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Address given by Mr Henry Sant on

“Martin Luther and the Eternal Sonship of Christ”

I would like to begin by reading a portion of Holy Scripture, reading the second Psalm. The subject matter we are considering this afternoon is most profound. When we think of Holy Scripture there are two greatest mysteries that are revealed to us there; the mystery of God, that God is one “Hear, O Israel; the LORD our God is one LORD” [Deuteronomy 6 v 4] and yet God subsists in three Persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. And back in Job the question is put “Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?” [Job 11 v 7]. That is the first, that is the greatest of mysteries, God. And the second mystery is like unto it, which is God manifest in the flesh. “Without controversy” says Paul “great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh” [1 Timothy 3 v 16]. And what we have come to consider today touches on both of these great doctrines; Martin Luther on Christ’s eternal Sonship. As I have sought to prepare this paper, and I do intend to read the paper, because I want to quote extensively from Luther himself, but as I have prepared and done a measure of reading, I have found it truly profitable. One thinks of the words of Psalm 104 and verse 34 “My meditation of him shall be sweet” says the Psalmist, and I do trust that what we have to say today concerning the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ will be sweet.

The doctrine of Christ’s eternal Sonship is stated clearly in Gospel Standard Article number 5, “We believe that he existed from all eternity as the eternal Son of the God”. I also quote from a more ancient doctrinal statement, the fourth century Nicene Creed, “I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds. God of gods. Light of light. Very God of very God. Begotten not made. Being of one substance with the Father.”

Before coming to the Protestant Reformer Martin Luther I want to say something about the significance of the doctrine of the Eternal Sonship to us as a connexion of Strict and Particular Baptist churches. It was in the mid-19th century that the doctrine really began to distinguish Gospel Standard churches from other Strict Baptists. At the time certain Strict Baptists were denying the orthodox truth of Christ’s eternal Sonship, although they said that they believed in the Trinity in terms of the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit being one God in three persons. However, they said that the Word was not the eternal Son of the eternal Father, but there was a time when he became the Son. Some would place this in the incarnation, others in Christ’s resurrection, and others in his ascension and exaltation at the right hand of the Father. A fourth group would speak of Christ becoming the Son of God by his offices in the covenant of grace.

This afternoon, let no-one think that this is an old controversy peculiar to the Strict Baptists 150 years ago and that it really has no relevance to us today. On the contrary, it is currently a hot theological topic in North America, and recently Matthew Hyde drew my attention to a significant book published in 2017 entitled “Retrieving Eternal Generation”. In one recommendation of this book we are told “The Christian teaching of the eternal generation of the Son has from the beginning engendered detailed scrutiny and fierce opposition, and again in the present, the doctrine is causing a great controversy”. And at times the controversy surfaces here in the UK. At the beginning of this present century, the late Robert Reymond, a Presbyterian theologian, spoke at the School of Theology of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, London, on the subject “Demolishing a Flawed Christology”. At that time, in his work on systematic theology Dr Reymond denied the truth of the

eternal generation of the Son of God. The summer 2001 edition of "The Sinner Saved", the journal of the Huntingtonian Press, was given over entirely to a rebuttal of the heterodox views of Reymond. (If any of you are interested, I do have some back numbers of that particular magazine with me today.) However, to be fair, I must say that I understand that before he died Dr Reymond did come to a more orthodox view of this doctrine. Another popular author who has definitely denied the eternal Sonship of Christ is John McArthur. Although, like Reymond, I think he has also subsequently renounced that position. But he still speaks of the denial of eternal Sonship as just a minority opinion and not a heterodox belief. And, I fear that some of his former writings denying the eternal Sonship, such as his Study Bible, are still in wide circulation. Also, A W Pink, whose writings have been very much commended by the Banner of Truth Trust, was another who questioned the eternal Sonship of Christ. In his commentary on Hebrews, remarking on chapter 1 verse 5 "For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?" Pink says, "This latter expression has occasioned not a little difficulty to some of the commentators and in the past has been made the battleground of fierce theological fights. The issue raised was the eternal Sonship of Christ. Though Scripture clearly teaches the Godhead and absolute Deity of the Son of God [Hebrews 1 v 8, etc.] and affirms his eternity [1 John 1 v 1], it nowhere speaks of his eternal Sonship, and where Scripture is silent it behoves us to be silent too".

Well, those are the words of Pink. However we would say that the Scripture is not silent, but plainly declares Christ's eternal generation as the Son of God. The term "eternal generation" is significant in that it indicates that the Son is eternally begotten of the Father. Rather than "eternal generation" some prefer the term "eternal begottenness". We had it in our reading earlier, in John 1 v 14 "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" and then again [verse 18] "the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father". We also see the truth of eternal generation in the language of Proverbs chapter 8 verses 22-25, where Christ speaks as the wisdom of God "The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth". Here Christ twice speaks of being "brought forth" before the work of creation; that is an eternal generation, or eternal begottenness. In Micah we read of him "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" [chapter 5 v 2]. Observe also the language of Proverbs 30 v 4 "Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?"

Before we consider Martin Luther's position in detail let me give you a taste of his writings. In a sermon on John 1 verse 14, referring to the words "the only begotten of the Father", Luther declares "That Jesus Christ is very God and very man, the only begotten of the Father, begotten of him in eternity, and born of the virgin Mary in time, and that believers in him are redeemed from sin and all evil, this is our Christian faith. This alone makes us Christians. It makes us adopted sons of God, but not his natural children, for Christ our Head alone is the natural, true and only begotten Son of God the Father". If I might here introduce a personal note, a text made precious to me and that has convinced me as the truth of the eternal Sonship as a Biblical doctrine is found in the Second Epistle of John verse 9 "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son". Surely, if there is no eternal generation of the Son there can be no eternal Father. We might ask, what then of the doctrine of the Trinity? Both Dr Gill and Mr Philpot assert that the doctrine of the Trinity stands or falls with the eternal Sonship of Christ.

I want to turn first of all to J C Philpot and his seminal work on the "True, Proper, and Eternal Sonship of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Only-begotten Son of God", first published in 1861. Referring in this book to the term the eternal generation of the Son of God, as used in the deliberations of those

Church Fathers who drew up the Nicene Creed in AD325, condemning the heresy of the Arians, Mr Philpot says "By it therefore they meant this great and glorious truth, that Jesus is "the Son of the Father in truth and love" [2 John v 3]; "the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father [John 1 v 18]; "his own Son" [Romans 8 v 32]; "his only begotten Son" [John 3 v 16]; that he was this from all eternity; and that not by virtue of any compact or covenant or foreview, or constitution of his complex person as God-Man, but by his very mode of subsistence as a Person in the Trinity".

With Mr Philpot this was not simply a matter of theological truth, but involved a real and vital experience of salvation. This is why I call his book a seminal work. It is the experimental nature of the book that makes it so attractive to the believer in Christ's eternal Sonship. Commenting on the words at the end of the First General Epistle of John "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life", Philpot says "Carefully examine the mind and meaning of the Holy Ghost in this remarkable declaration, for it is well worth weighing word by word. "We know" says holy John "that the Son of God is come" [1 John 5 v 20], but how do we know that the Son of God is come? By the personal and experimental manifestation of him as the Son of God to our soul". Philpot then refers to Galatians 1 verses 15 and 16 "...when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me". Surely the telling words here are those words "to reveal his Son", not "to me", but "in me".

In the preface to his book, Philpot speaks of how this truth of Christ's eternal Sonship was made a blessed reality in his own soul's experience. During a period of sickness and weakness in November 1844 he was much blessed in reading the Puritan John Owen's "Meditations on the Glory of Christ" and was then favoured with a manifestation of Christ to his soul. Philpot tells us he saw nothing by his bodily eye, but saw Christ by the eye of faith. He then declares "And now came that which makes me so firm a believer in the true and real Sonship of Jesus. I was reading the account of the transfiguration of Jesus (Matthew 17) and when I came to the words 'this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him' they were sealed with such power on my heart and I had such a view of him being the true and real Son of God as I shall never forget. The last clause 'hear ye him' was especially sealed upon my soul and faith and obedience sprang up in sweet response to the command. I did indeed want to hear him as he Son of God, and that as such he might ever speak to my soul".

Finally with regard to Mr Philpot, I quote from the closing words of his book "It is little to me what those may say and do who fight against the true and proper Sonship of the Lord of life and glory. It is not against us who seek to exalt his worthy name that they fight, but against him whom the Father has set as king upon his holy hill of Zion, and to whom he has said "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee" [Psalm 2 v 6-7]. It would be their mercy if they could obey the heavenly warning 'Kiss the Son lest he be angry', but whether so or not 'Blessed are all they that put their trust in him' [Psalm 2 v 12]".

These references to verses in the second Psalm really introduce us to Martin Luther's writings on Christ's eternal Sonship, which of course is my principal subject in this address. And I want to begin with Luther's commentary on Psalm 2 and shall then move on to his exposition of the Lord's High Priestly prayer in John 17. Firstly, we need to remember that Dr Luther's commentaries and expositions are based upon the courses of lectures and homilies he gave at the University of Wittenberg, where for over 30 years he was Professor of Biblical Exegesis. He did not write out his lectures, but spoke freely from a carefully prepared brief outline. This was his practice in both lecturing and preaching and, often with the help of his friends, the notes taken by his hearers were then gathered together and reduced into a regular form for publishing.

Let's turn then to Psalm 2 and verses 6 and 7 and the words "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." I am particularly interested in the words at the end of verse 7 "Thou art my Son;

this day have I begotten thee” and Luther’s comment on these words. The Apostle Paul quotes these words three times in the New Testament and we need to mark the significance of that repetition. What we have there at the end of verse 7 in Psalm 2 is repeated by the Apostle Paul first in his sermon at Antioch in Pisidia, in Acts 13 v 33, and then twice in his Epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 1 v 5 and chapter 5 v 5. Remember there is no vain repetition anywhere in Holy Scripture, no idle words, and so repetition is most significant. We have, of course, a four-fold Gospel. The quotation that we have in Hebrews 1 v 5 is most interesting when we consider the context, because in that opening chapter we have a remarkable statement concerning the Deity and eternal Sonship of Christ. Let me just quote there from Hebrews 1 v 5-8 “For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom”. In the light of this Luther says of the second Psalm “This Psalm is one of the most important Psalms of the whole Psalter, which is sufficiently proved upon the authority of the Apostle Paul, who when speaking of the divine generation says ‘Unto which of the angels saith he at any time, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee?’”

As we consider these verses (Psalm 2 v 6 & 7) I want to observe two things. First of all the proclamation of God, and then secondly the Person of Christ, or rather his eternal Sonship. Firstly, the proclamation of God. We have this in verse 6 “Yet have I set” says God. The pronoun is really emphatic, literally “I, even I”. Thus we can read it “Yet have I, even I, set”. It is God himself who speaks and who acts. Remember how he spoke in creation and by divine fiat called all things into being. You are familiar with the language of Genesis 1 “God said, and it was so... God said, and it was so”. “By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the hosts of them by the breath of his mouth... For he spake, and it was done; he commanded and it stood fast [Psalm 33 v 6 & 9]. That was the very manner in which God created. He spoke all things into being. God also speaks, and by his Word, accomplishes salvation in the souls of sinners. We read in 2 Corinthians 4 v 6 “God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath in shined in our heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” What was done in the physical resurrection of Lazarus is also the case in the spiritual resurrection of every elect sinner. In John 11 v 43 and 44 we read that Christ “...cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth, And he that was dead came forth”. And by his Spirit Christ still speaks life into souls that are dead in trespasses and in sins.

Now, turning back to Psalm 2, observe the power and authority of God. In verse 4 we read “He that sitteth in the heavens”. In fact, verses 1-3 and 4-5 contrast the ravings of unbelievers and the sovereignty of God. It is God who says “The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool” [Isaiah 66 v 1]. And the Psalmist acknowledges “...our God is in the heavens, he hath done whatsoever he pleased” [Psalm 115 v 3]. So in this proclamation in the second Psalm, what is it that God says? “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion”. It matters not that men dispute divine sovereignty, for all is settled; and that is the force of the word “yet”. “All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?” [Daniel 4 v 35]. It is as the Son of the living God that all authority belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ. He says, at the end of Matthew, “All power [*authority*] is given unto me in heaven and in earth” [Matthew 28 v 18]. And then in Ephesians 1 v 22 - 23 we are told that God “hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.” This is the proclamation of God.

Turning in the second place to the Person of Christ, and particularly his eternal Sonship. In verse 7 of Psalm 2 we have the Son’s response to the Father, in which he declares the words of the Father concerning himself “I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee”. Luther observes “The words of the Father express an **only** (emphasised), an

only begotten Son. He said unto me **only** (again emphasised) saith Christ, not unto many, Thou art my **only** Son. Distinguishing, most certainly, by such remarkable and particular words, this one especial son from all others: concerning which Psalm 89 v 6 saith, 'Who among the sons of God can be likened unto God?' (*note: the AV renders it differently*). As if he had said, There are many sons of God, but only one among them who is God. And who is like unto him?". To the Jews Sonship in no sense suggested subordination as we see in their response to what Christ had said concerning his works and the works of his Father in John 5 v 18 "Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he had not only broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God". So it was that subsequently, before Pilate, the Jews charged Christ with blasphemy "We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God" [John 19 v 7]. Sonship means equality with the Father. Furthermore, on Psalm 2 v 7 Luther says "And this is the scope of the whole Gospel; that Christ is the Son of God. As in Matthew 16 v 15 and 16 '...whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God' and upon this Rock it is that the Church is built".

Listen again to the words of the great Protestant Reformer, he says "For Christ came to plant and establish that faith whereby men believe him to be the Son of God". To Luther the eternal Sonship is a fundamental truth of the Gospel. The Faith once delivered to the saints [Jude v 3]. It is in Luther's comments on the words "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee" that we see his firm, sure and definite belief in the eternal generation of the Son of God. Here he identifies with the Fathers of the early Church. Luther declares "How discerningly and worthily have all the holy Fathers interpreted this passage 'This day have I begotten thee'. That is, say they, in eternity, for that is an eternal generation which is born and will be born without end. And to be a son is to be born of a father, but Christ neither began to be born, nor will ever cease to be born; but is ever being born in a most present nativity. He is rightly said therefore to be begotten 'today': that is, being always begotten. For 'today' neither implies a yesterday nor a tomorrow, but always a present time, a today." It is evident that "today" is to be understood as God's day, the day of eternity, which with God is all one day. A perpetual day, as it never began to be, so it can never cease to be. Again Luther says "Today is here to be taken for God's time not ours, for God is not there speaking with us, but with him who is with God beyond time". I consider these statements by the German Reformer as most important in the whole controversy over the eternal generation of the Son. Here we see that the eternal Sonship of Christ is as much a Reformation doctrine as it was a Patristic doctrine. Furthermore, paraphrasing the end of Psalm 2 v 7 Luther speaks of the sum of Christ's doctrine as the Lord saying "'God the eternal Father begat me from all eternity'. This is the highest article of our faith. This is the ground and chief article of the Gospel and therefore it is that Satan so furiously attacks it".

Let us now turn to Christ's High Priestly prayer in John 17. Here I shall simply refer to Luther's comments on a selection of verses. As we have been told by Mr Playfoot, the Gospel Standard Trust have just published the whole of that exposition and copies are available here this afternoon. Verses 1-3 "These words spake Jesus and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent". Expounding these verses and referring specifically to verse 3 "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent", Luther says "Thus then you have this full and golden sentence as an article, asserting that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And moreover, teaching and setting forth the benefits and blessings of him. That we might know what we have in him, and might through him rightly know God and learn the way that leads to him. In order that we might with glad and joyful mind trust in him only; which is what no other doctrine under heaven ever taught".

And then verse 5 "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was". As he begins his exposition of this verse Luther says "Here again is

a great and expressive text, concerning the divinity of Christ". Luther then paraphrases the request that Christ is here making: "For what else is here said, than which others might have expressed in a multitude of words thus 'Dear Father, glorify me who am thine only Son from everlasting, of the same divinity, essence, and glory with thyself'".

Verse 6 "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word". Commenting on the first part of this verse Luther says "Hence it appears to me, that there is not a more difficult article of faith and to believe that this Man Christ is truly the Son of God. And the reason is this, when we believe this, then we have gained the victory. For we think thus: Whatever Christ does, whatever he speaks to me, promises me, or gives me, and with whatever thing he draws, calls me forth and comforts me and strengthens me, or when he pardons my sins and bears with me, etc., all these same things the Father does, as being that one God. What hurt then can death and the Devil, together with all afflictions and adversities, do me? But this reason cannot apprehend; and here the Devil comes in and helps it on by saying that a line and a difference must be drawn between God and Christ. And that by two different considerations: that we are to look for Christ upon the cross, but for God in the heaven above. And thus at last we are brought to torment ourselves". Mark here how Luther speaks of Christ's eternal Sonship as a most difficult article of faith to truly believe, and one main reason is that Satan vehemently opposes it. You might think of the temptations of the Lord and how Satan comes with that question "If thou be the Son of God", "If thou be the Son of God" [Matthew 4 v 3 & 6].

Verse 10 "And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them". Luther expounds these words by saying "This no creature can say before God. And these words are not only to be understood concerning that which the Father gave him in the world, but concerning that one divine essence which is common to himself with the Father. He does not speak with respect to his disciples and Christians only, but he embraces at once all things that the Father possesses; his eternal and omnipotent essence, life, truth, righteousness etc... He who has Christ has the Father also, together with all grace, and heavenly blessings, and life eternal".

Finally, in John 17 v 24 observe how Christ does not make a request, but declares his sovereign will. He is equal with the Father and their will is one and the same. "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world". In expounding this last clause Luther paraphrases it thus, "They shall see this glory, that they may know that I am the Son; not as sent into the world, and born of a virgin, but thine only Son whom thou hast loved from the foundation of the world. That is that I am equally with thee, the one God, and begotten from everlasting'. For God could not love him more, than by giving him an equal and eternal divinity. All these things I have now preached and believed, but they are still seen through a glass darkly, and do not shine forth in all their splendour, therefore they are diligently to be declared and set forth by the Word, (as Christ himself had hitherto done), until the veil be taken away and we behold them openly and face to face".

In closing, I want to go back to Psalm 2 and verses 6 and 7 "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee". I spoke earlier of the proclamation of God and the Person of Christ, or more particularly his eternal Sonship, and now in closing I want to consider the people of God. They are the redeemed of Christ, who are spoken of in verse 6 "I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion". As King Christ has demonstrated his power by accomplishing the salvation of his people. He came "to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness" (Daniel 9 v 24). Having done all of this, Christ by his Spirit effectually brings his redeemed to himself. They come to Zion: "And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee

away" [Isaiah 35 v 10]. Among those who have come to Zion and experienced the blessings of salvation is Martin Luther. Rather should we say that salvation came to him. The secret of Luther's greatness is to be seen in the way in which God worked the principles of the Protestant Reformation into his soul's experience. As the historian Merle D'Aubigne makes plain, before ever the Reformation was unfolded in the history of Europe it was rooted in the things that transpired in the heart of the Reformer. In the language of Galatians 1 v 15 it pleased God to reveal his Son in Martin Luther. Therefore, as with J C Philpot over three centuries after him, Luther's vehement contending for the truth of Christ's eternal Sonship was not just a matter of orthodox doctrine, but was fundamentally experimental.

Last of all, I want to refer you to Luther's commentary on Galatians, and 2 verses in particular, where Luther's comments indicate the importance of faith, and how this is more than intellectual assent, but involves deep exercise of soul. Firstly, Galatians 2 v 20 "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me". Notice: it is the faith of the Son of God. Here Luther speaks of the spiritual union of saving faith; the faith that lays hold of the Lamb. "Faith," he says, "therefore must be purely taught, namely that by faith thou art so entirely and nearly joined unto Christ, that he and thou art made, as it were, one person; so that thou mayest boldly say: I am now one with Christ, that is to say, Christ's righteousness, victory and life are mine. And again, Christ may say: I am that sinner, that is, his sins, death etc are mine, because he is united and joined unto me, and I unto him. For by faith we are so joined together that we are become one flesh and one bone, as Ephesians 5 v 30 'We are members of Christ's body, of his flesh and of his bones'". Luther says further "So Christ living and abiding in me, taketh away and swalloweth up all evils which vex and afflict me. This union, or conjunction, then is the cause that I am delivered from the terror of the law and sin, am taken out of myself, and am translated into Christ and his kingdom, which is a kingdom of grace, righteousness, peace, joy, life, salvation, and eternal glory. Whilst I thus abide and dwell in him what evil is there that can hurt me?"

The second passage is the end of Galatians 1 v 16, those words "...to reveal his Son in me". Luther remarks "It is an easy matter to say, that the Gospel is nothing else but the revealing of the Son of God, or the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and not the revealing of the law. But in the agony and conflict of conscience, to hold this fast and to practice it indeed, it is a hard matter, yea to them also that be most exercised therein". O may we each be truly and spiritually exercised in this great doctrine of Christ's eternal Sonship and believe it not simply historically, because it is a Gospel Standard Article, but recognise the vital necessity of a revelation of Christ the Son of God in our souls. We need the inward experience of divine grace; "...faith of the operation of God" [Colossians 2 v 12]. Christ said "Behold, the kingdom of God is within you" [Luke 17 v 21]. Remember Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi and the Lord's response "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" [Matthew 16 v 16-17].

In seeking to deal with the doctrine of the eternal Sonship of Christ I realise how I have taken up a most profound subject, and here there is a great deal that is difficult and hard for us to comprehend and understand. However, this is all precious truth concerning the doctrines of God and of the Person of Christ, and these are surely the things Luther had in mind when he said that "doctrine is heaven". May you and I also find our heaven here. Remembering that the "Lamb is all the glory of Immanuel's land". I will conclude with those final words of the second Psalm "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." Amen.