

'The Eternal Son.'
(Comments on a Book by C. A. Coates)

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Comments on a Book by C. A. Coates. concerning 'The Eternal Son.'

Mr. Coates has recently issued a book entitled, "Remarks on a pamphlet by A. J. Pollock, entitled, "The Eternal Son."

It is with no slight grief of spirit that one places a few observations before the readers of Mr. Coates' "Remarks." Years of early and sacred memories lie behind us, in which so much was held in common with this beloved brother, that very reluctantly one finds himself in serious conflict with him. Let it be understood that his distressing and unaccountable departure from what we have learned of our Lord, does not lead one to ignore or undervalue what he has ministered of Christ to the hearts of saints by pen and voice in the past, when the truth held him.

I will not touch the personal controversy between him and Mr. Pollock in Mr. C.'s advocacy of what is hailed as "new light" and Mr. P.'s denunciation of it. There are times when a man in jealousy for the Lord's glory sets himself to contend with what he holds to be wrong teaching, and yet states things in a not quite perfect way. In such case he may be attacked over an incomplete sentence or an imperfect word, where his main position is nevertheless unassailable.

The casual reader, and especially he who has read Mr. C.'s "Remarks" alone, may observe that Mr. Coates meets one and another of Mr. Pollock's protests to his own satisfaction, and may conclude that C.A.C. is right concerning the whole matter, and that A.J.P. is wrong.

But I desire to call attention to five outstanding and incontestable features in C.A.C.'s book which will show in a clear way what the writer is teaching, and will lift our consideration of them out from the atmosphere of any personal aspect of controversy or conflict.

At the outset, when it was first publicly advanced (at Barnet in 1929) that it was not Scriptural to speak of "Eternal Sonship" in connection with our Lord's Godhead glory in the past eternity, it was stated in the report of the Reading that the brethren who thus spoke "neither denied or affirmed" Christ to be "Eternal Son." It was stated in a tentative form in the Report, though the fact that it was questioned by notable brethren startled and alarmed Christians throughout the world. But that stage of subtle and tentative presentation of the error has passed, and now not only has the denial of it been most generally and positively accepted by our "London" brethren, but those who advocate the "new light" have prefaced their issue of a new hymn book by a formal statement by the revisers of their exclusion of all reference to this eternal Sonship, and certain other glories of Christ, from their hymns. The whole fellowship in which this hymnbook is used stand committed to this exclusion by their acceptance of the book with the introductory description which states it.

Now in this paper by Mr Coates, will the reader note the following five elements of his recent teaching?

1. The glory of the Lord Jesus, Who as we gather from Scripture is the Son of God from eternity, is by Mr Coates limited as to His Sonship to His incarnation as born Son at Bethlehem, and the subsequent story. He no longer accepts that He was the Son in the past eternity. (See the first sixteen pages of his book.) He admits three Persons in the Eternal Deity, but will not have it to be believed that They were Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in that past Eternity, because we do not happen to have in the Bible the words Eternal Father or the words Eternal Son.

2. The glory of our Lord Jesus, Who as we gather from Scripture is "the Word" from eternity, is by Mr Coates limited as to His Word-ship, to His becoming Man. It is not accepted that He was the Word in the past eternity. (See his pages 26-29). He perverts the fact stated in John 1: 3, that there was expression given to God and to God's mind in the creation of all things, by the action of "The Word," though it is stated most emphatically that all things were created by the Word. It is most important to see that there is in the physical creation a testimony as to the Creator God (See also Col. 1: 16, first clause). The Apostle Paul comments on this in dealing with the sin of the heathen in Romans 1, and brings them in guilty on that ground.

3. The glory of our Lord Jesus, Who as we gather from the Scripture was eternally in the Father's bosom (John 1: 18) is curtailed in this respect also. His being in the bosom of the Father is limited to His life here on earth, and subsequently (pages 20 and 30). It is denied that His being in the Father's bosom has reference to His eternal place as the only begotten Son in the Father's affections. (This denial is also noticeable in the revised Hymns, where every such expression is eliminated by alteration.)

4. But Mr. Coates goes further than others. Having in his mind refused the Sonship of Christ in the past eternity, whatever else he allows, it follows as a necessary corollary, and is unequivocally stated on his pages 17, 18, 20, that the Name of Father must likewise be eliminated from the mind in thinking of God in the past eternity. As one has never met with this teaching before, among brethren out-gathered to Christ, it seems that it has become necessary for C.A.C. and the brethren with him to surrender this Fatherhood in the Godhead in the past eternity, even as the thought of Sonship in the past eternity is to be given up. Mr. Coates says on page 18, "It would be misleading for us to say that He was always with the Father." And again, on page 20, "It is quite beside the mark to say that the Father was the Father, before the Lord Jesus was born into the world."

5. Finally, on page 24 Mr. Coates boldly hints to us that the Name Jehovah properly belongs to God only from Exodus 6, onward: suggesting that Moses, having heard it then and there, uses it in a retrospective way in writing the account of Creation, etc. in Genesis 2, and later chapters. This is a crude and careless way of thinking and writing; for in Genesis 22, Moses himself records that Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-Jireh. This new doctrine is used by C.A.C. as an illustration of the way the titles "Christ" and "Christ Jesus" are used of Him in relation to the past eternity, though He was not the Anointed Man then. But is this so? Are we now to believe that God only became Jehovah when He thus revealed Himself to Moses?

Let us examine this a little more closely, and in conjunction with the parallel passage in Exodus 3. In chapter 6, we have the Name of God revealed to Moses for Israel as Jehovah. In chapter 3, we have the same God revealed to Moses for Israel as "I AM." The Hebrew leader is to inform the people of Israel that "I AM hath sent me unto you." We are to understand if led by the argument of Mr. Coates that Jehovah, being the Name assumed in Exodus 6, was not Jehovah in the past eternity, because the

communication of that Name was not made to Israel for the purpose of revelation until the time of Moses. But equally must he say that the revelation of God as I AM was not made to Israel until the day of Moses. Are we then to apply the same reasoning to the I AM glory of God as C.A.C. does to the Jehovah glory of God? He must assent to this if he be honest and consistent.

But if so, this would run counter to what our Lord says of Himself in John 8, namely, "Before Abraham was, I am." This proves a death-blow to C.A.C.'s reasoning. The revelation of God as I AM was given to Moses; but it was the declaration of Who God was before He was revealed. Christ was I AM even before Abraham's day, and of course from eternity. Jehovah — the Self-existent one, He who is — was the declaration of Who God is, from all eternity; but only adopted and given as a covenant Name to Israel from Exodus 6. It seems to be something more than a mere slip that our brother should logically pursue a fallacious argument to the point where he would deprive us of the Name of God as the Self-existent One, and only apply that designation to Him subsequent to Exodus 6. Closer examination on his part would show him very clearly the connection there is between the I AM of Exodus 3, and the Jehovah (HE WHO IS), of Exodus 6.

There are other assailable subjects in Mr. Coates' paper, but the above five points show how far a landslide has already taken place, and one wonders where these leaders will stop. It is an awful feature of the present day that Christians who are thought to be in a path of separation to Christ, and who have been favoured by so much light, should now and in a way suddenly — have agreed to give up what their godly leaders of the last century, men of God as they undoubtedly were, reverently treasured and assiduously taught as light from God. But surely there must be some amongst them who read their Bibles differently; to whom the simple voice of Scripture speaks in its own convincing and unreasoning way; and who enjoy holy and true communion with God in the faith of these cardinal truths, however discarded and discredited these truths become in the minds of those departing from them.

Other attacks are impending, and on foundation truths also, and brethren are hereby warned that having induced many saints to surrender so much that is vital, the enemy who seems to be acting through their minds will not be content with what their leaders have already given up, but will further attack what we have learnt of Christ's atonement, and even of resurrection. Of these things there are also premonitions and ominous signs. The enemy hates every mention of the blood of Christ in the Assembly. and every reminder of his defeat in the literal and actual resurrection of our Lord, and of His saints in due time.

"Ye therefore beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness; but grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and ever. Amen."

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