, He was formed from virgin seed, nor how He with bodily bulk and material weight walked upon the fluid substance of water with unmoistened feet, nor other things belonging to the supernatural attributes of Jesus.

Of these things we have spoken enough elsewhere and our illustrious teacher in an inspired manner has set forth in his *Theological Elements* the things which had been in part received from the sacred theologians, in part learned through long discipline and toil in searching the Scriptures, and in part revealed by a certain more Divine inspiration, whereby not only having learned, but also having suffered Divine things as it were by a kind of sympathy, he was perfected in their untaught and mystical union and faith. And that we may set forth most briefly the many and blessed visions of his most excellent mind, these are the words he speaks about Jesus in his work *The Theological Elements*.

From *The Theological Elements* of the most holy Hierotheus.

The universal Cause and Fulfilment of all things is the Divinity of Jesus which preserves the parts in harmony with the whole, and is neither part nor whole, yet is whole and part, comprehending in Itself both whole and part, yet pre-eminently above and prior to them.

In those which are imperfect, It is perfect as the Source of perfection; in the perfect It is not perfect, in the sense of being above and prior to perfection. As Source of all form, It is the



form-producing Form in the formless; in forms It is formless, being above all forms. It is Essence, permeating all beings at once, yet unaffected by them; as transcending all beings It is super-essential. It is the Bound of all principles and orders and is established above every principle and order. It is the Measure of all existing things and of all ages, and It is above and before all ages. It is Fulness to that which is deficient and Super-plenitude to that which is full; Unutterable, Ineffable, above Intellect, above Life, above Being; It possesses the supernatural supernaturally and the super-essential super-essentially. Hence, since in love towards mankind the Super-God has come into our nature and truly into our essence and has lived as man (may He be gracious to us in those things which we declare which are above all mind and utterance), in these respects also He has the supernatural and super-essential, not only in imparting Himself to us without any change or inter-mingling in His own Nature, and unaffected in His Super-plenitude by His ineffable self-emptying, but also because, the Newest of all that is new, He was in our physical nature super-physical; in our essence super-essential, partaking of all that is of us and from us and having it in a more excellent manner above us.

Let this suffice for these matters. Let us now continue to follow the purpose of our discourse by explaining to the best of our ability the common and undifferentiated Names of the Divine Distinction.

And in order first clearly to define everything in sequence, we give the Name Divine Distinction, as we have said, to the beneficent Emanations of the Godhead. For by imparting Itself to all beings which participate, and pouring forth upon them the whole of Its Goodness, It is united even in Its distinction, made manifold in Its unity, and multiplied from Unity while remaining within Itself. For example, since God is super-essentially Being and gives being to all beings and produces all that is, His own Unity is said to become multiplied through bringing forth many beings from Itself, while remaining in Itself; One in Its multiplication, united in Its Emanations, full in Its distinctions, not only by being super-essentially exempt from all beings, but by the unitive production of the



whole and the undiminished profusion of Its incessant communications.

Further, since He is Himself One, to the whole and every part and to every unity and multitude, He is One as it were super-essentially, being neither a part of the manyness nor a wholeness of parts. He is not in this manner a unity, nor a participant of unity, nor the possessor of unity, but beyond all these He is One, above the unity which is in beings, indivisible Plurality, unfilled Super-fulness, producing, perfecting, and sustaining all unity and manyness.

Again, since by deification many are new-born from Him as Gods, according to their capacity for the Divine Likeness, there seems, and is said to be, a distinction and multiplication of the One God; yet, none the less, He is the Supreme God, Super-Divine, super-essentially One God, undivided in things divisible, undifferentiated Unity in Himself, unmingled and unmultiplied in the many.

And supernaturally perceiving this, that guide unto the Divine illuminations by which both we and our teacher are led, that one great in the Divine Mysteries, that light of the world, thus speaks by Divine inspiration in the sacred Scriptures: "For though there are those called Gods, whether in Heaven or in earth, for there are Gods many and Lords many, yet to us there is one God, the Father, of Whom are all things, and we in Him, and one Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom are all things and we by Him."

For in Divine things the undifferentiated is superior to the differentiated and prior to it, and is none the less one for the distinctions of Its exempt Unity.

These universal and unitive distinctions of the whole Deity, or rather Its beneficent Emanations, we will attempt to the best of our ability to celebrate from the Divine Names which reveal Them in the Scriptures, first having made it clear that every Name of the good-bestowing God, to whichever Person of the Godhead it is given, must be taken as applying without distinction to the entire wholeness of the Godhead.

*(To be continued)*



## THE ELEMENTS OF THEOLOGY

### PROCLUS\*

#### Proposition CLXIX

*Every intellect has its essence, power and energy in Eternity*

For if it intellectually perceives itself, and intellect is the same with the intelligible, intelligence also is the same with intellect and the intelligible. For since intelligence is the medium between that which intellectually perceives, and the object of intellectual perception, and these are the same, intelligence also will be the same with each of these. Moreover, that the essence of intellect is eternal is evident: for the whole of it subsists at once. And this being the case, intelligence also will be eternal, since it is the same with the essence of intellect. But if intellect is eternal, it will not be measured by time, neither according to its essence nor its energy. And since these subsist with invariable sameness, the power also of intellect will be eternal.

*(To be continued)*

### PRAYER

Thee I invoke, the Lord of Life and Light!  
 Beyond imagination pure and bright!  
 To Thee, sufficing praise no tongue can give,  
 We are Thy creatures, and in Thee we live.  
 Thou art the summit, depth, the All in all,  
 Creator, Guardian of this earthly ball.  
 Whatever is, Thou art—Protector, King;  
 From Thee all goodness, truth and mercy spring.  
—Firdusi.

\* For previous sections see *Shrine of Wisdom*, Nos. 56 to 96.