

# Of the Personal Relations; Or, Relative Properties Which Distinguish the Three Divine Persons in the Deity.

by John Gill

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*John Gill's sermon explores the distinct personal relations of the Trinity, emphasizing the eternal generation of the Son as foundational to understanding the Godhead.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 2:7, Matthew 28:19, John 1:14, John 1:18, Galatians 1:1, Ephesians 1:3, Titus 3:4, Hebrews 1:3

**Topics:** "Trinity", "Divine Relations"

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## Description

John Gill expounds on the distinct personal relations within the Trinity, emphasizing that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three distinct Persons, each with unique properties that define their relationships. He argues against modalism and asserts that the distinctions are not merely nominal or based on their works but are rooted in their eternal nature. The Father is characterized by begetting, the Son by being begotten, and the Spirit by proceeding from the other two, establishing a necessary and eternal relationship among them. Gill highlights that these distinctions are essential for understanding the nature of God and the doctrine of the Trinity, which is foundational to Christian faith.

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## Transcript

A Body of Doctrinal Divinity

Book 1--Chapter 28

OF THE PERSONAL RELATIONS;

OR, RELATIVE PROPERTIES WHICH DISTINGUISH THE THREE DIVINE PERSONS IN THE DEITY.

Since there are Three who are the one God; and these Three are not one and the same Person, but three different Persons, there must be something which distinguishes them from each other; and the distinction between them is not merely "nominal", which is no distinction at all; as when the Sabellians say, God is one Person, having three names, Father, Son, and Spirit; here is no distinction; just as when a man has three names, they no more distinguish him than one would; be he called William, Henry, Frederic, William would not distinguish him from Henry, nor Henry from William, nor Frederic from them both, he being one man, having these several names: nor is the distinction merely "modal"; rather real modal; for though there

are three modes of subsisting in the Deity, and each Person has a distinct mode, yet the phrase seems not strong enough; for the distinction is real and personal; the Three in the Godhead are not barely three modes, but three distinct Persons in a different mode of subsisting, who are really distinct from each other; so that the Father is not the Son, nor the Son the Father, nor the Holy Spirit either the Father or the Son; but the difficulty is, what that is which gives or makes the distinction between them?

Now let it be observed, 1. Be it what it may, which distinguishes the divine Persons, it must be as early as the existence of God itself: God is from everlasting to everlasting; what God is now he ever was; he is the eternal and immutable "I AM"; he is what he was, and will be what he is; he is he "which is, and was, and is to come"; he is eternally and invariably the same: if the one God existed from eternity; and if the three Persons are the one God, they must exist from eternity, and exist as distinct Persons; and consequently what gives them their distinction must exist as early.

Wherefore, 2. Whatever distinguishes them cannot arise from, nor depend upon any works done by them in time, since their distinction is from eternity; and besides, the works of God "ad extra", or his external works, are common to all the three Persons; for though one may be more commonly ascribed to one Person, and another to another, yet the three Persons have a concern in each; and therefore they cannot distinguish them one from another. Creation is commonly ascribed to the Father of Christ, who is said to make the worlds, and create all things by him his Son; not as a mere instrument of action, since he is a co-efficient Cause of them; "without him is not anything made that is made"; and the Holy Spirit has a concern in the same; as has been observed (see Ps. 33:6).

The salvation of men is commonly attributed to the Son, and he is called Jesus Christ our Saviour; and yet, in the same place, God the Father is called God our Saviour, and is said to save "by the renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:4-6). Regeneration is more commonly said to be the work of the Spirit; and yet men are said to be born of God, of the Father, and of Jesus Christ, as well as of him; and God the Father is expressly said, to beget men again, according to his mercy (1 Peter 1:3).

I have made use of the works of God, both to prove the Being of God, and to illustrate and confirm the doctrine of a Trinity of Persons in the Godhead; but these do not make God to be, but to appear to be what he is; had they never been wrought, he would have been just the same as he is in his Being, Perfections, and Persons; for, 3. His works are arbitrary, depending upon his pleasure: thus of the works of creation it is said, "For thy pleasure, or by thy will, they are and were created", (Rev. 4:11) and as all things in providence, so all things in grace, are done according to the counsel of his will; it is of his will he has mercy on men, is gracious to them, regenerates and saves them; wherefore these are things that might or might not be, just as he thought fit; but not so his Being, the Persons in the Deity, and their manner of subsisting in it; for if there had never been a creature made, nor a soul saved, nor a sinner sanctified, God would have been the same he is, three Persons in one God.

In the economy of man's salvation, to which some ascribe the distinction of Persons, as taking its rise from thence; the three divine Persons are manifested, but not made, nor made distinct; but were so before, and would have been so, if that had never taken place, as it might not have done, since it flows from the goodwill and pleasure of God; whereas, 4. What gives the distinction, be it what it may, is by necessity of nature; God exists necessarily, and not by choice and will, as has been before argued; for if his existence is owing to will and choice, it must be either the will and choice of another, or his own; not another's, for then that other would be prior and superior to him, and so be God, and not he; not his own will, for then he must be before he was; have will and choice before he existed, which is an absurdity not to be endured: if

the one God then necessarily existed, and the three Persons are the one God, they must necessarily exist; and if they exist as three distinct Persons, that which gives them the distinction, must be necessary also, or arise from the necessity of nature; as God is, and the manner in which he is, so the distinction in him is by necessity.

But, 5. When I say it is by necessity of nature, I do not mean, that the divine nature, in which the divine persons subsist, distinguishes them; for that nature is one, and common to them all; the nature of the Son is the same with that of the Father; and the nature of the Spirit the same with that of the Father and the Son; and this nature, which they in common partake of, is undivided; it is not parted between them, so that one has one part, and another a second, and another a third; nor that one has a greater, and another a lessor part, which might distinguish them; but the whole fulness of the Godhead is in each. 6.

To come to the point; it is the personal relations, or distinctive relative properties, which belong to each Person, which distinguish them one from another; as paternity in the first Person, filiation in the second, and spiration in the third; or, more plainly, it is "begetting", (Ps. 2:7) which peculiarly belongs to the first, and is never ascribed to the second and third; which distinguishes him from them both; and gives him, with great propriety, the name of Father; and it is being "begotten", that is the personal relation, or relative property of the second Person; hence called, "the only begotten of the Father", (John 1:14) which distinguishes him from the first and third, and gives him the name of the Son; and the relative property, or personal relation of the third Person is, that he is breathed by the first and second Persons; hence called, the breath of the Almighty, the breath of the mouth of Jehovah the Father, and the breath of the mouth of Christ the Lord, and which is never said of the other two persons; and so distinguishes him from them, and very pertinently gives him the name of the Spirit, or breath (Job 33:4; Ps. 33:6; 2 Thess. 2:8).

Those men I have now respect to, hold that there are three distinct persons in the Godhead, or divine nature; and therefore it must be something in the divine nature, and not anything out of it, that distinguishes them; not any works "ad extra", done by them; nor their concern in the economy of man's salvation; nor offices bore by them, which are arbitrary things, which might, or might not, have been, had it pleased God; and what that is in the divine nature that can distinguish them, besides what has been mentioned, let it be named if it can.

If one of these distinct Persons is a Father, in the divine nature, and another a Son in the divine nature, there must be something in the divine nature which is the ground of the relation, and distinguishes the one from the other; and can be nothing else than generation, and which distinguishes the third Person from them both, as neither begetting nor begotten. From generation arises the relation, and from relation distinct personality. And as an ancient writer[1] says, "unbegotten, begotten, and proceeding", are not names of essence, (and it may be added, nor of office) but are modes of subsistence; and so distinguish persons.

Upon the whole, it is easy to observe, that the distinction of Persons in the Deity, depends on the generation of the Son; take away that, which would destroy the relation between the first and second Persons, and the distinction drops; and that this distinction is natural and necessary, or by necessity of nature, and not arbitrary, or of choice and will; which, if it was, it might not have been at all, or have been otherwise than it is: those who place it to the economy of the Persons in the redemption of men, have been urged with this, that if it was so, he that is called the Father, might have been called the Son; and he that is called the Son, might have been called the Father[2]; which has so pressed them, that they have been obliged to own, that so it might have been, if it had so seemed to God, and been agreeable to his

will[3].

Moreover, those who are in this way of thinking, and explain away the generation of the Son, and make it no other than a communion of nature, and a co-existence with the first Person, though they profess there are three Persons in the Godhead, they are not able to prove it, nor to point out that which distinguishes one from another; and besides, are not able to call them by any name, only say, the one is the first Person, the other the second, and the other the third; and even the reason of this order they cannot account for; for if they have their names and distinction from the economy of man's salvation, and the part they take therein, these cannot be given them antecedent to the said economy; and yet they must exist, and be considered as existing previous to it: if the first Person has the name of a Father, from his constituting and appointing Christ to be the Mediator and Saviour; and the second Person the name of a Son, from his constitution as such; though the reason of such names from hence does not appear; and the third Person has the name of Spirit, from any office or work undertook by him, to breathe into men in creation or regeneration; these names cannot be given them antecedent to such economy, constitution, and agreement, taking place; and yet they must be considered antecedent thereunto, in some view or another.

To such straits are men reduced, when they leave the form of sound words, which to do is dangerous, and generally leads into one error or another. But all this will more manifestly appear, by considering each divine person particularly, his relative property, and name pertinent to it. I shall begin with, 6a. First, The first Person; whose distinctive relative property is "begetting", and who is very pertinently called, the Father, which distinguishes him from the second and third Persons: and here let it be observed, that it is not his being a Father with respect to the creatures, that distinguishes him; not a Father in creation, providence, and grace: not in creation; he is a Father as the Creator of all; all his creatures are his offspring; and he is particularly the Father of spirits, of angels, and the souls of men; but this does not give him the name of Father in the Trinity; so he would have been, if not one man had ever been made, or an angel formed; nor does his being a Father to creatures distinguish him from the second and third Persons, for they are equally concerned with him in creation; and being the one God that has made us, they are the one Father of us, even the second and third Persons, as well as the first: nor in providence; God is the Father that provides for all his creatures, supplies them with things necessary, and supports them in their Beings; but this is not peculiar to the first Person; in this the second Person jointly and equally operates with him, by whom all things consist, and by whose power all are upheld; and so the third Person; and therefore on this account equally entitled to the character of Father: nor in grace, in adoption, and regeneration; in which all the three Persons have a concern: in adoption, as the Father bestows the wonderful grace on the sons of men, the son gives to them that believe in him power to become the sons of God; and the Spirit has so much to do with it, that he is called the Spirit of adoption: in regeneration, the Father of Christ begets men again to a lively hope of an inheritance; the Son quickens and regenerates whom he will; and those that are born again, are born of the Spirit: it is not therefore what the first Person does in either of these respects, that entitles him to the character of Father in the Godhead, and distinguishes him from the others; but it is his being the Father of the second Person, or the Father of Christ, as he is often called, and very emphatically and significantly, God the Father, (Gal 1:1; Eph 1:3, 3:14) and this name he has from begetting the Son, who is therefore called his Son, his begotten, his only begotten Son, (Ps. 2:7; John 1:14, 18) and this personal relation, or relative property, is what distinguishes the first Person in the Trinity, it being never attributed to any other. 6b.

Secondly, The second Person, whose distinctive relative property and character is, that he is "begotten", which is never said of the other two Persons, and so distinguishes him from them, and gives him the name of "Son"; and that he is the Son of God, there is abundant proof; all the three Persons bear testimony of it; the Father at the baptism and transfiguration of Christ, (Matthew 3:17, 17:5; Ps. 2:7, 89:27) the Word, or Son of God himself, (John 19:7, 5:17, 18, 10:30; Mark 14:61, 62; John 8:13-18) and the Spirit, (Matthew 3:16, 17) it is testified and acknowledged by angels, the good angels, (Luke 1:31, 35; Heb. 1:6) evil angels, the devils, (Matthew 8:29; Mark 3:11; Luke 4:41) by men of all sorts; by good men, (John 1:6, 7, 33, 34, 49; Matthew 16:15; 16 John 6:67, 11:27; Acts 8:37) by bad men (Matthew 27:54).

So that he is on all hands acknowledged and owned to be the Son of God. The Sonship of Christ is an article of the greatest importance in the Christian religion; it has a very great concern in, and connection with the ordinance of Christian baptism; it was declared by a voice from heaven, at the baptism of our Lord, "saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). That ordinance is ordered by our Lord himself to be administered "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost", (Matthew 28:19) considered as in their natural relative characters to each other, equally divine persons, and not as sustaining any office, which no one name or term used is expressive of; and it is mentioned in the first confession of faith, and as the sum of it, in order to an admission to that ordinance the scripture gives an account of; "I believe", says the eunuch desiring baptism of Philip; who required an express declaration of his faith; "I believe", says he, "that Jesus Christ is the Son of God", (Acts 8:37) and this was the sum and substance of the ministry of the apostle Paul, with which he first set out, and continued in, that Christ is the Son of God, (Acts 9:20; 2 Cor. 1:19) and, indeed, it is the distinguishing criterion of the Christian religion, and what gives it the preference to all others, and upon which all the important doctrines of it depend; even upon the Sonship of Christ as a divine person; and as by generation, even eternal generation.

Without this the doctrine of the Trinity can never be supported; of this the adversaries of it are so sensible, as the Socinians, that they have always set themselves against it with all their might and main; well knowing, that if they can demolish this, it is all over with the doctrine of the Trinity; for without this, the distinction of Persons in the Trinity can never be maintained; and, indeed, without this, there is none at all; take away this, and all distinction ceases.

A writer of the present age, and who was the first among us who objected to the eternal generation of the Son of God, though Roell, a Dutchman, before him, attempted to explain it away; or, at least, to a different sense; deed, pretends to hold the doctrine of three distinct Persons in the Deity, and yet explodes this: a strange paradox! He owns<sup>[4]</sup> some divines have strenuously maintained, and "judiciously defended", the doctrine of the Trinity, who held the eternal generation of the Son, and the procession of the Holy Ghost.

Why then should this judicious defence be deserted by us? he owns that these properties, begetting, begotten, and proceeding, "plainly prove" the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to be distinct Persons; why then should they be laid aside? and especially, since without them there is no proof to be made of their being distinct Persons "in the divine nature". He says<sup>[5]</sup>, that his account of Christ's Sonship, that is, by office, and not by nature, does not take away any argument by which we prove his Deity.

But without his eternal generation no proof can be made of his being a distinct divine Person "in the Godhead", and so not of his Deity: he farther says, that it does not take away any argument to prove his distinct personality from the Father and the Holy Ghost; whereas it takes away that which is the only proof of it, without substituting a sufficient one in its room; and, indeed, no other in the divine nature can be

substituted in its room; not the office of Christ, as Mediator; for he must first be proved to be a distinct divine Person, before he can be considered as Mediator.

The doctrines of redemption, justification, atonement, and pardon of sin, depend upon the divinity of the Person of Christ, as the Son of God, (Gal. 4:4; Rom. 8:3, 4; Heb. 1:2, 3; 1 John 1:7). I cannot see there is any reason to object to the use of the phrase "eternal generation", as applied to the sonship of Christ, since one divine person is said to "beget", (Ps. 2:7) and therefore must be a Father; and another divine person is said to be "begotten", (John 1:14, 18) and elsewhere, and therefore must be a Son; and if a begotten Son, as he is often said to be, then he must be a Son by generation: for he must be a very illiterate man indeed who does not know that to "beget" and "generate" are the same; and that also to be "begotten" and "generated" are the same; and therefore generation, with great propriety, may be used of the divine persons; and if used of the divine persons as in the divine nature, as if of the Father in the divine nature, then of the Son in the divine nature; and there being nothing in the divine nature but what is eternal, then this generation must be "eternal generation"; there are no persons in the divine nature but who are eternal, the eternal Father, the eternal Son, and the eternal Spirit; nor is there anything in it but what is eternal; every attribute in it is eternal, as eternal power, eternal wisdom, &c. every will, decree, and purpose in it is eternal, the eternal birth of the eternal minds[6]; why not then the Son of God, the Word and Wisdom of God? and indeed Wisdom, or Christ, is expressly said to be "brought forth", *ytlw*, a word expressive of generation, twice used in Proverbs 8:24, 25, and there, in some ancient versions, rendered "begotten", as *Nwma* "brought up", (Prov. 8:30) is in some later versions rendered carried in the bosom, as a son in the bosom of the Father; all which is spoken of as done in eternity: now if Christ was begotten from everlasting, or ever the earth was, before there were any fountains of water, or mountains and hills, and was as early as a son in the bosom of his Father, one would think there can be no difficulty in admitting his eternal generation.

To which may be added, that if no moment or instant can be given or pointed at, neither in eternity nor in time, in which Christ was not the begotten Son of the Father, then he must be eternally begotten of him, or be his Son by eternal generation; but no moment and instant can be given or pointed at, neither in eternity nor in time, in which Christ was not the begotten Son of the Father; therefore he must be eternally begotten of him; or, in other words, be the Son of the Father by eternal generation.

The phrase "eternal generation" is said to be a contradiction in terms; surely, not more so, than "eternal creation", and an "eternal creature": it may be thought so by those who will say the same of a Trinity in Unity, or of three being one, though expressly asserted in 1 John 5:7 and so is no more a contradiction than a Trinity of persons in one God. Indeed if the phrase was used of human generation, and applied to that, it might well be thought to be a contradiction in terms; but not as used of divine generation, and as applied to that; the one being in a nature finite, the other infinite.

Perhaps the distinction of a priority of order, and a priority of time, may serve to remove the seeming contradiction; the former may be in things eternal, but not the latter. Thus, for instance, God is eternal, and so are his decrees; as the decree of election, or rather God's act of choosing men before the foundation of the world; now God may be conceived of as previous to his act of choosing in priority of order, though not in priority of time, which cannot be admitted in eternity.

So the Father generating the Son, may be considered in priority of order previous to the Son generated by him, though not in priority of time, of which there can be none in eternity; considering therefore the Son's generation of the Father from eternity, in a priority of order, though there can be none of time, it will not

appear to be a contradiction in terms. When the scriptures ascribe generation to the Divine Being, it must be understood in a manner suitable to it, and not of carnal and corporal generation; no man in his senses can ever think that God generates as man does; nor believe that ever any man held such a notion of generation in God; yet Socinus[7] has the impudence to say, that some called Evangelics, hold that God generates in the divine essence one like himself, "more animantium", as animals do.

But generation must be understood of such generation as agrees with the nature of a spirit, and of an infinite uncreated spirit, as God is; that spirits generate we know from the souls or spirits we have about us and in us; our minds, which are spirits, generate thought; thought is the "conception" and "birth" of the mind; and so we speak of it in common and ordinary speech, "I conceive", or such a man "conceives" so and so; this is my "conception" of things, such are the "conceptions" of others, &c.

So with the Platonic philosophers, thought is the birth of the mind; they call it the mind begotten by the mind, as it were another like itself[8]; now as soon as the mind is, thought is, they commence together and they co-exist, and always will; and this the mind begets within itself; without any mutation or alteration in itself. Now in some respect these answer: the mind to God who is nouv, the eternal mind, and thought, the birth of the mind, to Christ, the eternal logov, word and wisdom of God; who is in some sort represented by logov endiayetov, the internal mental word.

So Plato[9] says, "thought is logov, word or speech, by which the soul declares and explains to itself what it considers"; or elsewhere[10], "thought is a discourse within the soul to itself, without a voice". Aristotle[11] somewhere calls it the logov, or word, tw noi sunaidion, co-eternal with the mind. Now if our finite created spirits, or minds, are capable of generating thought, the internal word or speech, and that without any motion, change, or alteration, without any diminution and corruption, without division of their nature or multiplication of their essence; then in an infinitely more perfect manner can God, an infinite uncreated spirit, beget his Son, the eternal Word, wisdom, reason, and understanding, in his eternal mind, which he never was without, nor was he before it: "In the beginning was the word", &c. (John 1:1) and this same Word is expressly said to be "the only begotten of the Father", (John 1:14) and this perfectly agreeable to the sense and language of the old Jewish church, as appears from the ancient paraphrases, and from Philo[12], who says of the logov, or Word, that it is not unbegotten as God, nor begotten as men, and that it is the first begotten Son, with other expressions of like nature: these things considered, may serve in some measure to relieve our minds, and make it more easy to us to conceive of this wonderful and mysterious affair. ``Mental or metaphysical generation, as a learned divine[13] observes, is a similitude and adumbration of divine generation; as the mind begets by nature, not by power, so likewise God; as the mind begets a birth co-essential and co-eternal, so God; as the mind simple and perfect begets a birth simple and perfect, so God; as the mind begets immutably (or without mutation) so God; as the mind begets of itself in itself, so God; as the mind does not beget out of matter without itself, so neither God: as the mind always begets and cannot but beget, so God the Father; as metaphysical generation abides, so the divine." Not but that there is in some respects a great dissimilitude between these, as the same writer observes; for the mind begets only a faculty, or an in-existent propriety, but God the Father begets a person existing by himself; the mind begins to beget in time, but God begins not to beget, but always begets from eternity, &c.

To this may be added another similitude, which may help us in this matter, and serve to illustrate it; and that is the sun, to which God is sometimes compared; the sun generates its own ray of light, without any change, corruption, division, and diminution; it never was without its ray of light, as it must have been had it been prior to it; they commenced together and co-exist, and will as long as the sun endures; and to this

there seems to be an allusion, when Christ is called the "brightness", *apaugasma*, the effulgence, the beaming forth "of his Father's glory", (Heb. 1:3) "ut radius ex sole", as the ray from the sun, as Tertullian[14] expresses it.

Though such allusions are not to be stretched too far, nor admitted where they imply any imperfection. It will be granted that the phrases "begetting" and "begotten", as attributed to the divine persons in the Godhead, are used in reference to human generation; between which and divine generation there is some resemblance; as likeness, sameness of nature, personality, &c. and as we consider divine generation, it comes nearer to generation, properly so called, than any scheme or hypothesis opposed to it; but then care must be taken to remove from our minds everything carnal and impure; and what implies an imperfection; as division of nature, multiplication of essence, priority and posteriority, motion, mutation, alteration, corruption, diminution, cessation from operation, &c. to reason from the one to the other, as running parallel to each other, is unreasonable; to argue from human to divine generation; from that which is physical or natural, to that which is hyperphysical or supernatural; from what is in finite nature, to that which is in a nature infinite, unbounded, and eternal, is very irrational; and to reason from the one to the other, without limitation, restriction, care, and caution, is very unsafe and dangerous; since it may lead unawares into foolish and hurtful errors; and when objections of this sort are made, as they too often are, in a vain, ludicrous, and wanton manner, they are to be rejected and detested, as impious and blasphemous; and they that make them are not to be disputed with, but despised: what is objected in a modest and decent way may be attended to; and the chief that I have met with are, that the sonship of Christ by generation makes him to be later than the Father, to be dependent on him, and subordinate to him; or, in other words, that it seems to be contrary to his eternity, independence, and equality.

Let us a little consider each of these objections. 6b1. It is urged, that he that generates must be before him that is generated; a father that begets must be before the son that is begotten by him; and putting the sonship of Christ on this foot, he cannot be co-eternal with the Father, but must have a beginning. This is the old stale objection of the Arians, and of Arias[15] himself, who stumbled at this, and set out with it, reasoning thus: "If the Father begat the Son, he that is begotten must have a beginning of his existence; and from hence it must be evident that there was a time when he was not a Son; and therefore it must necessarily follow, that he has his subsistence out of nothing".

And so Aetius[16], a follower of his, could not understand how that which is begotten, could be co-eternal with him that begets. But a little attention to a plain rule will set this matter in a clear light, and remove this objection: the rule is, and I think it is a good one, and will hold good, that "correlates mutually put or suppose each other"; that is, they commence together, they exist together, they co-exist, and that one is not before the other, nor the one after the other.

Now father and son are correlates, they suppose each other; a father supposes a son, and a son supposes a father; they commence and exist together, they co-exist, they are not one before nor after another: the father, as a father, is not before his son, as such; nor the son, as a son, is not later than his father, as such; let a man have a firstborn son, as soon as he has one he becomes a father, and not before; and his son is as early a son as he is a father; and supposing they live together a term of years, be it an hundred years if you please, which is not an unreasonable supposition, since it has been a fact that father and son have lived together a longer term of time; now at the end of these hundred years, the father, as a father, will not be a moment older than the son as such; nor the son, as a son, one moment younger than the father, as such; their relations rise and continue together till one or other of them cease.

There is no priority nor posteriority, no before nor "after" in these relations; and so, as an ancient writer says[17], "with God there is no post existence of him that is begotten, nor pre-existence of him that begets;" if there is an eternal Father, there must be an eternal Son, and therefore must be co-eternal; there cannot be a Father without a Son, that would be an absurdity, and therefore not before him. Should it be said, that though these mutual relations exist together, and that one is not before the other; yet surely he that is a father, though not as a father, must exist before him who is his son.

As plausible as this may seem to be, it may not appear so plain when examined; for this objection may arise from a false notion of animal generation. Generation is not a production of a non-entity into being, or a bringing into existence what did not exist before; for to bring that into being which was not in being before, is nothing less than a creation, and creation is too much to ascribe to the fathers of our flesh; they are not our creators, they do not give us our being; they do not bring us out of a state of non-existence into a state of existence; God only is the creator.

According to the later discoveries in natural philosophy respecting generation, it appears that every man is born of an animalcule; that generation, so called, is no other than a motion of the animalcule into a more convenient place for nourishment and growth. All generation, say our modern philosophers, is with us nothing, so far as we can find, but "nutrition", or "augmentation" of parts[18]: they conclude, that the "animalcule" of every tribe of creatures, were originally formed by the almighty Parent, to be the seed of all future generations of animals[19]; and that it seems most probable, that the "semina", or "stamina", as of all plants, so of animals that have been or ever shall be in the world, have been formed "ab origine mundi", by the almighty Creator, within the first of each respective kind[20]; and that these are no other than the entire bodies themselves "in parvo"; and contain everyone of the same parts and members, with the complete bodies themselves, when grown to maturity[21]; all which, they say, evidently appears, by the help of microscopes: and this is the rather to be attended to, because it so greatly agrees with the sacred scriptures, by which it appears, not only that Levi, the great grandson of Abraham, was in his loins, that is, seminally in him, before his father Jacob was born; but that all mankind were in Adam, that is seminally in him, as well as representatively; the former being the foundation of the latter (Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:22).

If, therefore, the "semina" of all mankind were created together in the first man; and all men were seminally, and in "animalculo" together in Adam, then not one before another, no priority nor posteriority among them: so that these things, rightly considered, instead of weakening, serve to strengthen and illustrate the doctrine pleaded for[22]. How far this philosophy is defensible, I will not say; I only observe it to abate the force of the objection; and the confidence of those who make it, it being not easy to disprove the said hypothesis. 6b2.

As to the objection taken from dependence, suggesting that the doctrine of Christ's Sonship by generation is contrary to the independence of Christ as a divine Person. It may be asked, what dependence has a Son upon a Father, in animal generation? Does he depend upon him as the cause of his existence? He does not. He does not bring him into being. God only is the efficient Cause and Author of his Being. He is, at most, only an instrument of removing the animalcule, created of God, into a more convenient situation for nourishment and growth; in order, at a proper time, to come forth into the world, according to the above hypothesis: a parent has no concern in the formation of his child; it is formed without his knowledge, and without asking his consent and will; he knows nothing of its shape, features, and sex, until its birth; and when it is born, its life, and the continuance of its being, do not depend upon him; a son lives when a Father dies, and often many years after him: it is true, in some sense, he may be said to depend upon him with respect to some circumstances, especially in the former part of life; as, for the care of him, provision

for him, assistance and protection given him; circumstances which argue weakness in the human nature; but not to be found in the divine nature, nor anything analogous to them; and does not a father oftentimes depend upon his son, as in case of distress, sickness, penury, and old age?

But be these things as they may, Christ, as all sound divines hold, is autosev, "God of himself", and independent of any other, though he is the Son of the Father; and as the distinct personality of the Son of God arises from his relation to his Father as such, so the distinct personality of the Father arises from his relation to his Son as such; hence the distinct personality of the one, is no more dependent, than the distinct personality of the other; and both arise from their mutual relation to each other; and both arise and commence together, and not one before the other; and both are founded in eternal generation. 6b3.

As to subordination and subjection, and inequality, which it is supposed the Sonship of Christ by generation implies; it may be answered, that Christ in his office-capacity, in which he, as Mediator, is a Servant, and as he is man, and appeared in the form of one; it will be acknowledged, that he is subordinate and subject to the Father; but not as he is the Son of God: and whatever inequality sonship may imply among men, it implies no such thing in the divine nature, among the divine persons; who in it subsist in perfect equality with one another; and in particular, the Scriptures represent the Son of God as equal to his Father, as one who thought it no robbery to be equal with God; being of the same nature, and having the same perfections with him, and that he is equal to him with respect to power and authority; for with respect to power he says, "I and my Father are one"; and they represent him as having the same claim to equal honour, homage, and worship; since all men are "to honour the Son, as they honour the Father"; not as in subordination to him, but as equal with him.

There is a passage which is perverted by some to the sense of subordination and subjection of the Son of God to the Father, which is in 1 Corinthians 15:24, 28. "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father and when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him; and put all things under him; that God may be all in all". It should be observed, that all this is said of something that is future; and which, as yet, is not, and so no proof of what is, or has been.

Besides, there is a twofold Sonship of Christ, divine and human; from the one he is denominated the Son of God, and from the other the Son of man. Now Christ in the text, is only called "the Son", which does not determine which Sonship is meant. This is to be learnt from the context, where he is spoken of throughout as man, as man who died, and rose again from the dead; from whence, by various arguments, is proved the general resurrection; and so he is continued to be spoken of to the passage under consideration; the plain and easy sense of which is, that at the end of the world, at Christ's second coming, when all the elect of God shall be gathered in, and Christ shall have completely finished his work, as Mediator, he will deliver up the mediatorial kingdom complete and perfect, that is, the whole body of the elect, the kingdom of priests, to the Father, and say, "Lo, I, and the children whom thou hast given me"; and then the delegated power under which he acted, as the Son of man, will cease, and be no more; and that sort of rule, authority, and power, will be put down; and he, as the Son of man, be no longer vested with such authority, but shall become subject to him that put all things under him; and then God, Father, Son, and Spirit, will be all in all; and there will be no more distinction of offices among them; only the natural and essential distinctions of the divine Persons will always continue.

There are various passages of scriptures in which Christ, as the Son of God, addresses his divine Father, without the least appearance of any subordination or subjection to him, but as his equal, as Jehovah's

fellow, particularly John 17:24. But I shall proceed to examine more particularly, in what sense Christ is the Son of God, or what is the true cause and reason of this relation. The Socinians, unwilling to own the eternal Sonship of Christ, or that he was the Son of God before he was the Son of Mary; and not caring to acknowledge the true cause and reason of it, which is but one, have devised many; which shows the puzzle and confusion they are in; Calovius[23] has collected out of their writings, no less than thirteen causes, or reasons of Christ's Sonship; some of them are so weak and trifling, as not deserving to be mentioned; and others require but little to be said to them: I shall take notice of some of the principal ones: and then proceed to place the Sonship of Christ on its true basis, and assign the proper sole cause and reason of it; his being "begotten" of the Father. 6b3a.

They say he is called the Son of God because of the great love of God to him, and make beloved and begotten to be synonymous terms; that Christ is the object of the love of God, the Son of his love, his dearly beloved Son, is most certain; but then it is not his love to him that is the foundation and cause of relation to him; he is not his Son because he loves him; but he loves him because he is his Son; it is not love among men that produces such a relation; there may be great love where there is no such relation; Jonathan loved David as his own soul; but this strong love bore to him, did not make him nor denominate him his son.

On the other hand, there may be relation and not love; a father may not love his own son; neither love nor hatred effect relation; the one does not make it, nor the other destroy it. 6b3b. Sometimes they ascribe the Sonship of Christ to his likeness to God, and make that to be the cause of it: that Christ is the image of the invisible God, the express image of his Father's Person, and so like him, that he that has seen the one, has seen the other, because the same nature and perfections are in both, is true; yet the reason why Christ is called the Son of God, is not because he is like him, but he is like him because he is his Son; of the same nature and essence with him. 6b3c.

At other times they tell us, he is the Son of God by adoption; of which the Scriptures give not the least hint. To which may be objected, that Christ is God's own Son, his proper Son, the Son of himself; and therefore not adopted: whoever adopts an own son? or what reason can there be for it? adoption among men, is not of their own sons: but usually when they have none of their own; as the instances of the adoption of Moses by Pharaoh's daughter, and of Esther by Mordecai show: besides, Christ is the begotten Son of God; and if begotten, then not adopted; these are inconsistent; yea, he is his only begotten Son; whereas, if he was his Son by adoption, he could not be said to be his only Son, since he has many adopted ones; even as many as are predestinated to the adoption of children, by Christ; as many as the Father gave unto him; as many as he has redeemed, "that they might receive the adoption of children"; as many as receive him, that is, believe in him, "to whom he gives power to become the sons of God"; even as many sons as he brings to glory; which is a number no man can number: but the more principal causes of Christ's Sonship they insist upon, and which seem to have the most countenance from scripture, are as follow, and which I shall more particularly and largely consider. 6a3d.

The miraculous conception and birth of Christ, or his wonderful incarnation, is assigned as the reason of his Sonship; and this is founded on (Luke 1:35) the words of the angel to Mary, in answer to the difficulties objected by her, to Christ being born of her; "The holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore, also, that holy Thing that shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God". Now let it be observed, that the angel does not say the holy Thing born of the virgin should "be", but should be "called" the Son of God; for though sometimes the sense of such a phrase is the same as to "be", as in Isaiah 9:6; 1 John 3:1, yet seems not intended here; since this appellation, the

Son of God, is a name which Christ has been, and is usually called by; and the angel is not giving a reason of Christ's being the Son of God; for he was so before his incarnation; but of the manifestation and declaration of him as such in the human nature; nor does the angel predict that Christ should be called the Son of God, for "this reason", because of his miraculous birth; for either he was to call himself so, or others were to call him so, for this reason, which neither have been; or else the angel's prediction must be false, which cannot be admitted.

Moreover, the particle therefore, is not causal, but consequential; the angel is not giving a reason why Christ should be called the Son of God, but why he should be received and owned as such by his people; who would infer and conclude from his wondrous birth of a virgin, that he must be the Immanuel, the child to be born, the Son given, &c. prophesied of in Isaiah 7:14, 9:6 where he is called the "child born", with respect to his human nature, and the "Son given", with respect to his divine nature[24] (see John 3:16 4:10).

Once more, the particle "also", ought not to be neglected; "Therefore, also, that holy Thing", &c. not only the divine person of Christ should be owned and called the Son of God; but also the human nature of Christ, thus wonderfully produced, being taken up into personal union with him, should bear the same name: so that it is not the wonderful birth of the human nature, that so much as gives the name; but the union of this nature to the person of the Son of God; whence it is called by the same name he is.

The reasons why Christ cannot be the Son of God, on account of his wonderful incarnation, are the following. 6b3d1. If so, then the Holy Spirit must be the Father of Christ, since he had such a special and peculiar concern in it; as the above passage shows; and then there must be two Fathers in the Trinity; which would introduce a wretched confusion there. But there is but one, distinct from the Word and Spirit (1 John 5:7; Matthew 28:19). Besides, the Father of Christ is, in many places, distinguished from the Spirit, and therefore cannot be the same (John 14:16, 17, 26, 15:26; Eph 1:17, 3:14, 16).

To which may be added, that the Spirit is called the Spirit of the Son, (Gal. 4:6) whereas, if this was the case, rather the Son should be called the Son of the Spirit; which he never is. 6b3d2. If the incarnation of Christ is the cause of his divine Sonship, then there was no God the Father of Christ under the Old Testament; this was what the Marcionites of old asserted; which put the ancient writers[25] on proving, as they did, that it was the Father of Christ who made the world, gave the law, spoke by the prophets, and edited the books of the Old Testament; all which appears from Hebrews 1:1, 2.

Besides, God existed as the Father of Christ, before the foundation of the world; for so early as such he blessed his people, and chose them in Christ (Eph 1:3, 4). 6b3d3. If Christ was the Son of God, with respect to his human nature only, the distinctive phrase "according to the flesh", when used in speaking of him, would be quite impertinent; for it is never said of any mere man, that he is the son of such an one according to the flesh, but only, that he is his son; but the phrase is very pertinently used to distinguish Christ, the Son of God, according to his divine nature, from his being the Son of David, and of the fathers, according to his human nature, (Rom. 1:4, 9:5). 6b3d4.

The incarnation of Christ is not the reason of his being the Son of God, but the manifestation of him as such; he was not made, but manifested thereby to be the Son of God (1 John 1:12, 3:8). In the fulness of time God sent forth his Son--for what? not to be made a Son; he was so before he sent him; but that this Son might be made of a woman, or be made man; that the Word might be made flesh, or become incarnate; and so God, the Son of God, be manifest in the flesh (Gal. 4:4).

For, 6b3d5. It is certain that Christ existed, as the Son of God, before his incarnation; and is spoken of in the Old Testament as such; even Nebuchadnezzar, an heathen prince, had a notion of the Son of God; which he might have from Daniel, and other Jews in his palace; for he had many in his dominions, from whom he might learn that there was a glorious Person, who would appear in human nature, under the name of the Son of God; and seeing four persons in the fiery furnace, when only three were cast into it, and the form of the fourth remarkably glorious, he concluded him to be one like him, who had been described to him, (Dan. 3:25; Ezek. 21:10).

Agur long before knew that a divine Person existed, as the Son of God; for speaking of the Almighty, and incomprehensible Being, he asks, "What is his name, and what is his Son's name, if thou canst tell?" suggesting that as the name, that is, the nature of God is ineffable, he had a Son of the same nature with himself, equally so (Prov. 30:4). Earlier than he, David speaks of the Son of God, begotten by him; whom he calls all the Kings and Judges of the earth to pay divine homage and worship to; and pronounces them blessed that trust in him, (Ps. 2:7, 12) and speaks of him also as his firstborn, who should call him his God and Father, (Ps. 89:26, 27) yea, Christ existed as a Son, not only before Solomon and David were, but before Melchizedek was, for he is said to be made like unto the Son of God, (Heb. 7:3) yea, he existed as such at the creation of the world; for God, by him his Son, made the worlds, (Heb. 1:2) before any creature was in being he was the Son of God; and so the words may be rendered in Psalm 72:17.

"Before the sun was, his name was the Son", the Son of God. 6b3d6. If Christ is only the Son of God as he was man, and so called because made man, then he would be in no other class of Sonship than creatures be. Adam being wonderfully made and created out of the dust of the earth, is called the son of God, and all his posterity are the offspring of God, (Luke 3:38; Acts 17:28). Angels are also the sons of God, by creation; but "to which of the angels said he (God) at any time, Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee?" (Heb. 1:5) and if not to them, much less to any of the sons of men; and therefore Christ's filiation must be in an higher class than theirs; and not to be ascribed to his incarnation; but must be placed to another account. 6b3e.

Another cause or reason assigned by the Socinians why Christ is called the Son of God, is his resurrection from the dead; which cannot be the true reason of it; because, 6b3e1. He was the Son of God before; as has been proved, and they themselves acknowledge; for if he was the Son of God, through his incarnation, as they say, though wrongly, then before his resurrection; and so not on that account: the mission of Christ into this world, as the Son of God; the testimony bore to his Sonship, at his baptism and transfiguration, by his divine Father; the confession of men and angels, good and bad, already observed; show him to be the Son of God before his resurrection, and so not by it. 6b3e2.

If he was the Son of God on that account, he must beget himself, and be the author of his own Sonship, which is notoriously absurd; for he raised himself from the dead, as he predicted he would; and as he had power to do, as he declared, and did it (John 2:19, 10:18). 6b3e3. If so, his Sonship must be metaphorical and figurative, and not proper; whereas, he is often called God's own Son, his proper Son, the Son of himself; and God his own proper Father (Rom. 8:3, 32; John 5:18). 6b3e4.

On this account, he cannot be called the only begotten Son of God; for though he may, indeed, on account of his resurrection, be called, as he is, the firstborn from the dead, and the first begotten of the dead, and the firstfruits of them that sleep, (Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5; 1 Cor. 15:20) yet cannot be called the only begotten, since many of the saints rose with him at his resurrection; and all men will be raised at the last day. 6b3e5. If the resurrection of the dead entitles to Sonship, then wicked men would be the sons of God; since there

will be a resurrection of the unjust as well as of the just; of some to shame and damnation, as well as of others to everlasting life, (Dan. 12:2; John 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15) yet these are never called the sons of God; as not on any other, so not on this account; indeed, the dead in Christ, who will rise first, are said to be the "children of God being the children of the resurrection", (Luke 20:36) not that they then become the children of God, and are so for that reason; for they are so before; but being raised, and put into the possession of the inheritance, they will be manifested, and declared the children of God, "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ"; and so, 6b3e6.

The resurrection of Christ from the dead, is only a manifestation of his Sonship; he was "declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead", (Rom. 1:4) and hence it is that the words in Psalm 2:7. "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee", are applied to the resurrection of Christ, (Acts 13:25) not that he was then begotten as the Son of God, for he was so before, as has been proved; but he was then manifested to be the only begotten Son of God; and which words are applicable to any time when Christ was declared and manifested to be the Son of God. 6b3f.

The last reason I shall take notice of, which the Socinians give of the Sonship of Christ, is his office as Mediator; they say he is called the Son of God, because he was sanctified, or set apart to his office, as such; and was sent into the world to do it, and has executed it, and is now exalted in heaven. And it is not to be wondered at, that they should assert Christ to be the Son of God by office, when it is a notorious sentiment of theirs, that he is only God by office; for the sake of which they endeavour to support this: the text which they build this notion on is John 10:36.

"Say one of him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, thou blasphemest, because I said I am the Son of God?" That Christ is the Son of God, may be concluded from his sanctification and mission; because no other was prophesied of, or promised to be sent, and no other expected to come, but he who was the Son of God; but that his sanctification and mission are the reason of his being so called, cannot be from hence concluded; because he was the Son of God before he was sent.

Christ had, in the preceding verses, asserted his equality with God, saying, that he and his Father were one; upon this the Jews charged him with blasphemy; to vindicate himself from this charge, he first argues from his inferior character, as being in office; that if magistrates, without blasphemy, might be called gods, and children of the most High, much more might he be called the Son of God, who was in such an eminent manner sanctified, and sent into the world by the Father; but then he let not the stress of the proof of his Deity and Sonship rest here; but proceeds to prove the same by his doing the same works his Father did; to which he appeals.

But that Christ is not the Son of God, by his office as Mediator, the following reasons may be given. 6b3f1. Because if Christ is the Son of God, not by nature, but by office, then he is only the Son of God in an improper and metaphorical sense; as magistrates are called the children of the most High, or sons of God, being in an office under him: whereas, Christ, in a true and proper sense, is the Son of God; he is the Son of the Father in truth, (2 John 5:3) most truly and properly his Son; his own, his only begotten Son, the Son of himself, (Rom. 8:3) his proper Son, (Rom. 8:32) therefore not so in an improper sense. 6b3f2.

Because the mediatorial office of Christ is so far from being the ground of his Sonship, that it is his Sonship that is the ground of his mediatorship; for antecedent to his investiture with his office, he must be considered as previously existing under some character or another, and which appears to be his relation to God as his Son. Thus in his inauguration into, and investiture with his kingly office, his Father, in the

performance of it, addressed him under this relative character; "unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever", (Heb. 1:8) and of his consecration to his priestly office we read, "The Lord maketh men high priests which have infirmity: but the word of the oath which was since the law", (the eternal council and covenant, made more clear and manifest since the law, Ps. 110:4) "maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore"; that is, not makes the Son a Son, but the Son a priest; (Heb. 7:28) so that he was the Son of God before he was considered as a priest: and with respect to his prophetic office, previous to his investiture with, entrance upon; and discharge of that, he was the Son of God; and, indeed, his relation to God, and nearness to him, made him the only fit and proper Person for it; "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him"; his nature, will, purposes, and promises; all which he was privy to, as being the only begotten Son of the Father, and lying in his bosom, (John 1:18) so that previous to his office as Mediator, and each of the branches of it, he was the Son of God; and therefore not so by it: when, I say, Christ, as the Son of God, must be considered previous to his being the Mediator; though he is both from eternity; it must be understood, not of priority of time, of which there is none in eternity; but of priority of order; for Christ must be considered as existing as a divine Person, under some character or relation, ere he can be considered as invested with an office; not in order of time, both being eternal; but in order of nature; even as the eternal God, must be considered as existing previous to any act of his; as of eternal election, not in priority of time, the eternal acts of God being as early as himself; but in priority of order, as one thing must be conceived of and considered by our finite minds, before another. 6b3f3.

Because he is frequently distinguished as a Son, from the consideration of him in his mediatorial office; as in the eunuch's confession of Faith; "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God", (Acts 8:37) and in the ministry of the apostle Paul, who is said to preach "Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God" (Acts 9:20). Now the phrase "Jesus Christ" respects his office as the Saviour, the anointed Prophet, Priest, and King; and if the other phrase, the Son of God, is a term of office also, they coincide, and signify the same thing; and then the sense of them only is, that Christ is the Christ, and the Mediator; the Mediator confessed by the one, and preached by the other; which carry in them no distinct ideas; whereas the meaning is, that the one believed, and the other preached, that Jesus, the Saviour and true Messiah, who had lately appeared with all the true characters of the promised one, was no less than a divine Person, the Son of God (see also 1 John 4:14, 15, 5:5). 6b3f4.

Because Christ, as Mediator, is the Servant of God; and especially so he appears in the discharge of some parts of that his office; as in his obedience and suffering death, see (Isa. 42:1, 49:3 53:11; Phil. 2:7, 8). A servant and a son are very different relations, and convey very different ideas; our Lord observes the distinction, (John 8:35) and Christ, as a Son, is distinguished from Moses, as a servant, in the house of God, (Heb. 3:5, 6) whereas, if Christ was a Son by office, or as mediator, he would be no other than a servant, as Moses was, only of an higher rank, and in a greater office; no one is ever called a son because he is a servant; one that is a son may indeed be a servant, but is never called a son on that account; so that this is to lessen the glory of Christ, as the only begotten of the Father, and reduce him to the character and state of a servant. 6b3f5.

Because the Sonship of Christ is sometimes spoken of as adding a lustre to his office as Mediator; as when the apostle says, "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession", (Heb. 4:14) that which makes this High Priest so great an one, and furnishes out so strong an argument to a constant profession of him, is his being the Son of God, not by office, but by nature; for if this was only a term of office, it would not only coincide with

his being an high priest, but there would be no emphasis in it, nor evidence of his greatness; nor such strength in the argument formed upon it.

Likewise, the Sonship of Christ is represented as putting a virtue and efficacy into what he has done as Mediator, and therefore must be distinct from his office as such; so particularly the apostle John ascribes the efficacy of his blood, in cleansing from sin, to his being the Son of God; "And the blood of Jesus Christ his Son", (there lies the emphasis) "cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). Sometimes it is observed, wonderful, that he who is the Son of God, should perform some parts of his office as Mediator; as obedience and suffering death; "Though he was a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered", (Heb. 5:8) but there would be nothing strange and wonderful, that, he, being the Mediator, should perform the part of one; but it lies here, that he, being the Son of God, in the form of God, and equal to him, should appear in the form of a servant, and be obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. 6b3f6.

Because the Sonship of Christ is made use of to express and enhance the love of God, in the gift of him to the sons of men, (John 3:16; 1 John 4:9) which would not be so strongly expressed, and so greatly enhanced, and appear in such a glaring light, if Christ, in such a gift, is considered not as a Son by nature, but as a Servant, and in an office capacity; God has given what is more than men, or than people, for the life of his chosen; to do which would be love; but he has given his own Son; which is a far greater instance of love, (Isa. 43:4). 6b3f7.

Lastly, If Christ is the Son of God, and may be called his begotten Son, by virtue of his constitution as Mediator, it should be shown, that there is something in that constitution which is analogous, or answers to generation and Sonship, and lays a sufficient ground and foundation for Christ being called God's own Son, his proper and only begotten Son; what is there in the first Person's appointing and constituting the second to be a Mediator, that gives him the name of a Father? and what is that in the constitution of the second Person in such an office, that gives him the name of the Son, of the only begotten Son?

Having removed the chief and principal of the false causes, and reasons of Christ's Sonship, assigned by the Socinians; I shall proceed to establish the true cause of it; and settle it on its true basis; by assigning it to its proper and sole cause, his eternal generation by the Father; which I shall attempt to do by various passages of scripture. There are some passages of scripture, which have been made use of to prove the eternal generation of the Son of God, I shall not insist upon, particularly Isaiah. 53:8.

"Who shall declare his generation?" which is to be understood, neither of the human, nor of the divine generation of Christ, as it was by the ancient writers; not of his human generation; for that the prophet himself declared; as that he would be born, and be born of a virgin, (Isa. 7:14, 9:6, 7) nor of his divine generation, which is declared both by the Father and the Son; though, indeed, the manner of both generations is inexplicable and ineffable, and cannot be declared by men: but the words are either to be understood of Christ's spiritual generation; the seed he should see, (Isa. 53:10) his spiritual seed and offspring; a generation to be accounted of, but not to be counted by men, their number being not to be declared: or, rather, of the wickedness of that age and generation in which Christ should appear in the flesh; called by him, a wicked, adulterous, and faithless generation; the wickedness then rife both in the Gentile and Jewish world, was such as not to be declared; and particularly the barbarity and cruelty of the Jews, in putting Christ to death, and persecuting his apostles, were such as no tongue and pen could fully declare.

I have not, in my Treatise on the Trinity, insisted on Micah 5:2 as a proof of the eternal generation of the Son of God; of whom it is there said, "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting"; though this has been, and still is, insisted on by great and good men as a proof of it: but when he is said to go forth from the Father, it may seem, as it does to some, rather to intend his mission in time, or as coming into the world; not by change of place, but by assumption of nature, (John 16:28) besides, the phrase is plural; "goings forth"; which seem to denote various acts; whereas that of begetting is a single act: to which may be added, that, that is an act of the Father; these seem to be acts of the Son; and therefore may seem rather to be understood of his goings forth in the covenant, in acts of grace and love towards his people, and delight in them; in approaching to God in a covenant way, and asking them of his Father, and all blessings of grace for them; in becoming their Surety, and engaging to be their Saviour and Redeemer.

However, these words are a full proof of the eternal existence of Christ; or otherwise these things could not be predicated of him and his existence so early, under the relation and character of the Son of God, and that previous to his goings forth in a mediatorial way; as before proved.

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