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ETI

LETTERS

ON THE
THE
ETERNAL SONSHIP OF CHRIST:

IN WHICH THE OPINIONS OF THE
CHURCH LIBRARY

REV. ADAM CLARKE, D.D., LL.D., &c. &c.,

ARE

REVIEWED AND REFUTED.

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM BEAUCHAMP.

WITH AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY,

BY LEROY M. LEE, D.D.

LOUISVILLE, KY.:

PUBLISHED BY JOHN EARLY,
FOR THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SOUTH.

1849.

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PREFACE.

UNPROTECTED orphanage presents, in the necessities of its nature, one of the most affecting appeals for sympathy that ever addresses itself to the heart of humanity. "The milk of human kindness," unless its channels have been dried up by a life of cruelty and crime, flows spontaneously for its relief and support; and we feel, while mitigating its sorrows, that we are not only engaged in an office that is good in the sight of God, but we are doing a work which "the angels that fell not" might emulate, and shout over the privilege of assisting. Posthumous publications have a very strong resemblance to orphans. They are often the first conceptions of minds capable of vast and brilliant achievements, hastily drawn, and as hastily fashioned into life and form; and then, perchance, laid aside for a convenient season that the increasing engagements of time never yield. And, in after years, when the mind that conceived them is abroad exulting among the won-

(3)

ders of the Spirit-land, and the hand of the author is still in the solitude of the grave, they come forth to meet the vicissitudes of orphanage without a heart to love, or a hand to guide them. Life, even under such discouragements, is not always unsuccessful or unhappy. There is a Providence that shapes the ends of the offspring both of the loins and of the mind. It is sometimes the case that the child, to pursue the figure, ascends to a higher condition of life, and sheds a blessed light of joy and truth, through a wider and more enduring sphere of influence than was ever dreamed of, or hoped for, by the ambition or anxiety of the paternal mind. Such, we venture to predict, will be the history of these Letters on the Eternal Sonship of Christ.

Nearly twenty-five years have elapsed since the author of these Letters ceased from his labours in the outer temple of Christianity. He was the author of several valuable works: among them a treatise on the Evidences of Christianity, and also an essay on Ecclesiastical Government. The one before us is, perhaps, his latest composition, and it is believed it will compare favourably with either of his other works. It was written in the vigour and maturity of his intellectual powers; and was the result of long years of careful and patient study—studies, superinduced by the necessities of a position demanding zeal for “the truth as it is in Jesus,” and claiming, as well for the maintenance of a good conscience as for the preservation of the flock of Christ, that he should “contend earnestly” against a class of

heresies that contravened and destroyed "the faith once delivered to the Saints." In the earlier periods of his ministry, he had witnessed the wasting and desolation of the Arian and Pelagian heresies in the land of the Pilgrims and among the hardy pioneers of the West. He had withstood them to the face, because they were to be blamed. Systematic and persevering efforts had been made to plant them among the early settlers of the West. Their advocates were on the frontiers. They were industrious and energetic. It is not surprising that partial success crowned their zeal. But it is humiliating to confess that these erroneous and false doctrines had found a lodgment among the Methodist Societies previous to 1810. This was a source of sincere sorrow to those whose duty it was to watch over the flock of Christ. They bewailed the prevalence of the error, and sought to drive it away from those of whom they had the spiritual oversight. Many entered into this contest for the truth. No one was more zealous, or spread his efforts over a wider space, or through a longer period, than the author of these admirable Letters. He opposed them by every form of hostility authorized by the gospel of Christ—preached, prayed, and wrote against them, with the uncompromising hostility of a sincere conviction that they were "damnable heresies." As an auxiliary to these measures to oppose and put down these evil workers, the friends of sound doctrine resolved to establish a periodical to be devoted mainly to this object. Accordingly, the Western

Christian Monitor, a monthly publication, was commenced in Chillicothe, Ohio, in 1816. Of this Magazine, Mr. Beauchamp was the Editor; and while he presided over its affairs it was conducted with distinguished ability. Contemporary authority informs us that it contributed very materially to the exposition and suppression of the heresies that denied divinity to Christ, repudiated the sacrificial character of his death as an expiation for sin, and sought to establish the doctrine of man's inherent freedom from guilt and condemnation. Besides this, it spread the leaven of pure doctrine through all the ramifications of Western Methodism, extinguished the false lights that false teachers had kindled, and left it glowing and joyous beneath the converging rays of the Sun of Righteousness.

Subsequently to 1816, Mr. Beauchamp united with Dr. Thomas Hind, extensively known in the Church, during the period we are considering, as Theophilus Arminius, in forming the settlement of Mount Carmel, in Illinois. Here, as an instructor of youth, as pastor of the flock, and as friend and adviser of all, he was eminently useful. But he possessed qualities of a different kind, that enlarged his usefulness, and contributed greatly to his influence. He "was well versed in nearly all the mechanical arts. He has been known to build a house, make a clock, and repair watches. He was particularly delighted with the use of tools, and was fond of working at the cabinet business. The writer*

* Theophilus Arminius, Meth. Mag. 1825, p. 51.

has seen him work in brass, iron, and wood, repair the firelocks of the hunters, so essentially necessary in a new country; repair and ornament his compass, and build a mill. *All this he did, although never trained to any particular branch of business.*” But he has higher claims to our consideration. His educational advantages were limited. He manifested, at an early period, a taste for books, and a desire to acquire knowledge. But in the frontier settlements he had few opportunities for improvement. Yet such as were accessible, he used with avidity. Intervals of leisure during the toils of the day were spent in providing torches for the night, and with these, when the family had retired to rest, he would stretch himself upon the hearth, a devotee at the shrine of knowledge. The habits of study thus formed, continued to distinguish him to the latest periods of his life. His profiting appeared unto all. He was an excellent physician, a proficient in several sciences, a master of logic, a good linguist, and a profound theologian. As a preacher, he had few, if any superiors in his day. He commenced preaching in the nineteenth year of his age, entered the Itinerancy in 1793, and after filling successively some of the most prominent stations then in the Church, he located in 1801. In this relation, he was as diligent in study, and as industrious in all mental and spiritual employments, as when engaged in the exclusive work of the ministry. It was during this period he mastered the Greek, and became a critic in the Latin and Hebrew languages. His

severest mental labours were performed amidst the presence of all sorts of physical occupations. He was diligent in business, a great economist of time; and his time was always usefully employed. The works he composed and left behind him, are a proof of his industry. Besides those already mentioned, we may enumerate these: A volume on the Eternal Sonship; Translations of Hebrew texts with comments; An Essay on Slavery; An Essay on the Divine Law; A brief view of the latter day glory, and of some events with which it is connected; An English Grammar, &c. &c. In 1822, he re-entered the Itinerancy in the Missouri Conference, and was stationed in St. Louis. In 1823, he was placed on the Indiana district. He was a member of the General Conference of 1824, and was nearly elected to the Episcopal office. His work was well nigh finished. In the autumn of this year, in the active discharge of his duties, he was arrested by disease, and soon after exchanged the toils of earth for the triumphs of heaven. He rests from his labours, and his works follow him. In these, "he, being dead, yet speaketh."

RICHMOND, *February*, 1849.

INTRODUCTION.

Most of the controversies with which the Christian interest has been afflicted have been occasioned by misapprehensions concerning the *person* of Christ, and the *character* of the atonement made by his death upon the cross. It is the design of revelation to set forth the truth upon each of these subjects; that our faith, rightly discerning and apprehending the truth, might find its vindication and support “not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.” And it is one of the first and most pressing duties of those who have “come to the knowledge of the truth,” to illustrate and defend what was the mind of the Spirit when He spoke of “the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.” Many false opinions have gone out into the world. These all misrepresent “the only begotten Son of God,”

deny him as the divine Mediator, and refuse to receive him as the Saviour of Sinners. He is thus set at nought; his person despised and rejected, and his atonement lightly esteemed, or "counted an unholy thing." Every careful student of the Word of God must perceive not only the viciousness of such opinions, but their utter destructiveness to all the motives and reasons for soundness of faith and holiness of life. And every one who has attained to "the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins," must feel a desire to recover such as have embraced these errors, equal at least to the strength of his own perceptions of the truth, and to the ardour of his love for Him who "died for our sins, and rose again for our justification." The attempt, therefore, to enlighten and save, is no less the offspring of duty than the dictate of charity; and while hope enlivens the labour, success will be crowned with the glory of "saving souls from death, and hiding a multitude of sins."

"With respect to the person of Christ, opinions have assumed every possible form. His Divinity and humanity have been denied, with a vehemence at least equal to that with which

his compound nature as the God-man of revelation has been derided and rejected. This conflict of opinion shows the freedom with which human reason canvasses the great facts and principles of Divine inspiration ; and almost justifies doubt upon subjects on which even good men have differed so widely. But it is a solace to know that “the truth as it is in Jesus” is made known in the Word of God, and is susceptible, if not of positive demonstration (to concede something, in charity to the prejudices of our opponents), at least of complete and satisfactory proof and developement to minds submissive to the teachings of Eternal Wisdom. There is truth—sufficient, comprehensive, and convincing—as to the person of Christ ; and that truth has been revealed to man. And the truth thus revealed, is important as an integral element of the faith, whereof cometh salvation. It is, therefore, a dictate of duty, enlivened by all the considerations requiring a true faith in Christ, to study the testimony God has given concerning his Son ; and we are assured, the research, if guided by a devout submission to the authority of the words

“ which the Holy Ghost teacheth,” will issue in knowledge of the truth, and exemption from opposing falsehood and destructive error: “ Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

The Supreme Godhead of Jesus Christ is distinctly revealed; and has been received with a nearly universal assent, as one of “ the first principles of the oracles of God.” But the doctrine of the divine eternal Sonship of our Lord, although equally established by the Word of God, has met with a very different reception. Since the promulgation of the erroneous opinions of Arius, the divine filiation of Christ has been boldly controverted, or pertinaciously rejected, by many assuming the name and wearing the garb of Christians. In the early part of the fourth century this heresiarch denied the proper divinity and eternal Sonship of Christ. The occasion selected for the declaration of his heretical notions involves his character, in the judgment of some theological writers, in the suspicion of being actuated by impure motives and malignant feelings. “ It is said he aspired to episcopal honours; and after the death of

Achilles, A. D. 313, felt not a little chagrined that Alexander should be preferred before him.”* Intellectually he was certainly superior to his more fortunate competitor. But whether his defeat operated to produce a change in his opinions, or provoked him to declare his real sentiments concerning Christ, which he may have previously held, but cautiously concealed from the church, it is difficult at this distance of time to determine. It is, however, a fact, that the elevation of Alexander was the occasion of their development. “One day,” says the authority already quoted, “when his rival had been addressing the clergy in favour of the orthodox doctrine, and maintaining in strong and pointed language, ‘that the Son of God was co-eternal, co-essential, and co-equal with the Father,’ Arius considered this as a species of Sabelianism, and ventured to say, that it was inconsistent and impossible, since the Father, who begat, must be before the Son, who was begotten; the latter, therefore, could not be absolutely eternal.” Opinions so obnoxious

* Watson, Theo. and Bib. Dictionary, *Art.* ARIUS.

in themselves, and so variant from the long-established faith of the church, could neither be connived at nor tolerated. Arius was first admonished, then efforts were made to convince him of his error, and he was borne with for a season; till, finding him pertinacious in the maintenance of his opinions, and labouring to propagate them, the zeal of Alexander was roused, and calling a council of his clergy, A. D. 320, he proceeded to depose him from the ministry, and excommunicate him from the fellowship of the church. But error travels fast, and increases rapidly. The leaven of this heresy continued to spread, until a general council of the church was convened, A. D. 325, in the city of Nice, by order of the Emperor Constantine, and for the especial purpose of suppressing this heresy; when he and his doctrines were again condemned, and the true faith of the church was declared to embrace the proper divinity and eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ. The heresy thus introduced, though variously modified, and ever departing more grievously and fatally from the true doctrines of the Gospel, and regularly descend-

ing to a lower depth of spiritual indifference, has come down to our own times; and, through the rushing tide of its tributary, the less licentious, but equally shallow and turbid stream of Unitarian theology, is emptied into the Dead Sea of modern Universalism, upon whose shores, and in the depths of whose stagnant and putrid waters, no living thing is found. It is a truth, well attested by all the facts of the Christian history, that the doctrine condemned, as we have seen, by the first general council of the church, has always seemed to be under the ban of Him, whose glory it would obscure, and whose Godhead it denies. Individuals who have embraced it, have added nothing to the purity of their character, or their experience of the grace and mercy of God. Organized religious systems, built upon this foundation, have been shorn of their strength, or left as monuments of the displeasure of God. They are mausoleums of the spiritually dead. No breath of God breathes upon the dry bones of that valley of death, to revive and enliven its multitudes of dead; and the valley, instead of being instinct with life under the stirring in-

fluences of a pure faith, is only a receptacle for the dying and dead—poisoned by drugging the well of life with a doctrine that, rightly estimated, repudiates the atonement of Christ, and denies the existence of real guiltiness in man. Affecting to receive the word of God, *as a revelation*, it measures it by the low and defective standard of its own ability to gauge its doctrines and fathom its mysteries; and, despite its promise to obey Him “that speaketh from heaven,” it doggedly disputes the authority that commands “all men to honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.” Refusing this honour to the Son, they have failed in their allegiance to God, and the Trinity in Unity have resented the indignity by abandoning them to the corrupting influences of an impure faith, and a false worship. If the facts of their continued existence and numerical strength be alleged as an offset to this conclusion, it may be stated in reply, that the history of the error furnishes no proof of having ever “converted a sinner from the error of his ways;” and it can scarcely be affirmed that it involves the doctrine of conversion, either as a

necessity of our nature or a privilege of the Gospel. And the seeming miracle of its continuance and success, may be explained by the facts "known and read of all men," that, *preceding*, in any community, purer doctrines and a more spiritual worship, it only aims to make converts to an opinion; and is silent on the subjects of repentance, faith, and holiness, or, if it speaks, it is to "darken counsel by words without knowledge;" and only succeeds in making a vicious life quadrate with an impure faith. Or, if it *follow* in the wake of those preaching repentance and remission of sins by faith in Christ, it finds the elements of its strength, and the means of its enlargement, in giving refuge to those who have paused in their Christian course, and turned aside from the holy commandments delivered unto them. Thus, from the beginning, "denying the Lord that bought them," putting him to an open shame, and trampling under foot the blood of the Son of God, their character and history explain the denunciations of Scripture, and vindicate the Divine justice in leaving them, in hardness of

heart and blindness of mind, "to believe a lie," and to "die in their sins."

But greater and more destructive errors are found in connexion with the doctrine of redemption by the death of the cross, than in misapprehensions respecting the person of Jesus Christ. Error makes him a good man, a martyr to his zeal for the reformation of his countrymen in faith and manners, and, in life and death, an example to all ages of goodness and devotion to truth and righteousness. It yields him no higher merit, pays him the tribute of no profounder homage than having illustrated a virtue which every man, independently of him, may emulate and attain. But truth teaches that he was "God manifested in the flesh;" that by the conjunction of divinity and humanity in him, he was constituted "Mediator between God and man;" that his death was a voluntary sacrifice for the sins of the world; and that, except through him, as Redeemer, Advocate, and Saviour, there is no remission of sins, and no hope of salvation for man. Indeed it makes him "all and in all" to the system of God's remedial measures for the recovery and re-

demption of mankind. In a word, it was by the death of Christ upon the cross, that sin was atoned for; Divine justice propitiated; and provision made for reconciliation between God and man. This is the doctrine of the Gospel, as to the atonement made by Jesus Christ. This atonement is the only foundation of our hope in the mercy of God. But we misapprehend the *nature* of atonement, if we suppose the *sufferings* of Christ had any part or lot in the matter. Mere suffering has nothing virtuous or vicarious in it. It was not by a death of suffering, but by the suffering of death, as a judicial act, and especially by the shedding of blood in death, that atonement was made. The sufferings of Christ sustain a very important position in the Gospel of the grave of God, but they are never represented as identical with atonement, or as involving any of its elements. All his sufferings, from his birth to his crucifixion, if considered in their reasons and intentions, may be thus classified: 1. Those which were necessary to the fulfilment of the predictions concerning his humiliation and trials as “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;” and which were

to constitute an important element of the proof of his Messiahship. 2. Those which, according to the appointment of God, were requisite to the perfection of his own character as "the captain of our salvation." 3. Those which in their nature and causes were intended to illustrate the trials and temptations of Christian life, and their opposite virtues; and to teach us, by his own example of gentleness and patience, how we ought also to walk, and to please God in all things. In this classification we perceive the reason of Christ's sufferings, but we seek in vain for any Scriptural identification of them with the atonement made by his death upon the cross. Even that most solemn and affecting scene in the garden the night preceding his crucifixion,—when, "being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground"—is never referred to as possessing any qualities of atoning efficacy or merit. Although blood was shed, and under circumstances sublimely awful and impressive, yet we do not refer to it, in our creed or our affections, as *the* blood of atonement, nor, in our estimate of the price

of our redemption, do we comprehend aught beside the blood shed upon the cross. It was then, we repeat it with emphasis and earnestness, in the act of dying, and by the shedding of blood in dying, that atonement was made for sin, and a sacrifice worthy of the occasion and the subject was offered to God. But the blood shed upon the cross, as an offering for sin, was the blood of the only begotten Son of God. Indeed, the apostle proceeds beyond the divine Sonship to discover and designate the exalted nature and priceless merit of the blood shed for our redemption; and affirms of the church, that God "hath purchased it with *His own blood.*" (Acts. xx. 28.) The *essence* of atonement, therefore, is to be found in the nature and character of Him, who poured out his life unto death, and made his soul an offering for sin. "God manifested in the flesh" could only meet the grave demands of this great enterprise; and for "the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

We are placing the atonement of Christ upon high and holy ground; but not higher

than is warranted by the Word of God, and the actual character of the sacrificial offering for sin. Nor, when we have placed our highest estimate upon this great work of righteousness, can we transcend the design of God in setting forth his Son to be a propitiation for our sins, or lessen the obligation to seek the full stature of Christian manhood provided for in the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Indeed, the developement, maturity, and perfection of Christian character, must always depend upon the agreement of our own faith with the teachings of God's Word, as to the nature of redemption and the character of the Redeemer; especially, since the Scriptures always identify the efficacy of atonement with the divinity of the sufferer; and make the righteousness of faith to depend upon the strength and accuracy with which it embraces Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world.

The publication of Dr. Clarke's speculations on the doctrine of the divine Sonship of Christ, in his notes on Luke i. 35, was a source of great surprise to many of his personal friends, and of profound sorrow to the

Wesleyan Methodist Connexion in England. They were the occasion of a controversy of several years' continuance, in which his erroneous reasonings were successfully exposed and refuted, especially by the Rev. Richard Watson, in a pamphlet entitled "Remarks on the Eternal Sonship of Christ; and the Use of Reason in Matters of Revelation; suggested by several passages in Dr. Adam Clarke's Commentary on the New Testament." Others entered into the debate, sides were taken, and the peace and orthodoxy of the body were seriously threatened; until the Conference, as a necessary rule for self-preservation, resolved to admit no one to the exercise of ministerial functions "who denied the divine and eternal Sonship of Christ." By this means the orthodox doctrine of the Church was maintained, and peace and kindly feelings were again restored. It is due, however, to the memory of Dr. Clarke, to say he was a firm and constant believer in the Supreme Godhead of Jesus Christ.

The issue of Clarke's Commentary from the press in this country, soon after its publication in England, awakened the fears of the

friends of the orthodox doctrine concerning the personal character and atoning sacrifice of Christ; lest his speculations on the eternal Sonship of our Lord might unsettle the faith of the church and introduce heretical opinions into the pulpit. That his views gained adherents, we think highly probable, but we are not aware that they have ever been the occasion of injury or trouble to the church. But it was the fact of their adoption, or the fear of their prevalence, that led to the composition of the Letters we are introducing to the consideration of the reader. At that period the opinions of Dr. Clarke were held in the highest estimation by the Methodists on both sides of the Atlantic; and there were just grounds of fear, when the authority of his name was brought to the support of any theological question. It was to remove the weight of that authority, and to vindicate from its influence the true doctrine of the Church concerning "Jesus Christ and him crucified," that the subjoined Letters were addressed to one, perhaps, perplexed by his reasonings, or confounded by the confidence with which they were put forth as the authorized teaching of

the Word of God. And most effectually do they avail for that object.

Mr. Beauchamp brings to his work a mind endowed with talents of a very high order, well cultivated and matured, and peculiarly adapted to the course of reasoning required by the intricacies of the error he undertook to examine and refute. He was also remarkably qualified for the exigencies of such a discussion, by his long and careful study of the Word of God. His argument is purely scriptural; seeking to ascertain, by legitimate deduction, what is "the mind of the Spirit," he brings his own mind into subjection to its teachings; and refuses utterly to allow of any cavil or disputation against what is written in the Law or the Prophets concerning Him who was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." To whom these letters were addressed, what theological circumstances elicited them, or what effect they produced, are questions we are as unprepared to answer, as we are the additional one of why they have been so long kept from their true sphere of publicity and

usefulness in the church. But we are glad they are at length liberated; and we have misapprehended their character, if they are not found to contain a complete and satisfactory vindication of the doctrine that gives to Jesus Christ the exclusive and distinguishing merit of being recognised on earth, and revered among "the principalities and powers of heaven," as the Eternal Son of God: "begotten," in the language of the Nicene Creed, "of his Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made," &c.

But the question at issue in this work is one of great *practical* importance to the church of God. As the atonement is the ground of our hope, so the atoning Saviour is the object of our worship and love. We owe a profound reverence to Jesus Christ, both as "the Son of the Highest" and as the Saviour of sinners. Obedience is the fruit of faith, and the proof of love. The Apostles worshipped Christ in every form of adoration, homage, and affection; and in this they have left us an example that we may wisely and safely imitate. In-

deed, it is a paramount duty of our Christian calling to follow them in all the indications of their affection for Christ, and devotion to his cause. Christ is the central sun of our religious system. Our doctrines are only right as they harmonize with the doctrines of the cross. Our faith is only saving as it embraces Christ as Saviour, Mediator, and Intercessor. Our life is only spiritual as it is "hid with Christ in God;" and we only advance in the favour of God and fitness for heaven, in proportion as we become nothing that Christ may be all in all.

L. M. L.

LETTER I.

General Remarks.

ST. LOUIS, May 6th, 1823.

MY DEAR S.....,

I pledged myself, in a former letter, to offer you a few observations on the SONSHIP of Christ. Hitherto I have been prevented from redeeming this pledge, chiefly, by indisposition of body. Accept of this as my apology for the delay.

The doctrine of the Sonship of Christ must be highly interesting to us, both as Christians, and as ministers of the Gospel. It holds a distinguished place in the system of evangelical truth, and a vital relation to the eternal welfare of man.

My communications will be made under the fullest persuasion of their being received

with feelings of the most friendly nature, and regarded with the attention and candour which the importance of the subject demands.

And hence, while they will be offered with affectionate regard, they will breathe the spirit of freedom, which ought to be cherished among friends. And so much the more I shall suffer myself to be led by the influence of such a spirit, as I have no hesitation in believing that truth is the object you have in view in all your researches.

If I can throw any light on this subject, so as to render it more pleasing and interesting to your own mind, and so as to aid you, in some degree, to defend the faith, my object will be effected.

It must be obvious to the most superficial observer, that over all subjects, even those that are intimately connected with our eternal peace, the influence of authority is very great. The decisions of men, whose names have become famous on account of intellectual acquirements, bear along the mind with such controlling energy, as to lay restraint upon the freedom of its operations. The respect which we pay unto them, is likely to become

excessive—because it is difficult to restrain it within proper limits. For the torrent of admiration, poured down the stream of public opinion, is too forcible to be resisted by us, while a consciousness of our inferiority unnerves our arm. Our love of ease, pressing us in the same direction, completes the submission; and authority becomes the ground of our faith. It is far less laborious to rest our faith on the opinions of great men, than to test it by examination. But it is not less dangerous than it is easy; for it is no uncommon thing to find men involved in errors of a pernicious tendency, while public opinion enrolls their names on the records of fame, as the sons of superior wisdom.

But I felicitate myself, and you, in the consideration that you will suffer nothing from the influence of authority, in any observations which I shall make on this subject. All their weight will consist of their own intrinsic worth.

These remarks are made to guard against the absurdity of greedily swallowing whatever may be said by great men, without examining for ourselves; and not to operate against rea-

sonable respect for authority. There is a certain degree of respect due to the opinions of great and good men, especially when they accord with each other. This should induce us to think favourably of their opinions, until we have examined for ourselves.

However, the foregoing observations must be restrained to human authority. To the decisions of Heaven, we are obligated, by every principle founded in reason and interest, to bow with perfect submission.

It has been thought by some that it is a matter of no consequence to have fixed principles respecting the Sonship of Christ. To believe that Christ is the Eternal Son of God, or to deny that he is such, is with them a thing of such indifference, as to render the subject unworthy of a candid examination. But whatever appearance of liberality this may wear, it will be found, when closely scrutinized, to want the solidity of truth. If God has revealed anything on this subject, it cannot be a matter of indifference; and that he has, I think, will appear evident from a diligent examination of the Holy Scriptures.

All our great *Reformers* have received the

Eternal Sonship of Christ, as a doctrine of revealed religion. It is found in all their creeds, directly or indirectly expressed. I acknowledge most readily, that this circumstance is not to be taken as proof of the doctrine—yet it should retain us on their side of the question until we have made a diligent inquiry, whether the doctrine is revealed in the Word of God. Such an inquiry, I am persuaded, will put us into possession of sufficient evidence to believe that Christ is the Son of God as to his divine nature. But if, after we have carefully examined the Sacred Volume, we are induced to believe that it contains no evidence of this doctrine, then it will become necessary, in order to maintain consistency and propriety of conduct, to recede from the church to which we belong, before we deny the Eternal Sonship of Christ. For it is impossible to reconcile our Articles of Religion with such a denial.

That the doctrine before us is contained in the Holy Scriptures—that it is a leading principle in the system of evangelical truth—and that it has a special bearing on the mind, in relation to the possession of that *divine nature* which constitutes us the sons of God, and en-

titles us to heavenly glory, I have no hesitation in believing. But before I approach the ground of this faith, it will be necessary to remove some objections which lie in my way. After effecting this purpose, I shall produce proof from the Scriptures, of the Eternal Sonship of Christ.

Before I close this letter, it will be proper to remark, that the doctrine in question does not depend on metaphysical reasonings for the evidence of its truth—nor can any serious impression be made on it by such reasonings. It rests alone on revelation. Yet all the arguments, which have been urged against it, are of a metaphysical nature ; and, therefore, we shall be compelled to tread metaphysical ground, in order to show the fallacy of these arguments. But in doing this, our object will not be to produce direct evidence in favour of our faith in the Eternal Sonship of Christ—but to remove the rubbish with which this doctrine has been encumbered.

I am, very affectionately,

W———— B————.

LETTER II.

St. LOUIS, May 9th, 1823.

MY DEAR S.....,

In my last I made some general observations relating to the Eternal Sonship of Christ. I now proceed to the discussion of this subject, in which the first thing proposed is, to consider the objections against the doctrine in question.

Every objection levelled against the doctrine of the Trinity—of the supreme Godhead of Christ, and of the atonement made by God manifested in the flesh, strikes indirectly at the doctrine under consideration. Because, if these doctrines be not true, J sus Christ cannot be the Son of God from eternity.

But although I should be led, in considering the objections which have been brought against these doctrines, to discuss subjects

closely connected with the one in question ; yet, as I should be introduced into a wider field than I propose to survey in these letters, I am not at present disposed to take such an extensive range. And therefore I shall confine myself to such objections as are made by those, who, admitting the above doctrines, nevertheless deny the Eternal Sonship of Christ.

If anything can be urged against the doctrine which I espouse, with the least appearance of strength, we may expect to find it in the arguments of Dr. Adam Clarke. His brilliant talents justify such an expectation. In his commentary on the thirty-fifth verse of the first chapter of St. Luke's Gospel, he holds the following language :—

“The doctrine of the Eternal Sonship of Christ, is, in my opinion, anti-scriptural, and highly dangerous ; this doctrine I reject for following reasons :—

“First. I have not been able to find any *express* declaration in the Scriptures concerning it.

“Secondly. If Christ be the Son of God as to his *divine* nature, then he cannot be

eternal: for *son* implies a *father*; and *father* implies, in reference to *son*, *precedency in time*, if not in *nature* too. *Father* and *son* imply the idea of *generation*; and *generation* implies *time* in which it *was* effected, and *time* also *antecedent* to such *generation*.

“Thirdly. If Christ be the Son of God as to his *divine* nature, then the Father is of necessity *prior*, consequently *superior* to him.

“Fourthly. Again, if this *divine nature* were *begotten* of the *Father*, then it must be in *time*, i. e. there was a period in which it *did not* exist, and a period when it *began* to exist. This destroys the *eternity* of our blessed Lord, and robs him at once of his Godhead.

“Fifthly. To say that he was *begotten* from all eternity, is, in my opinion, absurd; and the phrase *Eternal Son*, is a positive self-contradiction. ETERNITY is that which has had no *beginning*, nor stands in any reference to TIME. *Son* supposes *time*, *generation*, and *father*; and *time* also *antecedent* to such *generation*. Therefore the conjunction of these two terms *son* and *eternity* is absolutely impossible, as they imply essentially different and *opposite* ideas.

“The enemies of Christ’s divinity have, in all ages, availed themselves of this incautious method of treating this subject, and, on this *ground*, have ever had the advantage of the defenders of the Godhead of Christ.”

I have produced this long quotation, my dear S, that I may place the arguments of our opponents in a fair light, and give them a candid consideration ; and that it may be manifest, at the same time, that nothing of real weight can be advanced against our doctrine. For whatever can be offered against it may be supposed to wear the most plausible form, when coming from the pen of the learned and celebrated Dr. Clarke.

• I ought, perhaps, frankly to acknowledge, that it gives me no small gratification to have an opportunity of meeting objections against the doctrine in question, as they have been produced by a man of the first grade of talents. Because, in this case, their weakness will not be attributable to the inability of the objector, but to the fallacy of their own nature.

Before I enter into a particular consideration of the arguments contained in the above quo-

tation, I shall offer a few remarks of a more general nature.

1. "The enemies of Christ's divinity," says the Doctor, "have, in all ages, availed themselves of this incautious method of treating this subject, and, on this ground, have ever had the advantage of the defenders of the Godhead of Christ." That some are chargeable with incautiously treating the subject of the Sonship of Christ, I shall not deny. But the extent of the application of this charge, may become a question; and, perhaps, before we have done with this subject, it may appear to bear hard on even the Doctor himself.

However, I am not prepared to admit, that even "on this ground," "the enemies of Christ's divinity" "have ever had the advantage of the defenders of the Godhead of Christ." This broad assertion needs a little proof; and the admission of it, I am apprehensive, would imply that the advocates of the divinity of the Saviour have occupied ground less tenable than that of their adversaries. I submit to your own judgment, whether the assertion now under consideration

does not carry with it a greater appearance of indiscretion than of truth.

2. I shall likewise leave it with you to judge whether it was not a very unhappy thing for the Doctor, that he brought into view the incautious method of others in treating this subject. For, to whatever length they may have carried their indiscretion, they must have found him close at their heels, when he penned the following sentence. "ETERNITY is that which has had no *beginning*, nor stands in any reference to TIME." This assertion, contained in his fifth proposition, is so bold and daring, and marked with such a strong stamp of rashness, as to excite the highest degree of astonishment.

No man, indeed, will dispute the first member of the sentence; but who will presume to defend the latter? What! does "eternity stand in no reference to time?" or time bear no relation to eternity? Is not eternity boundless duration? and is not time limited duration? If they are both duration, is not their *nature* the same? Is not time a part of eternity? No reasonable man will deny that it is. If time is a part of eternity,

then, in the name of common sense, how can it be said, that "eternity stands in no reference to time?" The truth is, time has a close relation to eternity.

You will see, my dear S, by this, how *incautious* some great men are, when a favourite hypothesis is to be established. The Doctor, in order to disprove the Eternal Sonship of Christ, asserted that the phrase "Eternal Son is a positive self-contradiction;" and for the purpose of establishing this position, advanced the rash sentence now under consideration.

I think you will admit with me, that it will be very difficult for any man to prove that time and eternity are "essentially different"—since the nature of them both is duration—and since time cannot exist without eternity.

I am yours affectionately,

W———— B————.

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LETTER III.

ST. LOUIS, May 13th, 1823.

MY DEAR S.....,

You will perceive, by attentively reviewing the propositions quoted from Dr. Clarke in my last communication to you, that they contain two principles of argument. The one is intended to be founded on *scriptural* ground ; the other on the *implication* of the term son, in connexion with its cognates. The former of these is included in his first proposition ; the latter, in the rest of them.

The Doctor's first argument against the Eternal Sonship of Christ, runs in the following words: "I have not been able to find any *express* declaration in the Scriptures concerning it." The weight of this argument rests on *his* inability, to find the doctrine of the Eternal Sonship in the Word of God. I leave

you to judge of the *lightness* of an argument, which is supported by the *want* of ability. Some, however, may be disposed to call the assertion in question; believing it to be the want of *disposition* constituted by a predetermination to support a favourite hypothesis, rather than the want of *penetration*. But I wish to remain far from the arrogance of calling the assertion in question—for it is not my province to determine, to what extent *his inability* may reach. But, however, it is my province to determine, that to receive the conclusion growing out of *his inability*, would require more credulity than I am at liberty to exercise. I shall not contend, that the *want* of ability does not retain the Doctor under the necessity of remaining in darkness respecting the subject in question; but I shall contend, that *his want* can never impose such necessity on other men.

It may be necessary to ascertain the precise meaning of the phrase “express declaration.” Does the Doctor mean, that the Scriptures do not *expressly declare* the Eternal Sonship of Christ, in so many words? Or does he mean that no idea of the Eternal Son-

ship of Christ, is expressly declared in the Scriptures?

If the former of these is his meaning, his proposition includes far too much—for it would lie with equal force against the doctrine of the Trinity. The phrase *Eternal Son* is not found in the Scriptures—neither is the word *Trinity*. But this is no argument against either of the doctrines. We must therefore understand him to mean, that no idea of the Eternal Sonship of Christ is expressly declared in the Scriptures.

Now I have no doubt that the Eternal Sonship of Christ is revealed in the Word of God. The scriptural proof of this doctrine, however, I must lay over, until I have considered the other propositions of Dr. Clarke.

You will perceive, in critically examining these propositions, that the reasonings which they contain are founded on two hypotheses, respecting the *implications* of the terms *son*, *father*, *generation*, and *begotten*.

1st Hypothesis. The term *son*, with its cognates, must always imply a *priority* of essential being in the *father*, in respect to the *son*.

2d Hypothesis. The term *son*, with its cognates, must imply, in all its possible applications, *beginning* of existence.

Remove these two hypotheses, and the stately edifice, which has been reared upon them, will tumble into ruins. The principles contained in them constitute the whole ground of the argument, and run throughout the propositions now under consideration. Therefore, if these be removed, nothing will remain except the conclusion, which must follow the fate of the premises on which it is founded.

In my subsequent communications, I shall attempt to prove that these hypotheses are false, and consequently, that the arguments founded upon them are without force. In the mean time believe me to remain, as ever,

Yours affectionately,

W——— B———.

LETTER IV.

ST. LOUIS, May 15th, 1823.

MY DEAR S,

In order to understand the metaphysical reasonings of Dr. Clarke against the Eternal Sonship of Christ, it will be necessary to examine the principles on which they rest. These were noticed in my last letter, as being contained in two hypotheses. The first of these follows:—

“The term *son*, with its cognates, must always imply a *priority* of essential being in the *father*, in respect to the *son*.” Now, if this position is not true, then the second and third propositions of Dr. Clarke are false—for they have no other foundation on which to rest, as you will easily perceive by candidly examining them.

It may be worthy of remark, that the hy-

pothesis in question bears a very great resemblance to the old Unitarian argument, "The son cannot be as old as his father." Indeed the same principle lies at the foundation of the argument in both; the only difference being, that this old and often refuted proposition is less qualified than the other.

"The son cannot be as old as his father." We understand this expression in reference to man; and we may remark the falsehood it contains. There is a sense in which it is true—and there is a sense in which it is false. In regard to the *personal* existence of man in the world, it is true, that the son is not as old as his father. But in respect to the *essential* existence of man, it is not true.

There is *something* which forms the essence of every man, and constitutes his identity. In relation to this *something*, whatever it may be, the father has no *priority* to the son. This I mean to prove, in order to overthrow the hypothesis on which the Doctor has built his second and third propositions.

We existed in Adam, because we came out of him. Nothing is more evident than

that something cannot come from where it never existed. It is absolutely impossible that existence should arise out of non-existence, unless it be under the influence of Almighty power. It will therefore follow, that we were created in Adam, or else that the Almighty creates every man at the time when he is conceived, or that man himself possesses the power of creation.

The two last of these suppositions can hardly be admitted by sober Christians. The former is attended with insuperable difficulties in the mind of any one in possession of biblical knowledge; and the latter is so absurd, not to say impious, that it must be rejected with abhorrence by every reasonable man. We must therefore admit that every man has essentially existed from the time of the creation of Adam. And hence it will follow, as an incontestable conclusion, that all human beings are coeval in essential existence: the father has no priority, in this respect, to the son.

Some may endeavour to weaken the force of this conclusion, by attempting to involve it in obscurity. It may be asked, "How could

we exist in Adam?" But you will readily perceive that the conclusion is not liable to be clogged by the difficulty of conceiving *how* we existed in Adam. For it is not the *mode* of being, but the *reality* of it, which is concerned in the present question. As a matter of fact, it is not a subject of difficulty; and as to conceiving of the mode of essential existence, it is not within the compass of human intelligence.

Neither should any abatement be made from the weight of the foregoing argument, on account of any ideas arising in the mind in reference to *virtual existence*. What is *virtual existence*? Are not the ideas excited by this question, like glimmering exhalations, arising, in the glow of a summer's day, from the surface of the lake unruffled by the faintest breeze? Are they not too fleeting to be arrested, too subtle to be detained, until they can be defined?

It appears to me, that the expression, *virtual existence*, has generated in the minds of some a class of indistinct and indescribable ideas. At the first view, they seem to bear some resemblance to reality; but when we

attentively consider them, they vanish from before us. They are like thin vapours, which, when seen afar off, appear to possess some consistency; but as we approach them, they gradually disappear. On the airy wings of such unsubstantial ideas, many a metaphysician passes some dismal chasm which lies in his way. And when he has accomplished his purpose, when he has safely landed himself on the other side, he finds no difficulty in disposing of a troublesome thought. For he has only to point his wand at it, and it suddenly recedes into darkness, and makes way for the passage of his feet.

It may be possible, however, to restrict the phrase *virtual existence*, to some distinct ideas. And when this is done, will it not mean, either power to produce being out of nothing, or power to bring forward essential existence into another condition of being? But in either of these cases, the phrase can have no application to the *subject* of existence, but only to the *agent*, by which existence is *produced*, or brought forward. For it is too absurd to be admitted, that any being ever possessed *power*

to *produce* itself; and we are taught by matter of fact, that the developement of essential being into personal existence, is by *agency*. In the first case, where *virtual* existence is understood to be *power* to produce being, it is nothing less than power to create; and therefore can never be attributed to man. And in the second case, where *virtual* existence is understood to be power to bring forward essential being into personal existence, there is nothing in the idea contrary to the thought, that we have really existed essentially from the formation of Adam—nay, it necessarily implies the truth of such a thought.

Thus, on whatever side we turn our eyes, we find the doctrine of our pre-existence in our first parent, exhibited with sufficient evidence to induce belief. Every man, in regard to essential being, is as old as Adam. The father, in this respect, has no priority to the son.

But I am not disposed to rest this question on metaphysical reasonings alone. Its importance, not only in relation to the subject of the Eternal Sonship of Christ, but also in

respect to its bearing on religion in general, demands a more particular consideration.

But it is time to close this letter. I shall resume the subject in my next.

I am yours affectionately,

W———— B————.

LETTER V.

ST. LOUIS, May 19th, 1823.

MY DEAR S.....,

According to promise, I now resume the subject which I was discussing in my last communication to you. This is the doctrine of the pre-existence of men, in a state of essential being, from the moment of Adam's creation. To the argument contained in my last, and founded on the principles of reason, I now subjoin others, drawn from the Holy Scriptures.

1. That we were created in Adam, we learn from the language of Moses. *Then the heaven and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.**

All the host of them—you will think with

* Gen. ii : 1.

me, that this cannot be reasonably restricted to the original parents of the various orders of animal existence—but should be understood as including also the multitudes of living creatures which were to proceed from them. That this is the idea which Moses intended to communicate, seems more than probable from another passage written by him: *For in six days God created the heaven and the earth, the sea, and all that therein is.** This we learn, that all that is, was created in six days.

And in confirmation of this truth, we have the words of our Lord Jesus Christ: *But from the beginning God created them male and female.*†

God created them male and female—To whom does this refer? At the first view, misled, perhaps, by an association of ideas, we may suppose that it relates only to Adam and Eve. But this would be making a great mistake indeed—for it would be rending the text from the context.

The antecedent to the pronoun *them*, is certainly to be found in the question, to which

* Exod. xx: 11.

† Mark x: 6.

the text is in part the answer: *Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife?* Here it is evident that *a man and his wife*, that is, any man and his wife, and not Adam and Eve in particular, is the antecedent to the pronoun *them*. And hence it is undeniable, that any man and his wife, and not Adam and Eve alone, *were created from the beginning*. All mankind were brought into *essential* being, in the creation of our first parents. The words of Christ are so directly to the point in question, that it will be impossible to avoid the conclusion drawn from them, without violating the most evident principles of language.

2. It is no small gratification to me, in which you will participate, that I have it in my power to place this subject under the sanction of the celebrated Apostle of the Gentiles. He places the doctrine of pre-existence, as it relates to human nature, in a very luminous point of view. He gives us the fullest assurance of its truth, by assuming it as the ground of one of his arguments, in favour of a doctrine all important in Christianity. This argument, advanced in support of the excellence of Christ's priesthood, and of its superiority

over the levitical priesthood, is predicated on the doctrine of pre-existence. His reasoning proceeds on the ground of two facts. The first is, that the priesthood of Christ, according to the determination of the Divine Will, is after the order of Melchizedech; and the second is, that Levi paid tithes unto Melchizedech in the loins of his father Abraham. With the first we have no concern in the present question. But the second affords the most conclusive evidence, that we received essential existence in our original parent. For it is impossible that Levi should pay tithes in the loins of Abraham, without having some real existence in him; and if Levi had a real being in the loins of Abraham, he must have received that being in the creation of the original progenitor of mankind. The consequence of this is, that, since Levi can be placed, in regard to existence, on no other ground than one common to the human race, every man must have possessed essential existence in Adam. That the argument of St. Paul is founded on ground solid and indisputable, will not be called in question by any one who reflects that the Apostle was not only

among the greatest masters of reason, but was also possessed of that inspiration which rendered him infallible.

In whatever light we view the premises on which the Apostle's argument is founded, in the same light we shall be constrained to view the argument itself. And, therefore, as the strength of the Apostle's reasoning depends entirely on the solidity of the ground assumed, we cannot call this ground in question, without denying the truth of his conclusion. Were we to suppose that Levi existed in the loins of Abraham in some hypothetical sense, we should place the authority of the Epistle to the Hebrews in a very unfair and disagreeable light, by reducing this argument to a mere hypothetical deduction. For what is laid down in the premises, must come out in the conclusion. And were we to suppose that Levi existed in the loins of Abraham in some figurative sense, the argument founded on *such existence* would be no better than hypothesis. In proceeding in this manner, we should presume far too much. For we should not only rob St. Paul of the character of being a masterly reasoner, and deny his claim to

Divine inspiration—but we should charge him with imposing on the world by sophistical reasonings, on a subject of the highest interest to mankind.

I hope, therefore, that none will presume to suppose, that Levi existed in the loins of Abraham, in any sense less than real being—because such a supposition would implicate the Apostle in a very serious manner.

To sum up what has been said on this argument. If Levi really existed essentially in Abraham, he must have received such existence in Adam; and if Levi so existed in Adam, then all men were essentially formed when our primeval parent was created. To admit the pre-existence of Levi, and at the same time deny such existence to the rest of men, must necessarily involve us in gross absurdities. Therefore, it will follow with such force as cannot be reasonably resisted, that all men, in relation to essential existence, are equal in duration. The father, in this respect, has no claim to *priority* to the son.

3. You will permit me, my dear S, to present the question under consideration in its bearing on the fall of man. For although

the arguments already offered are sufficient to place the principle for which I contend, beyond dispute; yet, as this principle is of the utmost consequence to my final conclusion, to accumulate evidence in its favour cannot be uninteresting to me, and may not be unacceptable to you.

The doctrine of pre-existence is inseparably connected with that of human degeneracy. If the posterity of Adam had not been in him when he fell, it would have been impossible for them, according to our conceptions of this subject, to have lost the enjoyment of holiness, immortality, and happiness, through his fall. Accordingly we learn from St. Paul,—that “death passed upon all men”—“through the offence of one many are dead”—“in Adam all die.”

Now it must be evident to the most inferior understanding, that we could not die in Adam, had we not existed in him at the time of his fall.

Believe me to remain,

Yours affectionately,

W———— B————.

LETTER VI.

St. Louis, May 22d, 1823.

MY DEAR S'.....,

In my former communications, I have endeavoured to prove that the term *son* does not simply, in relation to essential being, that the person to whom it is applied is *subsequent* to his father—that the terms *father* and *son*, so far from implying *inferiority* of nature and *subsequent* existence in the son, imply that the father and son are equal in nature, and coeval in duration.

And now, if I have succeeded in accomplishing my purpose, then the first hypothesis of Dr. Clarke is utterly false, and the arguments predicated upon it are without foundation. Under a full persuasion that your candour will lead you to admit that the arguments which I have offered are sufficient to establish

the positions I have made and to evince the falsehood of the hypothesis in question, I hasten to the consideration of the subject in another point of view.

The other hypothesis on which the arguments of Dr. Clarke are predicated, comes now to be considered. "The term *son*, with its cognates, must imply, in all its possible applications, *beginning* of existence."

The fallacy of this hypothesis, and the *want* of solidity in the arguments founded upon it, will appear if the following propositions be duly considered.

1. Every term in application to man, must always imply *limitation* of nature, and *beginning* of existence.

2. No term in application to Deity can imply *limitation* of nature, or *beginning* of existence; and therefore every term applied to him must *always* be taken in such a sense as is consistent with the divine infinitude.

3. It is undeniably true, that the inspired writers have applied many terms to God which they have applied to man.

4. It is not less undeniable that the *impli-*

cation of these terms, in both these applications, *cannot be precisely the same.*

5. Therefore there are terms, which are not inapplicable to the divine nature of Christ, although such terms imply *limitation* when applied to man.

6. And therefore every argument, predicated on the *implication* of any term taken in the sense in which it is used in reference to finite beings, must be sophistical and destitute of strength, when the conclusion is drawn in reference to the infinite nature of God—because in this case the conclusion must contain more than the premises.

7. It will be admitted, that the term *son*, in all its applications to man, implies *limitation* of nature, and *beginning* of existence. But from this it will not follow, that it must *always* have this *implication* when applied to Christ, and that therefore it is utterly inapplicable to his divine nature.

You will admit, that the foregoing propositions cannot be called in question, without departing from the principles of reason. They recommend themselves to the good sense of every candid man. But if they are true, then

the hypothesis in question must be false, and all the arguments which repose upon it must fall to the ground. And therefore Christ *may be* the Son of God as to his divine nature—because it is not necessary that the term *son* should *always* imply *beginning* of existence. But if the supposition, that the term *son* must always imply *beginning* of existence, is groundless, then the fourth and fifth propositions of Dr. Clarke are without foundation. For, by critically examining them, you will find that they repose on this supposition.

Beginning of existence is not necessarily the *implication* of the term *son*, in all its possible applications. Therefore Jesus Christ *may be* the Son of God as to his divine nature.

In reference to essential existence, the son is equal in duration to his father. Therefore Christ *is* the Son of God as to his divine nature.

Let me again remark, that my faith in the Eternal Sonship of Christ is not founded in metaphysical reasonings—but on the Word of God. Yet correct reasoning on metaphysical grounds is so far from being opposed to the doctrine in question, that it is rather in

favour of it, as you will see by the last paragraphs in this letter. That the conclusions in those paragraphs are founded on principles of truth, and correctly drawn, I submit to the determination of your own judgment, on a candid review of what I have written to you.

I am yours affectionately,

W——— B———.

LETTER VII.

ST. LOUIS, May 24th, 1823.

MY DEAR S.....,

It may be proper, before we proceed any further, to stop for a moment, in order to view Dr. Clarke's metaphysical objections against the Eternal Sonship of Christ, in a light somewhat different from any in which we have before considered them.

From an attentive review of these objections, it will be found that they all ultimately terminate in the supposition, that the term *son* necessarily implies *beginning* of existence. And hence the conclusion, that this term cannot be applied to the divine nature of Christ, forasmuch as this nature is from eternity. For the whole conclusion of his arguments looks ultimately to the eternity of

the divine nature of Christ, in which beginning of existence is impossible.

It is true, that the first two of his metaphysical propositions proceed on the idea of *antecedence* or *priority* in the *father* in reference to the *son*. But it is to be remarked, that the argument proceeds from the idea of *priority*, to that of *beginning* to exist; for that being to whom another is *prior* must have *begun* to exist, and therefore can have no claim to existence from eternity. The two latter of these metaphysical propositions are founded directly, and the two former indirectly, on the idea of beginning to exist, as it stands opposed to that of existence from eternity.

There is, however, another difference between these two sets of propositions. The idea of *priority* does not necessarily exclude the idea of *beginning* to be. One being may be prior to another, and yet both of them may have begun to exist.

I have made these observations in order to remark, that the first principle which I have endeavoured to establish, lies with equal force against all the propositions in question. This principle is, that the *son*, in reference to

essential existence, is equal in duration to his father.

I shall now proceed, according to promise, to bring this principle to bear, in a more particular manner, on the arguments of Dr. Clarke.

The Doctor reasons thus: "If Christ be the Son of God as to his *divine* nature, then he cannot be eternal: for *son* implies a *father*, and father implies, in reference to *son*, *precedency* in time, if not in *nature* too. *Father* and *son* imply the idea of *generation*, and *generation* implies *time* in which it *was* effected, and time also *antecedent* to such generation." But from the principle which I have laid down above, and the truth of which I am persuaded has been fully established, the inference will be just the reverse of that which is found in the above argument. For if Christ is the Son of God as to his divine nature, then he must be eternal: for *son* implies, in reference to essential existence, *coeval* being between the father and the son. God the Father has existed from eternity; therefore Jesus Christ, his own proper Son, must be eternal. The Eternal Sonship of Christ, there-

fore, on this principle, follows from the *implication* of the term *son*.

The proposition of Dr. Clarke, now in question, appears, at the first view, as being plausible. But this plausibility disappears, the moment we discover that he reasons from the *implication* of the term *son*, in reference to personal existence, in order to draw a conclusion against an idea conveyed by the same term respecting essential being. The absurdity of such reasoning is sufficiently manifest. To build an argument on an idea conveyed by the term *son* in relation to personal being, in order to bring out a conclusion in reference to essential existence, is so sophistical, unfair, and absurd, that it will be difficult for any one who makes the discovery, not to feel displeasure at such quibbling.

Father and son do indeed imply *generation*. But generation is not the beginning of existence; but an operation acting on previous existence, and bringing forward essential being, in order to its manifestation in personal existence. And hence we may discover, that generation implies essential being in both the father and the son antecedent to generation

itself—yea, that the father and the son in *this being* are coequal in duration. Therefore, as the present question concerns the divine nature of Christ, the essence of Deity, this *divine* nature may be the Son of God—because, in essential being, the duration of the father and the son is the same. Now, my dear S, where shall we find the proposition of our opponents? Has it not fled away, like the chaff before a mighty wind?

The next proposition of Dr. Clarke runs thus: “If Christ be the Son of God as to his *divine* nature, then the father is of necessity *prior*, and consequently *superior* to him.”

No doubt you have often observed, that when men once presume that they occupy the ground of truth, they then advance forward with increasing boldness, regardless of the absurdities into which they plunge themselves. You have another opportunity of making such an observation in the case before us. The objector, occupying the fallacious ground which he had assumed, appears greatly to increase the measure and boldness of his steps, in the proposition in question. In drawing the conclusion contained in it, as if it resulted

from the "necessity" of things, he must have had great confidence that his arguments were founded in unalterable truth. But alas! how mistaken! Truth would have led him to a conclusion directly opposite. If Christ is the Son of God as to his divine nature, then the Father is neither *prior* nor *superior* to him, in regard to this nature. Because a father and his son, in reference to essential being, are coeval in duration, and consubstantial in nature, with each other. Thus we see, that, as the question does not relate to the manifestation of Christ in the world, but to his divine nature, the essence of Deity, the objection under consideration is as light as vanity. It has no force whatever against the Eternal Sonship of Christ.

The Doctor has conceived his next objection in the following words: "Again, if *this divine nature* were *begotten* of the Father, then it must be in time, i. e. there was a period in which *it did not exist*, and a period when it *began* to exist. This destroys the *eternity* of our blessed Lord, and robs him at once of his Godhead."

In casting a discriminating eye over this

proposition, you will at once discover that the idea of *generation* is here confounded with that of *creation*. To be *begotten*, and to *begin to exist*, in the language of the proposition, is the same thing. For the act of begetting is here made the proximate cause of being *begotten*, and of *beginning* to exist. Indeed the supposition, that being begotten and beginning to exist signify the same thing, is the very pivot on which the whole argument turns. For if the thing begotten existed before the act of begetting, as most evidently it does according to the principle before laid down, then the divine nature of Christ may have been begotten, and yet have existed from eternity.

The notion that being begotten, and beginning to exist, is the same thing, is so absurd, that to mention it is to confute it. Generation operates on previous existence, and causes it to approximate toward development. The act of generation is the act of a limited agent, whose power is infinitely incapable of producing something from nothing. But the act of creating, which gives beginning to existence, can be performed by Al-

mighty God only. That the act of generation is subsequent to existence in both the father and the son, is too evident to be denied—because the denial of it would lead to this conclusion, that every man who is a father has possessed power to create. But such a thought is pregnant with consequences of the most dreadful nature.

Therefore, as the idea of generation necessarily implies previous existence in the thing begotten, the divine nature of Christ may have been begotten of the Father, without there being “a period when it began to exist.” And therefore the doctrine which I have espoused does not “destroy the *eternity* of our blessed Lord,” nor “rob him at once of his Godhead.”

Under the delusive thought in which the idea of creation is confounded with that of generation, the Doctor proceeds to lay down his fifth and final proposition, in which we have already, in a former letter, noticed the character of uncommon rashness. It follows. “To say he was *begotten* from all eternity, is, in my opinion, absurd; and the phrase Eternal Son, is a positive self-contradiction. **ETERNITY**

is that which has had no *beginning*, nor stands in any reference to TIME. Son supposes *time*, *generation*, and *father*, and time also *antecedent* to such generation. Therefore the conjunction of these two terms *son* and eternity is absolutely impossible, as they imply essentially different and *opposite* ideas.”

In reply to this I would remark, that in order to maintain the Eternal Sonship of Christ, it is not necessary to contend that the Son of God was begotten from all eternity. For, to be begotten, is not to begin to exist—but to receive the operation of a certain cause on essential being previously existing, by which such being begins to approximate toward personal manifestation. For the son, in reference to essential being, is coequal in duration with the father, as we have before abundantly proved. And as the son supposes generation, so generation supposes the pre-existent state of the son, as well as the subsequent state of his personal manifestation. And therefore it is not necessary to maintain that Christ was begotten from all eternity, in order to support the doctrine of the Eternal Sonship of Christ. And hence it will follow that “the conjunction

of these two terms *son* and *eternity* are” not “absolutely impossible” on the principles of truth—because they do not “imply essentially different and opposite ideas.” For since the term *son*, when applied to man, implies essential existence in the son coeval with that of his father—the same term, when applied to Christ, should imply existence in him coeval with that of his Father, who is eternal. And therefore Jesus Christ as the Son of God is eternal.

Thus we discover, that in whatever view we may contemplate the objections raised against our doctrine, we shall see that there is no solidity in them. If the principle which I have brought to bear on these objections is correct, if the term *son* supposes existence antecedent, as well as subsequent, to generation, then the arguments of Dr. Clarke are as unsubstantial as “the baseless fabric of a vision.” And the impression which they make on the rock of truth, the Eternal Sonship of Christ, is no more than that produced by the thin vapour, floating along the mountain side, upon its flinty protuberances.

That the principle here referred to is correct,

will be admitted, I think, by every man who, with candour and critical sagacity, reviews the subject. But if any should suspect, that in the arguments brought forward to establish it, there may be some lurking fallacy, I have another principle in reserve, in which no lurking fallacy can exist. "The term *son* does not necessarily imply, in all its possible applications, *beginning* of existence." I shall apply this principle to the subject under consideration, in my next letter. You may then expect something, relative to the absurdities resulting from the objections of our opponents.

Believe me to remain,

Yours affectionately,

W——— B———.

LETTER VIII.

ST. LOUIS, May 27th, 1823.

MY DEAR S.....,

Our highest interest, as well as our first obligation, is to know God—to contemplate him in the works of creation, providence, and grace—to form correct conceptions of all the attributes and relations in which he has revealed himself to us. But in doing this one principle is ever to be kept in view. No idea respecting these attributes and relations is to be formed, but such as is consistent with the infinitude of his nature; and every *term* by which any idea concerning these attributes and relations is intended to be communicated, is to be taken in such a *sense* as not to violate this principle.

Now, in the light of this great truth, equally bearing on theory and practice, let me pro-

duce the principle mentioned in my last letter. "The term *son* does not necessarily imply, in all its possible applications, *beginning* of existence." You will perceive, that this position is in direct opposition to all the metaphysical objections produced by Dr. Clarke. For we must understand him as reasoning thus: "If Christ be the Son of God as to his divine nature, then he cannot be eternal: for *son* must always imply *beginning* of existence. This is its meaning when applied to man; and we can understand it in no other *sense* when it is applied to Christ." That this is his meaning is manifest, not only from the construction of his propositions, but also from the principles which they involve. For if he did not intend to argue from the implication of the term *son* as it applies to man, he could hardly fail to perceive that his premises would contain no truth, and consequently that his conclusions would be without weight. If he had admitted that the term *son* could be applied to Christ in a sense inapplicable to finite beings, he would have hurled, in a moment, the stately superstructure of his metaphysical argumentation into irretrievable ruin. For,

if the inspired writers have applied this *term* to Christ, in reference to his divine nature, or if it be in any way admissible so to apply it, then, in such application, it *cannot* imply either *beginning* of existence, or any kind of *limitation* whatever. Thus he is obliged to take the term *son* in the same *sense* when applied to Christ as when applied to man; that is, he is obliged to *beg* the question in dispute, before he can advance one step in his argument. He is under the dire necessity of assuming his own side of the question, in order to found his reasoning on such assumption! To what a wretched situation must a man be driven, when the cause which he has espoused, requires such support as this!

But this is not all. Were we to adopt Dr. Clarke's method of reasoning, and make a general application of it to the great truths of religion, into what a dismal region of error should we be led! Suppose we were to argue from the simple *implication* of terms in reference to man, in which *implication* the idea of *beginning* to exist is *always* included, and make deductions from this ground respecting God, where should we find ourselves in our

final conclusions? Should we not be led to infer the WANT of eternal existence in God, from every such term which the Scriptures have applied to him? Should we not plunge ourselves into the most pernicious errors?—into the frightful gulf of atheism itself?

The following observations are intended to expose the pernicious tendency of the reasoning which I here call in question; and to exhibit the absurdity of arguing against the Eternal Sonship of Christ, from the implication of the term *son*. I am not insensible, my dear S, that it may require some fortitude to approach the horrible gulfs, which the general application of such reasoning would open to our view. But to cast our eye over them, for a moment, may not be without usefulness to us, as it may lead us to keep at a distance from an error, the support of which requires such a method of argumentation.

In order to give more force to my remarks, and to make the destructive tendency of the reasoning on which Dr. Clarke proceeds against the Eternal Sonship more manifest, by placing its fallacy in stronger light, I shall exhibit, opposite to his reasoning, a few pro-

positions, framed on the same principle, and containing reasonings against some of the most important doctrines of religion. By this it will be manifested, that if his method of reasoning be admitted, then we must reject the most sacred truths of the gospel; and that, therefore, we must discard the whole of his metaphysical arguments against the Eternal Sonship of Christ.

God is ONE. No truth is more evident than this, or more universally admitted by Christians. Yet we cannot sustain even this doctrine, if we admit the principle on which Dr. Clarke argues against the Eternal Sonship of Christ.

1ST PARALLEL.

Dr. Clarke's argument against the Eternal Sonship of Christ.

"If Christ be the Son of God as to his divine nature, then he cannot be eternal; for *son* implies *beginning* of existence."

An argument formed on the same principle against the Unity of God.

If God is one, then he cannot be infinite; for the term *one* implies *limitation*; and *limitation* and *infinitude* can never possibly subsist in the same subject.

Now, my dear S, no man will dis-

pute, that the most obvious *implication* of the term *one* is, that of *limitation*; and no man will deny, that *limitation* and *infinitude* can never meet in the same subject. You will easily perceive, that the proposition on the right side of the page assumes a form, and contains a principle, equally plausible with that on the left. They repose exactly on the same ground—the common implication of terms, in their application to finite beings. It will be impossible to deny, on rational principles, one of these propositions, without denying the other. And consequently we must reject them both, or be driven into the gulf of atheism.

God is indeed **ONE**—but the term *one* must be so understood, as not to imply limitation. He is *one* in such a sense as is perfectly consistent with his own glorious infinitude. So Christ is the Son of God as to his divine nature—but the term *son* must be so understood as not to imply *beginning* of existence. He is the Son of God in such a sense as is perfectly consonant with his own eternal Being.

That God is the Father, will not be called in question by any one, who receives the New

Testament as being of divine authority. Yet even this sacred truth cannot be maintained, without rejecting the false principle on which Dr. Clarke argues against the Eternal Sonship of Christ.

2D PARALLEL.

<p><i>Dr. Clarke's argument against the Eternal Sonship of Christ.</i></p>	<p><i>An argument formed on the same principle against the doctrine that God is the Father.</i></p>
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<p>“If Christ be the Son of God as to his divine nature, then he cannot be eternal; for <i>son</i> implies <i>beginning</i> of existence.”</p>	<p>If God is the Father, then he cannot be eternal; for <i>father</i> implies <i>beginning</i> of existence.</p>
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You will at once discover, that the term *father*, in all its possible applications excepting that in which it refers to God, implies the ideas of *beginning*, *limitation*, and physical *imperfection*, as much so as the term *son*. The plausibility of the proposition on the right is not less than that on the left. The one has no more truth in it than the other—because they rest on the same principle. They must both fall, or stand together; and they must both fall—because they are founded in falsehood, and would lead us, in the inferences

naturally resulting from them, into the horrid gulf, from which we just turned away with abhorrence.

God is the Father, in such a sense as is not applicable to any other being. Christ is the Son of God, as to his divine nature, in such a sense as cannot be referred to created existence.

I shall advance one step further. That Jesus Christ is the Son of God as to his human nature, will be denied by none. Yet even this doctrine cannot be supported while we maintain the principle on which Dr. Clarke argues against the Eternal Sonship of Christ.

3D PARALLEL.

Dr. Clarke's argument against the Eternal Sonship of Christ.

“If Christ be the Son of God as to his divine nature, then he cannot be eternal; for *son* implies *beginning* of existence.”

An argument formed on the same principle against the Sonship of Christ as to his human nature.

If Christ be the Son of God as to his human nature, then he cannot always have been holy; for *son* implies moral depravity derived by natural generation.

Do not these propositions put on equally

the same imposing aspect? Is it not undoubtedly true, that, leaving Christ out of the question, every son born of a woman has come into the world in a state of moral corruption? And is not the very circumstance of their coming into the world as the sons of men, an evidence that they are naturally unholy? If we do not hold, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God as to his human nature, in such a sense as no other person is the son of God, we must admit the dreadful proposition on the right side of the page. What then would follow? Why, every thing most frightful—Enmity in Christ to God and his holy law!—an utter unsuitableness and incapacity in the Saviour to execute the plan of salvation!—with consequences the most appalling!!! The whole scheme of redemption rises before me—The divine nature of all its principles—the richness of all its promises—the happy consequences of its execution, running through the ages of eternity, and pervading, with the most salutary influence, the whole of the rational universe—would, in the case supposed, be involved in a darkness unutterably dreadful and appalling!

But whenever we admit that the term son, when applied to Christ, in any respect, must be understood in such a sense as is entirely inapplicable to the sons of men, in that moment we remove the ground on which the arguments of Dr. Clarke are predicated, and the whole superstructure reared thereon tumbles into ruin—so let it go—and in oblivion for ever sink.

I might proceed, were it needful, to expose to view other dangerous consequences involved in the objections, which have been levelled against the Eternal Sonship of Christ. But your intelligence and candour render such exposure unnecessary. You cannot remain ignorant, while reviewing the preceding remarks, that the objections in question are as pregnant with falsehood, as they are dangerous in tendency.

I have effected my object in the preceding discussion. In saying this, I shall submit it to your judgment, whether I depart from modesty. My purpose has been—not to prove, by metaphysical arguments, the Eternal Sonship of Christ—but to remove the obstructions thrown in my way to the proof—to remove

the rubbish under which some presuming theologians have attempted to bury this doctrine. And I flatter myself, that I have accomplished this purpose.

Before I close this letter, let me again remark, that the doctrine in question is not to be proved, nor disproved, by metaphysical reasonings. It does not rest on such ground. But it reposes in safety on the broad basis of scriptural truth ; where, in our subsequent discussions, we shall find it reared in divine beauty, and invincible strength.

I am yours affectionately,

W——— B———.

LETTER IX.

ST. LOUIS, May 30th, 1823.

MY DEAR S,

There is a principle in sacred criticism, from which we can never depart, without exposing ourselves to the danger of falling into error. This principle, recognised in my last letter, requires us to understand the words used by the inspired writers, so as to accord with the eminence of the Divine attributes. Every term applied to God has a peculiar meaning, which it can have in no other application—because this meaning excludes every idea of beginning of being, of limitation in nature, and of imperfection in operation.

This principle in sacred criticism, when considered in the abstract as a general rule, recommends itself so strongly to the common

sense of mankind that it meets with universal acceptance. But no sooner is this principle brought to bear on any word or term, so as to expose any favourite notion to the charge of fallacy, than we discover a repugnance to the particular application.

These observations are made with a double view. First, in order to notice an objection which you will foresee is likely to be offered against applying to the term *son* the above principle, as in my last communication to you; and secondly, to introduce some preliminary remarks to the scriptural proof of the Eternal Sonship of Christ. I am induced to unite these objects—because in effecting the one, I can accomplish the other.

The objection, to which I allude, will probably be clothed in language like the following: “If the term *son*, when applied to Christ, is not to be taken in its common implication when applied to man, in what sense are we to understand the term? must we depart from the plain and obvious meaning of words, in our search after truth in the Holy Scriptures? When the words of inspiration are diverted by us from the current of

their common meaning, we immediately launch upon the sea of uncertainty, and lose ourselves in the fogs of mysticism.”

The following observations will offer a full reply to this objection; while I wish you to regard them as being introductory to the evidence, which I purpose to draw from the Word of God, in proof of the Eternal Sonship of Christ.

1. The language of inspiration is indeed to be taken in the common and obvious meaning of the words employed. But this meaning must be qualified so as to attach no imperfection to God. This method of qualification, so far from leading us into error, is the only thing that can prevent us from “launching upon the sea of uncertainty, and from losing ourselves in the fogs of mysticism.”

2. In Jesus Christ there are “two whole and perfect natures, the Godhead and the manhood.”* Now terms may be applied to these natures considered separately, or as being united in ONE divine PERSON. But they must always be understood so as to accord

* Articles of Religion.

with the declarations of Scripture respecting the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ.

3. The term son, in its application to Christ, is to be understood in its common and obvious meaning—But this meaning must be qualified so as to render the sense peculiarly applicable to Christ alone.

4. There is nothing necessarily included in the implication of the term *son*, which renders it absolutely inapplicable to the divine nature of Christ—as *we have already seen* in our former discussions.

5. The inspired writers *have applied* the term *son* to the human nature of Christ—to his divine nature—and to both of these natures united in ONE glorious PERSON—as *we shall see* in subsequent discussions.

6. It is not to be supposed that the *implication* of the term *son* as applied to Christ, can be fully comprehended by us. Yet certainly we may form some correct ideas concerning this subject. In attempting to do this, let the following remarks be duly considered.

7. We have already seen, in the foregoing letters, that while the term son, when applied to man, implies that the son, in regard to

personal existence, is *subsequent* to his father, it also implies that he is, in reference to essential being, coequal in duration with his father: Even so, while the expression, *the Son of God*, implies that Christ, in respect to his humanity, is *subsequent* to his Father, it also implies that he is, in reference to his divinity, coequal in the duration of his existence with his everlasting Father.

8. As a human son possesses the same nature that his father does—even so the Son of God possesses, in his divinity, the same glorious nature that is possessed by his infinite Father.

9. As a human son has, in his essential being, existed coevally with his father from the time of man's creation—even so the Son of God has, in his essence of Deity, existed with his own divine Father from all eternity.

10. As there subsists between a good father and a dutiful son, a close and strong union—so there subsists between God the Father and God the Son, a union infinitely close and strong.

11. The love which a good father has for a dutiful son, and the love which such a son

has for such a father, surpass accurate conception. So the love that God the Father has for God the Son, and the love that God the Son has for God the Father, are infinitely beyond the comprehension of created beings.

I am yours affectionately,

W———— B————.

LETTER X.

ST. LOUIS, May 31st, 1823.

MY DEAR S.....,

I now approach the more important part of the subject, the scriptural proofs of the Eternal Sonship of Christ.

In the prosecution of my purpose, I shall produce a number of passages from the Book of God, as arguments in favour of this doctrine; making some remarks on each, in order to place the argument which it may contain, in a strong and clear light.

In doing this, I shall attempt to prove four things:—

First. That the sacred writers have applied the term *son* to the *whole* person of Jesus Christ, to his Godhead as well as to his humanity. *Second.* That they have used this

term with special reference to his Divinity. *Third.* That they have employed this term to distinguish his Divine nature from his humanity. *Fourth.* That they have used such language, as conveys, in a plain and forcible manner, the doctrine of the Eternal Sonship of Christ.

To substantiate any one of these propositions, will be to establish the doctrine in question ; and to evince the truth of the whole of them, will be to accumulate such evidence as might be expected, on a subject of so much importance. You will readily admit, that if these propositions can be established, all opposition to this doctrine should cease.

In making an appeal to the Word of God, I shall hold myself bound by obligations of the most sacred nature, to approach it with a profound respect—to sacrifice the arrogance of reason, the pride of opinion, on the altar of inspiration—and to submit, with the greatest readiness of mind, to the decisions of this standard of eternal truth.

“ The sacred writers have applied the term *son*, with its cognates, to the whole Person of Jesus Christ, to his Godhead as well as to his

humanity.”* The truth of this proposition is evident from the following arguments.

Argument I. “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the *only begotten* of the Father), full of grace and truth.” (John i: 14.) A few remarks on this passage are worthy of notice.

1. That this text relates to Christ as the Son is manifest—because he is here called “the only Begotten of the Father.” *The only Begotten*—This is a cognate of the term *son*; and as such, it can refer to the Messiah only as he sustains the character of the Son, in relation to the Father.

2. *The only Begotten of the Father*, and *The Word made flesh*, are evidently expressions signifying the same glorious Being, including

*No person, who acknowledges the Divine authority of the New Testament, will deny, that Christ is the Son of God as to his human nature, excepting such as call in question the doctrine of the Saviour’s humanity. For the angel said unto Mary: “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called *The Son of God.*” (Luke i: 35.)

his Godhead as well as his humanity. For the glory of the only Begotten, is undoubtedly the glory of the Eternal Word—because the Evangelist asserts, “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld HIS glory, the glory as of the only Begotten of the Father.”

3. This glory is the glory of God. It is not the glory of the *flesh*—that nature which was *made*. But it is the glory of the *Word*—that nature which is *Eternal*.

4. The specification which the Apostle gives of this glory abundantly proves the truth of this last remark. For the glory of which the Apostle here speaks is the glory of *grace* and *truth*, manifested in infinite fulness in the Person of the Word. Because the words of the Evangelist, without the parenthesis, run thus: “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of *grace* and *truth*.” Was the grace which descended upon the world from the Lord Jesus, in such boundless plenitude, the grace of human nature? This grace was full beyond measure—without a parallel in the medium of its communication—astonishing and inscrutable in the means of its operation—in its object grand, sublime,

incomprehensible—designed not only to bestow eternal life on the sons of faith, but also to maintain a happy influence over the whole of the moral universe. This grace never could result from the humanity of Christ alone. Neither was the truth which Jesus has exhibited with so much brilliancy in the Gospel, the effect of his human nature alone. This truth,—in system so correct, dependent, consistent, and perfect—in obligation so pure, elevated, and heavenly—in motive so impressive, energetic, and irresistible—was the truth of God himself. And therefore this glory of the only Begotten, is the glory of the Eternal Word, the infinite Jehovah.

5. Now, since this passage refers to Christ as he is the Son, the only Begotten of the Father, and since his glory as the only Begotten, is the glory of God, the Word manifested in the flesh—it must follow, in the most forcible manner, that he is the Son of God in reference to his whole Person, to his Godhead as well as to his humanity.

Believe me to remain, as ever,

Yours affectionately,

W———— B————.

LETTER XI.

ST. LOUIS, June 2d, 1823.

MY DEAR S.....,

It is very probable, that an objection may be urged against the argument contained in my last letter.

“St. John, in the beginning of his Gospel, conveys no idea of Sonship in reference to Christ, until after he mentions his incarnation. He speaks of him as the Eternal Word until he is made flesh, and afterwards as the Son of God; and therefore it seems probable, that his Sonship has reference only to his human nature.”

The plausibility of this objection, I have no doubt, has had great influence in leading some astray; and hence it may not be amiss to point out its fallacy.

1. The objection reposes on a circumstance which has no direct bearing on the present question. For, to give the circumstance of St. John's speaking of Christ, as the Eternal Word before his incarnation, and afterwards as the Son of God, any bearing on this question, it will be necessary to prove that by this the Evangelist intended to convey the idea, that the Sonship of Christ relates wholly to his human nature. For without such intention, the bare circumstance can prove nothing in reference to the doctrine before us. Now there is not the least intimation given that the Evangelist had any such intention; and therefore the objection must be without force.

2. St. John, so far from intending to communicate any such idea as that embraced by the objection, teaches us to believe just the reverse. For he informs us, in the 14th verse, that the glory of the Word is the glory of the only Begotten of the Father—it is the same glory beaming forth from the same divine Person. We are therefore taught, that the Sonship of Christ refers to his divine nature; and consequently the objection is sophistical.

3. Is it not very astonishing indeed, that

men should have no hesitation in calling Christ the *Eternal Word*, and yet scruple to call him the *Eternal Son*? For, if either of the terms, *word* and *son*, has superior claims over the other to the adjunct *eternal*, it must be the latter one. Because *son*, in the common use of the term, conveys an idea of *real continued being*; while *word*, in the common use of the term, conveys merely an idea of internal and external *action*. A word is a mere sound, a vibration of air, conveying some thought of the heart. These observations are made, not to derogate anything from the glorious appellation, the *Eternal Word*, but to expose the absurdity of using this, while we reject the more appropriate appellation, the *Eternal Son*.

I acknowledge that both these Divine Titles are beautifully expressive, and equally accurate in their proper place; but I must think that the latter is abundantly more expressive of the divine nature of Christ.

I am very affectionately yours,

W———— B————.

LETTER XII.

ST. LOUIS, June 5th, 1823.

MY DEAR S.....,

Having removed an objection in my last communication, I now return to that part of the subject which relates to the scriptural arguments in favour of the Eternal Sonship of Christ.

Argument II. "Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? Who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is his Son's name, if thou canst tell?" (Prov. xxx: 4.)

I shall not contend, as some, perhaps, would do, that this text, because it was written before Christ was born of the Virgin Mary, fa-

vours the doctrine of his Eternal Sonship. For, leaving other things out of the account, it is, in my opinion, introductory to a prophecy concerning events subsequent to the ascension of Christ into glory. But there are other reasons which induce me to believe that the passage contains the doctrine of the Eternal Sonship of Christ. The following remarks will bring these to view.

1. There is, in this passage, a singular beauty, a peculiar propriety. The Redeemer is presented to our view in the beginning and the close; while the intermediate part relates to the God of justice as the Governor of the world. As though the prophet would teach us, that the Father is in the bosom of the Son, as the Son is in the bosom of the Father—that the Son is the first and the last as to all divine communications to us—that through the Son alone we can have the knowledge of God, and the enjoyment of his presence.

2. It will not be called in question, that the Person mentioned as “ascending and descending,” is the “Son,” whose *name* is required in the latter part of the text.

3. Now the Saviour, this divine Person, first "descended" as God, in order to take upon him the nature of man; and having taken it, he "ascended up into heaven as God-man," and took possession of immortality and glory in the name of his people. And this is the Son, whose name we ought to know.

4. Therefore the name of "his Son," the Son of God, the Governor of the world, "is Emmanuel, God with us," "God manifested in the flesh."

5. And hence it will follow, that the term *Son*, in this passage, is applied to the whole Person of Christ, to his Godhead as well as to his human nature.

Argument III. "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." (Col. i: 13, 14.)

1. It is manifest that the beloved Son, who is the Prince of the kingdom here mentioned, is Jehovah incarnate. For "we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."

2. Now it is indubitable, that redemption can be only through the blood of that divine Person, in whom the Godhead is united with the nature of man. For the nature of Deity is incapable of suffering ; and man, in his nature alone, can do nothing meritorious, because he can never exceed his duty. The manhood of Christ, being united to the Godhead, was raised above obligation ; and hence all its sufferings became meritorious, and laid a foundation for the redemption of the world.

3. Therefore this incarnate Jehovah is the “ dear Son ” of God, mentioned in the text as the Prince of the mediatorial kingdom ; and hence the term Son is applied to the whole Person of Christ, to his divine nature as well as to his humanity.

Argument IV. “ God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son ; whom he hath appointed heir of all things, and by whom also he made the worlds ; who being the brightness of *the** glory, and the express

*The pronoun *his* is not in the original.

image of his person, and upholding all things, by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." (Heb. i: 1-3.)

1. In this passage Jesus Christ is spoken of only as the Son of God, and all the glory of both his nature and works is ascribed unto him as the Son.

2. He is the Son as to the divine nature—for as such he is in possession of the Godhead. As the Son, according to this text, he is "the brightness of the glory," the Essence of Deity; and, in respect to personality, "the express image of his *Father's* Person."

3. He is the Son as Creator and Upholder of all things; "by whom he also made the worlds;" "upholding all things by the word of his power." These glorious transactions are spoken of him only as he is the Son.

4. He is the Son as he is our Redeemer. "When he had by himself purged our sins." Here reference is had to his humanity, as being included in the act of making atonement for sin. But this reference is not to his humanity separately considered, but in union with his divinity—because in these united, he

effected the redemption of the world by purging away sin.

5. Now, as Christ is the Son as he is our Redeemer, our Upholder, and Creator—as he is the Son as the very God, possessed of “the brightness of the glory, and the express image of the *Father's* Person,” who will dare to say, that the term *Son* is not applied to his whole Person? and consequently, who will dare to say, that he is not the Eternal Son of God?

Believe me to remain, as ever,

Yours affectionately,

W———— B————.

LETTER XIII.

ST. LOUIS, June 8th, 1823.

MY DEAR S.....,

When our prepossessions in favour of any principle become strong by long continuance, it is difficult to remove them, even by the most conclusive evidence. For every argument loses a large proportion of its weight, because it is seen through the medium of prejudice. The mind, under such circumstances, pressed by the power of evidence, yet determined upon the defence of its previous opinions, looks around for some spurious sophism, as a refuge from the force of argument before which it is compelled to retreat. Hence it is natural to expect, that an attempt will be made to parry the foregoing arguments, by an objection conceived in language like the following.

“We must acknowledge, that in a few passages of the Scripture, the inspired writers seem to apply the term *Son* to the whole Person of Christ. But then we must understand them in such places as using the word rather loosely; and therefore we should refer it to the humanity of Christ alone, because otherwise the passages will prove that Christ is the Eternal Son of God. But this cannot be admitted on rational principles; for it is incomprehensible. The sacred writers call the Saviour the Son of God, because he was born, according to Luke i: 35, of the virgin Mary.”

In reply to this, I offer the following observations.

1. It is far from being true, that the inspired writers, in *only a few* places, apply the term to the whole Person of Christ. Such an application is made in a multitude of passages. The few, however, which I have selected from the many, are sufficient to establish the doctrine in question.

2. The objection before us presumes, that the sacred writers have used the “word *Son* rather loosely;” and indeed such a presumption is necessary to give any weight to the

objection. - For if they have not used this word, in reference to Christ, *very loosely indeed*, then our arguments, drawn from their application of it to the whole Person of the Saviour, must be absolutely conclusive in favour of his Eternal Sonship. I shall leave you, who consider reverence for the Word of God as a cardinal grace in the Christian, to determine what weight should be attached to an objection, which charges the inspired Apostles with writing *loosely* upon one of the most solemn and important doctrines of the Gospel. Nothing would induce me to represent them as loose writers; and had I inadvertently been led, in the heat of disputation, to offer so gross an insult to the Sacred Volume, with hearty repentance I would publicly retract it.

3. This objection insinuates, that the inspired writers, in *seeming only* to apply the term *Son* to the whole Person of Christ, have used language calculated to deceive. I must confess, indeed, that nothing appears to me better calculated to mislead than the language of the New Testament, if the writers of this divine book had no intention of communi-

cating an idea, that Christ is the Eternal Son of God. Inspiration apart, with the talents they possessed, and the language they used, something worse than *looseness* of writing should be attributed unto them, if they did not believe the doctrine for which I contend—for certainly they wrote as if they did believe it. Indeed, my dear friend, they did most assuredly *believe* it, and *teach* it.

4. But the secret comes out—The Eternal Sonship of Christ, at all events, must be denounced. And to effect this desirable object, everything opposing must be removed out of the way. The wayward reason of man must be erected into a supreme tribunal, before which prophets and apostles, and even Christ himself, must be arraigned. “Rational principles,” so called, rejecting everything “incomprehensible,” must constitute the rule of decision in this sovereign court. The inspired penmen must be represented as *writing loosely*, in order to afford an opportunity of giving any meaning, suitable to effect the object, to their language. But I protest against the decisions of this unlawful tribunal, and despise all its maledictions. I refer the trial of all

doctrines to the Word of God,—a tribunal from which there is no appeal. The character of the inspired writers shall not be aspersed with impunity; nor the credibility of the Scriptures exposed to ridicule, by these proud sons of a wayward reason.

5. When the sacred writers are represented as *writing loosely*—when nothing is to be considered “rational” which is “incomprehensible,” no great wonder need be excited by reference to Luke i: 35, as teaching that “the Saviour is called the Son of God, because he was born of the virgin Mary.” However, this passage teaches a very different doctrine. Its most obvious meaning is, that *that Holy Thing*, the humanity of Christ, which was born of Mary, is the Son of God, not because it was born of her, but because it was *conceived of the Holy Ghost*.

These remarks are sufficient to expose the fallacy of the objection before us; and therefore our arguments remain in full force.

If any suspicion should be excited, by the mere possibility that the term Son has been applied to the whole Person of Christ because he was born of a woman under the su-

pernatural influence of the Holy Ghost, the arguments which remain to be produced will place the doctrine in question on ground which cannot admit of such suspicion.

Believe me to be, as ever,

Your friend,

W——— B———.

LETTER XIV.

ST. LOUIS, June 10th, 1823.

MY DEAR S.....,

“The sacred writers have used the term Son, with its cognates, with a special reference to the divine nature of Christ.” This I purpose now to prove.

Argument V. “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that Holy thing

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which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God." (Luke i: 32-35.)

Although our opponents have endeavoured to maintain their cause by metaphysical reasonings, yet they appear at times disposed to call to their aid circumstantial evidence; and they seem to think that the text now before us is not unfavourable to their opinions of the Sonship of Christ. However, when this passage is duly considered, it will be found to raise an insuperable barrier in their way, and to afford an argument of an invincible nature, in favour of the doctrine I am maintaining in these letters.

1. The expression, "the Son of the Highest," must have a special reference to the divine nature of Christ. For it is manifest from the language of the angel, that Jesus Christ is the king of Israel, "who shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever," "and of whose kingdom there shall be no end," as he is "the Son of the Highest." Now the angel quotes these words from the ninth chapter of Isaiah, where this king of Israel is expressly called, "the mighty God, the Father of Eternity." Therefore, as Jesus Christ is the mighty God,

the Father of Eternity, as he is the Son of the Highest, he must be the Son of God as to his divine nature; and the expression, "the Son of the Highest," must have a special reference to his divinity.

2. But independent of this consideration, the language of the angel himself leads us directly to this point. "Therefore ALSO that Holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God." Now none will deny that "that Holy thing," which was born of Mary, is the humanity of Christ. But the angel says, that this "ALSO" shall be called the "Son of God," evidently referring to something else which is likewise the Son of God. If nothing besides "that Holy thing," the humanity of Christ, is the Son of God, why did the angel use the word ALSO? His language most forcibly leads us to look for something besides the humanity of Christ, as being the Son of God—and this can be nothing but his divine nature. It is therefore incontestably evident that the expression, "the Son of the Highest," has a special reference to the divinity of the Redeemer.

3. We would not be understood to mean,

that the expression, "the Son of the Highest," does not include the whole Person of the Saviour. We know it does. But while it includes his whole Person, it has a special reference to his divinity—because the angel afterwards speaks of his humanity, as being "ALSO the Son of God." The divine nature of Christ is the Son of God, in respect to that inconceivably glorious Relation which subsists between the Persons of the Trinity. The humanity of Christ is the Son of God, because it was conceived by the supernatural influence of the Holy Ghost—in consequence of which Jesus, in his human nature, "was holy, harmless, undefiled, SEPARATE from sinners."

It is very singular, that any man of critical sagacity should be led to conclude, that, because that holy thing which was born of Mary is called the Son of God, Christ is the Son of God in reference only to his human nature, when the language of the angel is calculated, in so strong a manner, to communicate an idea directly opposite. Is it the want of attention, or prepossession, that leads men into conduct so unworthy of their talents?

Argument VI. "Who is the image of the

invisible God, the First-born of every creature: For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." (Col. i: 15-17.)

1. In this passage the Apostle asserts the Godhead of Christ, under two glorious titles—"the **IMAGE** of the invisible God," and "the First-born of every creature." Both these titles relate to his divine nature—the first to what it is in itself, the second to what it is in relation to creatures. The last is the proof of the first.

2. Christ can be the First-born only in relation to his Sonship; for we can understand this term only in this sense. Besides, in the thirteenth verse, he is expressly called "his dear Son."

3. Christ cannot be the First-born of every creature, in relation to his humanity; for multitudes of men were born into the world *before* he was born of the virgin Mary.

4. No creature is called "the **IMAGE** of the

INVISIBLE God." But Jesus Christ, as the First-born of every creature, is this Image; the express likeness of the Person of the *invisible* incomprehensible Father. God is invisible, in certain respects, to every creature—because he is incomprehensible. Therefore the whole of this passage evidently relates to that divine nature of Christ, which constitutes his equality with the Father; and consequently he is the First-born as he is God.

5. This is abundantly manifest from the arguments of the Apostle. In proof of Christ being the First-born of every creature, he states a glorious fact; "all things were created by him and for him," and therefore he must be "before all things." The universe was made by him; and it was made for him, for his own glory, and the accomplishment of his own purposes.

6. It is therefore certain the term *First-born* is here applied to Christ, with a special reference to his divinity; and hence he is the Son of God as to his divine nature.

No one need ask, "How can Christ be the First-born of every creature?" For, as to the

mode of the divine existence, we know nothing.

Neither may any one suppose, that because he is the First-born of every creature, he must have begun to exist. For, to be born, is not to begin to exist. So far from it, that birth signifies a state of previous existence.

But it may be asked, "What idea is conveyed by the term First-born, in its application to Christ?" I reply, this term conveys the idea of Sonship; and this, perhaps, ought to satisfy us.*

*On this mysterious subject, suffer me to make a few remarks.

1. To be born, is to come forth, not into existence, but into an active state of existence.

2. Although God has existed from everlasting, yet we cannot say, that his *active* energy has always been in operation. He existed before all worlds; and therefore before he exerted his almighty power to produce those worlds. When he arose to create the worlds, then he *came forth*, and put the attribute of power into a state of *active* energy.

3. As the worlds were created by Christ, it may be said, that then, immediately in the act of creation, he was born as the Son of God, he came forth as the *active* Almighty Creator. In this sense, perhaps, he is the First-born of every creature. He,

Argument VII. "No man hath seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is

who existed from eternity, was necessarily *active* before the existence of every thing created. For his *active* energy gave all things being. "He is the Beginning," the First *active* principle, "of the creation of God." And in a similar sense, he may perhaps be said to be begotten from eternity; that is, to be brought forth as the *active* Agent, from that period in eternity past, when duration began to be measured by finite existence. In a like sense, it is also probable, that the language of the prophet respecting Christ, should be understood: "Whose goings forth have been from of old, from the days of eternity."

4. As to be born implies previous existence, "the First-born of every creature," should be understood to mean, that Christ existed before his goings forth from the days of eternity, when he put forth the omnipotence of his *active* energy to produce the worlds out of nothing. Indeed it should be understood to mean, that he, as the First active cause of all things, possesses as the Son of God independent existence, and consequently eternal Being.

The observations contained in this note, are offered on the ground only of probability. They are not intended, neither is it in their nature, to affect the *truth* of the doctrine discussed in these letters. Whether they are correct or not, is a question which has no direct bearing on this *truth*. For the reality

in the bosom of the Father, hath declared him." (John i: 18.)

1. These words afford an argument, which perfectly corroborates that which was last offered. They present the divine Being, as an *unseen*, incomprehensible object, "No man hath seen God at any time;" not that he has never partially manifested himself unto mortals; for he often appeared unto the Fathers. But he *has never been seen*, in the fulness of his essence, by any creature; for no created intelligence can so *see* him, as perfectly to comprehend him.

2. But "the only begotten Son," who is the image of the *invisible* God, perfectly comprehends what Deity is; for he "is in the *bosom* of the Father." And therefore, being possessed with the most perfect knowledge of what God is, "he hath declared him;" that is, he hath manifested God unto man, in such measure as agrees with the state of mortals, and the grasp of human comprehension.

of Christ's being the Son of God from eternity, is a matter of fact revealed in the gospel; but *how* he is so, is a question regarding the mode of his existence, which we never can fully comprehend.

3. Therefore the only begotten Son is God. If he were not God, he could not perfectly comprehend the Father, nor suitably declare him unto the world.

4. But if the only begotten Son is God, then the term *Son* is here used with a special reference to the divine nature of Christ; and therefore it is manifest that the Saviour is the Eternal Son of God. There is no way of avoiding this conclusion.

I am very affectionately,

W———— B————.

LETTER XV.

ST. LOUIS, June 16th, 1823.

MY DEAR S.....,

I have produced several arguments in proof that the sacred writers have used the term Son with special reference to the divine nature of Christ. In addition to these, let me offer a few more.

Argument VIII. "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.)

1. By the creation of "the world," God gave a direct manifestation of the infinity of his natural character and attributes, in particular of his wisdom and power. By the redemption of "the world," he gave a like manifestation of the infinite nature of his

moral character and attributes, in particular of his mercy and love. The proof of this infinity, in the first respect, is to be sought, not in the number, variety, and magnitude of created things, but in the *act* of creation itself. For this number, variety, and magnitude, however great, are, in their own nature, limited; and therefore cannot, it seems, afford direct proof of the infinite wisdom and omnipotent power of God. But the *act* that brought entity out of nonentity, uniting two extremes infinitely separated, can be the *act* of nothing less than Almighty power.

In like manner the *direct* proof that the benevolence of God is infinite, is to be sought, not in the happiness communicated, but in that *act* of the Father, by which he gave his Son for the redemption of the world. For the happiness communicated, however inconceivable, and whether flowing as a consequence of creation or redemption, being possessed by finite subjects, must be in its own nature limited; and therefore, it seems, it cannot afford a direct manifestation of the infinite nature of divine love. But the *act* of the Father, by which he gave his Son for the

redemption of the world, affords a direct proof of the infinitude of the love which is in God, if we admit that the Son is infinite; because nothing less than infinite love can bestow an infinite gift. If we deny that the Son is infinite, where shall we find any *direct* proof of the infinity of divine benevolence? I am apprehensive that then we shall look for it in vain.

2. The language in the text will appear, on the admission of the infinity of the Son, very appropriate and beautiful, and full of sublimity and energy. The love of God will then be seen clothed in majesty worthy of the great Jehovah. The representation of the love of God in this text, puts on the character of an indescribable and boundless nature—“God *so* loved the world.” No attempt of definition is made; the proof only is given—“He gave his only begotten Son”—his own proper eternal Son; and therefore he has given a direct manifestation, that he *so* loved the world as no created being can conceive—with a love infinite in its nature.

3. But if we force an unnatural construction upon the text, and make the expression,

“his only begotten Son,” mean, not the divine nature of Christ, but his humanity, we shall destroy the accuracy and beauty of the language of Jesus, and represent the love of God in a very contemptible light. *God so loved the world.* How? According to the supposed construction, he *so* loved the numerous millions of Adam’s race, as to give for them *one human being!* But where, on this ground, is the proportion between the ransom given and the world redeemed? Where is the accuracy of the language of Christ? and where shall we find the love of God? In what a mean and pitiable light does this construction place the compassion of Jehovah? Away with all such contemptible ideas! God forbid that we should be so ungrateful as to represent his compassion in such a light as this. God did, indeed, *so* love the world as to give his only begotten Son. He gave his infinite Eternal Son for the redemption of mankind—a ransom more than sufficient—a gift infinite in its nature, affording to the universe of worlds a direct proof of the infinity of the moral character of God.

4. That the term Son, in the passage be-

fore us, has a special reference to the divine nature of Christ, is evident from another consideration which the context affords. Under the title of "the Son of man," Christ claims ubiquity of presence. "No man hath ascended up into heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the *Son of man*, which is in heaven." Verse 13. In these words the Saviour of the world claims the glorious attribute of filling immensity with his presence.

He was in heaven while upon earth. And this divine attribute, which can belong to none but the infinite God, *the Son of man* possessed. It is therefore evident that the term Son, even in this verse, has reference to the divinity of Christ. Now, if the Redeemer claims ubiquity of presence, the attribute of Deity, under the humble title "the Son of man," who can believe that the august title "the only begotten Son of God," has not a special reference to his divine nature? The first of these titles, no doubt, has a special reference to Christ as God manifested in the flesh; and the second a like reference to his divine nature as a distinct Person, subsisting with the Father from eter-

nity. Therefore Christ must be the Eternal Son of God.

Argument IX. "But unto the Son, he saith, 'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever. A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. And thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thy hands.'" (Heb. i: 8, 9, 10.)

1. Nothing can be more evident than that the whole of this passage refers to Jesus Christ as the Son. For it is under this relation, the Apostle presents the Redeemer to view throughout this chapter; and the text before us is introduced thus: "But unto the Son he saith."

2. The Son, as the Prince Messiah, is the king of Zion (Psalm ii: 7, 8); and his inauguration as such took place when he was "anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows." The mediatorial kingdom, into the possession of which he was put by this anointing, he received from the Father (Matt.

iii: 16, 17), and holds as the reward of his righteousness in the character of mediator, as is evident from the following words: "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."

3. But the Apostle calls him Lord, and attributes unto him the government of the world on another principle; namely, on the ground of natural right, as Creator of all things. "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thy hands."

4. Therefore, we should understand his throne, in the first of this passage, as representing the empire of nature—for this "throne is for ever and ever." The empire of nature, which Jesus holds as God, is unalienable and eternal; but the mediatorial kingdom he is to deliver unto the Father, when the purposes for which it was instituted shall have been accomplished. (1 Cor. xv: 24, 25.)

5. Jesus Christ is the Son as he possesses the everlasting throne of nature. For "unto the Son he saith, 'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.'"

6. Now, if Jesus Christ is the Son as he is the king of nature, if his right to reign as the Son is predicated on his having laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens being the work of his hands, then most assuredly he must be the Eternal Son of God.

7. But if we understand the throne in the first of this passage, as being the throne of grace, and the sceptre of righteousness as being the sceptre of mercy—yet the conclusion will be the same. For the Son, as setting upon this throne, is God: “Unto the Son he saith, ‘Thy throne, O God.’” Therefore, whether we understand the throne in this text to represent the empire of nature, or the kingdom of grace, we are led by it to believe that Christ is the Eternal Son of God—because it represents him as being the Son as he is God.

I am yours affectionately,

W———— B————.

LETTER XVI.

ST. LOUIS, June 25th, 1823.

MY DEAR S.....,

We have seen, from a number of passages contained in the Holy Scripture, that the inspired writers have used the term Son with a special reference to the divine nature of Christ. Let me call your attention to a few more.

Argument X. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." (Gal. iv: 6.) In carefully considering this text, you will discover, that it sustains the doctrine advocated in these letters—because the term Son is here used with a special reference to the divine nature of Christ. Weigh the following remarks:

1. The spirit that cries Abba, Father; in the hearts of believers, is the Holy Ghost. To call this in question is to deny the witness of the Spirit—a doctrine expressly taught in the Word of God. (Rom. viii: 15, 16; and v: 5.)

2. The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of the Son—for “God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.”

3. The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of the Son in reference to the divine nature of Christ. None will be bold enough to deny this, in order to say, that the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of the humanity of Christ. For this places the Holy Spirit utterly below the dignity of his infinite nature, and the glory of the character which he sustains in the work of redemption.

4. Therefore Christ must be the Son of God as to his divine nature. For as the Holy Ghost, who is God, is the Spirit of the Son, he must be such as the Son is God. And if the Son is God, then he must be eternal—the Eternal Son of God.

5. Thence you will discover, that the passage before us has a forcible bearing on the doctrine under consideration; and this doc-

trine cannot be called in question without violating the plain meaning of this text. The language of the text is not capable of any construction, possessing the least shadow of plausibility, by which its evidence in favour of the Eternal Sonship of Christ, can, in any measure, be done away.

Argument XI. "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. (Matt. xxxiii: 19.)

Here let it be observed,

1. The first name under which the Divine Being has revealed himself to man, is אלהים—*God*. This word is in the plural form, and is so used to signify the plurality of Persons in the Godhead, as being under a certain relation to man. The relation which is signified by this divine title, is that which subsists between God and man, as being in covenant sanctioned by a conditional curse. This is the meaning of the original word.

2. The revelation of the plurality of the divine Persons, is followed immediately by the discovery of the unity of the divine Essence, under the name יהוה—*Jehovah*. Therefore

the full title of the Almighty is יהוה אלהים — *Jehovah God*.

3. In the New Testament, the Greek word *God*, in the singular form, is used in the place of אלהים. But then the persons of the Godhead are expressly revealed to us, under the distinctions of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and to each of them the term *Jehovah Lord*, is equally applied.

4. Therefore the name in which we are baptized is יהוה — *Jehovah*, in its application to all the divine Persons in the glorious Trinity—that is, in the name *Jehovah*, the *Father*, the *Son*, and the Holy Ghost—*Jehovah God*.

5. Yet we are to remember that there can be no distinctions in the Persons of the Godhead, implying essential inferiority or subordination. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are equal in nature and attributes—in essence, ONE undivided *Jehovah*. But it pleased the Son and the Holy Ghost to *assume* the *character* of subordination, in order to effect the redemption of the world. For although God, in his great love for man, purposed the redemption of the world, this purpose secured the honours of his throne and the rights of

Justice. It could not be otherwise ; and hence the necessity of satisfaction in the plan of redemption, and of the *assumed character* of subordination in the Son and the Holy Ghost. And therefore it is said in the Holy Bible, that the Son is *sent* by the Father, and the Holy Ghost is *sent* by both the Father and the Son. In the plan of redemption, the Father *sustains* the *character* of the sovereignty of the Godhead, requiring satisfaction for the sins of the world ; the Son *sustains* the *assumed character* of Mediator, offering the satisfaction required ; and the Holy Ghost *sustains* the *assumed character* of Sanctifier, applying the benefits accruing from the satisfaction offered by the Son. And hence the propriety of our being baptized in the *name* of these divine Persons, in the order in which they stand in the text—because according to this order, we are again received into covenant and *union* with the divine Being.

6. Now, if this view is correct, then nothing can be more evident than that Christ is the Son of God as to his divine nature. For we are baptized in that name which is applicable to the Son, in the same sense in which it is applicable to the Father and the Holy Ghost ;

and therefore this name must refer to the divine nature of Christ. The consequence is inevitable, that the term Son in the passage before us has a special reference to the divinity of the Redeemer. No sophistry can avoid the force of this conclusion. For we must deny that the Son is the second Person in the Trinity, or admit that He is the Eternal Son of God.

7. Were we to suppose that the term Son, in this text, applies to the humanity of Christ only, into what absurdity should we be led? According to this supposition, we should be baptized in the name of the Father, of the humanity of Christ, and of the Holy Ghost. Thus the second Person in the Trinity would be left out of the solemn act of our consecration to God in baptism. Away with this idea, which is far worse than absurdity! To mention it is sufficient to expose it to the rejection of every reasonable man.

8. We are most assuredly baptized in the name of *Jehovah*, the *Father*, the *Son*, and the *Holy Ghost*—that is, *Jehovah God*. Therefore the Son is *Jehovah*; and as such he is everlasting, the Eternal Son. Were there no other

proof, than that which this text affords, of the Eternal Sonship of Christ, we should be obligated, as reasonable men, to receive the doctrine as a truth of revealed religion.

I am, very affectionately,
Yours, in Christ,
W———— B————.

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LETTER XVII.

ST. LOUIS, July 1st, 1823.

MY DEAR S.....,

I proceed now to prove, that the “inspired writers employed the term *Son* to distinguish the divine nature of Christ from his humanity.”

Argument XII. “For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the Father of eternity,* the Prince of peace.” (Isa. ix: 6.)

* אבי ער, literally, *The Father of Eternity*. To call Christ “the everlasting Father,” appears to be calculated to mislead us—to induce us to confound the Person of the Father with that of the Son, and to suppose that both these divine Persons exist in the

1. It is very obvious, that one of the most striking traits in this text, is the distinction which it makes between the divinity of the Messiah and his humanity. The "child born," and the "Son given," strongly mark this distinction. The humanity of Christ was "born" of a woman—but his divine nature was *given* by the Father for the redemption of the world. The gift of the Father was *unspeakable* (2 Cor. ix: 15.); and therefore this gift was not the humanity, but the divinity of the Saviour, the second Person in the Trinity. Now, according to this text, "the Son is given

Prince of peace. Although the Father and the Son are in Essence eternally the **SAME**, indivisibly **ONE**; yet in Person they are distinct. For Jesus Christ, in the defence of his own divinity, his Equality, and Unity with the Father, particularly distinguishes his own Person from that of his Father. (John v: 17-47; viii: 12-30.)

The Hebrew text, which is literally, "the Father of Eternity," is accurately just, and conveys the most sublime idea of the Eternity of the Son. Eternity—that permanency of duration, which is without beginning, without end, without succession of periods in relation to Deity, emanates alone from the Infinite Being. It can only exist in God.

unto us ;” and hence the term *Son* must be employed here to distinguish the divine nature of Christ from his humanity. There is indeed no other light in which we can place this text, without departing from consistency.

2. It is necessary to consider the “child born,” and the “Son given,” as distinguishing the two natures in Christ, in order to give consistency to the subsequent part of the passage. Because these two natures, united in the Person of Messiah, constituted his capacity for becoming “the Prince of peace.” Their union rendered him “the Wonderful ;” qualified him to be our “Counsellor,” and to sustain, as Mediator, “the government upon his shoulder.” Therefore, nothing could be more proper, in a prediction relating to the nature of the Messiah, than to distinguish these two natures as existing in him ; and nothing can be more reasonable in us, than to understand the phrases, *the child born*, and *the Son given*, as being employed by the prophet to effect his object in making this distinction.

3. That the term *Son* is here employed to distinguish the divinity of Christ, we may also learn from the appellations, which, in this

passage, are given to the Redeemer of the world. The prophet calls him, "the mighty God, the Father of eternity." Now it is very obvious, that Jesus Christ, in reference to his humanity, "the child born," is not "the mighty God, the Father of eternity." Therefore he must be "the mighty God, the Father of eternity," as he is "the Son given." And hence the term *Son* must be employed here to distinguish the divine nature of Christ; and consequently the Redeemer must be the Eternal Son of God.

Argument XIII. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, even for a sin-offering, condemned sin in the flesh." (Rom. viii: 3.)

1. In this passage, in which the object of the divine mission, and the extraordinary nature of the Person charged with its execution, are exhibited to view, we have another instance, in which the term *Son* is employed to distinguish the divinity of Christ. "The likeness of sinful flesh," is evidently an expression intended to designate the humanity of the Saviour. For it was alone by the sufferings

of his human nature, that he became "a sin-offering." "Sin was condemned in his flesh," by the perfect atonement which he made through his passion and death.

2. "God's own Son," and "the likeness of sinful flesh," in which he was sent, can never mean the same thing. The latter is evidently the veil of humanity, with which the Second Person in the Trinity was clothed when he sojourned among men; and therefore the former, "the Son" who came in this likeness, must be that divine Person himself. And hence we see, that the term *Son* is here employed by the Apostle, to distinguish the divinity of Christ; and consequently the Redeemer must be the Son of God as to his divine nature.

Argument XIV. "Concerning his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." (Rom. i: 3, 4.)

1. The antithesis in this text, by which the Apostle beautifully contrasts the two natures of Christ, affords a strong argument in favour

of the doctrine for which I contend. "The seed of David according to the flesh," and "the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness," are expressions evidently antithetical; the former relating to the humanity of Christ, and the latter, to his divinity. To deny this, is to destroy the energy and beauty of the passage. It is very natural, in a description of the Author of the Gospel, to represent him according to the ancient prophecies; to place him before us as being, in his humanity, "of the seed of David," and, in his divine nature, "the Son of God with power;" and such a representation is no less required by propriety and truth.

2. The expression, *according to the Spirit of holiness*, standing antithetically with the phrase, *according to the flesh*, must mean something distinct from the humanity of Christ; and from the very relation which these two expressions bear to each other, the former must be referred to the Godhead—because the latter undeniably relates to the human nature of the Messiah. "The Spirit of holiness" is, therefore, that awfully glorious and self-

existent Spirit, whose Essence is uncreated holiness.

3. It will not be denied by any, that the Apostle here attempts to describe Jesus Christ; and that by "the seed of David" he means the human nature of the Messiah. Then we must believe that by "the Son of God with power," he means the divinity of the Saviour—or else admit the Apostle's description to be very defective and incorrect. The supposition that the words, *the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness*, are to be understood as conveying ideas of the *mode* of the incarnation, and the *sanctity* of the life of Jesus, charges upon this descriptive passage so much imperfection and inaccuracy as to render it abhorrent to every sensible man, who has not given himself up to the uncontrolled influence of some preconceived and favourite opinion.

4. The very terms in the text are calculated to lead us to believe, that the appellation, "the Son of God with power," is employed to distinguish the divinity of Christ. The adjunct "power," attached to this divine title, carries with it the same force as the word

mighty, when joined to that of *God*. *The mighty God*, and *the Son of God with power*, can apply only unto him, in whom exists independent and vital energy.

5. By the resurrection of Christ, we are led to the same conclusion; namely, that the term *Son* is here employed to distinguish the divinity of the Messiah. It is an indisputable fact that Christ was raised from the dead by his own inherent power (John x: 17, 18); and this very thing constituted the point of proof, that he was "the Son of God with power." But to be raised by his own energy, is to be possessed of the nature of God; and therefore to be "declared," "by the resurrection from the dead," "the Son of God with power," is the same as being declared possessed of the divine nature.

Thus, under whatever aspect we consider this passage, it leads us to conclude, that the Apostle has here employed the term *Son* to distinguish the divinity of the Messiah.

When candidly weighing the evidence contained in this text, in favour of the doctrine under consideration, I must confess, that I have been much astonished, that any rea-

sonable man should call this doctrine in question. So strong and full is this evidence, that it affords sufficient ground, independent of every other passage, to produce faith in the Eternal Sonship of Christ.

I am yours affectionately,

W——— B———.

LETTER XVIII.

ST. LOUIS, July. 7th, 1823.

MY DEAR S.....,

“The inspired writers have used such language, as conveys, in a plain and forcible manner, the doctrine of the Eternal Sonship of Christ.” This is the fourth proposition I promised to establish.

Argument XV. “And we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.” (John v: 20.)

1. The Apostle, speaking here of Jesus Christ as the Son, asserts that he is “eternal life”—uncreated infinite vitality—existence independent, and happiness underived—the source of life to all living creatures, especially to man.

2. As eternal life, he must be God; and hence the Apostle declares of the Son, “this

is the true God." No being, except God, can possess eternal infinite vitality.

3. And therefore the passage before us is directly in point. Jesus is the Son as he "is the true God;" he is the Son of God as to his divine nature—the Eternal Son of the Everlasting Father. The language of this text plainly asserts this doctrine.

Argument XVI. "For this Melchisedech, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; to whom also Abraham gave a tenth of all: first, being, by interpretation, king of righteousness, and after that, also king of Salem, which is, king of peace; without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually." (Heb. vii: 1, 2, 3.)

1. It is difficult to conceive how, by any language, the Eternal Sonship of Christ could be more strongly asserted, in a plain, though incidental manner, than it is by that composing the above passage. The Apostle's principal object is, indeed, the establishing of

the superiority of the Redeemer's priesthood over that of Aaron, the Sonship of Christ being brought in collaterally. But this circumstance does not weaken the argument, but rather increases its strength. For if the Apostle exhibits the doctrine in so strong a point of light when speaking of it incidentally, how would he have spoken of it, had it been the principal object of his discourse?

2. Melchisedech is here presented to view as the type of Christ, in being "the priest of the most high God;" "*made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.*" (V. 16.)

3. This Melchisedech, "having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually."

4. Therefore the Son of God, the antitype, must be eternal. For if the type was *without beginning of days and end of life*, in order to make him *like unto the Son of God*—then the antitype, the Son, must himself be eternal—the everlasting Son of the eternal Father. It is impossible to avoid this conclusion.

5. It will be useless to object: "Melchise-

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deh was not really without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but is only represented as such by the sacred historian, who makes no record of his parentage, birth, or death, nor of any succession in his priesthood, in order to make him a more perfect type of Christ." For this objection would increase the strength of the argument. Because, if Melchisedech was really a man, and it was necessary to represent him as having neither beginning of days nor end of life, in order to make him like unto the Son of God, to make him a perfect type of Christ—then nothing can be more evident, than that the Son of God is really himself without beginning of days and end of life. And therefore he must be the Eternal Son of God.

Argument XVII. "Father, the hour is come ; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee—And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." (John xvii : 1-5.)

1. If we listen, with the candour which Christians ought to possess, and corresponding confidence in the decision of Eternal Truth,

himself, to this language of Christ, not a shadow of doubt respecting his Eternal Sonship will remain, whatever may have been the previous state of our minds.

2. Jesus Christ here claims the title of the Son of God, and addresses his Father under this character. He speaks of himself under no other character, than that of the Son.

3. He speaks of "the glory which he had with the Father before the world was." Now this glory was the glory of the Father; for he says, "Glorify thou me with *thine own self*, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

4. Therefore it is manifest, that the glory of the Son is the glory of the Father. Therefore Jesus Christ, being as the Son possessed of the glory of the Father, must be the Son of God as to his divine nature.

5. Jesus Christ here directly asserts, under the character of the Son, that he had glory with the Father "before the world was." Therefore he was the Son before the world was; that, is from all eternity.

I remain, as ever, yours affectionately,

W———— B————.

LETTER XIX.

St. Louis, July 17th, 1823.

MY DEAR S.....,

I am persuaded that the doctrine we have been considering, supported by so many scriptural arguments, will be regarded by you as sustaining the character of truth, and occupying an important place among the principles of Christian theology. For divine inspiration has clothed it with the fairest and strongest credibility, such as can be resisted only by prepossession or obstinacy. So many passages, dictated by the Holy Spirit, and having the most favourable bearing on the truth of the Eternal Sonship of Christ, must produce conviction in every considerate and candid mind.

What adds weight to this last remark, is,

that the list of scriptural arguments which I have produced, might be greatly augmented. By a multitude of other passages contained in the Holy Bible, teaching directly or indirectly that Jesus Christ is the Eternal Son of God, in connexion with various considerations arising from the principal doctrines of Christianity, an opportunity is offered for a vast accumulation of evidence in favour of the doctrine before us.

But it will be admitted by you, that this is unnecessary. For if the arguments already offered do not produce conviction, the reasonable presumption is, that conviction is not to be expected from any imaginable accumulation of evidence.

In the preceding discussion, we have seen that the Eternal Sonship of Christ is a doctrine founded in truth—that the metaphysical objections urged against this doctrine are fallacious—that other objections, arising from mistaken views of the Holy Scriptures, are no less without foundation—and that the Holy Ghost, in many parts of the sacred volume, has set upon this doctrine the stamp of eternal truth. While, therefore, unshaken faith in

the Eternal Sonship of Christ, as a revealed truth, is obligatory upon us, it becomes us, as the ministers of the Gospel, to engage in its defence. And to do so, we are particularly encouraged by the consideration, that the arms with which we are supplied in the Book of God, are abundantly sufficient to enable us to effect our purpose.

Admitting, as no doubt you will, that I have proved—that the sacred writers have applied the term *Son* to the whole person of Jesus Christ, to his divinity as well as his humanity—that they have used this term with special reference to his divine nature—that they have employed it to distinguish his divinity from his humanity—and that they have used such language as conveys, in a plain and forcible manner, the doctrine of the Eternal Sonship of Christ, you will perceive that in defending this doctrine, we occupy a strong position. We stand on firm ground, the ground of truth, where the fullest confidence is inspired, and certain success insured.

Frequently gratified with repeated reviews of this subject, in each of which an accession has been made to the strength of my faith, I

cannot forego the pleasure of noticing some of the inferences naturally arising from the preceding discussion. But I must defer this until my next communication to you.

I am yours affectionately,

W———— B————.

LETTER XX.

ST. LOUIS, July 21st, 1823.

MY DEAR S.....,

In this letter, which will close my communications to you on the present subject, I shall notice a few particulars naturally arising from the preceding discussion.

1. It is very dangerous to deny, that Jesus Christ is the Eternal Son of God. This position, evidently inferable from the result of our present inquiry, might be supported on the ground of a general principle—to deny revealed truth is always dangerous.

That the doctrine of the Eternal Sonship of Christ is revealed from heaven, is sufficiently evident from the preceding arguments. But it is not my design to press this consideration. I wish to urge the inference in a particular

view as it has its bearing on the divinity of Christ. To deny that the Messiah is the Eternal Son of God, is virtually to call in question his Godhead, in doing which we plunge ourselves into danger of the most alarming nature. For the Arians can prove, and no man need deny it, that Jesus Christ existed as the Son of God before the world was (John xvii : 1-5). Now, if he existed before the world was, and is not the Eternal Son of God, then he must be a created Son, who was brought into being prior to the world, and by whom, as an instrumental cause, God created the universe. From this conclusion, which is downright Arianism, it will be impossible to extricate ourselves, if we deny the Eternal Sonship of Christ.

We may, therefore, see how dangerous it is to call in question this sacred doctrine ; and we may discover, how greatly men mistake, when they assume the denial of the Eternal Sonship, as the best ground on which to meet the Arian heresy. To deny that Jesus is the Eternal Son of God, is to take a long stride toward Unitarianism.

2. From the foregoing discussion we may

discover, in a strong light, and with no small degree of pleasure, the perfect accordance subsisting between the articles of our faith and the Holy Scriptures, in regard to the subject which has been under consideration. The first and second of these articles were evidently framed with a special reference to the Eternal Sonship of Christ; and whoever calls this doctrine in question, denies these articles.

The first article in which our church professes her faith runs thus:—"There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body or parts, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the Maker and Preserver of all things, visible and invisible.—And in the Unity of this Godhead, there are three Persons of one substance, power, and eternity;—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."

Our Church, you will here observe, in making this confession of her faith, expressly declares, that the Person of the Son is "of one substance, power, and *eternity*" with the Person of the Father, and the Person of the Holy Ghost. She asserts that the Son is of *one eternity* with the Father: and in doing this,

she professes her faith in the Eternity of the Sonship.

You will further remark, in order to see the beauty, strength, and precision of this article in regard to its bearing on the Eternal Sonship of Christ, that it presents to our view the infinite God, as a spiritual subsistence *only*, without having the least reference to the incarnation : for it expressly declares, that he is “without body or parts.” And yet it no less expressly asserts, that one of the divine Persons “in the Unity of this Godhead,” this spiritual subsistence, is “the Son.” Therefore the term *Son* is here applied, by our Church, to the divine nature *alone* of Christ; because, in this article, he is presented to our view in his spiritual subsistence *only*, as being “without body or parts.” And consequently, according to this article of our faith, Jesus Christ is the Eternal Son of God.

The faith of our Church, in her second article, is thus expressed :—“The Son, who is the Word of the Father, the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, took man’s nature in the womb of the Blessed Virgin,” &c.

It will not escape your notice, that our Church here chooses to use the term *Son* in preference to that of *Word*, as expressing the Agent of the action, by which God was manifested in the flesh; hereby intending to preclude the supposition, that Christ is the Son of God in reference *only* to his humanity. The divine nature of Christ, that assumed the humanity for the redemption of the world, is, in the language of this article, called "the Son." "The Son took man's nature in the womb of the Blessed Virgin." We must, therefore, acknowledge, unless we deny this part of our faith, that the Son existed before the incarnation, and without any reference to it. For the Son could not have taken the nature of man upon him, if he had not existed as the Son before this transaction. We must also believe that by "the Son" our Church means the divinity of Christ; for it was this divinity that took the nature of man in the womb of the Blessed Virgin.

You will likewise remark, that it is positively declared, that "the Son is the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father." And hence, according to this confession of

our faith, he must be the Eternal Son—because he is the Eternal God, and of one substance with his everlasting Father.

Thus we may see, that these articles of our faith perfectly accord with the Word of God, in relation to the doctrine we have been considering; and that to deny this doctrine is to call in question these articles, and, what is still worse, to reject the authority of Heaven.

And here let me observe, I must consider such denial an indirect attack made upon the articles of our faith; and in defence of this faith I wish you to consider these letters as being offered.

3. If we admit that the doctrine which we have had under consideration is true, as we must from the abundance of evidence produced in the preceding discussion, then, most obviously, it must be our duty to defend this doctrine, with prudence, firmness, and zeal. To the discharge of this duty we are forcibly urged, by various considerations. The intimate connexion between this doctrine and that of the divinity of Christ—the danger of denying it in the fearful consequences resulting—the high responsibility under which we

placed ourselves in receiving the ministerial office—the sacred obligations which arise from our having subscribed the articles of our faith, and promised, in our ordination, “to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines” from the Church of God—all combine to press us to the same point—to the performance of the duty before us.

With this reflection I leave you; praying that you and I may receive grace from God to perform all our duties, that we may come at last to his Eternal Kingdom, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

I am yours affectionately,

W——— B———.

THE END.

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