

# The Eternal Son of the Father

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## INTRODUCTION

Of late years, a doctrine has been formulated and taught amongst many Christians that has been termed the "Temporal Sonship" doctrine, as opposed to the orthodox doctrine of "Eternal Sonship". The hitherto generally accepted view that our blessed Lord and Saviour is and was the Son of God from all eternity, was challenged in 1929 by J. Taylor of New York when he was in England at a series of readings held at High Barnet. At first it was only said that Divine Relationships in eternity were unknowable, and therefore the Lord's Sonship before incarnation could not be affirmed, but soon by 1932 it was being boldly taught that the Lord's Sonship began at incarnation, and Eternal Sonship was directly denied.

This doctrine has been confined to those known as "Taylor Exclusive Brethren", at one time a very numerous company. It is resolutely refused by others also known as Exclusive Brethren and by well-known teachers amongst the Open Brethren. Owing to the sad break-up of the Taylor company, many individuals and meetings have been forced out of their original fellowship, and would dearly like to be able to share unity with the brethren who have never been in fellowship with J. Taylor. However, because they are still unable to affirm that the Head of the Church is the Eternal Son of God, they have been refused, or, knowing that they would be refused if they applied, they have never pursued the matter. It is with the desire to help any who may be confused on this issue, that this little book is written.

Right at the commencement, let it be stated that nobody has ever failed to confess that the Lord is an Eternal Divine Person, without beginning or end. It is not His personality but His eternal relationship as Son of the Father that is questioned. That the Trinity, three Persons in One God, has always had existence, is a truth held by all. Also we do not wish to evade the arguments advanced by the exponents of J. Taylor's doctrine. We assume they only have the Lord's honour and glory in their motives when they advance these teachings, but firmly believe that they are sadly mistaken. The only authority to which we can turn when the Truth is at stake is the Word of God. We will avoid as far as possible, therefore, using the support of human authorities.

Many, when they learn that the Lord's Godhead and Manhood are not apparently affected, regard the question as not of fundamental importance. They point out that the words "Eternal Son" and "Eternal Sonship" are not in Scripture, and therefore do not see why they should be required to use

them. But many words that are not in Scripture are used to define scriptural doctrine. Where are the words "Trinity", "Divine Person", "Vicarious Sacrifice" or "The Fall" for example? Many formulae are used that are succinct statements of scriptural doctrine, but are not themselves in Scripture. It would be impossible to give exposition of Scripture if we could only confine ourselves to direct quotations. This excuse, used to avoid grasping the issue, is not tenable. Our aim in this book is to show that a fundamental issue is involved.

## REASONS ADVANCED IN SUPPORT OF THE TEMPORAL SONSHIP DOCTRINE

Here are some of the main arguments of these teachers:

(a) A son is in a place of subjection to his father. Even when a son reaches a high position and state, he still gives honour to his parents. This is a principle found throughout Scripture. There can, however, be no subjection or obedience between Divine Persons as viewed absolutely in the Godhead; therefore the Lord's Sonship has only to do with His mediatorial position taken up in Manhood.

(b) The word "Only Begotten" refers to birth. There was only one time when He was born, and that was at the incarnation.

(c) "He is in the bosom of the Father" (John 1: 18). The word "is" does not imply an eternal state as in the name "I AM" (John 8: 58) but a present state. The word "in" is the Greek word *eis* which implies that He came into that state. Elsewhere in the chapter the past tense is used to describe Him in the Eternal Godhead (verses 1 and 2).

(d) Throughout Scripture the term "Son", "Son of God" is only applied when referring to the Lord in Manhood, and the position He then took up. To the simple objection that the Father must have had a Son in order to send Him into the world, it was pointed out that present relationships are often used to identify persons in events before the relationships existed. For example a man might say, "When my wife was a little girl". She was not his wife when she was a little girl, nevertheless he still refers to her as his wife. In John 17: 3, it is "Jesus Christ Whom Thou has sent", but He was not Jesus Christ before He was sent. In John 3: 13, the Son of Man came down from Heaven, but He was not the Son of Man before He came down. "Jesus Christ, the Same yesterday and to day and for ever" (Hebrews 13: 8). Here we have the attributes of Deity ascribed to the Lord under His human name and title.

(e) Scriptures used to support the doctrine are Psalm 2: 7, "This day have I begotten Thee", and Luke 1: 31, which it is claimed shows that the Lord was not called the Son of God until His birth.

Many have found it very difficult to refute these arguments in a convincing manner. Most of the followers of J. Taylor were persuaded to accept the new teaching. Those who took the lead did so with an acute intellect and knowledge of Scripture, and one may acknowledge that they appeared to have a genuine and reverent desire to honour Divine Persons. Some of those who rushed into print to oppose the doctrine seemed confused and caught off guard. For example, they asserted that the new doctrine was Sabellianism, which was not true. It was a new teaching (to them) and first the Scriptures needed to be searched to see if these things were so. We are convinced, however, that it was really a very subtle attack on the fundamentals of the Christian Faith. We must look beyond the dear brethren who taught the error and see the enemy at work. Satan was behind it, using godly men that he had taken unawares. In doing so, he effected the ruin of a portion of that great movement of the Holy Spirit in the last century which rediscovered the precious truth of God's assembly. It is one's desire, in producing this booklet, to present a case from Scripture that will convince of their mistake those who have

imbibed the temporal sonship doctrine. Many an argument has been put forward in the past that seems conclusive to those who already accept the orthodox view, but very weak in the judgment of those who are opposed.

## THE PROOF OF THE LORD'S DEITY

See John 5: 17-18. The Lord had just healed a man on the Sabbath Day, to the anger of the Jews. His answer to them was, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work", which appears to be the first time He said publicly that God was His Father. This condemned Him utterly in the eyes of the Jews, for they saw that by saying that God was His Father He made Himself equal with God.

Here we see that the Lord's Sonship demonstrated His equality with Deity — not His subjection as the followers of J. Taylor teach. Could it be that the Jews had reached the truth of His claim to equality by the wrong reasoning? No, the inspired words do not say that it was just what the Jews said, but assert plainly that He made Himself equal with God by saying God was His Father. The reasoning of the Jews was as correct as their conclusion.

Why did the Jews see this? Because in the Hebrew thinking, and in the Scriptures, a father is presented as being of the same nature as the one he begets. Here are a few examples:

There is the common term, "sons of Belial". Belial means "worthless", so the term "son of Belial" simply means a worthless person.

Jesus was surnamed Barnabas by the apostles (Acts 4: 36), meaning "son of consolation", because he was by nature one who consoled for he was a good man who exhorted the brethren that with purpose of heart they would cleave to the Lord (Acts 11: 23-24).

The Lord surnamed John and James the sons of thunder.

Judas is called the son of perdition because he was by nature one that would perish. Perdition means perishing.

He called the Pharisees a generation of vipers because they had the nature of vipers. See also "children of light", "children of wrath", "child of the Devil", etc.

Every being begets after his own kind (Genesis 1). Therefore the Jews saw that if God has a Son, that Son has the nature of Deity. There is only One True Son of the same eternal essence as the Father — the Only Begotten Son.

But the objection will at once be raised, "If God has begotten a Son, there must have been a time when the Son was begotten, and therefore He has a beginning". This is quite wrong reasoning, for the right implication is exactly the opposite. If an eternal Father, without beginning nor end, begets a Son, that Son also must have neither beginning nor end; else He is not a True Son according to the Father's essence. God's nature is infinite, therefore His Son's nature is infinite.

We must abandon all reasoning from the finite. Every finite creature begets a finite creature with a beginning, but the Infinite begets the Infinite with no beginning. The word "Only Begotten" does not imply carnal or low thoughts of begetting, but implies equal nature. This is what the ancient orthodox teachers called "The Eternal Generation of the Son". The begetting is not an event of the past, however distant.

Let us not lessen the force of the word "Only Begotten" by saying that it might just be translated "Only" or that it means simply unique or uniquely precious. It means far more than that. It means that

He is the only Son according to the Divine Essence. To justify this lessening of the force of the word "Only Begotten", the case of Isaac is put forward who is called Abraham's only begotten son although there were other sons. However, in God's eyes, Isaac was the only son. Abraham said, "O that Ishmael might live before Thee!" but Ishmael was not recognised by God, the covenant was not to be with him (Genesis 17: 18-19). On the other hand it has been stated, that because of the Septuagint use of the word "only begotten" for the Hebrew "only one" (*jachid*), that "only" is all that is meant by it. But the Septuagint is often an inaccurate translation and certainly cannot be cited as a greater authority than the New Testament itself. Those who have come to the defence of Eternal Sonship by denying that the real meaning of the Greek word *monogenes* is "only begotten", have actually obscured the issue.

But what then are we to say about all the other sons? Are there not many sons brought to glory? (Hebrews 2: 10). Are we not sons? (Galatians 4: 6). Are we not begotten of God? (1 John 5: 1, 18). Are not the angels called sons of God? (Job 1: 6/38: 7).

It is true that we are brought into sonship by the grace of God. We have been begotten of God as regards the new nature, when we were born again by the Word and the Spirit. This is the divine nature (1 Peter 1: 4). It is the nature of God *morally* — God's true nature from the *moral* standpoint, but it is not sonship according to *essence*. That is, we do not partake of Deity and thus become omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent, etc. Only the Son has Sonship according to essence. From the moral aspect He is the Firstborn among *many* brethren, but from the point of view of Divine Essence He is the Only Begotten with *no* brethren.

As regards the angels, the Scripture insists that the Lord's Sonship distinguishes Him from them. "For unto which of the angels said He at any time, "Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee" (Hebrews 1: 5). Never has God called an angel His Son. Yet the angels are called sons of God in the book of Job. We suggest that this is because they had no progenitors and are all directly created by God to reflect His glory. In like manner the only man to be directly created by God, and not humanly generated, was Adam, and as he had no progenitor, he is called the son of God (Luke 3: 38).

We will now consider *other scriptures that support this truth*. Here it is necessary to find scriptures where the abstract concept of sonship is the subject matter. It is not sufficient to look at places where the name "Son of God" is mentioned because, as we have seen, it is common to identify a person by a name or title even when referring to occasions when the person did not possess that designation. All the scriptures which say that the Father sent the Son do not prove to those who hold the temporal sonship theory that the Lord was the Son before He was sent, because, they say, the Divine Persons were not known by any distinct names before the incarnation, and therefore can only be referred to by the names they took afterwards.

*Hebrews 5: 8*. "Though He were Son". There is no definite article before Son; it is characteristic, and the relationship of Sonship is the prominent thought. "Though He were Son, yet learned He obedience". As the Son, the experience of obedience was unknown to Him, and so He learned what that experience was by the things that He suffered. In this passage we see that the idea of obedience and subjection was foreign to His Sonship. This is the opposite to the doctrine of temporal sonship which maintains that His Sonship is to be identified with subjection. No, it is not *as* the Son that He learned obedience, but in spite of His being such. The reason a man is subject and inferior to his father in human relationships is that the son is always the junior, the father obviously being born first. To argue from this that the Lord's Sonship denotes subjection is plainly wrong for there can be no seniority between Divine Persons. It is another example of trying to understand the Infinite by a comparison with the finite.

Now turn to *John 1: 14*. The literal translation is "We beheld His glory, the glory of an only begotten with a father". The glory is that of the abstract relationship rather than that of the Person Himself, that is to say, the glory in this passage is specifically that of His Sonship. This glory shone through the veil of His flesh so that His disciples recognised it. It was His Divine glory.

This will be immediately challenged by those who deny His eternal Sonship. They will say that it is His moral glory, which He had as the Perfect Man. We will, therefore, test this by searching the Scriptures. When those who had to do with Him in His life here were constrained to confess Him as the Son of God, what made them do so? Was it His moral glory or His Divine glory? Let us look at the incidents involved.

(1) *Nathanael (John 1: 49)* confessed Him as the Son of God and King of Israel. It was His omniscience that opened His eyes. The Lord had shown that He knew some secret that only Nathaniel could have known.

(2) *The disciples in the boat. (Matthew 14: 33)*. The Lord had just shown His Divine power as the Creator and Sustainer of all things, walking on the water and stilling the wind and the waves. Here we have Him as the omnipotent One.

(3) *Martha (John 11: 27)*. The Lord had just revealed Himself as the Source of Life. Only God is the Source of Life. All other beings receive their life through Him.

(4) *The man blind from birth (John 9: 35-38)*. Here the man is told directly from the Lord Who He is. It is the man's reaction that is noteworthy as he immediately worships the Son of God showing that he recognised His Deity; for the Lord accepted his worship as offered intelligently. We can contrast this with the man in *Matthew 19: 16-17* who said "Good Master". At once the Lord checked him, because he had ascribed something to Him that only applied to God, without realising that the One he was speaking to was indeed God.

(5) *The Centurion (Matthew 27: 54; Mark 15: 39)*. Here the reasons for the centurion's confession are plainly stated. In Matthew it was due to the severe earthquake, the rending of the rocks and the opening of the tombs. In Mark it is specifically stated that it was due to the Lord's shouting with a loud voice just before He gave up His spirit. This was remarkable to the centurion who had no doubt seen large numbers of such executions. A man crucified gets weaker and weaker until he cannot speak above a whisper. Here was One who could shout with a loud voice just before He died, showing supernatural strength. It was, therefore, not His moral glory that convinced the centurion, but His Divine glory, as was the case in all the foregoing cases.

We will refer to Peter's great confession in *Matthew 16: 16* and *John 6: 69* later.

We are therefore fully justified in asserting that the Lord's Sonship denotes His Deity and does not pertain to His lowly dependence and obedience as the Perfect Man. A possible reason why some think that the glory of *John 1: 14* is moral and not Divine, is the words that immediately follow: "full of grace and truth". We are sure, however, that the Authorised Version is correct in putting the clause "and we beheld His glory, the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father" in brackets. The words "full of grace and truth" refer to the statement before the parenthesis: "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us". The parenthesis is put in to show that in spite of the veil of flesh, the Divine glory shone through for His own to see. In saying all this we are not wishing to infer that moral glory is not included in Divine glory for "God is Light". The idea that we are opposing is that it was exclusively His moral glory as seen in manhood.

Many are convinced of the Lord's Eternal Sonship but do not rank it among the fundamentals.

They point out that its denial may be sincerely done in the belief that it is something that guards the Lord's glory, and that it is not accompanied by any doubt as to His eternal personal Being. We, however, maintain that it is a necessary component of the Doctrine of Christ. To demonstrate this, we will refer to the early contention in the professing church when the greatest challenge to the Truth came from Arius, who denied the Lord's Deity.

Now Arius was not like the modern Unitarian who thinks that the Lord was a mere man. His system taught that the Lord was the first and greatest creature that God made, and the only creature that God made directly. To this great creature God gave the task of creating everything else, so all things, apart from Himself, were created by Him. He was God's representative, and expressed God to every other creature. As God's representative, He was entitled to worship, and as such was rightly addressed as God. One thing only Arius would not accept, and that was the truth that the Lord was of equal substance (or essence) to the Father. He said that he was of *similar* substance but not of *equal* substance to God.

These two expressions, "similar substance" and "equal substance", differing in Greek by only a single letter, became the great battleground on which the whole of Christianity depended. Athanasius was the great orthodox champion. Constantine the Emperor favoured Arius, and Athanasius had to go into exile. Only to the Scriptures did both protagonists turn. Every Scripture that showed that the Lord was God, that proved He is the Creator of all things, that showed He must be worshipped and honoured by creatures as though He were the Father, was accepted by Arius as agreeing with his system. What scripture then was left to prove that the Lord was of equal substance to the Father? Mainly the truth of Eternal Sonship — the bulwark of John 5: 18, that His Sonship proved His equality to the Father, because of His eternal generation.

At first the Emperor did not realise the vital importance of the controversy, and he issued an edict that as the words "similar substance" and "equal substance" were not in the Scriptures, the contention was to cease as being an insoluble question. This, however, was not obeyed. How like was Constantine's stratagem to those today, who say that as the term "Eternal Sonship" is not in Scripture, they will neither affirm nor deny the doctrine!

How right Athanasius was when he pointed out that although the difference between the contenders might appear to be small, yet really the difference was infinite! Truly the difference between the finite and the infinite is infinity, no matter how great the finite might be. How serious it is to take away this most important weapon of Eternal Sonship, which proves the truth of the Lord's Person!

Let us also notice the extreme importance that is placed in Scripture upon the confession of the Lord's Sonship. In 1 John 4: 15 it says, "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him and he in God". Such a blessed spiritual result as this does not come, of course, from the repetition of a form of words but from the affirmation of the heart in complete awareness and acceptance of the confession's full implications. Many a time, representatives of the Jehovah's Witnesses — the modern Arians — have called at the front door, and to the question "Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God?", they willingly give the answer in the affirmative. Does God dwell in them and they in God — these deniers of the Lord's Deity? Obviously not, for they do not affirm His *Eternal* Sonship, nor accept that it is essentially connected with His Deity. In their minds the Lord's Sonship had a beginning; not in incarnation but far back before any other creature had been created.

Peter's confession of Matthew 16: 16 also brings before us the great importance of this doctrine, for we find that it is the foundation rock on which the Lord builds His church. "Thou art the Christ, the

Son of the Living God". Because He is the Son of God He is God. The Father is the Living God, who has life in Himself, the Source of Life, so likewise the Son is the Living God and has life in Himself, the Source of Life. In Mark 8:29 and Luke 9: 20, the story of Peter's confession is given, but only the first half, "Thou art the Christ" is mentioned. Consequently there is no reference there of its vital importance as the foundation rock of the church. Without Eternal Sonship the foundation is missing. How solemn that some well-meaning brethren have so little understanding that they are tampering with the church's foundation!

## ETERNAL SONSHIP THE PROOF OF GOD'S LOVE

We have been considering the Eternal Sonship as the supreme proof of the Lord's Deity. Now we would bring out the second important thing that Eternal Sonship demonstrates — namely the infinite love of God.

"God so loved the world. . ." How much? So much that He gave His only begotten Son. There is nothing that shows His love more.

But, of course, those who teach temporal sonship do not deny the infinite love that has ever existed between those Divine Persons that they say are now known as the Father and the Son. The Scripture is plain, "Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world" (John 17: 24). But though this love is not denied, the *demonstration* of it is denied.

How weak John 3: 16 would sound if the words "only begotten Son" were omitted, and the words "Divine Person" put in their place! Over and over again the love of God is measured by the fact that He gave His *Son*. He that delivered up His Own Son for us all, shall He not freely give us all things? (see Romans 8: 32). No gift can be as great as that.

In the very first mention of love in the Bible, the supreme sacrifice that the Father made in giving His Son is brought before us: "Take now thy son, thine *only* son ... whom thou lovest ... and *offer* him . . . for a burnt offering." (Genesis 22: 2). The love of the Father for His Son comes first, and typically the love of Christ for His Church is the second mention of love in the Scriptures (Genesis 24: 67).

The main point of the parable of the wicked husbandmen (Mark 12: 1-9) is that after the lord of the vineyard had sent his servants (prophets), he sent his son. "Having yet therefore one son, his *well-beloved*, he sent him last unto them, saying, 'They will reverence my son!'" Does this look as though the one sent only became his son when he was sent? The objection is made, "It is only a parable". We acknowledge that a parable is not usually an allegory, but one cannot get away from a parable's main point in this way. The whole meaning of the parable stresses that the lord of the vineyard had sent the one he valued most because it was his well-beloved son.

We feel that it was terrible presumption to deny the validity of this demonstration of love to say, as it were, to the Father that His Son only became such after He had entered the world. We ask reverently, may this not have given great offence to both the Father and the Son? Is this not an explanation of the strange madness that splintered that company? Were they given up to be defenceless before the onslaughts of Satan? We urge earnestly that the seriousness of this error be not underestimated.

## THE FATHER'S BOSOM

John 1: 18. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him".

This passage has always been taken by orthodox Christians to mean that the Son is eternally in the bosom of the Father, and therefore is able to reveal the inmost secrets of the Father's heart to His own. Those who deny Eternal Sonship, however, must teach that His dwelling in the Father's bosom had a beginning when He became a man.

Here we have the present tense used to deduce eternity, as it is in some other places in the Scriptures. The Lord said "Before Abraham was, I AM" and thereby showed that HE was eternal. If He had said "Before Abraham was, I was", it need only have meant that He was older than Abraham, but the present tense gives the sense of eternal existence — no beginning and no end. In John 8: 24, the Lord said, "If ye believe not that I AM, ye shall die in your sins". The insertion of the pronoun "he" in the A.V. is quite unwarranted. The context does not show that the Lord had said that He was anybody that the "He" could refer to. It is the assertion of His eternal Godhead. There are other similar passages.

Why then, argue the opposers, did John 1:1, which clearly refers to eternity, use the past tense. "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God". One feels that the answer to this is that the inspired writing is taking us back to the earliest conceivable beginning of anything at all, and saying that the Word was already there. It is the past eternity here, and the future eternity is not in view. Where the thought of eternity without end as well as without beginning is brought before us, the present tense is used. Of course with God there is no past or future, but that is beyond our comprehension. For our finite minds the Holy Spirit uses words that are within our grasp.

Another objection centres round the preposition "in" which here is the Greek word *eis* denoting "motion towards", similar to our word "into" or "unto". If I say "I walked in the house" it indicates that I was walking in the house all the time, but if I say "I walked into the house", it indicates that my presence in the house was due to my walking into it. In English, I cannot say, "I am into the house", but in Greek that form of words could be used, and it would indicate that my present position in the house is due to my past moving into it. Consequently (say the objectors), the preposition *eis* shows that He is in the Father's bosom as a result of a past act of movement into it.

To this objection we answer that "eis" does not necessarily denote *physical* motion. When one believes *in* the Son of God (John 3: 16), the preposition "in" is *eis*. It denotes a movement of the heart or will. This *eis* of "in the Father's bosom" shows movement of the affections. We have here another example of the way these teachers reason from the finite when they are dealing with the infinite. If there is movement here it is the *eternal* movement of Divine affections. What could be a more beautiful or profound thought? Let us not dare to doubt that a Father's bosom has been the blessed portion of the Son for all eternity, His rightful and deserved place. As one has written "How fearful we should be, lest we admit of any confession of faith that would defraud the Divine bosom of its eternal ineffable delights, and which would tell our God He knew not a Father's joy, and would tell our Lord that He knew not a Son's joy in that bosom from all eternity" (*The Son of God, by J. G. Bellett*).

## TWO TEXTS USED TO SUPPORT THE NEW THEORY

*"This day I have begotten Thee"*

We now come to certain texts which have been used to support temporal sonship. One of these is

first mentioned in Psalm 2:7, "Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee". It is quoted three times in the New Testament Acts 13: 33, Hebrews 1: 5 and 5: 5. This sentence is taken up to show that the Lord's Sonship began when He was begotten on a certain day.

The usual interpretation by those leaders whom we should remember with respect (Hebrews 13: 7) is that this does refer to the Lord's incarnation when He was born in time, and that it speaks of the Lord's Sonship in manhood. These brethren never thought of it as casting a doubt on the Lord's Eternal Sonship which they regarded as true and distinct, not to be confused with the text. Some divided the text into two — "Thou art My Son" being His Eternal Sonship, and "This day have I begotten Thee" His Sonship in time. One would not contend with anybody who is satisfied with this explanation.

For those who may feel that this interpretation is not quite convincing, it may be as well to look at the passage more closely. It was not the interpretation made by the ancient orthodox scholars who lived before the so-called Brethren movement, for they regarded it as an affirmation of the Lord's Divine Sonship throughout.

Firstly, let us look at the second Psalm. Beginning with the time when the nations are raging against the LORD's anointed, it goes on to speak of the day when the King is established on the holy hill of Zion, ruling the nations with a rod of iron. We find that in this context the decree is made, "Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee". So "this day" in the Psalm appears to be referring to the beginning of His glorious reign.

Secondly, Acts 13: 33. This is in the context of the resurrection (verse 30). In verse 33, the quotation from the psalm is given to support the statement that God has raised up Jesus. Many think that this does not refer to His being raised from among the dead as in verse 30, but to His being raised high above all, but in either case it does not refer to His lowly birth in a manger.

Thirdly, Hebrews 1: 5. Here the quotation is given to show that He is so much better than the angels having obtained *by inheritance* a more excellent Name than they. Is this inheritance connected with His birth in manhood? If not, why is the quotation given here? Does it not fit in better if it has to do with the inheritance that is His Own by Eternal Sonship?

Fourthly, Hebrews 5: 5. Here it is connected with the text, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec". Melchisedec is seen (as a type) made like the Son of God, without father or mother, descent, beginning of days or end of life (Hebrews 7: 3). But the Lord *by incarnation* had a legal father, true mother, descent (genealogy) and beginning of days. To bring in a quotation which refers to the days of His birth, when the whole point is the eternal continuance of His priesthood does not seem right. It is His Sonship in eternity that is more suitable to the context.

So orthodox Christians have taught that this verse refers to "eternal generation", to which we have already referred; that "This day" or "Today" has the well known meaning (to them) of the Eternal Today, the *ever present now*, a decree declared by the Infinite God.

One leaves it to the reader to decide. We have shown, however, that it is a very inadequate reference to support such a revolutionary new doctrine as temporal sonship.

*Luke 1: 35.* "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: *therefore also* that holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God".

This verse is much used by opponents of Eternal Sonship. Attention is drawn to the words "therefore also", and it is said that the child became the Son of God by the Holy Spirit and the

overshadowing of the power of the Highest. But the passage before us is indited with the perfect accuracy of the Holy Spirit, and the exact words need to be examined.

One of the points stressed by the ancient expositors is the term "Holy Thing". The adjective "holy" is definitely neuter, and "Holy Thing" is the accurate English translation. There must be a reason why it is neuter and not masculine, and the reason is that the perfect manhood conceived by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary, was not a person in itself, but a nature. Though body, soul and spirit, it was personal only because the Eternal Person of the Son of God took it to Himself. It had no separate personality. This brings us to the heart of the mystery of the incarnation which no human mind can comprehend. Body, soul and spirit make up a person in every merely human individual, but in His case it was a nature, made personal only because He took it into His Person. He is One Person, not two. Everything that the Man Christ Jesus experienced was the experience of the Son of God. There were not two sons, but only one. Because of the overshadowing of the power of the Highest, that Holy Thing, conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, is rightly called the Son of God. He went through human experiences from birth to death, with human body, human soul and human spirit, yet the Person who did so was never anyone else but the Eternal Son of God.

This is a great mystery, and all the historic fundamental errors concerning His Person have been attempts to explain it in some measure. It is inexplicable. He is a real Man and true God in One Person. The two natures, manhood and Deity, are not joined together to form one nature, but are united in One Person. They ever remain distinct but are never separated. Their union is personal, not consubstantial.

Therefore, it is quite true that the Holy Thing born of the Virgin Mary could not be called the Son of God without the overshadowing of the power of the Highest, but neither His Eternal Person nor His Eternal Sonship changed at all at that time.

## **THE TRIUNE NAME**

We believe we have written enough to show that the Lord's Sonship is eternally bound up with His Godhead. finally let us think briefly of the Triune Name of Matthew 28: 29, "The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit".

The Name of the Father proves Godhead, for it shows that He is the Source of all (Ephesians 4: 6).

The Name of the Son proves Godhead for it shows that He is of the same essence as the Father (John 5: 18).

The Name of the Holy Spirit proves Godhead, for God is spirit (John 4: 24). The Spirit of God is the essence of God.

These three Names are One.

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