

The Person of the Father & the Son

by James Arminius

The sermon explores the Person of the Father and the Son, emphasizing their eternal relationship, divine nature, and the attributes of the Father and the Son.

Scripture: John 1:1, John 5:26, John 10:30, Romans 8:9, Philippians 2:6

Topics: "Trinity Doctrine", "Christology"

Description

James Arminius delves into the deep theological discussion on the Person of the Father and the Son, emphasizing the eternal relationship between them and the divine nature they both possess. He explains that the Father is the First Person in the Holy Trinity, who eternally begat the Son by communicating His own Divinity to Him. Arminius highlights the Son as the Word of the Father, begotten from Him from all eternity, and proceeding from Him by sharing the same Deity. He establishes the Son's divinity through the names, attributes, works, and Old Testament passages attributed to Him, affirming His equality with the Father in essence but distinction in mode of existence.

Transcript

DISPUTATION 5

ON THE PERSON OF THE FATHER AND THE SON

RESPONDENT: PETER DE LA FITE

I. WE do not here receive the name of "Father," as it is sometimes taken in the Scriptures in regard to the adoption, according to which God hath adopted believers to himself as sons: (Gal. iv, 6) Nor with respect to the creation of things, according to which even the Gentiles themselves knew God the Father, and gave Him that appellation: (Acts xvii, 28.) But by this name we signify God according to the relation which He has to his only-begotten and proper Son, who is our Lord Jesus Christ: (Ephes. i, 3) And we thus describe Him: "He is the First Person in the Sacred Trinity, who from all eternity of himself begat his Word, which is his Son, by communicating to Him his own Divinity."

II. We call Him "a Person," not in reference to the use of that word in personating, [appearing in a mask,] which denotes the representation of another; but in reference to its being defined an undivided and communicable subsistence, of a nature that is living, intelligent, willing, powerful, and active. Each of these properties is attributed, in the Holy Scriptures, to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Substistence: "Him

which is, and which was, and which is to come." (Rev. i, 4) Life: "As the living Father hath sent me," &c. (John vi, 53, 57.) Intelligence: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God (Rom. xi, 33.) Will: "And this is the Father's will," &c. (John vi, 39.) Power: "Thine, O Father, is the Power." (Matt. vi, 13.) Action: "My Father worketh hitherto." (John v, 17.) We do not contend about words. Under the term "Person," we comprehend such things as we have now described; and since they agree with the Father, the title of "Person" cannot be justly denied to him.

III. We call Him "a Person in the Holy Trinity," that is, a Divine Person, which with us possesses just as much force as if we were to call Him God. For though the Deity of the Father has been acknowledged by most of those persons who have called in question that of the Son; yet it is denied by those who have declared, that the God of the Old Testament is different from that of the New, and who have affirmed that the Father of Jesus Christ is a different Being from the Creator of heaven and earth. To the former class we oppose the word of Christ: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth," &c. (Matt. xi, 25.) To the latter we oppose another saying of the same Christ: "It is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that He is your God." (John viii, 54.) To both of these classes together we oppose that joint declaration of the whole church at Jerusalem: "Thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said," &c. And in a subsequent verse, "For of a truth against thy holy Son Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, etc, were gathered together." (Acts iv, 24- 27.)

IV. We place Him "first" in the Holy Trinity: for so hath Christ taught us, by commanding us to "baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." (Matt. xxviii, 19.) "The First" not in relation of time but of order; which order has its foundation in this: The Father is the fountain and origin of the whole Divinity, and the principle and the cause of the Son himself, which the word "the" implies. (John v, 26, 27.) Pious Antiquity attempted to illustrate this [mystery] by the similitude of a fountain and its stream, of the sun and its beam, of the mind and its reason, of a root and its stalk, and by similar comparisons. On this account the Father is called "unbegotten" and the Christian Fathers ascribe to Him supreme and pre-eminent authority. It is on this account also that the name of God is often attributed in the Scriptures peculiarly and by way of eminence to the Father.

V. We attribute to Him "active generation," which likewise comprised under the word "Father;" but of its mode and ratio, we willingly confess ourselves to be ignorant. But yet, since all generation, properly so called, is made by the communication of the same nature which He possesses who begets, we say with correctness that "the Father of himself begat the Son," by communicating to him his Deity, which is his own nature. The principle, therefore, which begets, is the Father; but the principle by which generation is effected is his nature. Whence the Person is said to beget and to be begotten. But the nature is said neither to beget nor to be begotten, but to be communicated. This communication, when rightly understood, renders vain the objection of the Anti-Trinitarians, who accuse the members of the church universal of holding a quaternity (of Divine Persons in the Godhead.)

VI. We say "that from all eternity He begat," because neither was he the God of Jesus Christ, before he was his father, nor was he simply God before he was his Father. For as we cannot imagine a mind that is devoid of reason, so we say that it is impious to form a conception in our minds of a God who is without his word. (John i, 1, 2.) Besides, according to the sentiments of sacred antiquity, and of the church universal, since this generation is an internal operation and it is likewise from all eternity. For all such operations are eternal, unless we wish to maintain that God is liable to change.

VII. We have hitherto treated of the Father. The Son is the second person in the Holy Trinity, the Word of the Father, begotten of the Father from all eternity, and proceeding from Him by the communication of the same Deity which the Father possesses without origination. (Matt. xxviii, 19; John i, 1; Micah v, 2.) We say, "that he is not the Son by creation." For what things soever they were that have been created, they were all created by him. (John i, 3.) And "that he was not made the Son by adoption:" for we are all adopted in him. (John i, 12; Ephes. i, 5, 6.) But "that he proceeded from the Father by generation." He is the Son, not by creation out of nonentities, or from uncreated elements -- not by adoption, as though he had previously been some other thing than the Son; for this is his primitive name, and significant of his inmost nature; but He is by generation, and, as the Son, he is by nature a partaker of the whole divinity of his Father.

VIII. We call the Son "a person," with the same meaning attached to the word as that by which we have already (§ 2) predicated the Father. For he is an undivided and incommunicable subsistence. John says, (i, 1,) "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God." Of a living nature: "As I live by the Father." (John vi, 57.) Intelligent: "The Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, has declared him." (John i, 18.) Willing: "To whomsoever the Son will reveal him." (Matt. xi, 27.) "Even so the Son quickeneth whom he will." (John v, 21.) Powerful: "According to the efficacy whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto him." (Phil. iii, 21.) Active: "And I work." (John v, 17.)

IX. We call the Son "a person in the Sacred Trinity," that is, a Divine person and God. And, with orthodox antiquity, we prove our affirmation by four distinct classes or arguments. (1.) From the names by which he is called in the Scriptures. (2.) From the divine attributes which the Scriptures ascribe to him. (3.) From the works which the Scriptures relate to have been produced by him. (4.) From a collation of those passages of Scripture, which, having been uttered in the Old Testament concerning the Father, are in the New appropriated to the Son.

X. The divinity of the person of the Son is evident, from the names which are attributed to him in the scriptures. (1.) Because he is called God, and this not only attributively, as "the Word was God," (John i, 1.) "Who is over all, God blessed forever;" (Rom. ix, 5;) but likewise subjectively: "God manifested in the flesh." (1 Tim. iii, 16.) "O God, thy God hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness." (Heb. i, 9.) Nay, he is likewise called "the great God." (Tit. ii, 13.) (2.) The word "Son" stands in proof of the same truth, especially so far as this name belongs to him properly and solely, according to which he is called "God's own Son," (Rom. viii, 32,) and "his only begotten Son," (John i, 18,) which expressions, we affirm, are tantamount to his being called by nature, the Son of God. (3.) Because he is called "King of kings and Lord of lords;" (Rev. xvii, 14; xix, 16;) and "the Lord of glory." (1 Cor. ii, 8.) These appellations prove much more strongly what we wish to establish, if they be compared with the scriptures of the Old Testament, in which the same names are ascribed to him who is called Jehovah. (Psalm xcv, 3; xxiv, 8-10.) (4.) Pious antiquity established the same truth from the name, of Logov, "the Word;" which cannot signify the outward word that is devoid of a proper subsistence, on account of those things which are attributed to it in the Scriptures. For it is said to have been "in the beginning, to have been with God, and to be God," and to have "created all things," &c.

XI. The essential attributes of the Deity which are in the Scriptures ascribed to the Son of God, likewise declare this in the plainest manner. (1.) Immensity: "My Father and I will come unto him, and make our abode with him." (John xiv, 23.) "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." (Ephes. iii, 17.) "I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." (Matt. xxviii, 20.) (2.) Eternity: "In the beginning was the Word." (John i, 1.) "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." (Rev. i, 11; ii, 8.) (3.) Immutability: "But

thou, O Lord, remainest; thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail." (Heb. i, 11, 12.) (4.) Omniscience is also attributed to him: For he searches the reins and hearts;" (Rev. ii, 93.) He "knows all things." (John xxi, 17.) And he perceived the thoughts of the Pharisees. (Matt. xii, 25.) (5.) Omnipotence: "According to the efficacy whereby the Lord Jesus Christ is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Phil. iii, 21.) But the Divine nature cannot, without a contradiction, be taken away from him to whom the proper essentials of God are ascribed. (6.) Lastly. Majesty and glory belong to Him equally with the Father: "That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." (John v, 23.) "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, forever and ever." (Rev. v, 13.)

XII. The divine works which are attributed to Him, establish the same truth. (1.) The creation of all things: "A2 things were made by Him." (John i, 3.) "By whom also, he made the worlds," or the ages. (Heb. i, 2.) "One Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things." (1 Cor. viii, 6.) But what are these "all things?" Exactly the same as those which are said, in the same verse, to be "of the Father." (2.) The preservation of all things: all things by the word of his power." (Heb. i, 3.) "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." (John v, 17.) (3.) The performing of miracles: "Which He works by the Holy Spirit, who is said to "have received of the things of Christ, by which he will glorify Christ." (John xvi, 14.) "By which, also, he went and preached unto the spirits in prison." (1 Pet. iii, 19.) This Spirit is so peculiar to Christ, that the Apostles are said to perform miracles in the name and power of Christ. (4.) To these let the works which relate to the salvation of the church be added; which cannot be performed by one who is a mere man.

XIII. A comparison of those passages which in the Old Testament, are ascribed to God, who claims for himself the appellation of Jehovah, with the same passages which in the New, are attributed to the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ -- supplies to us the fourth class of arguments. But because the number of them is immense, we will refrain from a prolix recital of the whole, and produce only a few out of the many. In Numbers, xxi, 5-7, it is said, "The people spoke against God, and the Lord sent fiery serpents among them, and they bit the people," many of whom "died." In 1 Corinthians x, 9, the apostle says, "Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents." The passage in the 68th Psalm, (18,) which describes God as "ascending on high and leading captivity captive," is interpreted by the apostle, (Ephes. iv, 8,) and applied to Christ. What is spoken in Psalm cii, 25, 26, about the true God, ["Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth," &c.] is, in Heb. i, 10-12, expressly applied to Christ. St. John, in his gospel, (xii, 40, 41,) interprets the vision described by Isaiah, (vi, 9, 10,) and declares that "Esaias said these things when he saw the glory of Christ." In Isai. viii, 14, Jehovah, it is said, "shall be a rock of offense, and a snare to the houses of Israel," &c. Yet Simeon, (in Luke ii, 34,) St. Paul, (in Romans ix, 33,) and St. Peter, (1 Epis. ii, 8,) severally declare that Christ was "set for the rising and falling of many," for "a stumbling block, and rock of offense" to unbelievers, and to "the disobedient."

XIV. We call Christ "the second person," according to the order which has been pointed out to us by Himself in Matt. xxviii, 19. For the Son is of the Father, as from one from whom he is said to have come forth. The Son lives by the Father, (John vi, 57,) and the Father hath given to the Son to have life in himself." (v, 26.) The Son understands by the Father, because "the Father sheweth the Son all things that himself doeth," (v, 20,) and what things the Son saw while "He was in the bosom of the Father, he testifies and declares to us." (i, 18; iii, 32.) The son works from the Father, because "the Son can do nothing of himself: But what he seeth the Father do." (v, 19.) Thus "the Son does not speak of himself, but the Father, that dwelleth in him, doeth the works." (xiv, 10.) This is the reason why the Son, by a just right, refers all things to the Father, as to Him from whom he received all that he had. (xix, 11; xvii, 7.) "When he was in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation,

and took upon him the form of a servant, &c. and became obedient" to the Father, "even unto the death of the cross." (Phil. ii, 6-8.)

XV. We say "that the Son was begotten of the Father from all eternity." (1.) Because "his goings-forth have been from of old, from everlasting," and "these goings-forth" are from the Father. (Micah v, 2, 3.) If any one be desirous to give them any other interpretation than "the goings-forth" of generation, he must make them subsequent to the "goings- forth" of generation; and thus likewise he establishes the eternity of generation. (2.) Because, since the Son is eternal, as we have previously shewn, [§ 7,] and since he had no existence at all before he existed as the Son, (but it is proper to a son to be begotten,) we correctly assert on these grounds, that "he was eternally begotten." (3.) Since Logos, "the Word," was "in the beginning with the Father," (John i, 1, 9,) he must of necessity have been in the beginning from the Father; (unless we wish to maintain that the Word is collateral with the Father;) in truth, according to the order of nature he must have been from the Father, before he was with the Father. But he is not from the Father, except according to the mode of generation; for if it be otherwise, "the Word" will be from the Father in one mode, and "the Son" in another, which contradicts the eternity of the Son that we have already established. Therefore, "the Word" is eternally begotten.

XVI. From these positions we perceive, that an agreement and a distinction subsists between the Father and the Son. (I.) An Agreement in reference to One and the same nature and essence, according to which the Son is said to be "in the form of God," and "equal with the Father;" (Phil. ii, 6,) and according to the decree of the Nicene Council to be *omoousiov* ["of the same substance,"] "consubstantial with the Father," not *omoiousiov* "of like substance;" because the comparison of things in essence must be referred not to similitude or dissimilitude, but to Equality or Inequality, according to the very nature of things and to truth itself: (2.) A Distinction according to the mode of existence or subsistence, by which both of them have their divinity: for the Father has it from no one, the Son has it communicated to him by the Father. According to the former, the Son is said to be one with the Father; (John x, 30;) according to the latter, He is said to be "another" than the Father; (v, 32;) but according to both of them, the Son and the Father are said to "come to those whom they love, and to make their abode with them," (xiv, 23,) by the Spirit of both Father and Son "who dwelleth in believers," (Rom. viii, 9-11,) and "whom the Son sends to them from the Father." (John xv, 26.) May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of all consolation, deign to bestow upon us the communion of this Spirit, through the Son of his love. Amen!

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