

# The Person of the Son

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"NO ONE KNOWS THE SON BUT THE FATHER." Matt. 11: 27.

"NO ONE KNOWS WHO THE SON IS BUT THE FATHER." Luke 10: 22.

These two statements, in which slightly differing words are used for "knows," imply that however much has been shown to be true of Him in the Scripture, there is depth unrevealed and glory inscrutable to man in the Person of CHRIST.

Where Christian theologians have for nearly two thousand years been exploring His holy beauty, it may appear almost like presumption to venture a few words on such a theme; yet it may prove opportune to briefly and reverently examine some of the Divine communications made to His saints.

It is necessary, in order to clear the ground a little, to call the reader's attention to a great marvel; namely, that God should be pleased to address men in human language at all. The spirit of a man knows the things of a man (1 Cor. 2: 11); but here we are in communication with GOD, and in connection with that which is confessedly inscrutable. How incomprehensibly great is God! Our curiosity may lead us to wonder in what language He speaks to the angels, or what language we shall ourselves speak in the eternal state. But we can gather that God's desire is to speak to us in ordinary language in this world. It was for this reason on the day of Pentecost, when many languages were represented in Jerusalem, that the gift of tongues was bestowed, to allow people to hear in their own dialects the wonderful works of God (Acts 2: 8). Actually the Bible as first given, was in Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek. These tongues were used of God, not because they were the study of any priestly class or religious order, but because they were the common languages current at the time the Scriptures were given, and among the people to whom they were given.

This is important. I would say even to any Roman Catholic Christian that these languages are to anyone difficult now, because they are dead languages. But through grace, translations have been made. When Latin was used, a Latin version was needed. But Latin was not one of the languages in which the word was first given. To translate out of one tongue that is not generally understood into another that is just as difficult for the ordinary reader is no help; it only hides the communications of God instead of passing them on into the ordinary speech\* of the common people (Rom. 10: 8). The validity of a translation is measured by its fidelity to the original word, and the value of it is commensurate with its use of words understood by ordinary people.

{\*The horrid travesty of "the Tongues movement" is exposed, in that that gift was given to explain to certain hearers what they might not have understood in the current tongue of the country. It was to help foreigners.}

For those who will read this paper there was needed an English translation, true to the original

word, and in language such as simple English people can understand. For God has given His word to us not to conceal His meaning, nor to becloud our minds, nor to nauseate the heart with controversies, but to convey to His people His own blessed thoughts; thoughts of which Christ — the true Christ — is the ever blessed Centre.

The Bible then, in the holy simplicity of its grand unfoldings, and in the sweet language of our own mother tongue, becomes God's own language to us. Any alleged interpretation which does violence (Matt. 15: 1-6) to the plain and unequivocal speech in which He addresses us, will surely mislead us. Let us humbly bear this in mind as we proceed.

Now while the truth of Christ can only be taught by the Spirit of God, i.e., the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. 2: 9-11), it is likewise true that it can only be apprehended by new-born souls in the capacity of a Spirit-formed nature (1 Cor. 2: 12-16). Immensities of glory may often appear to be difficulties; but immensities only really become difficulties to Christians when we attempt to solve them by some process of human reasoning. Let us humbly weigh what is taught in the Word of God as to the Son of God, looking that the Spirit may Himself guide us into the truth. We will do so with the earnest desire to profit by what has been revealed, without going beyond what is written.

The Son of God may be seen in four positions, viz.:- His Eternal Sonship; His Sonship in Time; as Son in Resurrection; and as Son in Ascension and Glory.

## **1. HIS ETERNAL SONSHIP.**

To have any sense of the greatness of Christ, we must bow in the conviction of this glory — He is Son of God from all eternity. That is, He from all eternity has been the Son (Heb. 1: 2) in the Triune Godhead (Matt. 28: 19).

Hebrews 1: 2, shows us that He was before all the ages by which time is measured or can be measured, since He is the One by Whom they were all made. This carries us back into eternity. The full glory of the Triune God is stated in Matthew 28: 19 — Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, — and is circumstantially illustrated in Matthew 3: 16, 17, and parallel passages.

We are met at the outset by a seeming difficulty. There are five passages which in our English Bible speak of the Eternal Son as "only-begotten," namely, John 1: 14 and John 1: 18; John 3: 16 and John 3: 18; and 1 John 4: 9.

As the words "only begotten," taken in their literal etymological meaning, might suggest to English readers the idea of Birth, and the beginning of Being, it is of transcendent importance to ascertain with what meaning the word is used in Scripture. For the true explanation of a word employed in inspired writings is determined by its use rather than by its derivation.

The passages in which the Greek word so translated is found are all cited below, proving that the sense in which it is used is very different from that which such a translation might lead a careless reader to imagine.

MONOGENES is the Greek word in the New Testament

which is translated "only-begotten" in the five references to the Son mentioned above. It is used nine times in all in the Greek text.

Greek Monogenes. English rendering.

Luke 7: 12 Only.

Luke 8: 42 Only.

Luke 9: 38 Only.

John 1: 14 Only-begotten.

John 1: 18 Only-begotten.

John 3: 16 Only-begotten.

John 3: 18 Only-begotten.

Heb. 11: 17 Only-begotten.

1 John 4: 9 Only-begotten.

Thus it is three times translated by the single word "only," and six times by the compound word "only-begotten."

Let us observe the instances -

(a) Those in Luke are simple. Evidently the pathos of the situation met by the Lord was in each case enhanced by the fact that these were only children.

(b) The passage in Hebrews refers to Abraham, and the expression "only-begotten" is evidently not used to state how many sons he begat; that is, not to emphasize the begetting. For he begat other children. Rather does it intimate that Isaac, as the child of promise, held a UNIQUE place; that he was the one who ALONE was recognised of God, and by Abraham's faith, as the heir of the promises. Do we not realise as we read it what strain there was on Abraham's affection when this trial of his faith touched the very one, and the only one, on whom all his God-given hopes rested?

(c) This brings us up against the fact that it is only in John's writings that the English translation 'only begotten' is applied to the Son of God.

Now this very John is the one who, in language more explicit than that of any other inspired writers, shows in his first and most prominent verses (John 1: 1, 2) that HE NEVER HAD A BEGINNING.

It is therefore more than obvious that when he used the word MONOGENES, it was never intended that we should understand it in the sense that the Son had a birth or beginning in Eternity past.

(d) A fourth observation may be made at this point. The Greek word for "to beget" is often used in the New Testament, especially in Matthew's first chapter; where too we are distinctly told that JESUS, Who is called CHRIST, was born of Mary. Again in the second chapter. it is said JESUS having been born. But such refer evidently and unquestionably to His birth as Babe on earth at Bethlehem.

There are, however, three passages which we require to humbly touch upon; Acts 13: 33; Heb. 1: 5; Heb. 5: 5; each of these being quotations from Psalm 2: 7. "Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee."

The term day is a time term. The context of the Psalm itself, and each of the citations thereof in the New Testament by the Holy Spirit through His servants, shew clearly that David in the first instance, and Paul, and the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in quoting David's Psalm, were referring to His time history, and not at all to His eternal relationship in Deity.

Thus Acts 13: 23, 32, 33, show that it is applied by Paul to the subject of God fulfilling His

promise in raising up a Saviour to Israel.

In Hebrews 1: 5, the glory of angels is said to be inferior to the glory of the One Who, though Son, had made purification for sins, and in Manhood has taken a place at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

So Hebrews 5: 5, links Christ's priesthood with His relationship as Son; and the quotation from the Psalm is brought in to show that He did not glorify Himself into the position of Priest, but was appointed thereto in resurrection by the One that had said unto Him, Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee. It refers to His place as Man.

Neither in Psalm 2: 7, nor anywhere else does it refer to, never is it applied to, His eternal Personality.

Now with regard to the Old Testament, be it noted that in that Greek Version of the Hebrew original which is called the Septuagint, and from which our Lord Himself so often quoted, the same Greek word MONOGENES is found as translation of the Hebrew word YACHID. If we briefly consider the instances in which this word occurs in the Old Testament, it will further elucidate its meaning. It is found eleven times, as follows: —

Hebrew Yachid.    English Rendering.

Gen. 22: 2    Only.

Gen. 22: 16    Only.

Judges 11: 34    Only.

Prov. 4: 3    Only.

Jer. 6: 26    Only.

Amos 8: 10    Only.

Zech. 12: 10    Only.

Ps. 22: 20    Darling.

Ps. 35: 17    Darling.

Ps. 25: 16    Desolate.

Ps. 68: 6    Solitary.

All of these passages confirm our conclusions from the New Testament. Wherever the word YACHID is used in the Hebrew, and translated into MONOGENES in the Septuagint Greek, it conveys the idea of an object before the mind in a single or solitary way, whether it be an only son or daughter; a son distinguished in affection and honour in a human household, or one especially signified in the purpose and ways of God, though in reality there were others in that human family; or an object placed in a unique position of loneliness, of aloneness, of being by one's self.

It is of interest to note that French translations give "unique" as the equivalent of MONOGENES. To sum up, the words YACHID in the Old Testament, and MONOGENES in the New, both seem to join the meanings of "only," "solitary," and "dear." In regard of the eternal Son, He is distinguished in affection, as an only child would be with a fond human parent. (See John 1: 14, New Tr.).

Thus in every part does our God, in the Holy writings, guard us from any false conception of the

Son of His love (Col. 1: 13); setting Him before us as having no beginning (John 1: 1); as having created all things (Col. 1: 15-16); who subsisted in the form of God and hence esteemed it not an object to be grasped after to be equal with God (Phil. 2: 6), seeing that that was the essential nature and character of His own Being. In the Triune Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, He was the Eternal Son. Father and Son are correlative terms; the truth of the One is bound up with the truth of the Other. He is the antichrist who denies the Father and the Son (1 John 2: 23). Whosoever denies the Son has not the Father, He that confesses the Son hath the Father also.

As to all that this wondrous and eternal glory means, in its joy of relationship, the mutuality of affection it tells us of, the dignity it implies, the reverential awe it bespeaks, the community of mind and will and purpose it more than hints to us — of these we cannot speak particularly now. But we get glimpses of glory which lead us humbly to endorse, in the faith and the adoring affection of our souls, the fact that, No one knows the Son but the Father.

The Son of God may further be considered in connection with

## **2. HIS SONSHIP IN TIME.**

The Eternal Son, in accordance with His Eternal Father's will (John 8: 42), came in due time into the world, and was born a Babe in Bethlehem (Luke 1: 26-33), supernaturally born of the virgin Mary, conceived in her womb of the Holy Ghost (v. 35). The Form of His Being was altered, so that He Who was, in the completeness of His eternal Personality, in the Form of God (Phil. 2: 6, 7) — so that the Form was the Person — was seen on earth, in the completeness of His Personality, in the Form of a Servant; the Whole Person was the Son . . . "In likeness of men," says Holy Scripture; "as a Man," says Scripture. While we rightly speak of Christ AS SON OF GOD, we also rightly speak of Him AS A MAN. He is the same Person, the same one Person, whether we view Him from the standpoint of His Deity or of His Humanity. Complete in His eternal Sonship, complete in His Humanity, the Son is the Man Christ Jesus, the Man Christ Jesus is the Son. There are not two Sons in His Person as early heretics would have forced Christians to believe; one being as Scripture (Luke 1: 35) affirms "the Holy Thing" which was born of Mary, the other as they so erroneously affirmed, the Spirit that tabernacled inside the Man, a separate entity within Him, Who, as they alleged, constituted the real Personality to which the form of a man was attached. Perhaps the transfiguration is an example of how conditions may be changed and the person be the same; one moment in lowly appearance conversing with His disciples, the next moment glorious beyond compare, not with an external illumination making Him so, but the same Person in two distinguishable fashions, each absolutely true of the same Whole Person throughout. Are we baffled in every attempt to explain this? Then let us afresh own that, No one knows the Son but the Father.

There was only one Son, and the Man was He. Ten thousand eyes saw Him as to His Personal appearance (John 6: 40), yet saw Him not in the truth of His Person. He was in the world and the world knew Him not (John 1: 10). A hundred Scriptures had foretold His coming and His ways and glories, and those Scriptures were in the hands of His earthly people in His own earthly land of Israel; yet it is said "He came to His own (things) but His own (people) received Him not" (John 1: 11). Nay, in their ignorance of His glory, they fulfilled those very Scriptures in condemning Him (Acts 13: 27). They could not have been condemned for not seeing His spirit, had His Sonship been limited to His spirit. It was He, Himself, His whole Person, Whom they rejected — He was the Son. In this connection let us ponder the deep meaning of the following Scriptures: —

John 6: 42. — "Is not this JESUS? . . . How then does He say, I am come down out of heaven?"

John 8: 19. — They said to Him therefore, "Where is Thy Father?" Jesus answered, "Ye know neither Me nor My Father. If ye had known Me ye would have known My Father also."

John 8: 42. — Jesus said unto them, "If God were your Father ye would have loved Me, for I came forth from God and am come [from Him]; for neither am I come of Myself, but He has sent Me."

John 8: 53, etc. — "Art Thou greater than our father Abraham . . . Whom makest Thou Thyself?" JESUS answered ". . . It is My Father that glorifieth Me, of Whom ye say that He is your God . . . Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day . . ." The Jews therefore said unto Him, "THOU art not yet fifty years old, and hast THOU seen Abraham?" JESUS said unto them, "Before Abraham was, I am." They took up stones . . . but JESUS hid HIMSELF and went out of the temple.

If human language is to be used at all as a vehicle for Divine communications, these portions, and many another, show that Jesus, the Jesus Whose footsteps we follow in the gospel story, is the Son of God. He Himself speaks, and we hear Him; He moves, we watch Him; He thirsts, is weary, weeps, works, warns, suffers, dies, is buried; and we say, "The Son of God loved Me and gave Himself for Me." We have not to analyse His Person, and differentiate between His body and His spirit, before we find Him to be the Son of God.

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Further we do well to give full weight to the following passages from the same Gospel of John:-

John 9: 11. — The Man that is called JESUS.

John 9: 17. — He is a Prophet.

John 9: 33. — If this Man were not of God, He could do nothing.

John 9: 35-38. — JESUS . . . Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He . . . said . . . Who is He, Lord? JESUS said unto him, THOU HAST BOTH SEEN HIM, AND HE IT IS THAT SPEAKETH WITH THEE.

We may not turn away from the evident meaning of these words. There was a Person there Whom all might see, but on Whom not all did believe who saw Him. But those in whom there was faith, IN SEEING JESUS SAW THE SON OF GOD. He said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him.

Again we read:-

John 10: 32. — JESUS answered them, Many good works have I showed you from MY FATHER. . . The Jews . . . for blasphemy, and because that THOU, BEING A MAN, MAKEST THYSELF GOD. JESUS answered them . . . say ye of Him Whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am Son of God? . . . The Father is in Me, and I in Him. They sought again to take Him.

"I said, I am the Son of God." Who is the One Who said this? The One Who said this is the One Who walked in the temple in Solomon's porch (v. 23), and (in v. 39) the One Whom they sought to take, but He went forth out of their hand. The sin of the Jews was that though the Son was Man, and that Man was Son, they hated both Him and His Father (John 15: 24), and their charge against Him in the day when they crucified Him was this, We have a law, and by our law He ought to die because He made Himself the Son of God (John 19: 7). All this would become meaningless if His Sonship and His Manhood were distinct entities.

All is plain until the inborn rationalism of fallen and carnal man gets to work on this

unfathomable mystery. May it not be said that error as to the Person of Christ often proceeds from the audacity that tries to dissect TWO NATURES in the One Person, and thence to define which is the Divine and which is the Human? JESUS IS GOD, and JESUS IS MAN. The inscrutable mystery to which reference was made at the beginning of this paper, lies in this, that both these glories are true, but inseparable, in the One Person. He may be viewed, now in the light of the one glory, now in the light of the other, but He is the same Christ throughout, body, soul, and spirit. His Godhead was not a distinct entity from His Manhood. He was not two persons. but One. It would be totally wrong to limit the Sonship of Christ, the glory of the Son, to any one part of His glorious Being. He is One, and indivisible. If any difficulties are alleged, let them remain difficulties, for how else can it be when "No one knows the Son but the Father."

Seeing that Christ is Man, we find that in each and every particular the Scripture speaks of Him in language such as, would be used of man, while ever apart from sin and with holiness innate. It speaks of Him as to His body, Matt. 26: 12; Luke 23: 52; John 20: 12; Heb. 10: 5. It speaks of His soul, Matt. 26: 38; Mark 14: 34; John 12: 27; Acts 2: 27, 31; In the Old Testament also, as in Ps. 16: 10; Ps. 22: 20; Isaiah 53: 10, 11, 12; etc., etc. It speaks of His spirit also, Mark 2: 8; Mark 8: 12; Luke 10: 21; Luke 23: 46; John 11: 33; John 13: 21. All these speak of Him in Manhood, the Son having become Man; even as we in the constitution of our manhood are said to have spirit, soul and body (1 Thess. 5: 23). The same words are used in His case as are used in our case. Yet how every heart that knows Him, while adoring the absolute identity of our Lord in nature with man, sin apart, yet feels the holy mystery, the infinite glory, indissolubly true, that He is the Son incarnate.

Thus His trials were similar to ours, and affected Him in spirit, soul and body; in fact in every way. He was made like unto His brethren in all things (Heb. 2: 17); and hath been in all points tempted like as we are. Let any one take a concordance and see how the saints of God from Job onward have been afflicted in (1) body, (2) soul, and (3) spirit, and it will astonish him to see how fully it is proved that the trials of all three are necessary to complete the experience of true manhood, and how necessary it was that Christ should be Man in every detail. One need not use adjectives; lest it should appear that in any way one was limiting the truth of Christ's Person to Humanity as we know it in ourselves; but the Son of God in Manhood was Man, body, soul, and spirit. Either this is so, or the language of Scripture is meaningless and misleading; (I speak as a fool). The MAN, in all the completeness of His Manhood here, was SON, and always SON, in life and in death.

### **3. SON IN RESURRECTION.**

In speaking of our Lord in relation to His eternal Sonship, the further extension of His Personal glory into resurrection and ascension has to be considered. For in the ways of God in grace and counsel, the Son as Man was to open up a new world, "where sin, nor want, nor woe, nor death, can come." The love of God sent Him, the Son, the unique, "darling" Son, to bring in life, and be the propitiation for our sins (1 John 4: 9, 10). For sin had ruined the first order of man, and had brought in death and judgment. He died the death, He bore the judgment, for our sakes, making atonement for us in the very work and way that have revealed the love of God. But to end up the old order alone would have lent an appearance of defeat in God's ways, as though His purpose in creating man had been defeated. The love of God had planned that after the unfoldings of His ways and character in the history of the first man (with all the marvels of redemption, grace, holiness and love brought to light in the cross), there should be a new race of men, with Christ, the Son, for its living Head. Past all the disclosure of what sin is — its miseries and results for ever unmasked and hated (Rom. 7: 13-15), the heart won by the true knowledge of God (Rom. 8: 31-39), life and incorruptibility brought to light by

the Gospel (2 Tim. 1: 10), blessing secured in One (2 Cor. 1: 19, 22) Who is the unchanging and infinite Object of God's delight and love — we find ourselves in the presence of the risen Son of God.

For Jesus is risen. Death in our case shows sin's triumph over us, and our weakness in the presence of Satan's power. Resurrection in His case shows His triumph over both sin and Satan. He Who went into the grave came out of it. Let it be distinctly averred that the Son of God, Jesus, Who was dead, now lives again — in resurrection estate surely — but with His own Person complete. It would be just as false to deny His bodily presence on the first glad resurrection day of which we read in John 20, or in Luke 24, as it would be false to deny His bodily presence on the cross or in the grave. Death is an enemy in God's creation as far as man is concerned, and if death for ever secured the body as its prey, then would God's enemy have triumphed. The triumph of God is set forth in Christ's real resurrection, the full result of which will be in the resurrection of the just in its time, and in the resurrection of the unjust in its time (1 Cor. 15; John 5; Rev. 20).

The Son of God has emerged from the grave, victorious, alive again, complete in Manhood after as before, not a spirit (as though His Person were limited to His Spirit) (Luke 24: 36-43), never to die again (Rom. 6: 9), for death has no more dominion over Him. He lives after the power of an endless life, an indissoluble life (Heb. 7: 17). In the risen Son of God, Jesus, we see God's thought for man, ever living, ever beyond sin's power and Satan's reach, for ever living to God, for God's pleasure and will. He is Head, and Pattern, of the new type or order of man on which sin and Satan and death have no power, and in connection with a new scene where everything ministers eternally to the joy of the heart of God. The new position is opened up to us of glory, honour, and incorruptibility. There is opened up to view an era, a resurrection vista, in which the Son of God is the fulfiller of all God's counsels. His Son was marked out Son of God with power, not only by the raising of other dead ones, but by His own resurrection on that first Lord's day. And as risen, in all the vigour and power of eternal life, He is the Model to which His redeemed ones are to be conformed (Rom. 8, 29; Phil. 3, 21).

We gladly see that He will be the First-born among His many brethren; for He Who won the position is ever distinguishable in the blessedness of His Personal glory and His victory from those who are sharers of that position and victory. But how blessed when the Lord Himself declared to them, "I ascend to My Father, and to your Father, to My God, and your God."

Thus nothing of His Person is lost. He Who is Son of God, and yet Man, is alive in the beauty and power of His resurrection, in the whole truth and unity of His Person.

#### **4. SON IN ASCENSION AND GLORY.**

The new order of life and position of victory were declared by the Lord in resurrection, but it remained for the Son to take the predestined place as Man in glory, where on the one hand we might see the setting forth of God's infinite pleasure in Him, and on the other it might be possible to bring the purpose of God to fruition in heaven and in earth. (Eph. 1: 9, and Eph. 1: 20-23). We behold the completeness of His redemptive work, the triumph of good over evil, the glory of God revealed in the face of Christ (2 Cor. 3, 4), in such fashion that the very Presence that once was our dread has become the home of our affection (Acts 9: 5; Phil. 3: 7-14) and the lure of our minds. We see the spot from which the Church on earth is supplied, and the servants and Saints are sustained (Col. 2: 9-19; Eph. 4: 8-16), the Resource from which all fulness is ministered, the One Who alone will master Satan, put down all hostility to God, and bring in the millennium, and the eternal state.

Moreover, we see in the present session of The Son of God in Manhood in the throne of God,

that this holy Person has contracted no impurity by touching sin and death, which would disqualify Him as Son from sitting there; and that there has been no surrender of His Divine glory by becoming Man. It shows us the exquisite and infinite delight of the heart of God in the whole story of His incarnation, humiliation, and death as nothing else can.

And — we may add — by transferring our thoughts to heaven and the presence of God, and the riveting of our affections on a Person so glorious and fair up there (Col. 3: 1-4), we who are His are detached from the sordid world around us with all its glitter and noisy boast, to await with souls already satisfied in His love, the coming of GOD'S SON from heaven, even JESUS (1 Thess. 1: 9, 10).

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