

Psalms 2:7 (Alexander Craven Ord) 141456

The Glory of the Person of the Son of God: His Title as the Eternal Life, Chapter 7: On the Introduction of What Is Human Into the Godhead

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And the Denial of Divine Attributes to the Second Man

We have seen, in Phil. 2: 4-10, how the unity of the Person of the Lord is carefully preserved throughout. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." Under this name Jesus, given to Him as man, though implying that He is Jehovah, He is spoken of as in the form of God, and as emptying Himself and taking the form of a servant. So in John 6, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever and the bread which I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." These passages really give no countenance to the old heretical notion of the preexistence of the humanity of Christ; for in the last quoted passage, the Lord in speaking of Himself, alludes to His body as the bread which He gives, and calls it the bread which came down from heaven. Mr. Raven, refusing to admit divine truth, which is infinitely blessed as to our association with Christ in what He was eternally and divinely, through His becoming Man, has been forced (by the endeavor to make out Eternal Life to be "Something" in Eternity, which is not essentially divine,) into reasonings, which, if true, would prove nothing less than humanity in the Godhead. He says

"I believe Eternal Life to be the life of man" (October 12, 1890 – also) As to what it is essentially, it was ever in Him with the Father. . . . This certainly could not be said of the Son of Man as to form, but it could and is as to purpose, and as to all that He is essentially. All I meant by "in essence" was, that it (Eternal Life) was not in form with the Father until the Son became Man, but as I said the being, and, in a sense, the relationship was, but I judge the thought of Eternal Life always had man in view (July 25, 1890).

But what is, "all the Son of Man is essentially" – or Eternal Life, if it is "the life of man"? The "nature," "being," and, "in a sense, the relationship" were there something moreover, inferior to, and yet in His Godhead as the Son. Again he says

"I do not find that the term Eternal Life is employed save in connection with manhood either in the Son or us" (November 2, 1890).

All that in which Eternal Life essentially consists (nature and relationship) was in the Son ever with the Father, and manifested in Him when here after the flesh. But the Eternal Son is a much greater thing than Eternal Life" (July 2nd).

The essentials of the Second Man are, a human relationship with the Father, human righteousness, subjection obedience, dependence, confidence, &c. described by Mr. Raven himself as characteristic of Eternal Life.

Now if these things are true, as existing in Christ before He became incarnate, they make His Godhead altogether distinct, and of a different character, from that of the other persons of the blessed Trinity, who, dwelling in the absolute existence of Godhead, never partook of manhood, and all that is essential to it; so that the unity of the divine nature, in the persons of the Godhead, is completely destroyed. Moreover, these qualities, if existent as constituent elements in the Son, are wholly inconsistent with the true nature of Godhead, and all its essential properties, before manhood was actually assumed and the proper Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ also disappears.

We read in Psa. 2:7, when Christ became man, "Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee"; and again in Luke 1:35, "Therefore also that holy thing that shall be born of Thee shall be called the Son of God." This tells us distinctly that this "being" or "relationship" only commenced with the incarnation; so that it would be wholly false to say that anything of the kind existed in the Son before incarnation; any more than these human properties, of which we have spoken, which are indeed essentials of manhood, and belong to the creature alone and could not exist apart from creature nature, or its assumption by Christ. If they existed previously, they cannot be true human qualities at all, and all the true humanity of Christ and His blessed association with us, in order to represent us in His manhood, is also lost, with all its infinite results in redemption.

He {F. E. Raven} adds that Mr. {A. H.} Rule "does not understand or evades the force of the scripture, 'the Second Man is out of heaven,'" being apparently unaware that all orthodox writers from the earliest ages have used these passages as we have cited them; so that they have been spoken of as "the transference of predicates," that is that the union of the divine and human in the Person of Christ was so perfect, that what was properly predicated as distinctive or descriptive of one nature, when spoken of either as God, or as Man, could be applied to His Person.

Here is where the division of the Person of the Lord (the result of these theories as to eternal life) becomes painfully evident. For in the letter of August 25th, 1890, to Mr. M., given in full in Some Letters of F. E. R., we read

That which was to characterize man was what had been in the Son eternally with the Father, and was in due time revealed in the Second Man, the One out of heaven. But what characterized the Second Man could not include all that was true of a divine Person, as self-existent, having life in Himself, omnipotence omniscience, and many other attributes of a divine Person; and yet it does include what He was morally in righteousness, love, holiness, truth and nearness to the Father.

Yet it is as Man that Scripture constantly and specially applies to Him, the attributes of omniscience and omnipotence; and to detach them from what He is as the Second Man, because of His connection with us, as such is to destroy the unity of His Person, and to deprive us of all the blessing that flows from what He is. He says, "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of

man which is in heaven.”

Certainly this applies self-existence, and what is illimitable to Him as man, as distinctly as when it is said of Him as the Son, using the same term of expression, “The only begotten Son which is” (Ö T<) “in the bosom of the Father.”

If this limit is rightly assigned to one of our blessings in Christ, it is applicable to all; for the principle is stated by Mr. Anstey in a general and absolute way, “We may distinguish between Eternal Life and true Godhead in the person of the Son of God; and we must separate them when we think and speak of what has been communicated to us.” “If Eternal Life cannot be separated from the Godhead of the Son, then we have it not.” The fact is Mr. R. and all who accept his doctrine, including Mr. A. and his cosignatories, have shut themselves up to this conclusion. They admit, and it is impossible to deny, that Scripture speaks of Eternal Life as existing before incarnation. It must be, they say, something distinct from His Godhead, because it is communicated to us. So they affirm there was something in Him before He took flesh that was not Godhead at all, and has to be separated or distinguished from it, and which has also to be distinguished afterwards in His life. This is where their theory has landed them – the result of denying that “the Eternal Life” is a proper and essential attribute of the Person of the Son. (See p. 81 {pp. 127b, 128a, herein}).

Mr. Anstey has placed, not his opponents, but himself and his friends, who “have full fellowship” in his statements, “upon the horns of the dilemma,” as he expresses it. “If Eternal Life cannot be separated from the Godhead of the Son, then we have it not.” Will he tell us when and how this Eternal Life which is not Godhead was created, and how that which is not Godhead came to exist in Godhead? His attempt to separate it from Godhead renders it an unscriptural and delusive fable. And when he declares if it cannot be separated from Godhead he “has it not,” we trust that many eyes will be opened to the consequences of his doctrines. We commend to the attention of these teachers the following extract

But there was that which belonged to the Lord Jesus that was not made – “In Him was life.” It was not only that He could cause a life to exist that had not before existed, but there was a life that belonged to Him from all eternity. “In Him was life.” Not that this life began to be; all else, all creation began to be and it was He that gave them the commencement of their existence.

But in Him was life, a life that was not created, a life that was therefore divine in its nature. It was the reality and the manifestation of this life which were of prime importance to man. Everything else that had been since the beginning of the world was only a creature; but in Him was life. Man was destined to have the display of this life on earth. But it was in Him before He came among men. The light was not called the light of angels, but of men. Nowhere do we find that eternal life is created. The angels are never said to have life in the Son of God. They were kept by divine power, and holy. Theirs is a purely creature life, whereas it is a wonderful fact of revelation that we who believe have the eternal life that was in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and are therefore said to be partakers of the divine nature. This is in no way true of an angel. It is not that we for a moment cease to be creatures, but we have what is above the creature in Christ, the Son of God (“The Word Made Flesh,” Coll. Writings of J. N. D., vol. 21, p. 139).

Mr. Raven appears in one passage to make a difference between what He is as “the last Adam, a life-giving Spirit,” and “the Second Man.” It is as the Second Man that he denies that “all that is true of a divine person as self-existent having life in Himself, omniscience, omnipotence, and many other attributes of a divine person are included” (p. 4). Is there then one part of His humanity dissociated from His Godhead, whilst another part is not so? One part of His humanity, the Second Man, not characterized by omnipotence and omnipresence, because He is thus linked with us; another part only, as last Adam, divinely distinguished or characterized by these divine powers? Into how many parts will this unholy reasoning divide the glorious Person of our Lord? We have had first of all essential life and Eternal Life so divided; and now the last Adam and the Second Man.

All this is indeed deadly and fatal error as regards the Person of Christ, and ruinous in its effect on souls. Can we wonder at one who was recently delivered from these errors saying, “I have lost Christ; i.e. as the alone glorious Object before the soul!

Is this separation continuous, and constant, and eternal?

The Scripture is as careful to maintain the connection of these things, both in the Person of Christ and toward ourselves, as these writers are to dissever it. “All things,” says the apostle (Col. 1:16-18), “were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. And He is the Head of the body, the Church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence.” For all the fullness was pleased to dwell in Him. That is, that the Spirit of God links what He is as Creator and Upholder of the entire universe, to the position which He occupies as Man risen from the dead, and Head of His body; the One in whom all the fullness of the Godhead dwells. So in Eph. 4. He who has gone up on high, and led captivity captive, and received gifts for men, after having first descended into death and the grave, is the same that has ascended far above all heavens, that He might fill all things.

He communicates out of this fullness as Head, all that is needful for the edification of His body, into whom we are to grow up to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. From Him the Head (vv. 15, 16) the whole body is supplied and makes increase according to the effectual working in the measure of every part. Everywhere the apostle insists on this divine fullness being enjoyed by Christ as Man and Head of His body, as the source and spring of all gifts and blessings, and the active energy and sustaining power in His members. It is expressly connected with His body and used for it. Even when life and His divine unity with the Father is brought in, no such separation is made (John 14). “The world seeth Me no more; but ye see Me because I live ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you.” For though He is in the Father, we are in Him, who alone is so in the unity of His divine nature; so that we derive blessedness as well as the revelation of the Father, from His being so.

We have been told indeed before, that the life of Jesus to be manifested in our mortal flesh was human, not divine; but are all the poor bewildered sheep of Christ to be left to the perilous uncertainty and injury of these destructive analyses applied to the Holy One of God? When will the responsible leaders awake to the danger, as well as the dishonor, thus done to the blessed Lord?

The author intimated the similar attack that has been made upon the blessed Person of Christ in Lux Mundi (The Light of the World), by Oxford professors and clergymen which has been followed up by other well-known writers in the Church of England. There also they will find it

taught that Omniscience does not characterize the Second Man; in other words, that He does not know in His human nature what He is cognizant of in His divine, His Person being thus divided. And this is the leading argument of the Rationalists of the present day, in order to weaken and destroy the foundations of Christianity, which has now ("tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon") been endorsed by the leaders of this school among "Brethren."

So that He whose blessed Person we have always been taught was indivisible and indissoluble, is now, by this dreadful dissecting process of the human mind to which it is subjected, divided into two kinds of life, and two kinds of manhood. Mr. Raven alone can tell us when He has these divine attributes, or when or whether they can or cannot be in exercise toward us or in us, or in what aspect He is divested of them. Will he or those writers inform us what is the meaning of being filled with all the fullness of God, as the result of Christ dwelling in the heart by faith? (Eph. 3). How can Christ, who is in heaven, be in us life, or sustain that life in us, save as a divine Person? It may be said, perhaps, that it is by the Holy Ghost He does so; but in the Colossians, where we have "Christ in you, the hope of glory," it is emphatically the power of the life of Christ in the soul, and not the aspect of the Holy Ghost's presence and activity, as the Epistle to the Ephesians. Or will these writers say that the Holy Ghost can be in us and sustaining this life in us as God, and that Christ cannot do so, because He is man?

though we are specially told in this epistle that "in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily"; and "ye are complete in Him" are the very words that follow. Does not "bodily" express His manhood? and our being "complete in Him" (B80DT:X<@4), in whom the fullness (B8ZDT:") of the Godhead dwells {Col. 2:9, 10}, involve, in the most distinct and definite way, our connection with Him in whom we stand as Head? Is not this the Second Man, who Mr. R. says is not characterized by, and does not include the attributes of a divine Person?

We give a further extract from Mr. Darby, on the subject of manhood being out of heaven, and of the unity of the Person of Christ, written when a brother was charged with holding the former doctrine; in consequence of a statement inadvertently made by him in print, subsequently acknowledged and withdrawn, and even the appearance of it repudiated.

Had he (Mr. ____ {C. H. M.}) held the doctrines imputed to him, I for one should have objected to holding communion with him; but, his statements on this point are as plain, as their plainness makes the injustice of his accusers to be evident. But I think His expression objectionable: "The Second Man was, as to His manhood, the Lord from heaven." The objectionableness lies in this, that in ascribing the title of the Lord from heaven, it goes beyond ascribing it to His Person, being man; and by the expression "as to" separates the nature and applies the title to it. Had he said He was Lord from heaven in His manhood, he would have been perfectly right, and he who denied it would be unquestionably a heretic, but "as to" separates the manhood, and thus the words cannot refer to His person, who was there in manhood. Dr. C. does not see the difference, and quotes them as "in His manhood," condemning them alike as the same. That Mr. ____ ever asserted that His manhood came down from heaven, is, as far as I can discern, simply a false accusation. The Second Man was the Lord from heaven. That Scripture states. And it goes a great deal farther (in predicating of the nature what belongs to the Person) than the ignorance of Dr. Carson seems to be aware of.

"This," says Jesus, "is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die." "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." Now I fully admit that this language deals with His human nature, His flesh having in view the union of the two natures in His person, just as He says, "The Son of Man which is in heaven." He begins by, "I am the living bread," and then passes on to the bread being His flesh. Still this union is so true that He speaks of Himself as the living bread which came down from heaven, and declares that this bread is His flesh. Hence as mere human expressions, the divine man, and the heavenly man, can be used as expressing what is blessedly true, though they may not have the accuracy of Scripture. The true humanity of Jesus is fundamental, but he who would so separate the natures in the Person as to touch such expressions as the sixth of John gives, is on very slippery ground (Collected Writings 10:76-78).

It will be seen that what has been referred to as confounding the Nature with the Person, Mr. Darby calls "ignorance of Scripture," which predicates "of the Nature what belongs to the Person." For in this way Scripture constantly speaks of Him, as regards both His human and divine nature, so that in reality it is condemning its statements. "A man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land" (Isa. 32:2); applying thus His divine power and protection and the blessedness of the shelter found in Him, to that wondrous Man of whom alone such infinite grace could be predicted. This mode of expression is even extended to His body, as not only Mary Magdalene says, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him" (John 20:13); but the angels (who delighted to show the honor in which they held that Person, and how sacred in their eyes was the spot where His body had lain) say to the women at the sepulchre, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." But, above all, this is seen in the words that are used by Jehovah Himself, "Awake, O sword, against My shepherd, and against the Man that is My Fellow, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zech. 13:7). And He who is born in Bethlehem – the Judge of Israel smitten with the rod upon the cheek – the ruler in Israel – is the One "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:1, 2).

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