

APPENDIX B

THE TESTIMONY OF MEN

And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God (John 6:69).

We fully recognize that the testimony of God is infinitely greater than the testimony of men (1 John 5:9). God's Word is our infallible and final authority in determining the nature of Christ's Sonship. It is of interest, however, to consider what respected Bible teachers have written on the subject of eternal Sonship.

John N. Darby, one of the early Plymouth Brethren, devoted Bible student, and prolific author:

The eternal Sonship is a vital truth, or else we lose the Father sending the Son, and the Son creating, and we have no Father if we have no Son, so that it [the doctrine of eternal Sonship] lies at the basis of all truth. . . . I hold it vital to hold the Sonship before the worlds. It is the truth.¹

C. H. Mackintosh, highly esteemed Plymouth Brethren author and preacher:

I would, at this point, solemnly admonish my reader that he cannot be too jealous in reference to the vital truth of the Person and the relations of the Lord Jesus Christ. If there be error as to this, there is no security

as to any thing. God cannot give the sanction of His presence to aught that has not this truth for its foundation. The Person of Christ is the living, divine centre round which the Holy Ghost carries on all His operations. Let slip the truth as to Him, and you are like a vessel broken from its moorings, and carried, without rudder or compass, over the wild watery waste, and in imminent danger of being dashed to fragments upon the rocks of Arianism, infidelity, or atheism. Question the eternal Sonship of Christ, question His deity, question His unspotted humanity, and you have opened the floodgate for a desolating tide of deadly error to rush in. Let no one imagine, for a moment, that this is a mere matter to be discussed by learned theologians—a curious question—a recondite mystery—a point about which we may lawfully differ. No; it is a vital, fundamental truth, to be held in the power of the Holy Ghost, and maintained at the expense of all beside—yea, to be confessed under all circumstances, whatever may be the consequences.²

We rejoice in every opportunity for the setting forth of Christ's Eternal Sonship. We hold it to be an integral and essentially necessary part of the Christian faith.³

Charles Spurgeon, author, English Baptist preacher, pastor of Metropolitan Tabernacle in London:

But Jesus, the eternal Son of God, “very God of very God,” who had been hymned through eternal ages by joyous angels, who had been the favourite of his Father's court, exalted high above principalities and powers, and every name that is named, he himself condescended to become man; was born of the Virgin Mary; was cradled in a manger; lived a life of suffering, and at last died a death of agony.⁴

Question 20: Who is the Redeemer of God's elect?
Answer: The only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was and continues to be God and man, in two distinct natures and one person for ever.⁵

H. A. Ironside, author, beloved Bible teacher, pastor of Moody Church in Chicago:

More recently the so-called Raven meetings have been divided over the teaching of an American leader who denied the truth of the Eternal Sonship of Christ. This most serious error caused many to take a definite stand against it and led to another separation. But sadly enough by far the greater majority saw nothing wrong in such views and have gone on with the promulgator of them. This puts these meetings entirely off the ground of the early Brethren who considered a true confession of Christ the very first consideration.⁶

T. Ernest Wilson, author and missionary to Angola for nearly half a century:

The eternal Sonship of Christ is one of the most vital, basic doctrines of the Word of God. It is denied by many heretical cults, but held and valued by all those who know and love our Lord Jesus Christ . . . we must be on guard against those who say that He only became the Son of God at His incarnation and who deny His eternal Sonship.⁷

Charles Hodge, American Presbyterian theologian:

The [Nicene] Council declared that our Lord is the Eternal Son of God, i.e., that He is from eternity the

Son of God. This of course involves the denial that He became the Son of God in time; and consequently, that the primary and essential reason for his being called Son is not his miraculous birth, nor his incarnation, nor his resurrection, nor his exaltation to the right hand of God. The Council decided that the word Son as applied to Christ, is not a term of office but of nature; that it expresses the relation which the Second Person in the Trinity from eternity bears to the First Person, and that the relation thus indicated is sameness of nature, so that Sonship, in the case of Christ, includes equality with God.⁸

The word Son [in Romans 1:3-4] designates the divine nature of Christ. In all cases, however, it is a designation implying participation of the divine nature. Christ is called the Son of God because he is consubstantial with the Father, and therefore equal to him in power and glory. The term expresses the relation of the second to the first person in the Trinity, as it exists from eternity. It is therefore, as applied to Christ, not a term of office, nor expressive of any relation assumed in time. He was and is the Eternal Son.⁹

Augustus H. Strong, Baptist minister and theologian:

The Sonship of Christ is eternal . . . neither the incarnation, the baptism, the transfiguration, nor the resurrection marks the beginning of Christ's Sonship, or constitutes him the Son of God. These are but recognitions or manifestations of a pre-existing Sonship, inseparable from his Godhood. . . . Not a commencement of existence, but an eternal relation to the Father—there never having been a time when the Son began to be, or when the Son did not exist as God with the Father.¹⁰

Benjamin B. Warfield, eminent Presbyterian theologian and educator and seminary president:

The designation “Son of God” is a metaphysical designation and tells us what He is in His being of being. And what it tells us that Christ is in His being of being is that He is just what God is. It is undeniable—and Bousset, for example, does not deny it,—that, from the earliest days of Christianity on, (in Bousset’s words) “Son of God was equivalent simply to equal with God” (Mark xiv. 61-63; John x. 31-39).¹¹

We read that “When the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law.” The whole transaction is referred to the Father in fulfillment of His eternal plan of redemption, and it is described specifically as an incarnation: the Son of God is born of a woman—He who is in His own nature the Son of God, abiding with God, is sent forth from God in such a manner as to be born a human being, subject to law. The primary implications are that this was not the beginning of His being; but that before this He was neither a man nor subject to law. But there is no suggestion that on becoming man and subject to law, He ceased to be the Son of God or lost anything intimated by that high designation. The uniqueness of His relation to God as His Son is emphasized in a kindred passage (Rom. viii. 3) by the heightening of the designation to that of God’s “own Son.”¹²

John Murray, professor of systematic theology at Westminster Seminary for thirty-six years:

There are people, while not being in anyway disposed to the denial of Jesus’ deity, who maintain the title “Son of God” is solely a Messianic title, a title

that belongs to Him in virtue of His incarnation. It is that position that I am trying to contradict to a very large extent. . . .the title “Son of God” is applied to Him in virtue of His pretemporal, ontological, intertrinitarian relationship identity.

Now, since He came from above—from heaven, from the Father—it was in the identity that was His in heaven and with the Father prior to His coming that He came and was sent. This identity is distinctly specified as that of Son, and “only begotten.” Hence, His filial identity, I submit, is preexistent, pretemporal and transcendent.¹³

There are good reasons for thinking that in this instance [Romans 1:3-4] the title [“Son”] refers to a relation which the Son sustains to the Father antecedently to and independently of his manifestation in the flesh. Paul entertained the highest conception of Christ in his divine identity and eternal preexistence. The title “Son” he regarded as applicable to Christ in his eternal preexistence and as defining his eternal relation to the Father. . . . the subject matter of the gospel is defined as that which pertains to the eternal Son of God.¹⁴

J. Oliver Buswell, college and seminary professor of theology for many years:

The virgin birth of Christ was a miracle wrought by the Third Person of the Trinity whereby the Second Person of the Trinity, the eternal Son of God, took to Himself a human nature, so that He “became man” what then shall we say of eternal Sonship? . . . There can be no doubt that “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” are words intended by the writers of the Scriptures to indicate eternal relationships within the Triune Godhead.¹⁵

Lorraine Boettner, respected theologian:

In theological language the terms “Father” and “Son” carry with them not our occidental ideas of, on the one hand, source of being and superiority, and on the other, subordination and dependence, but rather the Semitic and oriental ideas of likeness or sameness of nature and equality of being. It is, of course, the Semitic consciousness that underlies the phraseology of Scripture, and wherever the Scriptures call Christ the ‘Son of God’ they assert His true and proper deity. . . . As any merely human son is like his father in his essential nature, that is, possessed of humanity, so Christ, the Son of God, was like His Father in His essential nature, that is, possessed of deity. The Father and the Son, together with the Holy Spirit, are coeternal and coequal in power and glory, and partake of the same nature or substance.¹⁶

C. I. Scofield, dispensational author and Bible teacher, founder of the Central American Mission:

God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This relation, in some sense not clearly explained, is fundamental in the divine Being and always existed. Although in His incarnation our Lord became a true human being, at the same time He continued to be “the Son of God.”¹⁷

Lewis Sperry Chafer, dispensational theologian and founder of Dallas Theological Seminary:

He was the Son of God from all eternity, but He became Son of man by incarnation . . . various theories which contend that Christ was: (a) Son of

God by virtue of incarnation; (b) that He was Son of God by virtue of His resurrection; or (c) that He was Son of God by mere title or official position, break down before the volume of Biblical testimony which asserts that He was Son of God from all eternity.¹⁸

E. Schuyler English, author, editor of *Our Hope* magazine, chairman of the editorial committee of the *New Scofield Reference Bible*.

The Father has always been the Father; the Son has always been the Son; the Holy Spirit has always been the Holy Spirit. . . . And of the Son it is written, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever" (Heb. 13:8). He always was God the Son; He continued to be God the Son in His earthly garb as Man; He remains God the Son, as He shall always be, in His heavenly exaltation.¹⁹

Lehman Strauss, author, widely traveled dispensational Bible teacher:

Every claim of Jesus Christ, including the confessions of other men, that He was the Son of God is a remarkable expression that shows the eternal relationship between the Father and the Son. His title of Son of God is not based upon His Virgin Birth. He did not become the Son of God by virtue of His birth in the manger of Bethlehem, but He was Son of God by inherent right in eternity past. . . . There is no support in favor of the doctrine that the divine relationship between the Father and the Son had its beginning at the Incarnation. . . . There was never a time when this relationship between the Father and the Son had a beginning. The title of this chapter might well be "The *Eternal* Sonship of Christ."²⁰

Robert P. Lightner, author, professor of systematic theology at Dallas Theological Seminary:

The term “Son of God” describes the Savior’s relationship to God the Father. His relationship to God is eternal and was not affected by the incarnation. “Son of God” is not less, but far more than a name or title. It is another way of setting Christ forth as the only begotten. The second member of the Godhead did become the Son of man, the son of David, and the son of Mary when He became incarnate but He was the Son of God from all eternity.²¹

John F. Walvoord, author, theologian, and for many years president of Dallas Theological Seminary:

The consensus of the great theologians of the church and the great church councils is to the effect that Christ has been a Son from eternity; and the theory that He became a Son by incarnation is inadequate to account for the usage of the term. . . . The Scriptures represent Christ as eternally the Son of God by eternal generation. While it must be admitted that the nature of the generation is unique, being eternal, sonship has been used in the Bible to represent the relationship between the first Person and the second Person. . . . The scriptural view of the sonship of Christ, as recognized in many of the great creeds of the church, is that Christ was always the Son of God.²²