

# Psalms - Appendices

by F.W. Grant

---

*F.W. Grant's sermon explores the relationship between natural sciences and Christian theology, emphasizing the need for a unified understanding of both realms as reflections of God's truth.*

**Scripture:** Malachi 4:2, John 3:8, Romans 13:10, Ephesians 5:13, Colossians 2:9, Hebrews 1:3, 1 John 3:16, 1 John 4:6, 1 John 4:8

**Topics:** "Trinity Doctrine", "Mathematical Theology"

---

## Description

F. W. Grant preaches about the witness of arithmetic to Christ, exploring the significance of the numbers 1, 2, and 3 in relation to the Trinity. He delves into the natural analogies found in mathematics and how they reflect the divine attributes of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Grant emphasizes the unity, love, and harmony within the Triune Godhead, as revealed through the numerical patterns in nature and Scripture, inviting listeners to consider the profound connection between mathematics and theology.

---

## Transcript

The Witness of Arithmetic to Christ

Appendices to Vol. 3 Psalms.

APPENDIX I

A LEAF FROM THE GOSPEL OF THE EXACT SCIENCES

"Doth not nature itself teach you?" (1 Cor. xi. 14.)

"There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification" (chap. xiv. 10).

The natural sciences need to be converted to Christ. Nature indeed does not: for (apart from man, the crown of it,) it has never fallen from Him. It knew at the beginning the touch of His creating hand, when, as the "Word," the Revealer of the mind of God He called it into existence; and the work must, of course, bear witness to the Worker. If it be the work of the Revealer, we may well take it as a revelation. And this it is, and as this it must be read, to understand it. But the sciences, so called, are drifting away from Christ. Man wants no more of God than he ever did; and science being the order of the day, his aim must be to make it

such as he would have it. He must use it as Adam his father did the trees of the garden, to put a hedge between himself and Him who is pursuing him. The old story, be it no more than a tradition, has its features of most uncomfortable resemblance to men's conduct now; all the more uncomfortable because every one now believes in heredity.

So much the more earnestly does science "offer itself," as a well-known professor has told us, "to purify theology," - necessarily after its own fashion: to make it as purely natural - as little supernatural - as it is itself. And from hence has come an attack on Christianity, (which is nothing if not supernatural,) an attack which in the multiplicity of forces enlisted under it, and in the pretentiousness of the learning out of which it springs, is the most formidable of its kind which perhaps the centuries have ever witnessed.

There has been, too, already, on the part of those who maintain the defence, so large a yielding of the ground in dispute, as brings into peril of loss all that remains of it. They have allowed the principle - at least the mass have - that "Scripture was not intended to teach science," to be pushed so far as practically to separate from one another God's two witnesses. The natural has been cut off from the supernatural, and become thus merely secular. We may, perhaps, indeed find God in it, but scarcely the God of revelation: rather a heathen than the Christian God; or God reduced to the features common to the two. The effect of which, for those to whom Christ is the revelation, and the only revelation, of God, is to make natural theology but the dullest, coldest candlelight to those accustomed to the warmth and glory of the noonday sun. Thus it is no wonder if Nature be left as neutral territory, or debateable ground, for the materialistic or agnostic squatter to build upon, with only scant and ineffective protest.

But for Christianity such a division of the empire must be ruin in the end. Christ, if not a universal King, is none. If the physical universe say "I know Him not," where, then, is this kingdom of His? Thus science has gone on, taking fullest advantage of the concession made to it, pushing further and further its limits continually, insisting on full freedom for speculation, - on having room to add to the history of the world its dreams of the beginning, its prophecies of the end, and to fill up all the gaps between after its own fashion. If we object, we are told that "the world moves still," in spite of the efforts of theologians to arrest it. "Scripture was not intended to teach science." If science, then, can only conjecture a cosmogony, how life was produced, how species originated, how man descended (or ascended), nay, as to the birth of religion itself, the spectre of Galileo warns off interference, and Scripture, by the concession, must retire before it. Science is knowledge reasoned out and verified, - knowledge verified by facts of observation. But then the first of Genesis has not the value of the poorest text-book of geology: it is not reasoned out, but revealed authoritatively. And here, after all, is the stumbling-block for the mere "naturalist": can the supernatural be upon any terms with the natural? - can it, above all, be admitted as really "super" to the "natural"? - which means, of course, can it have leave to exist?

But we are not going into the argument whether Scripture teaches science, still less to plunge into the conflict as to the first of Genesis. I believe, indeed, that there still exists a method of proof as to this, accessible, not merely to scientists or to the learned of any kind, but also to any common man who deems the matter worthy of sufficient attention. And after all, if Scripture is, in fact, a revelation from God, one would expect in it a kind of authentication which would appeal to common men, and not leave them wholly dependent upon the lagging evolution of nineteenth century science, and the not very tender ministry of its priesthood of to-day.

Still we are not going to attempt such proof at this time. Our purpose is rather to interrogate Nature itself, by no means as a whole, but in a mere fragment of it, - a few letters of its alphabet indeed, - to listen to its

voice, to see if we are able to interpret at all its language, and for this compare it (after the approved method of philology) with the alphabet of another language, well known to us all as theological, and see if possibly they may not be near akin. If we should find them, in fact, so much so, as that the one, with the help of the other, should spell out a central truth of theology itself, - and if, moreover, the text used for this could be proved to be as old as, nay, involved in the very constitution of the alphabet itself, - then, without any possible question, as it would appear, the theological truth, whatever it be, must be at least as old as that old natural alphabet, and will be enforced with all the power of demonstration that Nature itself possesses. Then it will be seen that, as Scripture on its side has no quarrel with Nature, but can put sanction on its teaching, as the text at the head of this paper does, so Nature, on its own side, far from being at issue with Scripture, owns it loyally as the word of the living God.

It is evident that the more simple and elementary the truth taken up for this, the more simple and perspicuous the argument will be. The more fundamental also in Nature, and the more it belongs to that part of it which bears, most of all, the stamp of mind upon it, the more will it seem in order for the light illuminating it to flash out here. Now I know of nothing in which the stamp of mind is more readily discovered than in that numerical system which is more and more being seen to manifest itself in Nature, and most of all in that foundation science where the Builder's hieroglyph would most certainly be found. Chemistry deals with the very substance of all material things, with the primitive atoms and molecules themselves; and "Chemistry," says Herschel, "is, in a most pre-eminent degree, the science of quantity; and to enumerate the discoveries which have arisen for it from the mere determination of weights and measures would be merely to give a synopsis of this branch of knowledge." And he goes further than this, and affirms that "Indeed it is a character of all the higher laws of Nature to assume the form of a precise quantitative statement."

Similarly, Alexander von Humboldt declares that "the only remaining and widely diffused hieroglyphic characters still in our writing - numbers - appear to us again as powers of the cosmos, although in a wider sense than that applied to them by the Italian school."

Once more, Prof Flint says: "The physical universe has, perhaps, no more general characteristic than this - its laws are mathematical relations . . . . If we are to give any credit to science, there can be no doubt about the weights and measures and numbers. This question, then, is alone left: could anything else than intelligence weigh, measure, and number? Could mere matter know the abstrusest properties of space and time and number, so as to obey them in the wondrous way it does? Could what has taken so much mathematical knowledge and research to apprehend, have originated with what was ignorant of all quantitative relations? . . . . The belief in a Divine Creator is alone capable of rendering rational the fact that mathematical truths are realized in the material world." ("Theism," pp. 136, 137.)

May we not be able to go further than this, however? May it be possible not merely to assure ourselves that there are such, but even to interpret the hieroglyphics? That would indeed be a revelation, if it could be achieved! But is there any hope of it? Would it not be utopian to indulge such a hope? Is there, in fact, any meaning behind them, beyond that which Prof. Flint has given? Now we propose to inquire into the significance of only the first three numbers, - literally, the arithmetical A B C, - and to compare them with the fundamental truths of Christianity (which certainly give us, if this be true, the Name of the Builder of all this glorious fabric), the doctrine of the Trinity of Persons in the Godhead, and the respective offices of these three Persons. If there be any real correspondence apparent, then it will be surely fair to ask what can be the cause of this, except that the God thus presented to us is the Author alike of Nature and of Scripture? And this is a verification which it does not need a scientific expert to make, though it be really

scientific; nor indeed any enlarged capacity or attainment of any kind. It is a manifestation of Himself such as God in His care and love to all might exhibit for the help of His creatures, and expect them to give heed to. How many such proofs must there be facing us everywhere in Nature, overlooked from sheer incredulity as to His having come so near us, even by those who believe in a Saviour's birth in Bethlehem, - incredulity as to His desire to be known and understood by every soul caring thus to know Him! With what a blazon of proof would the natural sciences, if converted to Christ, surround us! I have elsewhere shown in detail - a detail which claims investigation at the hands of every candid seeker after truth - that there is a numerical structure of Scripture, as there is of Nature; and that these two have a common key in the spiritual significance of these numbers, as given in Scripture itself. I am only giving here one remarkable example on the side of Nature, and of Nature self-interpreted, although in perfect harmony with the scriptural use, and one which may well claim to be decisive. Certainly Christians have not had in their hands to lay the foundations of arithmetic, nor agreed to hide there in so secure a manner the evidences of their own belief. Nor, again, can it be supposed that they have constructed their belief out of the powers of these primary numbers. But "it is the glory of God to conceal a thing," as "it is the glory of kings to search out a matter." (Prov. xxv. 2.) And "if thou criest after wisdom, and liftest up thy voice for understanding, - if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." (Prov. ii. 3-5.)

There are then hidden things which are of priceless value to us. The earth but partially discloses her lodes and treasures of ore. But how little thought is there of these being such, even in the word of God itself; necessarily, therefore, how little search for them! If they are found also, how little belief is there in their value! The gems are counted but as common stones. How soon shall those who think so much of reason be waked up to find that there is reason everywhere, - divinest reason, put there by the Creator of the human mind, and who condescends to "reason" with the beings He has made?

Let us proceed to consider the numbers. Of each there are two forms, the cardinal and the ordinal. Taking both into account, primacy, unity, soleness, are evidently the thoughts that inhere in the first number. We shall seek out what other thoughts may be involved in, or connect themselves in a natural way with these. Then we shall inquire as to the possible theological bearings of all this. The argument must necessarily be weak at first, but it will be cumulative, and rapidly gather strength as we proceed. At least, so it is contended; and the thing to be proved has interest enough in it surely to provoke inquiry.

The ordinal of "one" is "first." If we apply this in the sphere of Nature, it is plain that what is first - the true beginning of all (and science does not now doubt a beginning) must be, without doubt, the cause of all: the first, if we really get back to that, is cause; and the first of all is thus the cause of all.

Suppose we could go back to the beginning, and that we found there, to the collapse of all our hopes, no God at all; nothing but such a cloud of elementary particles as our modern materialists can well believe in, - they must and will allow that this world-mist has been the cause of everything that exists to-day. Whatever the method - however the thing has evolved, - yet there cannot be really a single thought in the mind, or a particle of the air we breathe, that that mist shall not account for. And so Prof. Tyndall, in those "musings on the Matterhorn," which have been the occasion of so much musing on the part of others since, tells us, that his -

"Thought naturally ran back to its remoter origin and sculpture. Nor did thought halt there, but wandered on through molten worlds to that nebulous haze which philosophers have regarded, and with good reason, as the proximate source of all material things. I tried to look at this universal cloud, containing within itself

the prediction of all that has since occurred. I tried to imagine it as the seat of those forces whose action was to issue in solar and stellar systems, and all that they involve. Did that formless fog contain potentially the sadness with which I regarded the Matterhorn?"

And this is all so clear to him that to make good he thinks we might well even "recast our definitions of matter and force"!

For it is plain that no one of us can believe in a self-creation of things, or their coming out of absolute nothing; no matter how long a time you allow them to do it in. Even the growth of a smaller into a larger substance (as of a seed into a plant) would of course be quite impossible, except by the ministrations to it of surrounding elements, as moisture, air, and soil, in the case instanced. We may refuse the gross materialism of Prof. Tyndall; but the passage quoted well illustrates the impossibility we have noted, of separating in this way between "first" and "cause."

Of course, it is not meant, however, that a "first" always implies this. You may have the first of a series, which in no wise depend on it, but (along with itself) upon what is back of all together. We are not now concerned with these smaller beginnings, but with what is so in its highest and fullest sense. We are on the search after God, and must expect that what is less full and high will give the less perfect view or image of Him. Our contention is simply this, that, in the most absolute way of looking at it, the "first" implies cause. "The First" is the Name God claims as His, and this implies His being the Cause of all else. That nothing comes out of nothing, which is, in its rightful meaning, the faith of all, assures us that the great First of all must be the Fountain of all.

But we may take another step now, and a very easy step it shall be. A cause implies power, and mark, for its effect, sufficient, and so almighty power. So Prof. Tyndall speaks of the primeval world-fog as containing "potentially" his sadness on a certain occasion. Clear it is, surely, that a cause is not that till it has produced the effect; and thereby it has demonstrated its perfect power (quoad hoc, almighty) to produce it. The First Cause of the Universe must at least thus far be Almighty. There can be no need to dwell on this.

A third step now: we are seeking what is highest of its kind: the highest kind of cause we know, what is it? Perhaps one might urge even that we should not know cause or potency at all, if we had not found it in our will as potent. I take this to be true, although it was so early a lesson, shrouding itself in the first instinctive impulse of the babe seeking its mother's breast, that it may be better to take safer ground, and say that the highest cause we know is in will, choice, determination. "I will" would have no meaning, apart from the sense of power. True, that for executive ability an apparatus of nerves and bones and muscles has been somehow, and as it were in knowledge of my need, provided for me. True, my will may, from the failure of this, be practically impotent in a given case: yet even here this will of mine makes me, spite of all opposition to it, in this sense master of myself, sovereign in my inner citadel, - able, in fact, to distinguish myself by this very means from the outer machinery of flesh, which I ought to control and cannot.

Just as the highest "first" we know, then, is cause and potency; so, and as clearly, the highest cause we know is will. And it is highest, not because of the amount of power that is wielded by it, but because it is measured, controlled, purposive. No one doubts that this is the highest quality of cause, and for this reason; and no one would give up the possession of an insect's strength, governed by an intelligent will, for the resistless might of a hurricane, which is not so, - if, after all, there be a hurricane, even, of this kind!

Put together all this, then, by most easy suggestion, there emerges for us a Figure far more definite than the "nebulous haze" that shrouds the beginning of Prof. Tyndall's world; and which is a true figure of

PRIMACY - of a first. It has been legitimately evolved under the careful curb of reason, demanding what is implied in the idea, as yet only of the ordinal form of a single number, and already we have got what may well stand as a fundamental conception of Deity. The King's image appears already, if faintly, upon the current medium of exchange: a Supreme Will acting in power as the sufficient Cause of the Universe, intelligent, purposive. If this be the image on the coin, we know Whose image it alone can be.

But we have still to look at the cardinal form of the number - "one," unity. And here, as before, we have to give this its highest and most varied expression; then, putting all this together, to ask to what it points. It need not even now be doubted that this will be by a whole heaven removed from Tyndall's world-fog.

And first, physically, what is the highest and fullest expression of unity which we find in the material world? Manifestly, it is organic unity; and that is as much as to say, the unity of life. Life is the great organizer; and, from plant to man, weaves together its matchless tissues into wholes of marvelous symmetry and adaptation. Every part is fitted to every other part and to the whole, in a working practical unity far beyond the mere naked oneness of a single element. A mountain-mass of this would be but a bigger lump. The self-contained living thing is an individual.

The thought here is indeed hardly needed to complete the ideal image which has been rising before us: for the intelligent, purposive Will-Cause of the universe must needs be a "living God." And of course this organic unity is not true of Him, but only the shadow of what is ineffably higher than itself. We are but using earth-boundary-lines to mark off - not to measure - the heavens. But above this unity of life, however connected with it, rises another unity far higher, and therefore pointing more toward God, - the personality, which is other than the corporeity, and other than its life. But this, if disputed, we need not here contend about. Life and personality are at least the expression of unities which plainly enter into the idea of God, if we are to possess one; and no one will contend that He of whom Scripture speaks is not Living and Personal.

But this does not end the correspondence: personality itself leads us further, in that character which seems very clearly to distinguish it from the constantly changing material body. The unity of consciousness is such as our bodies, ever in flux, have not - a unity in time. With all the changes wrought in the course, say, of fifty years, we are witnesses to ourselves that we are, after all, the same persons as fifty years ago. We have not, in that sense, changed in all that time, though the body has been renewed, physiologists tell us, some seven times over. Here there is a unity in time, an unchangeable identity, which, if carried to its highest conceivable terms, develops yet further that thought of God which has been growing steadily, and keeping step with us, as we have pursued our way. Now it overshadows us with the suggestion of the Unchangeable, and so the Eternal. "Jehovah" meant this for the Hebrew; and here the figure of the Hebrew's God is on the coin. But the Hebrew did not stamp it there: who did?

But again: there is another personal unity, which man necessarily conceives, and some aim after, but which is seen but fragmentarily among those that dwell on earth; all the more fittingly the attribute of Him we are seeking. This is moral unity, a character of consistent harmony in which nothing is disproportionate, nothing defective, nothing discordant. Righteousness (which is practical harmony with one's relationships) and truth, which is identity between the representation and the fact, come naturally under this. Self-consistency in all positions is only possible to perfect goodness: and this fills out the full blessedness that we conceive as God's.

Add to this one last thing, which still the number covers, that God is One: there is no other; - none to dispute His absolute sway. Here again the old Hebrew creed is that of Nature.

All these ideas, then, find unforced expression under this first arithmetical number. Together they present us with a very sufficient summary of our faith as to God: not, of course, yet the Trinity; but God as One, living, personal, immutable, eternal, righteous, and true, the Almighty, Maker of the universe, and whom, in this sense at least, we must call Father, perfect in this relationship as in all other. Atheism, polytheism, pantheism, agnosticism, are all set aside by such a faith as this. There is not a main thought, as it would appear, that can be developed out of the number that is incongruous with this, or does not help, indeed, to set it forth. Primacy, unity, soleness, in their highest developments, speak of Him. This would seem a most extraordinary fact, and worthy of attentive consideration. This correspondence between Nature and Scripture can hardly be accidental, and cannot be of man. Is it possible that Nature is meant in this way to bear witness of the Hand that has moulded her? Is anything, in fact, more reasonable than this?

Two.

But the full Christian image of God we do not yet see; and we must now take up the second number to find if it will continue the story of the first. If it do so, the wonder must increase, and the difficulty of any solution of it, save one, be felt correspondingly. For the testimony now required is of a very different, almost of an opposite character to that which we have been considering, and, though Father and Son are indeed one God, the distinction between them we must expect to find now dwelt upon, even while we are reminded of this oneness also! Diverse, almost self-contradictory characters, one might think, to be found here together! And yet this will not be too hard a test, if we are right in believing that the handwriting we are reading is meant to convey such a message to us.

Now, at first sight, the second number is, in some sense, the very opposite of the first; One, in whatever way it applies, excludes difference; but two affirms it. And this is the key-note of its significance both in nature and in Scripture. Two individuals, even though exactly alike, are yet different by the whole breadth of that individuality. But difference easily runs into the thought of opposition, conflict, and so begins to suggest the possibility of evil. This thought of evil enters largely into the natural use. "They are not one," we say; "there is a difference between them."

"Two" is also the first number that divides. "One" cannot do so, as we all know. So evil too divides: it has separated man from God; it separates man from man; it has brought in death, which is the separation of soul from body.

Two tends thus to evil, but it is not necessarily evil, or we should have no possible use for it in the quest we are now upon. Only with two comes in the thought of relationship; and language presents the other side in its use of seconding. To "second" is to "confirm, succour, help," and to take even an inferior place in order to do this. And here there begins to dawn on us the light we are seeking.

But notice first that the idea of difference, and to a large extent the assumption of evil as present, enters into the better significance itself. "The testimony of two men is true," says Scripture. But how is it "true"? May not the testimony of one be true too? Undoubtedly, the meaning is, it can be taken as true; it is valid as evidence. But why cannot the testimony of one be taken as true? Well; the witness may be mistaken, of course: even that will be probably due to defect in some way, - to evil, in this sense of evil; but how often, even so, may real mistake be due to something worse than this! how frequently is it due to prejudice, passion, enmity, and such like! And the moral reason is, in fact, the principal one, why a single witness is

to be distrusted so much, if not refused: evil has come in; and there is the main need of a second witness to confirm the first.

But in any case the truth or validity of the double witness is founded upon difference. If upon examination we find the second witness only repeating the testimony,- still more, the words of the first, this correspondence, instead of producing greater confidence, destroys it. We say, this is a contrived affair: the one has learned his lesson from the other. We need the evidence of two persons, not of one; and this is only one person talking with two mouths. We need to have diversity of interests, feelings, general standard, with yet a confirmation of the point in question , - a sort of stereoscopic view of the facts, which shall give them due solidity. Thus the very help given in seconding implies a difference, often a moral one: in other words, the presence of evil.

What then, are the ideas presented to us under this number, two? On the one hand, those of difference, opposition, conflict; of evil, producing division between God and man, between man and man, and going on to division between soul and body, the natural extreme of evil - death.

In connection with this, though in an opposite interest, judgment is the putting of difference, the dividing according to difference: "who made me a judge or a divider over you?"

On the other hand, we have the thought of "seconding," confirmation, valid witness, help, taking an inferior place to give help; even here with the implication of evil having come in and created the necessity for this.

How different is the sphere of ideas in which we are moving here from that into which we were brought in the case of the former number! And again, we have not travelled outside of nature for these suggestions: they have come to us from the natural use of language, with no sort of help from theology at all, save perhaps as far as the view that sin has brought in death may be held to be theological. But how is it that there rises up before us here a Figure, in most respects so different from the former one, yet so familiar, and so allied to it in our thoughts? We have got back of Christianity, outside of all possible influence from it, yet to find, some way, the Christ of Christianity meeting us, as if the very stones of earth's foundations were in fact rising up to prophesy of Him! And is not this indeed prophecy, where no "human element" can come in to discredit the inspiration? Is not the king's image upon the coin again? And if so, what primeval workman stamped it there?

Christ is as manifestly before us here, with all the sacred sorrow of His humiliation, as in the first place we had the Father. God and man in one person, He exhibits in this way a marvellous difference within Himself, - two natures far apart brought into mysterious relationship. In Himself, therefore, at the very first thought, He claims - and it is His glory to claim - this number as His own. Who in the whole range of personal existence can claim it as He?

And what is He in Godhead? As we know, the Son; the Second Person. And what in manhood? The Son of man: the Second Man! And why the Second Man? Why, because evil has come in, and spoiled the glory of the first. And here too is an unspeakable difference: for, if manhood is to be raised up again, it cannot be in the old condition merely; no good in simply bringing back into that so soon lost, and which might be, therefore, so soon lost again! God never simply restores He replaces the first with what is different from it and far better. Yet it is not the mere setting aside in judgment of man, but help, salvation for him, and "the Second Man is the Lord from heaven" (1 Cor. xv).

With Him comes in a second - a "new creation;" a second paradise, - not the lost Eden, but the garden of God. "Behold," says the Voice from the Throne, "I make all things new." (Rev. xxi. 5).

Thus He is the Secunder, - the Helper, Saviour. He has met in conflict the adversary of our souls, that He might deliver us; and for this He has come down into the lower place, far below His natural equality with the Father, - below angels; nay, below the proper estate and dignity of man himself. He has come down to the place where the division which sin has caused is found at its worst - into the place of separation from God Himself, as witness the cry from the cross, out of the darkness it interpreted: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

He has come down, too, to the place of death, the division of soul from body: "He humbled Himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the Cross."

The number cleaves to Him in this way all through His path. No wonder; for throughout it He is the "True Witness," testifying, amid all the contradiction that sin has brought in, to the perfection of Him to do whose will alone He came: Nay, in creation He has already been that, - the Logos, the Word of God, - the utterance and revelation of His mind. No wonder then, that creation should bear witness of Him, as it truly does.

No wonder, either, that, being this, after His work accomplished, He should be the appointed judge of all, the Divider to every man according to the difference found in each, the "quick and dead" alike.

Examine this throughout, and see if the "exact sciences" have no Gospel in them. Who has had power over nature, to place it there? Who has graven upon the current money of the realm of thought the sacred figure of the thorn-crowned King?

Three.

What then of the number 3? Does it too change the manner of speech, and yet continue the story to which thus far we have been listening? In one respect, the help to interpretation that we have been finding hitherto fails with the third numeral. We have no record in language of any significance attaching to the third numeral. Even this lack may, however, itself have significance; and we may note it and store it up for such use as every natural fact should have, if one supreme Mind produced and rules in nature. Meanwhile there must be surely some other way of arriving at the end desired. If a worker may be known by his work, is there no work accomplished by this numeral, which will give it character? This question must, we think, be answered affirmatively; such work there is; and the more we examine it, the more, perhaps, we shall be impressed with the value of its testimony.

Some have speculated upon the possibility of a fourth dimension. But, according to the witness of all around us there are but three, - length, breadth and thickness: three modes of extension which alone are actually existent in the world, and which, it would seem, are alone possible to thought either. Moreover, to have any solid, tangible reality whatever, we must have this third dimension. What are length and breadth without thickness? A pencil line drawn upon paper is really more than that. Thus the number 3 attached to any other number denotes the cube of it. It is the sign of cubic - that is, solid - measure; and the third measurement is the measure of content.

Three, then, so taken, is ideally the great producer, the materializer, that which converts the idea into reality; thus manifests it, reveals it, brings out what it is. The architect's plan is practically in two

dimensions: it cannot be carried out except the third comes in to help.

Let us keep this in mind, and still pursue the inquiry. Two dimensions cannot give solidity: correspondingly, two straight lines cannot enclose a space. That is one of the things which reason, transcending experience, affirms as an absolute, universal truth. I have not compared all possible two lines when I declare this, nor do I need to do so. It is one of those judgments which reveal the native power of the mind.

Two straight lines cannot enclose a space. They cannot therefore in this sense effect a proper separation. Two, as we have seen, is the number of division; but we are not thinking of mere division now, but of separation as enclosure, - setting apart. As if, for instance, I had a field to cultivate, and for which my hedge must go all round.

Connect this thought with that of the third dimension. The moment you get this, a thought - as the architect's plan - becomes a realization, and, embodying itself in space, separates itself from what is round about it. It is not a destructive separation, but a constructive one, and in the interests of what is positive gain and fruit.

Yet there may be implied, as in a hedge around a field, a previous or an outside evil from which the hedge is to separate; but if the field is to grow nothing, the hedge has no significance: it separates to, not simply from, - sets apart. Here, for the present, then, we may pause; we have got a distinct, workable idea of the number; let us consider the application.

For the Christian and in Scripture, the Holy Spirit is, as we know, the third Person of the Trinity. Apart from Him, we could not, of course, speak of a Trinity at all. With Him the Godhead is manifest: too obvious and easy a thought, perhaps, to impress us much with its significance.

But the Holy Spirit is also the Revealer. In another sense from that in which Christ is the Witness of God, the Holy Spirit is the witness. He is the Inditer of Scripture, through men inspired of Him - the Relator, as Christ is in Person and Work the substance of the relation. The Spirit is the productive witness, as in creation, brooding upon the face of the deep, or garnishing the heavens.

But He is the Producer in another way. Apart from Him, salvation itself is not actualized in the soul. New birth is of the Spirit; and "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." With new birth sanctification begins in the soul; and as in the number of which we have been speaking, production and, setting apart are found together: the separation is from evil to bring forth fruit to God. As saith the Bridegroom of the Song of Songs: "A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse." And the heart of the spouse answers: "Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits."

So, once more, the figure is on the coin: the full, glorious image now. But the office of the Spirit may explain to us, what a little while since was left aside for consideration. As the worker in men it will be found that His Personality, though revealed distinctly enough in the word of God, is yet characteristically much hidden in His work. He is no mere "influence," far from it. He can be grieved and vexed, searches and knows, sends and is sent, divides unto men severally as He will, guides into truth, makes intercession. Yet, while this is true, wherever pictures, types, parables of the Spirit, He is presented rather in His work, or as identified with those in whom His work is.

Take an illustration from the book of Exodus: God speaks of Himself to Moses as identifying Himself with three men, who are thus in some way the display of what He is. "God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of

Jacob:" this He declares to be His memorial Name (Ex. iii. 15). Now, looking back to Moriah, the mount of sacrifice, we can see in Abraham's offering of Isaac no obscure picture of the Father and the Son (Gen. xxii.) But where is the Spirit seen in Jacob? Why, in that divine work which makes out of the "supplanter" an Israel, a "prince with God."

Take an example from the New Testament. In the 15th of Luke, where the Lord shows us the heart of God told out in the recovery of the lost, the Father comes into plain sight in the last parable; in the first, the Shepherd's search after the sheep shows quite plainly too the Saviour-Son. But in the woman seeking the lost piece of silver, the Spirit can be only seen, not personally, but in the Church, commonly figured in that way.

Once indeed, when the Spirit is seen in a bodily shape as a dove, at the baptism of Jesus, we have a partial exception; partial, as it seems, because the bird of love and sorrow is, as one of the sacrificial birds, rather the figure of the Man of sorrows, upon whom it descends.

Again, where the Lord seems to be making the strictest comparison, and where the word He uses is actually that used for the Spirit also, - "the wind (pneuma) bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth," - not only is the figure that of invisibility, and it is known by its effect, but the Lord adds, not as you, would expect, "so is the Spirit," but "so is every one that is born of the Spirit (Jno. iii. 8).

No more need be said in this respect; but, looking back now at this third numeral, to note again, that we had to find its character not in itself but in its effects, how complete once more is the parallel. The very anomaly, as it might seem, is really what makes more striking the analogy. Time type is perfect.,

The Three One.

Not that we have yet done with it, however. We have found, distinctly enough, in this nature-witness, the three Persons of the Godhead; have we no intimation that these three Persons are One God? Is it too much to expect, when we have found so much, still to find more? Well, let us put the question: how many answers may we not miss - answers of precious import too, - just because we do not put the question!

We must now then look at these three numbers as a whole, and test them by their common significance: if we find this, we must further ask, do these common elements point in the direction of our search? is their message really this, that these three Persons are One God?

Now there is one very evident feature in which these three numbers are united: they are all prime numbers. That means, as we know, that they are incapable of true division. But we could not go a single step beyond and find this. The number 4 splits at once into two halves, when tested by that divisive number two, which in that way so strongly suggests evil. Four is, thus in Scripture the number of weakness and tendency to failure, - thus of the creature; and, divided by this number, it yields again the fatal number of division and of death.

But the three numbers preceding maintain their integrity, and thus equally and together bear the stamp of the divine. But this is only a first step in the direction we are taking. Let us now, as we are surely by this time warranted in doing, take, up Scripture as a means of inquiry, and compare it with what we have already ascertained. Scripture uses with full confidence these natural analogies, and thus frankly and fully commits itself to nature, - has no suspicion or jealousy of it at all. The apostle's saying, which he gives as

the "message" of One much greater, is an illustration of this, "God is light" is a direct comparison of Him to that which still in its inmost being is a mystery, though men may have their theories about it. As a phenomenon it is a very complex one. Still, it is plain that the beam of light, as refracted in its spectral image, shows not merely a seven-fold glory of harmonious colour, but is a trinity of radiant energy, disclosing itself as heat, light, and chemical power, which is now called "actinism." In the spectrum, the central light-rays blend at one end with the heat, at the other with the actinic rays, only the central band of colors, standing between the others, being, of course, the visible light. The analogy is so far obvious, though it is one which the science of the apostle might well be incapable of making. Christ, Himself the witnessing "Light," brings the message to us that God is this: Father and Spirit being alike unseen of man. The warming, vivifying rays, which the manifest light carries with it, are no unapt symbol of the Father. The unseen, actinic rays, with their transforming power, are the no less apt symbol of the Spirit's energy. The sun, with his luminous "photosphere, - the light on a material candlestick, - is again He in whom "dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Col. ii. 9), "and who is the effulgence of [the Father's] glory" (Heb. i. 3). Christ as God and man alike, "the Sun of Righteousness" yet to "arise with healing in His wings" (Mal. iv. 2), and bring the day. The harmony of Nature and Scripture is here maintained throughout; and even the numerical progression is in harmony also.

But let us follow this leading also further. "Light" is "that which makes manifest" (Eph. v. 13). The fantasies begotten of obscurity are dispelled by it, and the truth becomes apparent. Truth is the accordance of the idea with the fact; and this unity or identity comes under the range of the first number, even as in the Genesis-record of creation the light appears on the first day. God as One in His moral nature is the True, - consistent with Himself, and with the reality of things everywhere.

But Christ also is the Light, and the Radiator of the light, the True Witness, bringing into the soul the valid evidence of the truth. As God and Man, He is the two-fold Witness, entirely competent as such, true and trustworthy. Who could believe in the light, and yet not accept the Sun?

But again, the Spirit as the Sanctifier, the Worker of reality, the Actualizer of the divine idea in man, is no less the True; and the scriptural phrase for holiness agrees with this: it is the taking things as they are, accepting things at their real value. It is "the holiness of truth" (Eph. iv. 24, R. V. ) and the Spirit is truth" (1 John. v. 6).

Once more, the numbers agree: the three are one in the self-same respect as the Scripture testifies as to the Persons of the Godhead. The three are a tri-unity, a trinity, even as the God of the Scriptures is a Triune God.

But there is another thing beside Light, that the same apostle bears witness that God is: "God is Love" (1 Jno. iv. 8); and this too will be most manifest in Him who is God manifest, and who is God's love-gift to mankind. But this is found in all three Persons, and must be capable of deduction under all three numbers, if there is to be no defect in this natural presentation of things. This is what we seek, the testimony of nature as parallel with Scripture, and which all that we have found hitherto encourages us to expect.

Now, under the first number, we got the idea of consistency, harmony, accord. The number one, we have seen never to divide. This "at-oneness" is assuredly the atmosphere of love: "love worketh no ill to his neighbor" (Rom. xiii. 10). This may be a negative, rather than a positive character; still it is a character of that which we are seeking. As we do not come under this number to the breach caused by evil, so we have not yet the activity of love to heal the breach. The preservative spirit of concord, therefore, is as yet

all that one can expect.

Under the second number, evil is seen as having come in, and divine love in its fullness is revealed. "Hereby know we love, because He laid down His life for us" (1 Jno. iii. 16, Gk). God and man are brought together in the very Person of the Mediator; and in His work for men, love stays at nothing whereby the end may be attained. The spirit of concord is here become the spirit of reconciliation: the Witness to God is the Saviour of men.

Under the third number, the work of the Spirit of God is the carrying out and making effectual the work of Christ in man's behalf. The soul of man becomes the garden of God, and receives the nurture necessary for the production of the fruit in which He takes pleasure. In him that keepeth His word is the love of God perfected (1 Jno. iv. 6).

Here then, with whatever imperfection told, is the first leaf only of that gospel of which we may be sure, if this be the beginning, the natural sciences must have much to say. The effort of the day is largely to force them into indifference, if not hostility to divine truth. Nature is neither hostile nor indifferent. And that numerical structure which we find in chemistry undeniably impressed upon the foundations of the world, but which as truly exists in nature and in Scripture everywhere, is, I believe, a God-given key to the correspondence of one with the other - a most signal help to the consistent interpretation of both. Mere utilitarianism, though quite unworthy of the name, may despise what it would consider the mysticism of all this. Harness nature to the machinery by which man's work is to be done, that it can understand. Nay, "speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee," - that will be approved, so long as the lessons gathered are to be merely earthy, and plenty of room is allowed for man's imagination to roam free from the control of God. You may speculate, as you please, upon elemental fogs as the cause of the sadness of a man of science, and even so your sanity shall not be questioned: for the imagination, even though it be but the whirl of the livelier brain-particles, still must be admitted to belong to man. But gravely to make nature talk in parables, - seriously to believe that they are there, - to credit God with sending messages to us by such a channel, - this will be for many too preposterous even for examination. Here induction, deduction, argument of every kind will perhaps be vain: the prophets of such things must be held for an anachronism. They should have lived when the world was in its credulous youth. This is not the age of gold but the age of iron, and we are rightly doubtful about that age of gold.

And yet, if even a time of universal scepticism were upon us, it should be lawful, one would think, to doubt the doubt. The perplexity and unrest, the sorrow and strife, with which the world is filled, are certain: there was One who dared to say once, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." It would be good if one could believe in God speaking to us in a voice like that! It would be good to believe even that Nature were His other hand put round us, clasping the hand of revelation, in His earnest desire to draw us to Himself. The belief that such is the fact is perhaps apology enough for speaking.

---

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/fw-grant/psalms-appendices/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**