

## The Sonship Before The Worlds — A Vital Truth

—J. N. Darby

1 John 5:7

Though I have ever held this verse, to say the least, to be very doubtful from the course of the meaning, it is not to discuss this at present I write, but another point of importance — the use of the term Son.

There are those who, objecting to the term Son as applied to the divinity of our Lord, stand on the verge, if not slipping into, confusion of the Persons.

It is the name of the Person, not the nature; and the Person is personally known to us, fully in the revelation of God in Jesus.

But while no man knowing the Son but the Father, the manifestation of God in the Son — in Jesus — makes the language of man scarce preservable from error, if we wish to affirm things *separately*, of the natures when affirmed about the Son, yet is that which is revealed very distinct, but it is spoken about the Person into which the man was brought, and therefore is rightly spoken of Jesus, and the connecting point of faith, not to know there is a Son, but that Jesus is the Son of God.

Nevertheless the works of God as such are directly attributed to the *Son* before the incarnation of, or rather in, Jesus, and therefore we are justified (much more than justified) in speaking of the Son as we do in the Trinity.

Thus Hebrews 1 has "spoken to us by the Son... by whom also He made the worlds." We are therefore justified in speaking of the Son as before the worlds.

Again in Colossians 1 where His whole personal glory is brought out — "In whom (His dear Son) we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins; who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: for by Him were all things created which are in heaven and upon earth... all things were created by Him (i.e., the Son) and for Him; and He is before all things, (the present state) and by Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body (His official glory), the Church, ...the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence. For it pleased — not the Father, this much misleads, but — the Godhead that in Him (the Son) should all fulness dwell (to wit, in Jesus) — for in Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

The Father dwelt in Him, and the Holy Ghost was upon, in all its fulness of indwelling presence.

Could there, I need scarce say, be separation, but He was not the Father, nor the Holy Ghost, but the Son.

Though He did His works by the Spirit, and the Father that dwelt in Him did the works, all fulness dwelt in Him (Jn. 14:10); He *was* the Son, and by Him all things reconciled, His actual efficient work.

In a word, God was in Christ, but there again we have the warrant for the speaking the name of His Person as revealed to us of the Son as before the worlds, "In whom..." (2 Cor. 5:19; Col. 1:14).

Again that our Lord was addressed as the Son in His Godhead is further manifest as it is said and written, "Unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever, a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom" (He. 1:8).

They therefore seem to err who do not give the title of Son to our Lord as connected with His Godhead, if they say this name is known *to us* only through His manifestation in the flesh (Jn. 17:6; 1 Tim. 3:16).

I believe so surely, both of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost alike unknown to us before we knew them by the indwelling and revelation of Jesus, *God manifest (in the flesh)*, illustrating His character *and* opening out the fulness more revealingly.

I feel it would be opening a gap for evil to acquiesce any further in this, for the Scripture does not acquiesce in it, though as stated below it is not only sound but blessed and glorious truth, but it is better to acquiesce in nothing but Scripture, for one does not know where it would carry one.

The Word was personally known to us as the Son revealing the Father by the Spirit, and we beheld that the glory of the Word was the glory even in Jesus of the only begotten with a Father, His nature, inheritance and dignity the same, though while humbled He gave the glory all to Him in all that is revealed in this (Jn. 1).

I fear using the fountain of blessing and glory in men's cavils, distortion, and pride.

But I say we are scripturally justified, and bound to silence these cavils, in speaking of the Son as acting in His creative capacity in the Godhead before the worlds, although we know that Person, or any Person, by His incarnation in which centred the unfolding of the mystery.

But we are bound to hold to this most important and essential (strictly speaking essential) truth as connected with the revelation of anything and subjection to any truth at all, for all blessing flows from believing and receiving from the Father, by the Son and through the Holy Ghost — thus the revealed, known and worshipped source of all blessing, the sum of the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh.

Nor is it less important that we should understand Son to be the name of the Person, not of the nature, for as we see that by Him He made the worlds, God over all blessed forevermore, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day and for ever," competent to sit in the glory of His Father's throne, and sitting there in the glory which He had with Him before the world was (Heb. 13:8; Jn. 17:5).

So also we know that "God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law." Nothing can more wonderfully magnify the law than this. "Then shall the Son also Himself be subject to Him that did put all things under Him" (Gal. 4:4; 1 Cor. 15:28).

If we ask, How can this be? We have the evidence of that in the fact of His having been so before; and thus the Lord secures and settles our faith, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit bringing us into blessing by giving us the facts of faith realized when they might be difficult of intelligence as to their internal possibility from our narrow nature and might be said to be contrary to natural possibility.

So it is written, "The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour" (1 Jn. 4:14).

If we say He were not the Son till the incarnation, then do I utterly lose the link of connection of His being sent from above, for then were it only after He was a Man in the world that He was sent about as a Man, but no, He was sent *into* the world — not to multiply passages, which are innumerable, for our connection with God hangs upon it.

If therefore the name Word be applied to our Lord previously so as to deny the relationship of Son instead of, as I have said, further illustrating *what* He is, whom none knoweth but the Father, then I say that is using the testimony of "the brightness of His glory" to destroy a distinct glory and the first glory and blessing of Christianity, i.e. in relation to us.

Moreover the full glory of our Lord's headship hangs upon the recognition of this truth, for as Firstborn of every creature it is by Him all things were created. So that the headship of creation in the Son rests upon this "for by Him..." (Col. 1:16).

Hence we strike at the sphere of our Lord's glory if we strike at the creative Sonship.

It is most important therefore as regards our relationship to God — that first link in the chain that brings us to God, gives us fellowship with the Father, and is the spring therefore of *all* this very point.

The Father sent the Son... it is *what* each were, the Sender and the Sent. I know nothing previous to this.

It is the Son that is the "brightness," only I did not *know* this nor Him till the incarnation, nor did a Gentile till the resurrection, nor indeed any till it pleased God to reveal it in Him, though there are full glimpses of it and statements in the Old Testament (Heb. 1:3).

Nor did I know the Father a bit more, nor the Holy Spirit in His indwelling, though holy men spake by Him.

No more than I know the Son till taught of Him (though He made the worlds), nor the Father till the Son reveal Him.

But the office of Christianity is to reveal the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, to make known this relationship in the Godhead (in our enjoyment of the results) into which creature is brought in blessing in the intelligent, Spirit-taught and quickened Church the personal fulness of Him who being such filleth all in all because the fulness dwelt in Him (Eph. 1:23).

Most important as regards His glory because the creative power is thus associated with redemptive power — is associated with, as *the basis of the headship* glory.

That Proverbs 30:1-6 is a most important passage, humbling us to profit, and yet opening to faith what man cannot enter into — a very important passage.

I have made this memorandum not to prove (it is known by communion in my own soul, i.e., to myself, communion with the Father by Him), but to show its importance because of the destructiveness of breaking the blessed link. The Word is our most important revelation of what He the Lord is — most important.

The Son is another most important revelation of what He, Jesus, is — the revelation, the name, the truth of His relationship in person in God, or in the Godhead.

If we do not see Him in this with the Father, we *lose all the value of it* in Him as incarnate.

It is another revelation about Him...

No one can give me the partakings of the divine nature. No one can call me into this relationship in integral blessing unless he be in it vitally, unless he be in it in His union with the Father... (2 Pe. 1:4).

Therefore the holy thing born of the virgin is called the Son of God, and in Him the fulness is manifested ever of God, and yet we are adopted into it further.

Officially the Word, might I not say, constitutes the apostleship, the Son the priesthood of Christ, both exercised as a Man, but in both competent for it from their respective characters. In a word, He is the Son.

As to any question arising from the term "begotten," it is only weakness itself, for if we argue from the *Word*, He was a Son before He was begotten, for the resurrection was the day He was begotten, yet was He not a Son while walking on the earth?

When He made the worlds He was a Son. I know Him as a Son in all that He is, and His acts, through some of them here. "Though He *were* a Son" — I see it as clearly as God's own truth, and it is in this I have to be receptive of truth by God in grace, not judging by my poor incapable intellect (Heb. 5:8).

The love of the truth is a great matter in subjection of spirit, not to lay down the imaginations of man, but to be thankful for the communion of God, and not to depart, or bear departure from the Scriptures.

When we have to speak, God's Spirit will teach us what to say. As for me, I feel I may err in every word. I resist utterly when the truth of God is set aside, yea I trust ever will, by His grace.

As for me myself, I am but as the beasts that perish incapable of these things to know them. As revealed they are all my blessing, for God is revealed (reveals Himself) in them to me. So that one is taught of God's Spirit. I could not depart from them. I hold them fast with life. They are between me and my God in thought. I defend them and I do not discuss them with men as questions. I speak of matters of faith which have been made known by faith to me, as God gives me utterance, and I recur to His word to guard as it teaches them where His Spirit is. I hold it vital to hold the Sonship before the worlds. It is the truth.

#### **The Impeccable Christ (4)**

—Stephen Hulshizer

It is truly a sorrowing experience to read a statement such as, "Jesus had to overcome genuine forbidden desires." This type of thinking is the fruit that springs from the seed of the Kenosis theory. One even hesitates to respond to such thoughts; however, if left unanswered one fears the outcome among the Lord's people. Above all is the desire to see Christ exalted above such ideas of men.

The word "temptation," as we know, can have several meanings. One is to "try, test, or prove," while the other would have the idea of "solicitation to do evil." There is no error associated with the fact that Christ was both "proven" and "solicited to do evil." The error lies in the thought of "forbidden desires," which can only be from the lusts of the fallen nature (1 Jn. 2:16). In all but three cases in the New Testament (Lk. 22:15; Phil. 1:23; 1 Thes. 2:17) *lust* carries a negative connotation. The underlying cause, or root of lust is *dissatisfaction*. Men lust for things, or other individuals because they are dissatisfied with what they currently have. It was the dissatisfaction of Adam and Eve with God's provisions and their current state, that lured them into the eating of the forbidden fruit.

It is important to see that sin had entered creation as a result of Satan's dissatisfaction (Ezek. 28:14-19; Isa. 14:12-14). Sin as a controlling principle had entered Adam and Eve *prior* to the outward manifestation of eating the fruit. Adam and Eve would never have been lured by Satan's solicitation to do evil, if dissatisfaction had not been present. The eating of the fruit was only the first outward expression of what had transpired inwardly. One of the problems with the thinking of man, and even with Christians who still have the sin nature, is that our frame of reference is what we are (sinful humanity). We assume that evil desires were a normal part of unfallen humanity. We need to view things more with the eyes of a Holy God.

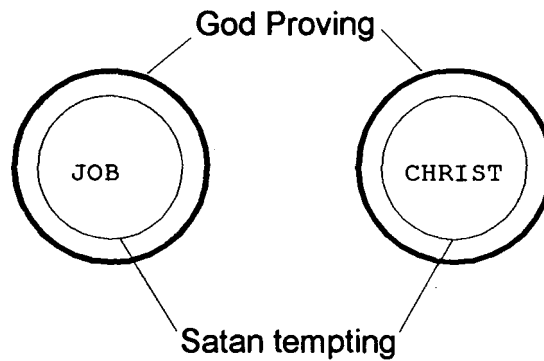
In James 1:13-17 the subjects of temptation and lust are addressed. Here we see two types of temptation. One is *external*, or that which involves a solicitation to do evil, or a trial. The second is *internal*, and involves enticement by one's own lust or dissatisfaction. God cannot be enticed by evil, nor does He solicit anyone to do evil. To say that Jesus Christ had forbidden desires, or was enticed by evil, would imply that He was not God in union with man. It would also imply that He was dissatisfied with His current position and/or condition. Could God, who knows the thoughts and intents of the heart, look down upon His "dissatisfied" Son and say, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased"? To imply that He could, would be to say that the "man" Christ Jesus was distinct from the Son, and would therefore create a dual personality. Jesus Christ was truly human, but always in perfect union with His divine nature. We, again because of our sin tainted minds, want to view lust as that which is not sin. Christ Himself said that for a man to lust after a woman, that he had committed adultery with her already in his heart (Mt. 5:28). Away with such thoughts that our Blessed Lord ever had forbidden desires, for His mind was pure and holy, and He knew no sin.

### *Our High Priest*

Perhaps one of the most misunderstood, and misused texts to support the teaching that Christ was tempted *just as we are*, but did not sin, are those references dealing with His high priestly work. They are found in Hebrews 2:18 and 4:15. It is implied from these references that Christ understands our internal temptations since he had the same "forbidden desires," although He did not sin. A short look at these verses would be helpful. From 2:17 it is essential to see that He is not sympathizing with our temptations or our sin, but with our weakness and frailty. Brother Kelly states this well. "The sympathy of Christ is associated with His priesthood on high. He sympathizes not with sin, nor with sinners as such, but with the *suffering saints of God*". He also notes "His sympathy is with the regenerate in their weakness, who hate sin, who have to endure the contradiction of the world." (William Kelly, "Christ Tempted and Sympathizing, *The Bible Treasury*, Vol 20, pg. 174.) Brother Darby makes the following point. "*I do not wish for sympathy with the sin that is in me; I detest it. I wish to be mortified — judged unsparingly. This the Word does* (Heb. 4:12)" (J. N. Darby, *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible*, England: Stow Hill, pg. 202) It is clear that Christ is in no way sympathizing with our forbidden desires, but with our sufferings which results from our exposure to sin. If it were with our sin and internal temptations of our lust that He sympathizes, He would sympathize with all of mankind, not just the brethren. 1 Peter 2:21-23, 4:12-13 clearly show that Christ suffered as a holy man for righteousness' sake, and as a result of being exposed to sin. It is with suffering that Christ sympathizes. He fully understands the suffering of the godly believer in this present evil world (2 Tim. 3:12, Phil. 1:29). Who more than a holy Christ could sympathize with such sufferings?

The phrase "yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15) has been implied to mean that "He did not sin." He had forbidden desires like we, but "didn't give in" is their interpretation. The word "yet" has been added to the original text. The remaining portion, "without sin," would be better rendered "sin apart." The same original Greek words are used in Hebrews 9:28, where it speaks of Christ returning the second time, "sin apart," or "without reference to sin." He came the first time to be a propitiation for our sins (1 John 2:2; 4:10), His second coming will not be in reference to that work again. The writer of 4:15 is trying to eliminate the very thing that many have implied it to mean. He is telling us that Christ was "tried" in every way as we, but lest we think this includes our sin, he adds "sin apart". We do not come to the throne of grace to receive

sympathy for our lust, we go to the Word and judge it. We go to the throne of Grace when we suffer for righteousness' sake and need enabling grace to endure.



#### *Concentric Circles of Temptation*

God is sovereign and controls all things. Satan may be *allowed* to solicit one to do evil, but God may use it to *prove* the believer. Satan was allowed to solicit Job to curse God (Job 1:11), but God merely used it to prove Job was truly His own (Job 1:12). Christ's temptation in the wilderness again illustrates this point. Christ was led into the wilderness by the *Holy Spirit*. Again Satan was allowed to solicit Christ to do evil. This he did by asking Him to show dissatisfaction with His lowly position and His condition of hunger. God utilized Satan's very attempts to record for us proof that Christ was truly the holy Son of God. Notice too in the wilderness temptation that Satan's attacks were against the *Person of Christ*, "If thou be the Son of God..." (Lk 4:3). In contrast, in the garden Satan never questioned the person of Adam or Eve. God later used Satan's physical attacks upon Christ to accomplish His redemptive plan (Gen. 3:15, Acts 2:23, 1 Cor. 2:8).

#### *Testing of Known Qualities*

The idea that Christ's temptation (testing) was not real, or valid unless He could have sinned, is strictly a product of the mind of man. In real life we test known qualities every day. If I were to sell you a new chair, which I knew full well would hold your weight, wouldn't I still allow you to sit on it to prove its quality? God never questioned the purity of Christ, only Satan and men do that. The testing of Christ in the wilderness was strictly showing us the holy character of Christ.

Who would know more of the sufferings associated with evil solicitation than a holy man? Adam as an innocent man failed so easily that he suffered little, if any. Christ took the tempting to its limit, and nowhere is this more evident than in the garden of Gethsemane. Here the sufferings were not merely those of an innocent man, who would have known nothing of the horribleness of sin, and separation from God. Those sufferings could only be those of a holy man. This is reflected again in His cry, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

May we know more of the sufferings of our Holy Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ! Oh, that sin would so affect us! Meditate on the fact that a holy individual was made sin for us. This scope of such a statement far exceeds that of an innocent Adam dying for fallen man.

#### *Summary*

Jesus Christ was God manifested in the flesh (Jn. 1:1, 14). He was not a diminished God added to a human personality, but God having taken on humanity. As such, He was true Deity and true humanity in one Person. In that His Deity was at all times in union with His humanity, it was, and is impossible for Him to sin.

Since He could not give up His divine attributes, as God is immutable (Mal. 3:6), Jesus Christ was truly Emmanuel, "God with us" (Mt. 1:23). His entrance into this world by the virgin birth did not make Him just like us. He was holy humanity (Lk. 1:35), and as such He could not sin. It was His holiness that gave the death of Calvary its value. This impeccability in no way diminished the temptations to which He was subjected. In fact, the Holy One's exposure to evil caused Him great suffering, such as no merely innocent individual could understand. This One is now our High Priest who sympathizes with us as we suffer for righteousness sake. At no time does He sympathize with our temptations that arise from our lust.

It was His willingness to empty Himself of His outward expression of glory, and to assume the expression of a servant, that is presented as the supreme example of unselfishness in Philippians 2:7. At no time are we taught in Scripture that Christ ceased to be less than God in all His fullness, of Deity, for God cannot be less than Himself.

The Kenosis doctrine has no Biblical support, and offers no spiritual edification to the believer. It's only result has been to diminish the Person of Christ, and to divide the Lord's people. In addition the doctrine has been the very foundation of false movements. In the early 1800's Irving (founder of the Irvingites) prayed for the gift of tongues with no success until he got the idea that Christ was tempted as we, and that we could do what He did by the power of the Holy Spirit. The error associated with this so-called revelation was enormous and great disorder and sorrow followed. Modern day Holiness movements use this doctrine to teach that the believer can obtain a state of practical holiness in this life. Interestingly, this state is one in which *they cannot sin*. To diminish the Person of the Son of God to mere humanity or something less than fully God is only heading in the direction of the liberals. For example, the Seventh Day Adventists are only one step away from the Kenosis theory with their original teaching that Christ took on Himself our sinful nature.

The finite mind of man cannot understand the mystery of God being manifested in the flesh, and as such, we should not attempt to explain it any more than we attempt to explain the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as one God. We declare the fact, but do not explain it. Worship Him, serve Him, declare Him but do not attempt to explain the unexplainable.

Thought: In this life we are to be *Christ-like*, but we cannot be *like Christ* (in the sense of being perfectly Holy). The reader is sincerely exhorted not to get engrossed in defending the issue, but rather to make it his, or her, objective to "know Christ and the power of His resurrection" (Phil. 3:10). Occupy yourself with this Holy One who had every right, as a member of the eternal Godhead, to be glorified, and yet was willing to empty himself of this right and take upon Himself humanity, so that He could suffer for sin. May our occupation with Him and His prime example of unselfishness, cause us truly to have the mind of Christ, and to worship and serve Him, rather than ourselves.

*The End*

### **The Book of the Prophet Zechariah (3)**

—H. Rossier

#### Fourth Vision — Chapter 3

##### *Joshua as Type*

Joshua and Zerubbabel stood at the head of those remaining of Judah and Benjamin, whose condition at the time of their return to Jerusalem was one of deep humiliation. They were weak representatives of the priesthood and royalty, by simultaneously forerunners, types, of the Messiah in His future glory.

The high priest Joshua is the subject of the prophet's fourth vision. His name, "the Lord is Saviour" points already to Him whom he foreshadowed. Yet, in this respect it is important to observe that Joshua can only be seen as type of Christ at the end of the chapter; at the beginning of it this is not the case. The high priest of Israel had a double function. In the first place he was a mediator "established for men in things relating to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins" (Heb. 5:1).

In the second place he was *the representative of the people*, and, according to Zechariah, more in particular of Jerusalem. Didn't we already observe that this prophecy does not consider the nation as a whole? God could only accept Jerusalem in the person of its representative, and therefore everything depended upon the condition of the high priest. In connection with the gospel, the early part of this chapter is a portrait of the condition of a sinner before God. It is, however, not our purpose to present this so important side of Joshua's person. We will restrict ourselves to highlight the high priest's role as representative of the people.

Joshua then stood before the Angel of the Lord, who, as we have seen in the first chapter, is in the Old Testament the symbolic presentation of Christ before His appearance in flesh.

In the New Testament, *the Angel of the Lord* is no longer mentioned, except in a few portions of Revelation. Joshua then stood before Christ, who is here presented in this hidden manner; in the Old Testament Christ is very often spoken of as *Lord*.

## *The Accusation Failed*

Satan stood on the high priest's right side to accuse him. As accuser of the saints the enemy still has access to God. But the Lord has taken on the defense of His people. Today's believers, God's present people, too have at their right hand an accuser who as a result of sin has obtained a right on man.

He appealed to God's righteousness regarding sin, and to God's holiness, in an effort to oppose what God in His grace would do for the benefit of Jerusalem. Alas! The high priest wore filthy clothing. Under such circumstances, who would prevail? Satan, who justifiably accused Joshua, or the holy God, who is too pure of eyes to behold evil?

*"Jehovah said unto Satan, Jehovah rebuke thee, O Satan! Yea, Jehovah that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee!"* (v. 1). Before God, Joshua took the place of Jerusalem, and the Angel of the Lord was the personification of the Lord to answer the accuser. God added to His words: *"Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"* The Lord began by determining that Satan was powerless in face of *His* choice and *His* election.

Satan pled God's righteousness and His wrath against sin, so as to ruin Joshua and Jerusalem. But since he was not acquainted with the divine *love* he stood ashamed. The grace that desires to save sinners is totally unknown to him. Satan came to proclaim that God's holiness would never be able to tolerate a man in filthy garments in His presence. And he was right. But God answered, "I have chosen Jerusalem, is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" That does not mean, as some maintain, that he was taken out of the fire after the flames had half consumed him. No, when the fire came near to him he was spared and set apart so as to never be cast into it again. Since the Lord had determined to save Joshua, Satan was made powerless, and he himself, the enemy of our souls, will be punished for his evil designs. Yet, God's righteousness must be satisfied, and this was the basis of Satan's dangerous purposes.

How could the Lord reconcile His righteousness with His gracious election? *"And Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the Angel. And he spoke and said unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from off him. And unto him he said, See, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I clothe thee with festival-robcs"* (vv. 3-4). God alone could do this. Joshua could not take off his clothes without standing naked before God. That would have meant his condemnation. He had to be clothed in new clothes, made worthy of Him before whose face He stood. The Lord said, "I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I clothe thee with festival-robcs."

God delivered Joshua, dealing with him according to the right that He possessed to cleanse him; He put him in the joy and in the glorious privileges of His presence. That will also happen in a future day when Jerusalem will enjoy the blessings of the Messianic realm. The beloved city will be aware of the work of salvation accomplished on her behalf; he will appear before God with the name: Joshua, the Lord is Saviour, written on his brow. She will be adorned with "gold-brocade," suited to the presence of the God of righteousness, and fitting for the feast of the king!

*"And I said, Let them set a pure turban upon his head. And they set the pure turban upon his head, and clothed him with garments; and the Angel of Jehovah stood by"* (v. 5). The turban was the token of the priestly office. By means of the prophecy, which portrayed Christ's mediatorial work — for as we mentioned, the high priest could not attend to that work — Joshua once more received the right to undertake this God-pleasing service. Thus, in the last days, will the nation itself be "a royal priesthood and a holy nation."

From the moment that the Angel of the Lord spoke to *Satan*: "The Lord rebuke thee," the accuser of Joshua disappeared. So it is always: the enemy may set out to destroy us, but for Him who takes care of our affairs he is unable to hold his ground.

## *Noblesse Oblige*

"And the Angel of Jehovah protested unto Joshua, saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts; and I will give thee a place to walk among these that stand by" (vv. 6-7). These verses have to do with Joshua's responsibility and with the priesthood he represented. Under the coming reign of Christ there will be an acknowledged priesthood; those who kept My charge" will be part of it (Ezek. 48:11). The unfaithful ones will not have the right to be among the priests, who execute the service before the Lord in His sanctuary. Yet by His grace even their needs will be attended to in that He will charge them with the care of the house (Ezek. 44:10-16). This thought, speaking of responsibility, is for us of even greater importance than for the believers under the old covenant. From the moment that we are, cleansed from our sins, brought before God, clothed with His righteousness, we are fit to serve Him, executing the holy priesthood in His presence. But with it we also are

responsible to show ourselves worthy of the calling, otherwise God will not be able to give us new blessings, nor can He then entrust the service in His sanctuary. The sad sluggishness of God's children regarding the worship service frequently has no other reason than this. Their lack of faithfulness hinders them to join the priests who stand before God. How many Christians are quite satisfied that they know to be reconciled to God, without realizing that nobility brings obligations. The judgment over the house and the keeping of the courts will never be entrusted to them. Year upon year they will, without spiritual insight, remain unable to judge and discern, remain useless to the Lord. It is because from the start they have failed to execute their ministry. May we all take these things to heart!

### *Branch and High Priest*

In the second part of this chapter (vv. 8-10) Joshua is presented to us under an entirely different character: "*Hear now, Joshua the high priest, thou and thy fellows that sit before thee — for they are men of portent*" [*men to be observed as signs or types — margin*] (v.8). Joshua was no longer addressed as representative of the people, nor as *the* responsible priest who had to take care of his service so as to be able to move among those who stand before God. Here he is seen as the one before whom the priests were sitting whom he had taken into his confidence as his companions. In the preceding verses Joshua was mentioned only to bring to our attention of whom he was a type, for they who surrounded him were set as "wondrous signs." In the future there will therefore be a high priest, and from the Epistle to the Hebrews and Psalm 110 we know that He will be high priest after the order of Melchizedek, an entirely different priestly order than the Aaronic one of Joshua. The priesthood after the order of Melchizedek belongs to Christ alone, and the following chapters will unfold for us the importance of His service. Here we have only a preliminary mention of it. First the Lord is presented to us under other types: "*For behold, I will bring forth My servant the Branch*" (v. 8).

The title "Branch" (Isa. 4:2; Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zech. 3:8; 6:12), and that of "Shoot" or "Tender Sapling" (Isa. 11:1; 53:2) always refer to the Messiah, who will spring forth from trunk of David. It is very remarkable that in this verse God addressed Joshua as the representative of Christ in His priestly service. The Lord announced to him that He would Himself raise up His Servant, David's Son, the King. In Chapter 6:12-13, where we find a more complete revelation of Christ, the "Branch" and the "High Priest" are one and the same person, and both offices are combined under one head. In the first chapter and in the beginning of the third, Christ was already introduced to us under the mysterious name of the Angel of the Lord. In this portion we see Him in the two characters in which He will one time reveal Himself, to enable us to consider and value His two distinct offices, so that we would not prefer the one above the other.

The prophet had begun with describing the fall of the Gentile world empires (Ch. 1), so that the restoration of Jerusalem could take place (Ch. 2). After that he had shown (Ch. 3:1-7) that in view of this Jerusalem, represented a person, Joshua, had to be cleansed. Here Zechariah went even a step further, showing that the faithful ones, if they were to share in the blessings of the last days, needed a spotless High priest, whose companions they will be. He will, however, also be a King out of David's seed.

### *The Stone with Seven Eyes*

This blessed person, however, is further presented to us in a third picture: "*For behold, the stone that I have laid before Joshua — upon one stone are seven eyes; behold, I will engrave the graving thereof saith Jehovah of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of this land in one day*" (v. 9).

When Joshua, one of the heads of the returned exiles, had begun building the house of God, they had put one stone before him that was to be the [key stone for the — *The translator*] foundation of the temple. It was the cornerstone [from which all measurements were to be taken while establishing the foundation — *The translator*] on which the entire building was to rest. This stone was but a weak picture of the true Stone, Christ, the foundation of the future temple, of Him who would first be the rejected corner stone before He would be laid forever. The great and glorious Millennial reign, will have the temple, the place of worship to the Lord, as centre, and it will be founded on Christ. During the entire dispensation of God's government over the earth, He will be the "spindle" around which everything and everyone will move: Christ the foundation; the temple God's dwelling place in the midst of His people; Jerusalem the city of the Great King, inseparably linked to the temple; the people of God in perfect harmony assembled around the house of the Lord and the royal city; all nations to the extremities of the earth gathered around the beloved nation! Finally, this beautiful display unfolds itself under the rays of the Sun of Righteousness. Thus will be the future glory *on earth*, while the luster of the Lamb's throne and of His bride, the new Jerusalem, will fill *heaven*!



"Upon one stone are seven eyes." In the book of Revelation, the seven spirits, the seven lamps, and the seven eyes are one and the same, but with different significance. "The seven Spirits which are before His throne" (Rev. 1:4) signify the fulness of God's Spirit, who leads the government of the world. In Revelation 4:5: "And seven lamps of fire, burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God," we see the fulness of the Spirit in casting light upon, and bringing into judgment that which rebels against God's government on earth. In Chapter 5:6, the Lamb with the "seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God which are sent into all the earth" signifies Christ with the fulness of His knowledge (combined with the fulness of His power — the seven horns) to execute God's counsels regarding the earth.

In Zechariah 3:9 the stone with the seven eyes portrays Christ in the fulness of His knowledge of God's thoughts. He was the full expression of these, for God Himself did engrave the graving upon it. Christ as Man here below, the once-rejected stone, was God revealed in flesh, the Truth. In Him, God made Himself known; and in Him, God will make Himself known on the new earth during the glorious reign of the Son of man.

*"And I will remove the iniquity of this land in one day"* (v. 9). Then will not just the people that was represented by Joshua be cleansed, but the whole land. The land of Israel must be cleansed from all unrighteousness and filthiness to be fit for Christ's reign as Priest, as King, and as Center of all God's thoughts.

*"In that day, saith Jehovah of hosts, shall ye invite every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig-tree"* (v. 10).

That will be a day of rest of everyone, the collective enjoying of that rest, the true reign of peace for Israel.

*To be cont'd*

## **Praying and Prophesying by Sisters**

—Hugo Bouter

*"Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman should pray to God uncovered?"* (1 Corinthians 11:13)

### *God's order*

In this chapter the main subject is the head covering of the woman, and that in connection with her place in God's creation order. There is a divine order in creation, which can schematically be presented as follows:  
God—Christ—man—woman (see v. 3).

1. God is the Origin of all and the Head of Christ, who, as Man, too the place of subjection to His Father,
2. Christ is the Word by whom all things have come into being, the Head of all things and therefore also the Head of every man;
3. The man is the head of the woman. This last has to do with God's order at creation: the woman has been taken out of man (vv. 8-9).

Well, it is clear that the terrain of creation-reality is a wider one than the sphere of the Assembly, God's redeemed people. Praying and prophesying takes place in both circles. Praying is an activity addressed *to God*, prophesying is just the other way around: it is addressed *to men* on behalf of God. The man takes part in these activities with uncovered head, the woman only with covered head (vv. 3-7).

Only later, in 1 Corinthians 14:34-37, follow further instructions regarding women, *namely that they ought to be silent in the assemblies*. Also, in this portion there is exclusively mention of prophets, not of prophetesses. This is therefore a more precise instruction, and sharpening of 1 Corinthians 11, which deals more in a general sense with the place of the woman in the divine order, both in position and authority. Apart from the assembly meetings, there is for sisters certainly the possibility of praying and prophesying. Just think of the four prophesying daughters of the evangelist Philip (Acts 21:9). Even so, they are not called "prophetesses," and in the rest of this chapter the dealings of the prophet Agabus is highlighted.

### *The Sphere of the Command to be Silent*

This command to be silent "in the assemblies" holds true for all those aspects of meeting in which one functions as the "mouth" of the gathered saints. That is every activity that "directs the worship." This is not to say that we are speaking of

'leaders of worship' and such as are known in many churches. The risen Lord is Himself the Leader of the worship, for He is the One who raises the song of praise in the midst of the Assembly (Heb. 2:12). The brothers give form, expression, or if you will leading to the worship in dependence upon the Lord Himself, who is the Host.

When one defends the praying and giving out of hymns by sisters during the time of "assembling ourselves" (Heb. 10:25), one must be consistent and also allow prophesying and teaching by sisters. In this regard, there is no essential difference between the activities "praying" and "prophesying," only a difference in direction — namely to God or to men. Neither activity is permitted for the woman within the realm of assembly meetings, as is also confirmed in 1 Timothy 2. That chapter speaks after all only about the praying that ought to be done in every place by men, and further about the adornment of the woman, as well as the command that they must *allow themselves to be taught* in quietness in all subjection. The order in creation as well as the order in the fall are to the inspired writer arguments with which he undergirds these precepts.

In 1 Corinthians 14:26 the brothers are addressed as those who are responsible for the course of the things during the meeting. The giving out of a hymn, a psalm is on a level as uttering a prayer. The assembly directs itself in these things to God. Afterward follows doctrine and a revelation — things having to do with teaching from God's side to the assembly. All these activities fall under the collective name "*praying and prophesying*" in Chapter 11.

The command to be silent in 1 Corinthians 14:34f is certainly not limited to the judging of earlier uttered prophecies in an assembly meeting. Another, very general subject is taken up here. The sisters ought to be silent "in the assemblies." That is clearly a very general precept. But suppose that they have some questions and want to learn something. In such a case they must do that at home, so the apostle says. When even the asking of questions by sisters is prohibited in the assembly meeting, is it then not entirely clear that this holds also true for all other activities giving expression to the feelings and thoughts of the assembly, for all contributions giving direction to the course of the meeting?

#### *Hanna's Example*

Eli, the priest, thought it strange not to hear Hanna's voice while she prayed in God's house. Indeed, Hanna could have prayed, not just silently, but also out loud in the temple (1 Sam. 1:9f). But here it is a question of a purely personal prayer, not of a congregation of the entire people of God at the tent of meeting. This latter event — at the hour of prayer at the bringing of the evening sacrifice — was led by the priests and Levites.

Similarly, also today, a sister can approach God with all liberty and express herself out loud in prayer (Heb. 10:19). In this she is not, as once the Israelite, hindered by the restrictions of an earthly sanctuary. She does not have to go first to a "house of God" or a "house of prayer." The only restriction in the New-Testament dispensation is that it does not occur during the meetings of the assembly, and that the sister in the presence of others wears a head covering as token, symbol of the authority she is under.

Indeed, sisters join in the singing in the meetings and the entire assembly says "Amen." The jointly singing one can even look at as a form of prophesying, a teaching, admonishing with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Col. 3:16; cf. 1 Chr. 25:11-3). The danger of ruling over the man or of giving direction to the meeting is totally absent from this. Also children share in these collective activities, even when they are not yet converted. The singing of the children contains, in my opinion, an important *educational* element. And happily, many children are converted and can from the heart join in the singing of the hymns in the meetings. Moreover: don't unconverted children also take part in our "family devotions"?

The worshipping in spirit and in truth, as it is mentioned in John 4, is of course also for sisters. They too worship, they too bring a sacrifice of thanksgiving. But the question is how, and in what manner this must take on form in the meetings. What is the part of men, and what the contribution of sisters. For this we have the precepts of Paul, as outlined above. God sees the heart, and the quiet worship in the hearts of all His children, of brothers and sisters, is to Him of greatest importance.

#### *Other Examples*

The Samaritan woman gave a *personal* testimony to her fellow citizens (Jn. 4), that is something totally different from her in turn beginning to act as *teacher*. She simply pointed the people to Christ. Naturally in her neighbourhood a sister may (must) give a personal testimony of the Saviour. This has nothing to do with the meetings of believers.

The woman who had been bent over glorified God in the synagogue (Lk. 13). In the first place, this is not the same as "in the midst of the Assembly." For the Assembly of God other precepts are valid than for the synagogue. In the synagogue men and women sat strictly separated. Women could not speak. The Lord Jesus, however, directed Himself to her and called her to Himself. It was an exceptional situation, and quite understandably she gave thanks to God for her healing. Exceptional situations cannot be taken as norm for the normal life of God's Assembly.

Acts 1:14 says that the eleven gave themselves all with one accord to continual prayer, with several women and Mary. This verse, however, says nothing about aloud participation in the collective prayer by these sisters. The brothers, as always in Scripture, are the "mouth" of the assembled saints. Even less warranted is the idea that the women participated in the election of Matthias. The context also refutes this: in verses 15 and 16 only men brethren are mentioned.

That Phoebe might be considered to have taken a leadership position because she would have been "a minister" [in the sense of the word in which it is commonly understood today — *The translator*] is simply wishful thinking. The feminine Greek word "prostatis" does occur only once in the New Testament (Rom. 16:2), the masculine "prostates" is never used. [In the Dutch Statenvertaling *prostatis* is rendered "Voorstander," meaning "advocate" or "champion" — *The Translator*]. It means patroness, or protectress. According to the dictionaries it does not refer to a leading function in the technical sense of the word, but rather supporting, caretaking, assisting. Therefore she is in verse 1 also called "a deaconess," "a servant" of the local assembly — and for such a spontaneous service, no official appointment is needed! All these examples still deserve emulation without getting involved with speculative ideas. Sometimes too these ideas are furthered by a wrong translation. In this vein, some translations seem to suggest in Philippians 4:3 that Euodia and Syntyche would have been contending together with Paul "*in the preaching of the gospel*." In the original text it simply says that they contended with him "in the gospel," which does not have to include preaching the Word. Also the suggestion by times uttered that Priscilla and Aquila would have been "leaders of a house church" falls under the same category of human speculation. Let us restrict ourselves to the Word of God.