

The Divine
and
Eternal Sonship
of
Our Lord Jesus Christ.

“What is His Name and what is His Son's Name, if thou cans't tell?”—*Prov. xxx. 4.*

“I came forth from the Father and am come into the world.”—*John xvi. 28.*

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The following is more the work of a compiler than anything else; this the language may convey to some readers. No originality is claimed, though the pages are not laden with initials. Filtered, by the Lord's mercy, through another mind and heart, the thoughts are brought together and presented thus, in the hope they may be used for His glory and the help and blessing of some of His people.

G.J.S.

THE DIVINE AND ETERNAL SONSHIP OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

As in quarters least expected, some have been found who object to call the blessed Lord Jesus Christ the Eternal Son of God, because the *term* is not found in Scripture, it is proposed to look briefly at this subject in the light of the written Word of God. In doing this, it will be necessary first to consider some of these old-time objections; what their value is and what it is that is really objected to.

The fact of the term not being found in Scripture would, if valid, shut out many other terms which have in all ages been accepted as convenient to describe *facts* that *are* found in Scripture, as the Trinity. Some of these facts are of vital importance, and to question them occasions great distress amongst simple believers. This was the first great thing that checked David when he would have murmured at God's dealings: "If I should say I will speak thus, I should offend against the generation of thy children." Ps. lxxiii., 15. It is, however easy to detect the source of all such attacks upon the truth. May the Lord deliver His own from being made tools for this purpose.

The question to be faced is: — Is there in Scripture the statement of such a fact, as that the second Person of the blessed Godhead bore eternally the relationship of Son to the Father? If so, then is our blessed Lord Jesus Christ the eternal Son of God! It is not necessary that the term “eternal” should be found in actual application to the relationship, if the relationship can be shewn from Scripture to exist eternally.

All human and philosophical ideas of method and time must be excluded from such an enquiry. It is not a question of How? or When? but of the simple Bible statement of an existing fact. Is there such a statement? Or, Is it implied in the ordinary use of language? To reason upon such a question from the analogy of things human to things divine, or from earth to heaven, is entirely out of place. May a reverent — What saith the Lord? take the place of all human, philosophical argument.

Any analogy there may be between the human and divine relationship in question, is shewn by Scripture to be the other way about; that is to say, the things that exist in heaven or in the mind of God before time began, are used as patterns of things to be set up on earth, which then become types of what shall exist throughout eternal ages. This is the case when God said to Moses, “Look that thou make them after the pattern which was shewed thee in the mount.” Ex. xxv., 40. In this way also the human relationship of father and son

is based upon that which exists eternally in the Trinity.* If, therefore, these relationships exist in the Deity, the question is raised:—How far is there analogy between that eternal fact and the human relationship which is based upon it? The first false step is to assume that it must be brought about in the same way, and this is strengthened by the use of the term “begotten” as to the Son of God. This, however, cannot mean the same thing in all respects as it does when referred to human generation. The question is:—What does it mean?

OBJECTIONS.

There are many and varied objections to the doctrine of the divine and eternal Sonship of our Lord Jesus Christ; but the chief of them may, for brevity, be summarized under three heads. These will all be seen to be directed against the idea of the *derivation* of the second Person of the Trinity from the first. They bear not so much against the doctrine itself, as against the human ideas connected with it, and some of the forms in which it has been presented. All will be seen to spring from human reasoning. Faith, alas! is lacking in them.

Some who make these objections hold professedly from the Scriptures the eternity of the Persons of the Deity. Why should they not accept

*NOTE: See “Divine and eternal relationships revealed in Christianity.” Food for the faithful. May, 1898.

from the same source the eternity of the relationship of Father and Son?

In denying this most precious truth and asserting that the term "The Son" always involves Manhood, they are in very bad company and are surely deceived, though it may be unwittingly. May the Lord grant deliverance! The enemy, however, knows what he is about and the question is a very serious one for all believers. Certainly it is so treated in Scripture.

These objections have been thus stated, viz.:—

- i. The doctrine of the eternal Sonship contains a contradiction in terms. It is incomprehensible how the divine essence (Being), can be communicated to the Son and yet be retained by the Father.
- ii. It is inconsistent with the eternity of the divine nature of Christ; since upon the face of it the Father must be prior to the Son.
- iii. It necessarily involves a denial of the self-existence and independence of the Son.

These are really but one after all. We cannot understand it!—in some one or other of its bearings. They all spring from human reasoning upon false premises, faith is in none of them. They are not Scriptural objections, they are purely philosophical. They object to the idea of *communication* of the divine essence; to *derivation* and *dependence*.

It is surely true that the divine essence is incommunicable and indivisible. God does not make gods of His people; nor does He divide Himself to form a plurality of Gods. We are not, therefore, called upon to understand how the Father communicated Godhead to the Son; it is not stated that He did so; therefore, that this idea is incomprehensible is no argument against the doctrine of the eternal Sonship. It is, however, claimed by some that they use the word "understand" not merely as with a human, finite mind, but as in Prov. viii. 5 with "an understanding heart." This is but begging the question. An understanding heart is what Solomon asked of God (see 1 Kings iii., 9-11), and means there as given in the margin, a hearing heart, to hear or discern judgment. The context shows it is similarly used in Prov. viii., 5. A heart that by faith loves to hear (see v., 6) and bow to the excellent things that proceed out of the mouth of divine wisdom, without reasoning. It is always, and only the finite human mind, that reasons. We may not be able, even by faith, to grasp at once and explain all the excellent words of divine wisdom, but the believer lives by them as the Lord did, and all soon becomes plain to him that understandeth (v. 9). That there are three Persons yet, but one God, is a matter of faith in Scripture as the written Word of God. So also is the statement that, "The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." 1 Jno. iv., 14.

We may ask those who hold the eternity of the Trinity of the Persons, but who object to the eternity of the relationship of Father and Son on the ground of not being able to understand it, to explain a few other things which they presumably hold. How can three distinct Persons coequal, co-existent and coeternal be but one God? How is God in heaven and upon earth at the same time, yet not partly in one and partly in the other? What is God's essence? His omnipresence? His unsuccessful, eternal existence? His mode of subsistence? What is absolute perfection?

There are also many other things equally incomprehensible to us in the Godhead, but which faith accepts because they are subjects of revelation. It is evident when these things are in view, how limited is our present knowledge; how little human language is adapted to the things of God. Our ideas of all these things are after all but negative.

The other two objections treat the doctrine of the eternal Sonship as inconsistent with the proper Deity of our Lord and may be dealt with together.

No. ii. objects on the ground that the eternity of the divine nature of Christ is denied by it. For, — If the Father and the Son; then, — First the Father and afterward the Son. No. iii. objects on the ground that the coexistence and independence of Christ is denied; for the Son must depend on the Father for His existence. The Scripture, however, indicates with regard to this that the truth is: —

When the Father, then the Son. This faith holds to.

It is at once conceded that all these objections are true if there is any analogy in respect of generation between the human and the divine relationship; if the language can be used of the Godhead in a human physical sense, but this cannot be. You cannot speak of generation, derivation or communication in this way of divine Persons. You cannot speak of the whole and part of Spiritual beings, there is no division of God. Such terms have no possible application to the Godhead and they may all be absolutely rejected; but let us see to it that we give not up the great Bible fact upon which the whole gospel rests—"God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth in HIM should not perish, but have everlasting life." Jno. iii., 16.

It may be insisted on here that they who hold this doctrine of the eternal Sonship of our blessed Lord, express also their faith in His uncaused, self-existent and independent divinity in very much stronger language than has ever been adopted by those who refuse this doctrine. Belief in the eternity of his Sonship, does not, therefore, loosen the hold of the eternity of His Being. It is those who deny Him this further essential glory of His Being, who take the first step downward; decline always commences from the top.

Some base their objections to the doctrine of Sonship upon John i., 1-2, which they affirm guard (as

the flaming sword the way of the tree of life) the glory of His Person. They declare that in thinking of Him apart from Manhood they dare not go beyond these statements of Scripture, as it would be intruding into what belongs to the "form of God." But these are not the only verses of Scripture which speak of our Lord in eternity and apart from Manhood. Other Scriptures prove that it is not necessary to give up the self-existence of the Logos in order to believe that He is the Son of God eternally.

Certainly God means something when He uses the words "Son" and "Only-begotten"; but to say these terms imply only a relationship of a divine Person in human condition to the Father, is to deny much else that Scripture has said about that blessed relationship of Father and Son.

Further, to say that the peculiar characteristic of Christianity depends upon incarnation, is to deny the love of the Father in giving the Son. It is well known and recognised that the affection due in any relationship cannot possibly exist before the relationship itself exists. If the relationship of the Father and the Son before incarnation is a Scripturally revealed truth, then to deny it is not only destructive of the love of the Father, but derogatory to the highest glory of the Son Himself. Moreover, since the peculiar relationship of believers to-day, that of Sonship, depends upon this divine relationship of Father and Son; then does it make Sonship, whether in Christ or in the believer,

to be more of an ephemeral than of an eternal character. That there is the thought of eternity in the relationship, even for the believer, "before God, who calleth things that be not as though they were," is shown by what the Son says to the Father, "Thine they were and thou gavest them me." John xvii., 6.

STATEMENT OF BIBLE FACT.

There are five passages in the New Testament which speak of our Lord Jesus Christ as "The Only-begotten Son of God." They are here quoted in the order in which they occur, viz.:—

"And the word became flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of an only-begotten with a Father) full of grace and truth." John i., 14.

"No man hath seen God at any time, the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." John i., 18.

"God so loved the world that he gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John iii., 16.

"He that believeth on Him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only-begotten Son of God." John iii., 18.

These are in the gospel; the Spirit further presents it in the epistle thus:—

"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him." 1 John iv., 9.

Following this up, the next verse shows that the term, "His Son," is used as an equivalent to "Only-begotten Son." It runs thus:—"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son a propitiation for our sins." Verse 10.

But verse 14 shows that "the Son" is used also with the same force:—"We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." This is John's interpretation of the marvellous fact stated in verse 9.

Further, the next verse shows that the term "Son of God," is used also with the same force, as an equivalent for "The Only-begotten Son."

"Whosoever confesseth that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God." Verse 15.

This is corroborated by the use of the terms, "His Son," "The Son," and "The Son of God," in Ch. v., 9-13. Unquestionably the Person here thus variously spoken of under the above terms, is the One called in Ch. iv., 9, "His Only-begotten Son."

Finally, the term "My beloved Son," is shown to be the same blessed Person, and equivalent to "The Only-begotten Son" by its use in the scenes of our Lord's baptism and the transfiguration in the three synoptic gospels and by Peter in referring to the latter scene. In the baptismal scene, the three Persons of the Trinity are for the first

time revealed; the Father's voice is heard from heaven declaring the baptised One to be His beloved Son in whom He had found all his delight and the Holy Spirit descends from heaven and abides upon Him. This is no other than the second Person of the Trinity, God's Only-begotten Son, ever existing in His bosom.

But we have the blessed Lord Jesus presented as the Son in another way, that is by correlation. His continual address to God under the title of Father, whether as *the Father*, or as *My Father*, proclaims Him in most instances as the Divine Son, which is in all respects equivalent to the Only-begotten Son. From this it is also seen that the terms "Father" and "Son" stand or fall together, they are absolutely coeval. In John these terms are used very frequently. We cite two of each kind here:—

"And the Father Himself who hath sent Me hath borne witness of Me." John v., 37. Again, "As the living Father hath sent Me and I live by the Father." Ch. vi., 57.

"Therefore doth my Father love Me, because I lay down My life for the sheep." Ch. x., 17.

"If ye had known Me ye should have known My Father also." Ch. xiv., 7.

In these passages it is clear He claims to be the Son of the living Father. Nothing can be stronger!

In the Scriptures referred to, then, we have the blessed Lord Jesus Christ spoken of under the

terms "The only-begotten Son," "His Son," "The Son," "The Son of God," and "My beloved Son." Moreover, He speaks of "The Father" and "My Father." This is the Bible statement of the fact. Let us reverently inquire what it means. Before doing so, however, we may say, that we believe that all the Scriptures cited above with whatever beautiful variations refer to Jesus as the divine and eternal Son of God. They are all from John; and the divine Son of the Father manifested on earth, has universally been held to be the theme of the beloved apostle.

It is, however, evident from other Scriptures that this title of our Lord as Son of God is twofold:—His title in the Godhead and His title in Manhood; but as this latter title is not in question it need not be pursued. The mass of the Scriptures that refer to Him under any one of the above titles will, by the study of the context, be seen to refer to His divine title. Some others will be seen to refer to His title as Son in Manhood, which faith equally clings to. He was the divinely begotten, Holy; unique Son of God as born on earth.

Now to some all the Scriptures that speak of Jesus as the Son of God are referred to His humanity, and they earnestly protest against the application of this title to His Deity, saying it implies derivation and inferiority. But a little careful enquiry into the meaning of the above terms will show that these titles cannot be limited thus.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Taking the five occurrences of the term "Only-begotten Son," which John alone, of all the New Testament writers uses, it seems impossible to suppose that any one of them refers to His humanity, but that it is invariably His Deity which is in view.

The term "Only-begotten" is the translation of the word—*Monogenes*—in the New Testament inspired Greek, which is always precise and accurate. But—*Monogenes*—is one rendering of the Hebrew word—*Jacheed*—in the Septuagint version of the Old Testament. It is four times thus rendered,* and is translated into English by the words, "only child," "only-begotten." The same word—*Jacheed*—is translated direct from the Hebrew into English, in the authorised version, by "only child," "darling," "desolate."

Another rendering of—*Jacheed*—in the Septuagint is—*Agapetos*,—this word is used some seven times,† and is translated into English by "beloved" "loved." In these cases it is translated direct from the Hebrew by "only (son)," "only (beloved)."

Here two thoughts seem to be involved in the Hebrew word—*Jacheed*;—they are "only-begotten" and "beloved." The person spoken of is in a relationship with another, which He alone holds, or

NOTES: *Jud. xi., 34; Ps., xxii., 21; xxv., 16; xxxv., 17.

†Gen. xxii., 2, 12, 16; Prov., iv., 3; Jer., 6-26; Am. viii., 10; Zech. xii., 10.

can hold, and there is all due affection between those holding such relationship. The word – Monogenes – represents the only one of His kind, and that not the only remaining one; there was never another. This is true when applied to Christ, whether as divine Son, or as Son born into this world. The word – Agapetos – seems to indicate the love such a relationship brings with it and demands.

We will now try to find out what “Only begotten Son” implies in the New Testament, and will consider the first two uses of it in John i., 14-18. The first eighteen verses of this chapter evidently forms a kind of prologue to the whole book. The first two verses declare the Logos to be God and to be also, in the beginning with God. This we do not dwell upon. But verse 14. tells us that the Logos, full of grace and truth, became flesh and tabernacled (the word used here) amongst us. He had tabernacled with Israel of old, but they did not behold His glory, it was veiled. Now His tabernacle is the body prepared for Him, of which He took possession and His glory is seen by faith. It is “the glory as of (an) only-forgotten with (a) Father.” Here this expression occurs for the first time, and there are no articles. Now, verse 18. Shows that the word “as” is not mere comparison, but equals “truly.” The glory is truly that of the Logos who became flesh and is the sum of the divine glory, which flows out from the Father upon “The Only-begotten Son.”

We may notice in passing that incarnation and the miraculous production of Christ's human nature are here seen to be two distinct things. God prepared the body, "A body hast thou prepared Me," and the Logos inhabited it, became flesh. And the Spirit here sees in the glory manifested in that body, the glory of the Logos, who is the Only-begotten of the Father. That is to say, the Logos is the Only begotten Son of God. All the proper glory of God the Father is revealed in the Son, the Logos become flesh. This Heb. i. also says. The third verse describes the Son as the effulgence of the glory of God, the expression of His essential Being. . So that in becoming flesh, all the fulness of the Godhead, -Father, Son and Holy Spirit, was pleased to dwell in Him (see Col. i., 19).

Turning now to verse 18. we may see that this last verse of the prologue defines and decides the question as to the Logos being ever the Only-begotten Son, when compared and connected with verse 14. "No man hath seen God at any time. The only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." This time the Spirit twice uses the definite article, fixing it as fact and not comparison. When was He in the bosom of the Father? This the Scripture shows to be at the time of speaking. He "is," not was, as though He ever left that bosom. Nor is it "is" as though He were never there before incarnation. If it only meant He "is" and was not; that is, that He was

only there as the Only-begotten Son in incarnation, the form of the sentence might be different. There would be no need of the participle in the last part, which is translated by the word "is." It would then read, the Only-begotten Son, the (one) in the bosom of the Father. But as the participle —ōn— is used by the Spirit of God it cannot be meaningless, but makes the expression very much stronger. It is as "The Only-begotten Son" He exists, as such, eternally in the bosom of the Father.

The same word is used for the ever present existence of God, the One who "is" —ho ōn—; who always IS. The I AM. The subsistence and existence of Christ in this position is intimated, its being part of that subsistence and existence. It is this that enables Him to declare the Father. He could do so as in the ever present sense of the love which He enjoyed in that bosom and of which He was the Object. The intimate relationship expressed by the figurative expression, "in the bosom of the Father," is a continual and unchanging relation. He is thus competent to display all the grace and truth of the Father. It is the unchanging intimacy of this eternal relationship which qualifies Him as the perfect Revealer of God the Father. He is the only One who is competent to give a true exegesis of the Being, nature and character of God the Father. How attractive this blessed Revealer, as also the One thus revealed to each true heart!

That this is the force of the expression under consideration there can be no question, and if it be so the other uses of the term will be seen to mean the same as a matter of course. Consequently God's love toward the world is measured by His giving His Son, His Only-begotten, Ch. iii., 16. An immeasurable gift! Would not this love be tremendously discounted, reduced to a minimum, if it could be proved that He created a Son in human form to give? It would mean indeed that He *had* no Son to give.

The next use of the term (iii., 18), declares that "He who believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." This is exceedingly solemn.

The last time the term is used is in 1 John iv., 9. Here it is again given as a proof of the love of God. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him." Still, He is Only begotten Son before He reached this world, or He could not be sent; anything less than eternal Son in this case, would be Arianism.

The other verses cited, of this chapter, speak of the same blessed Person, thus sent, as "His Son" (Ver. 10); and "The Son of God" (Ver. 15). But that which is connected here with this manifestation is the love of God, who is love, eternally. He manifests what He is, by revealing Himself as

Father in the gift of the eternal Son, who brings life and propitiation for us. Love, life and propitiation all hang then upon the manifestation of the eternal Son, who is ever with the Father. Even when presented as the eternal life in Chapter i., 2, it is "That eternal life which was with the Father." Here again by correlation, He was the Son in whom the eternal life was.

It may be noticed that against the force of the terms "sent," "gave" and "came," as used to show that He was the Only-begotten Son, Before He was thus sent and came, it is urged that "came" in "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," does not mean that He was Christ Jesus before He came, and this is true. It is evidently used in that verse to prove that He who is called Jesus Christ is a divine Person and had a previous existence as God. But Jesus is his name as a Man, and He was not that before He became a Man. His divinity, however, is always thus guarded by the Holy Spirit. But Son is not merely a name, it is a relationship, and when Scripture announces that "The Father" sent the "Son," it is an act expressive of the love of the One who is Father. Was He never love, never Father before Christ Jesus came into the world? Was the Son not the Son until then? Has "I came forth from the Father and am come into the world," no meaning?

How could we do without these precious names, Son and Father, behind all the display of

God in creation and dispensation, to show what God is in His nature eternally, the absolute truth of that which has now been revealed? God is not love for an occasion, nor the Son for display merely. The Father had no beginning as such, nor the Son. Otherwise we have no revelation of what He is eternally, but only what He became. How greatly we should be losers if this were so, each heart that loves Him will at once acclaim!

Scripture then, evidently affirms distinctly, that the Only-begotten Son is the revelation of an eternal relationship and that Bible fact faith maintains, spite of all the oppositions of science falsely so called; or the refusal of it by those who will not believe what they cannot understand.

What it means is an entirely different matter. If it be asked, How? Scripture is absolutely silent and faith says not anything. Only no merely human, physical, earthly means can be admitted as an explanation. If it be asked, When? This is a question of time and all ideas of time must be and are excluded in that which is eternal, even in an eternal relationship. If time might be at all entertained it is;—When the Father, then the Son. The stated fact is that there is such a relationship and it is that of an Only-begotten Son with the Father. Now it is true that there are no useless terms in Scripture. True also that it means something and that there is food in every word of God. If, then, we can obtain the meaning, we may perchance find food such as we thought not of.

It is submitted that what has passed before us, proves at least that there are three divine ideas in the term, "Only-begotten Son":—1. Only: there is not another; unique. 2. Begotten: having the same Being, nature and attributes. 3. Son: One who concentrates and reciprocates all the Father's affections.

The use of the term both in the Old and New Testaments, declares plainly and at least, these three ideas. Taken as referring to the Lord Jesus Christ, He is the only One of that kind, there is no other; He is the same in Being and attributes as the One to whom He holds this unique relationship, and He is ever the One who concentrates and reciprocates all the affection that the Father's bosom implies. Being such, how well He is calculated to declare that Father, who waited the due time to be thus made known.

This, Jesus certainly claims, and His claims are vindicated by the Holy Spirit. It is shown in John, specially in Ch. v., that He claims to have the same Being and attributes as the Father Himself, not derived nor exalted. He claims that God is His Father, that He is what the Father is, that He knows what the Father knows, speaks His words, does what He does, even to raising the dead and giving life, and declares that all men shall honour the Son even as they honour the Father. One thing, however, He does which the Father does not do and that "Because He is the Son of Man," it is

thus expressed: "The Father judgeth no Man, but has committed all judgment unto the Son, that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent Him." Ch. v., 23. When all this is seen, how greatly it enhances the sense of the love that was in the Father's heart when "God spared not His *own* Son, but delivered Him up for us all."

On the other hand, He has title as Only-begotten in humanity also. This must be looked at for a moment to prevent confusion. There was no other of that race, a Holy Man, begotten as to His humanity by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit (Lu. i., 35), and called the Son of God, that Holy thing born of the virgin. But He is never spoken of thus as Only-begotten. "Thou art my Son this day have I begotten Thee," Ps. ii., 7, is the nearest. "To-day," being a note of time shows that it is not the eternal relationship that is here spoken of; though it is the same blessed Person and holding the same divine relationship all through. The citation of this Psalm in Acts xiii., 23-33, makes it quite plain that it is as a Saviour He is said there to be raised up on earth to Israel in fulfilment of promise; not raised from the dead. The next verse (34) shows that it is the sure mercies of David that are referred to His resurrection from the dead.

In taking a place as Son of God on earth, He in infinite condescension inhabits the body prepared

for Him, and in that body learns what obedience and dependence mean. He did not come to earth to command but to obey. He did not come to do His own will, but depended always upon His Father, whom He thus recognised as greater, than Himself. John xiv., 28. In this sense He accepts all as a gift from the Father, even "To have life in Himself." Ch. v., 26. Life was in Him as the Logos (Ch. i., 4), but here it is given to Him of the Father as the Son on earth to have life in Himself. This is not to say that the Father gave the Son life as such, but the power of communicating that life to others. His people have life, but not life in themselves it is in Christ, they cannot communicate it to others. That this passage should occur in the very chapter which, above others, claims the Being and attributes of the Father for our blessed Lord, is the more remarkable, and shows the infinite humility that characterised Him as a Man on earth.

But He who could say, "I came forth from the Father and am come into the world; again I leave the world and go to the Father," John xvi., 28, and who thus gives us the most profound truths of Christianity in a single sentence, refers in that sentence not only to what He became, but to what He was eternally. It was His own act. He came forth from the Father and He was come into this world. It was His own act again to leave the world and by whatever means He chose. Blessed be His Name! He chose to leave this world by the cross,

that we might be ushered into the presence of that Father from whom He came forth, in association with Him as sons. That we may, indeed, already enter in spirit into this relationship and enjoy that which He only, apart from such an exodus, had enjoyed or could.

EXAMINATION OF SOME OTHER SCRIPTURES.

We now turn to some other scriptures from the epistles of Paul, to see how the testimony of the Holy Spirit is sustained throughout. Christ is ever the testimony of God—that He is the eternal Son is the highest point of it.

Rom. i., 3,4, expressly asserts, that as to His human nature Christ is Son of David; but as to His divine nature, He was powerfully exhibited to be the Son of God, by resurrection from the dead. Here He raised Himself. The order of this Scripture, leaving out the adjuncts, runs thus:—"Paul, bondsman of Jesus Christ, a called apostle, separated to God's glad tidings . . . concerning His Son." Then in parenthesis He declares that Son to have "come of David's seed." This was a voluntary act on the part of the Son of God, just as John speaks of Him as the Word who became flesh. "According to the flesh," sets forth His human nature. "Flesh" can only be taken in that sense when the flesh of our Lord is in question. This is one part of an antithetical sentence.

Thrown over against this is "According to the Spirit of holiness." If, "according to the flesh," indicates His human nature, "according to the Spirit of holiness," indicates His divine nature. Flesh is opposed to Spirit here, as in so many other Scriptures when speaking of the Lord, and in each case refers to His human nature (see 1 Tim. iii., 16; 1 Pet. iii., 18), and the word holiness, indicates that as to His Spirit He was God, for holiness has to do with the nature of God. Holiness is not attribute, but nature. Righteousness is attribute and is part of holiness, as is to hate wickedness. So that the Psalmist, seeing these attributes in the Messiah, hails Him as God, saying - "Thy Throne, O God, is for ever and ever. . . . Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity." Ps. xlv., 6,7. This is holiness and proves Him to be God; for none but He who is God is Holy thus. So the Spirit of holiness here, marks out in power the One who came of David's seed according to his human nature, to be the Son of God according to His divine nature. This was true of Him all the time of His sojourn here. If God was manifest in flesh, He was justified in Spirit; all His claims to be God, which He certainly made, were vindicated by the Spirit of holiness in which He ever walked and acted here.

His divine Sonship has so far been presented in two ways. He was God's Son before He came in flesh, this the glad tidings declare. Next, all the while He was down here, acting as He ever did in the

Spirit of holiness He was declared in power to be the Son of God. His thoughts, His words, His deeds were ever the outcome of this Spirit. Leprosy and palsy fled His presence. The deaf, the blind, the dumb, the lame, all recognised His grace and owned His power. Everything declared Him Son of God. It did not make Him such, it proclaimed Him Son.

Thirdly, that which above all else marked Him out as Son of God in power, was the resurrection of the dead (persons Pl.), whoever they were. So that when Jesus raised the dead, as He did in the cases of the Nobleman's son at Cana, the Widow's son at Nain, Jairus' daughter, the Centurion's servant or Lazarus, these acts manifested Him as the Son of God. Above all, when He rose from the dead Himself, having annulled Him that had the power of death, as the power of death itself also, when He came forth from the grave victorious, having by His own power defeated the foe in His last stronghold, then, then in the sight of all created intelligences He was declared in power to be the Son of the Living God in resurrection. This completes the circle, He is the eternal Son of God! Let it be noted that the Spirit of holiness and resurrection did not constitute Him Son of God, but declared, marked Him out to be that which He ever was.

Coming now out of the parenthesis, we learn that this glorious Being, Son of God before He came of David's Seed, divine Son of God all the

while He was here, Son of God in resurrection, is none other than Jesus Christ our Lord. Blessed be His Holy name! Let all men honour the Son even as they honour the Father!

Mark again it is certainly here declared that Jesus our Lord is called Son of God, not on account of His Holy Being in incarnation and resurrection, but that these prove Him to be what He is according to His divine nature and the relation which as God, He ever bore to the first Person of the Trinity. If this be not so, we must certainly and on the same ground give up the Trinity also.

Thus Paul and John, by the same Spirit, testify to the same thing. There is a slight distinction between them, inasmuch as the former declares Him to be the Son of God, the latter the Son of the Father. The terms are the same in fact, but Son of God indicates nature; Son of the Father personal relationship.

One other Scripture from Paul, already referred to, we will examine a little more closely. This is:—Heb. i., 1-4, "God . . . hath : . . spoken to us in (the) Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds." Here, in one grand sentence is affirmed the very Being of God, together with eternal relationship, incarnation, complete revelation, universal heirship and creation by the Son. Further, this Son is spiritually and morally the effulgence of the glory of God. He fully reveals

that glory, as in John, only there it is the glory of the Father. He is also the expression of His substance, that is, of His essential Being. It is not Person here, but essential Being. There are three Persons in the Godhead, but one essential Being. The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God. Or, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. This blessed Son,—the image of the invisible God, having by Himself made purgation for sin, sat down by divine right and title, at the right hand of the Majesty on high. This is the One who wrought redemption's work by and for Himself.

Here we have again, Sonship claimed for Him, before creation; in incarnation; as in death and resurrection also. In other words, Jesus is the divine and eternal Son of God!

REASONS FOR ACCEPTING THE BIBLE STATEMENT.

The Scriptures adduced by no means exhaust the claims of the Word of God that Jesus is the divine and eternal Son of God, according to all fixed principles of interpretation of that blessed Book. It may be hoped that the statements that have been produced may be accepted by all who seek the truth and are prepared to bow to the claims of the Bible as the only inspired statement of the divine mind. Why should not the revelation God has made of Himself in all His fulness in the Son be ac-

cepted? Why the joy of it not be known? How many myriads of His people have lived and died in the joy of it in all ages of the Church's history? Some men there are, however, whose minds have so little sense of truth that evidence will not produce conviction. May the Lord help such! Alas! there are others whose animus against all that is of God is so strongly marked that it is not to be hoped that they will bow to God's word. These will to the end maintain the denial of everything they do not understand judging every statement of Scripture from a human and philosophical standpoint, wresting them to their own destruction.

By such it is still held that to speak of the Son eternally, implies derivation and inferiority. But this is human reasoning and an assumed ability to understand everything. "Ye shall be as Gods," underlies it, though it may be, unconsciously to the individual. It is arguing, as has been said, from earth to heaven, from the human to the divine. If God's word predicates of the second Person of the Trinity, both eternal Sonship and equality in the Godhead, together with distinct personality and underived Being, faith in the revelation of God accepts it.

To refuse it is the presumption of a mind puffed up with its own capabilities, even though it pretend to an understanding heart, which is in reality a heart, hearing, bowing to and justifying divine Wisdom in the revelation it makes, without reasoning or assuming ability to understand it.

If we expect even to understand everything revealed about God, we hold in our mind the thought of equality with God. It matters little then if we degrade the Person of the Son, the glory of the God-head has, by such, been degraded already to that which a human mind can compass. We are never raised, nor can be, to the status of God in any way, that of understanding not excepted. Faith bows reverently to the revealed, God-breathed Scriptures. Who would be wise above what is written is a fool.

The statement that Jesus Christ Our Lord is the divine and eternal Son of God is to be accepted then by all who know and love the truth, because it is affirmed in the strongest possible way in so many passages in the Bible, our only standard of truth.

Another reason, though a presumptive one, is to be derived from the fact that in all ages it has been held by the saints of God as the revealed truth. That it has been obscured by philosophical statements of How? and When? in which necessarily much error has been presented, is true; but the fact itself, apart from all explanations has been held by all orthodox Christians. To refuse, it brings us into contact again with David's first check: "If I should say I will speak thus, I should offend against the generation of thy children." Thank God that to the end, there is always a generation of faith; though there be also one of

unbelief! The great doctrines of the faith of God's elect have always been embraced not by the learned few alone, though they, to a large extent, render their tribute to the truth at all times, subjecting their minds to God and His word, but by the masses of the spirit-taught saints, though they be not schoolmen. This has been based upon the claim made by all Protestant believers, that the Scriptures themselves are clear and easy to be understood where faith is in exercise, specially on all the great doctrines of Christianity. Even Rome has preserved them as dogma. This is certainly an argument that the obvious meaning of Scripture is its true meaning. It is not meant by this, that meaning which an individual may give to an isolated passage, but that sense which the general tenor of Scripture, its connection and the constant comparison of analagous passages, would lead and in fact have led the mass of Christians to adopt.

It is not what the learned tell them, though they may have come to the same conclusion; but the general sense of the passages themselves, that convince those who seek the truth. In fact, the learned, in very many instances, go astray on some one or other favourite principle of interpretation, which they carry to an excess. Christians have the intelligence—nous—of Christ, a faculty which enables them to receive the things of God although they cannot fully understand or explain them. This faculty is fed by faith in the Scriptures, and is use-

ful as directing the affections, which in that way come to love all the revelation that God has made of Himself. The clear common-sense view of Scripture, which commends itself to the judgment and spiritual instinct of the mass of Christian readers, — that unction from the Holy One by which they know all things, is worthy of far more respect than are the views of the learned few.

This, though a presumptive argument, is all in favour of the divine and eternal Sonship of our Lord Jesus Christ.

THE IMPORTANCE OF IT.

No truth has been more attacked in all ages, since the revelation of it, than this one of which we speak. To-day, it is denied by all the heterodox sections of Christendom. Why do they all thus attack primarily the Person of the Son of God? From opposite points and with various assigned reasons, He, the Son (blessed be His name!) is the butt of the malice and virulence of men destitute of the truth. Many, alas! of His own are drawn into the vortex, as ever in such cases. The very fact of such a persistence of attack against any truth, marks the importance of that which is attacked. A more subtle mind than that of man is surely behind it all.

These attacks came in very early; they are, in these days, stronger and more virulent than ever; more, too, from what is called within. The Fathers, so-called, shrank from the attacks of the

Pagans on the unity of the Godhead, and feared to compromise that truth by the doctrine of the eternal Sonship, which might seem to militate against it, and many of them failed in the assertion of the true and full divinity and Sonship of our Lord; one of the great foundation and distinctive truths was in this way left undefended. So much for some of the learned.

The Scriptures, however, are clear, as to this point, that it was the Son who created the worlds, as in Heb. i., this we have seen. So in Col. i., it is the "Son of His love by whom all things were created in heaven and upon earth, visible and invisible . . . all things have been created by Him and for Him, and He (the Son) is before all things and by Him all things are held in being," verses 13-17. Now it is upon this relationship of Sonship that the peculiar feature of Christianity depends? God's people are sons to-day; sons forever! This they never were before nor will they ever be again in the same way. Because they are sons they have the Spirit of God's Son in their hearts crying Abba Father.

Jesus said in resurrection: "As My Father has sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent you into the world. And when He had said this He breathed on them saying 'Receive ye Holy Spirit.'" Jno. xx., 21, 22. This was the Spirit of Sonship for their mission to make known the Father. If He was not the Son when sent into the world, then

we have no such mission from the Father at all, and we cannot be sent in the same way. Further, we have not the Father's love in sending the Son out of heaven, if He were not the Son before He was born into the world. We thus lose all that the Son is if He is only so in incarnation and all the love of the Father in sending the Son as well. Moreover, it is in the character of Son He has associated us with Himself, and brought us into fellowship with the Father as sons ourselves, though in Him. He says of us also: "I say not that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father Himself loveth you because you have loved Me and believed that I came out from God." This they had believed but did not as yet know all that it meant; that is, that it was the Father from whom He came; they had not yet the Spirit of Sonship. In this they were immature; but this knowledge is the life of the **saints**.

It cannot, however, be looked upon as mere immaturity for the believer to-day, since the Spirit of Sonship has come, to deny this truth, that the Son came forth from the Father; it is reprehensible ignorance, or carelessness, or worse. It is to become a dwarf, as in Heb. v., 13, supposing the person to be a Christian; it is to remain a child carried about with every wind of doctrine, as in Eph. iv., 14. This notion of Sonship in Christ only when incarnate is destructive of the very elementary joy of the saints, and abhorrent to all those who have communion by the Spirit in the truth.

THE SOLEMNITY OF REFUSING IT.

But there is another side of it that may well make believers tremble even to entertain the idea of refusing this truth of the eternal Sonship of our Lord. It comes under the distinct ban and denunciation of the Spirit by the Apostles. The eternal Sonship is connected in the most intimate way with "the doctrine of the Christ." The Holy Spirit by John writes: "That we may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, we might have life through His name." Jno. xx., 31. The greatest glory in this name is that He who bears it is the divine Son of God.

In the Epistles of John, the Spirit begins His warnings to the babes against those who would seduce them. It is about the Son he warns them, and he begins at this early stage because apostacy lies at the end of this first departure. It is the relation of the Son with the Father sustained in the Person of the Christ that would be attacked. He that denies that Jesus is the Christ is a liar; but he that denies the Father and the Son is anti-Christ. Moreover, he who denies the Son the same hath not the Father; but he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also. These are preliminary warnings, and they are against the beginning of the removal of the foundations. This is part of that which they had heard from the beginning; if they abode in the Father and the Son, they would be in

the conscious enjoyment of eternal life (see 1 John ii., 22-25).

We have already seen how "The Son," with John, is equal to the eternal Son. We shall now turn to some tests which the Apostles gives as to the false prophets who have gone out into the world. The two main tests of the first six verses of Ch. iv. are the confession of Jesus Christ come in flesh; and the hearing of the apostles as the inspired messengers of God to us. The first test is the confession of Jesus Christ come in flesh. That is, that He had a previous existence as God, and voluntarily became flesh as His own act. This agrees with what the Spirit of God tells us in the gospel, Ch. i., 1-4. Happy to have heard the apostle so far!

In the rest of what we have alluded to as the prologue of the gospel, the Spirit proceeds to show that He who was God, the Logos, was the Only-begotten Son ever in the bosom of the Father. Thus not only the eternity of His being is taught, but also His pre-existence from eternity as Son. This in the epistle, John by the Spirit proceeds to confirm. Beginning in Ch. iv., 7 with the eternal Being of God, who is love, he proceeds in verses 9-10 to shew that Jesus Christ come in flesh, is the Only-begotten Son whom the Father sent into the world to manifest His love to us, that we might live through Him and that propitiation might be made by Him. Shall we not hear the apostle in this also? Or, Shall we

accept the first part of the revelation as to the divinity of the Being of the Christ and reject the eternity of His relationship as Son, which is part of the same revelation, given in the same breath? Remember that God's love, together with life and propitiation for us, hang upon the glory of the divine Son. Is to reject this to hear the apostles and to be influenced by the Spirit of truth? Or, Is it the spirit of error which leads into the darkness of apostacy? Let believers beware! May the Lord deliver any who have allowed their mind or the minds of others to lead them astray in thus refusing Him.

He who was promised as the Seed of the woman in Genesis, has been revealed in the New Testament as Immanuel: — The Son. Coming in lowly guise as a man, He was rejected, crucified and slain. The Holy Spirit, who delighted to vindicate His claims when here, has now come down from Him on high to depict all His glories, Personal, official, and divine. He brings us, too, the last word from God about the One rejected by earth. He is crowned in heaven! There, in a place which no creature ever occupies, He sits by divine right, as Son upon the Father's Throne; as God upon the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. He shall shortly be revealed from heaven in judgment as the Word of God; having a name also which no man knows but He, Himself. Shall we refuse such testimony? Shall we not rather heed what the Spirit further says: "He that believes in the Son of God hath the witness in him-

self; he that doth not believe hath made Him a liar, because he hath not believed in the witness that He hath witnessed concerning His Son. And this is the witness that God hath given to us eternal life and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that not the Son of God hath not life. Ch. v., 10-12. Is not this solemn?

Further, "the doctrine of the Christ" (2 John, 9), is not fully recognised by owning that He is in Person eternal; but it is demanded that in *relationship* also He be owned as eternal. "He who goes forward and abides not in the doctrine of the Christ has not God. He that abides in the doctrine, he hath both the Father and the Son."

Does not the instruction in Ch. ii., 10, 11, apply in this case to all who hold dear the revelation of the Father and the Son with all that hangs on it for time and eternity? May the saints of God awake to what the enemy is about! He ever seeks to get any special truth denied in that which has been the very citadel for the defence of that same truth.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the great central Object of the Spirit of God, and consequently of the attack of the enemy. He who confesses Him as thus revealed is of God. He who touches the divinity, eternal Sonship, or redemption wrought by Jesus Christ, is not of God.

Blessed be the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, the divine and eternal Son of the Living God!

BY THE SAME.

THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM.

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