

## I. CHRIST'S FIRST TITLE OF HONOR AND ATTRIBUTE: HE IS THE WORD.

3. That this Gospel may be clearer and more easily understood, we must go back to the passages in the Old Testament upon which it is founded, namely, the beginning of the first chapter of Genesis. There we read, Gen. 1, 1-3: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, and the earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light, and there was light," etc. Moses continues how all things were created in like manner as the light, namely, by speaking of the Word of God. Thus: "And God said, Let there be a firmament." And again: "God said, Let there be sun, moon, stars," etc.

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4. From these words of Moses it is clearly proved that God has a Word, through which or by means of which he spoke, before anything was created; and this Word does not and cannot be anything that was created, since all things were created through this divine utterance, as the text of Moses clearly and forcibly expresses it, when it says: "God said, Let there be light, and there was light." The Word must therefore have preceded the light, since light came by the Word; consequently it was also before all other creatures, which also came by the Word, as Moses writes.

5. But let us go farther. If the Word preceded all creatures, and all creatures came by the Word and were created through it, the Word must be a different being than a creature, and was not made or created like a creature. It must therefore be eternal and without beginning. For when all things began it was already there, and cannot be confined in time nor in creation, but is above time and creation; yea, time and creation are made and have their beginning through it. Thus it follows that whatever is not temporal must be eternal; and that which has no beginning cannot be temporal; and that which is not a creature must be God. For besides God and his creatures there is nothing. Hence we learn from this text of Moses, that the Word of God, which was in the beginning and through which all things were made and spoken, must be God eternal and not a creature.

6. Again, the Word and he that speaks it, are not one person; for it is not possible that the speaker is himself the Word. What sort of speaker would he be who is himself the Word? He must needs be a mute, or the word must needs sound of itself without the speaker. But Scripture here speaks in strong and lucid words: "God said." And thus God and His Word must be two distinct things.

If Moses had written: "There was an utterance," it would not be so evident that there were two, the Word and the Speaker. But when he says: "God said," and names the speaker and his word, he forcibly states that there are two: that the speaker is not the word, and the word is not the speaker, but that the word comes from the speaker, and has

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its existence not of itself but from the speaker. But the speaker does not come from the word, nor does he have his existence from it, but from himself. Thus, the words of Moses point conclusively to the fact

that there are two persons in the Godhead from eternity, before all creatures, that the one has its existence from the other, and the first has its existence from nothing but itself.

7. Again, the Scriptures firmly and everlastingly maintain that there is only one God, as Moses begins, saying: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." And Deut. 6, 4, "Hear, O Israel; Jehovah our God is one God." Thus the Scriptures proceed in simple, comprehensible words, and teach such exalted things so plainly that every one may well understand them, and so forcibly that no one can gainsay them. Who is there that cannot here understand from these words of Moses, that there must be two persons in the Godhead, and yet but one God, unless he wishes to deny the plain Scriptures?

8. Again, who is there so subtle as to be able to contradict this doctrine? He must distinguish or keep apart the Word from God, the speaker; and he must confess that it was before all creatures, and that the creatures were made by it. Consequently he must surely admit it to be God, for besides the creatures there is nothing but God; he must also admit that there is only one God. Thus the Scriptures forcibly conclude that these two persons are one perfect God, and that each one is the only true, real, and perfect God, who has created all things; that the Speaker has his being not from the Word, but that the Word has its being from the Speaker, yet he has his being eternally and from eternity, and outside of all creation.

9. The Arian heretics intended to draw a mist over this clear passage and to bore a hole into heaven, since they could not surmount it, and said that this Word of God was indeed God, not by nature, however, but by creation. They said that all things were created by it, but it had also been created previously, and after that all things were created by it. This they said from their own imagination without any authority

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from the Scriptures, because they left the simple words of the Scriptures and followed their own fancies.

10. Therefore I have said that he who desires to proceed safely on firm ground, must have no regard for the many subtle and hair-splitting words and fancies, but must cling to the simple, powerful, and explicit words of Scripture, and he will be secure. We shall also see how St. John anticipated these same heretics and refuted them in their subterfuges and fabrications.

11. Therefore we have here in the Books of Moses the real gold mine, from which everything that is written in the New Testament concerning the divinity of Christ has been taken. Here you may see from what source the gospel of St. John is taken, and upon what it is founded; and therefore it is easy to understand.

This is the source of the passage in Ps. 33, 6: "By the Word of Jehovah the heavens were made." Solomon in beautiful words describes the wisdom of God, Prov. 3, 22, saying that this wisdom had been in God before all things; and he takes his thoughts from this chapter of Moses. So almost all the prophets have worked in this mine and have dug their treasures from it.

12. But there are other passages by this same Moses concerning the Holy Ghost, as for example in Gen. 1,2: "And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." Thus the Spirit of God must also be something different from him who breathes him into existence, sends him forth, and yet he must be before all creatures.

Again, Moses says in Gen. 1, 28-31: "God blessed the creatures, beheld them, and was pleased with them." This benediction and favorable contemplation of the creatures point to the Holy Ghost, since the Scriptures attribute to him life and mercy. But these passages are not so well developed as those which refer to the Son; consequently they are not so prominent. The ore is still halfway in the mines, so that these passages can easily be believed, if reason is so far in subjection as to believe that there are two persons. If anyone will take the time and trouble to compare the passages of the New

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Testament referring to the Holy Ghost with this text of Moses, he will find much light, as well as pleasure.

13. Now we must open wide our hearts and understanding, so as to look upon these words not as the insignificant, perishable words of man, but think of them as being as great as he is who speaks them. It is a Word which he speaks of himself, which remains in him, and is never separated from him.

Therefore according to the thought of the Apostle, we must consider how God speaks with himself and to himself, and how the Word proceeds from within himself. However, this Word is not an empty sound, but brings with it the whole essence of the divine nature. Reference has been made in the Epistle to the brightness of his glory and the image of his person, which constitute the divine nature, so that it accompanies the image in its entirety and thus becomes the very image itself. In the same manner God of himself also utters his Word, so that the whole Godhead accompanies the Word and in its nature remains in, and essentially is, the Word.

14. Behold, here we see whence the Apostle has taken his language, when he calls Christ an image of the divine essence, and the brightness of divine glory. He takes it from this text of Moses, when he says that God spoke the Word of himself; this can be nothing else than an image that represents him, since every word is a sign which means something. But here the thing signified is by its very nature in the sign or in the Word, which is not in any other sign. Therefore he very properly calls it a real image or sign of his nature.

15. The word of man may also in this connection be used in a measure as an illustration; for by it the human heart is known. Thus we commonly say: I understand his heart or intentions, when we have only heard his words; as out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks, and from the word the heart is known, as though it were in the word. In consequence of this experience the heathen had a saying: *Qualis quisque est talia loquitur.* (As a man speaks, so is he). Again: *Oratio est character animi* (Speech is an image of the heart). When the heart is pure it utters pure words, when it is impure it utters impure words. With this also corre-

sponds the gospel of Matthew, 12, 34, where Christ says: "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." And again, "How can ye, being evil, speak good things?" Also John the Baptist says, John 3, 31: "He that is of the earth is of the earth, and of the earth he speaketh." The Germans also have a proverb: "Of what the heart is full, overfloweth out of the mouth." The bird is known by its song, for it sings according to its nature. Therefore all the world knows that nothing represents the condition of the heart so perfectly and so positively as the words of the mouth, just as though the heart were in the word.

16. Thus it is also with God. His word is so much like himself, that the Godhead is wholly in it, and he who has the word has the whole Godhead. But this comparison has its limits. For the human word does not carry with it the essence or the nature of the heart, but simply its meaning, or is a sign of the heart, just as a woodcut or a bronze tablet does not carry with it the human being, but simply represents it. But here in God, the Word does not only carry with it the sign and picture, but the whole being, and is as full of God as he whose word or picture it is. If the human word were pure heart, or the intention of the heart, the comparison would be perfect. But this cannot be; consequently the Word of God is above every word, and without comparison among all creatures.

17 There have indeed been sharp discussions about the inner word in the heart of man, which remains within, since man has been created in the image of God. But it is all so deep and mysterious, and will ever remain so, that it is not possible to understand it. Therefore we shall pass on, and we come, now to our Gospel, which is in itself clear and manifest.

"In the beginning was the Word."

18. What beginning does the Evangelist mean except the one of which Moses says: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth?" That was the beginning and origin of creation. Other than this there was no beginning, for God had no beginning, but is eternal. It follows, therefore, that

the Word is also eternal, because it did not have its origin in the beginning, but it was already in the beginning, John says. It did not begin, but when other things began it was already in existence; and its existence did not begin when all things began, but it was then already present.

19. How prudently the Evangelist speaks; for he does not say: "In the beginning the Word was made," but it was there," and was not made. The origin of its existence is different from the beginning of creation. Furthermore he says: "In the beginning." Had he been made before the world, as the Arians maintain, he would not have been in the beginning, but he would have himself been the beginning. But John firmly and clearly maintains: "In the beginning was the Word," and he was not the beginning. Whence has St. John these words? From Moses, Gen. 1, 3 "God said, Let there be light." From this text evidently come the words: "In the beginning was the Word." For if God spoke, there had to be a Word.

And if he spoke it in the beginning, when the creation began, it was already in the beginning, and did not begin with the creation.

20. But why does he not say: Before the beginning was the Word? This would have made the matter clearer, as it would seem; thus St. Paul often says: Before the creation of the world, etc. The answer is, because, to be in the beginning, and to be before, the beginning, are the same, and one is the consequence of the other. St. John, as an Evangelist, wished to agree with the writings of Moses, wished to open them up, and to disclose the source of his own words, which would not have been the case had he said: "Before" the beginning. Moses says nothing of that which was before the beginning, but describes the Word in the beginning, in order that he can the better describe the creation, which was made by the Word. For the same reason he also calls him a word, when he might as well have called him a light, life or something else, as is done later; for Moses speaks of a word. Now not to begin and to be in the beginning are the same as to be before the beginning.

But if the Word had been in the beginning and not before

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the beginning, it must have begun to be before the beginning, and so the beginning would have been before the beginning, which would be a contradiction, and would be the same as though the beginning were not the beginning. Therefore it is put in a masterly way: In the beginning was the Word, so as to show that it has not begun, and consequently must necessarily have been eternal, before the beginning.

"And the Word was with God."

21. Where else should it have been? There never was anything outside of God. Moses says the same thing when he writes: "God said, Let there be light." Whenever God speaks the word must be with him. But here he clearly distinguishes the persons, so that the Word is a different person than God with whom it was. This passage of John does not allow the interpretation that God had been alone, because it says that something had been with God, namely, the Word. If he had been alone, why would he need to say: The Word was with God? To have something with him, is not to be alone or by himself.

It should not be forgotten that the Evangelist strongly emphasizes the little word "with." For he repeats it, and clearly expresses the difference in persons to gainsay natural reason and future heretics. For while natural reason can understand that there is but one God, and many passages of Scripture substantiate it, and this is also true, yet the Scriptures also strongly oppose the idea that this same God is only one person.

22. Thus arose the heresy of Sabellius, who said: The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are only one person. And again Arius, although he admitted that the Word was with God, would not admit that he was true God. The former confesses and teaches too great a simplicity of God; the latter too great a multiplicity. The former mingles the persons; the latter separates the natures. But the true Christian faith takes the mean, teaches and confesses separate persons and an undivided nature. The Father is a different person

from the Son, but he is not another God. Natural reason can not comprehend this; it must be apprehended by faith alone. Natural

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reason produces error and heresy; faith teaches and maintains the truth; for it clings to the Scriptures, which do not deceive nor lie.

"And God was the Word."

23. Since there is but one God, it must be true that God himself is the Word, which was in the beginning before all creation. Some change the order of the words and read: And the Word was God, in order to explain that this Word not only is with God and is a different person, but that it is also in its essence the one true God with the Father. But we shall leave the words in the order in which they now stand: And God was the Word; and this is also what it means; there is no other God than the one only God, and this same God must also essentially be the Word, of which the Evangelist speaks; so there is nothing in the divine nature which is not in the Word. It is clearly stated that this Word is truly God, so that it is not only true that the Word is God, but also that God is the Word.

24. Decidedly as this passage opposes Arius, who teaches that the Word is not God, so strongly it appears to favor Sabellius; for it speaks as though it mingled the persons, and thereby revokes or explains away the former passage, which separates the persons and says: The Word was with God.

But the Evangelist intentionally arranged his words so as to refute all heretics. Here therefore he overthrows Arius and attributes to the Word the true essential of the Godhead by saying: And God was the Word; as though he would say: I do not simply say, the Word is God, which might be understood as though the Godhead was only asserted of him, and were not essentially his, as you, Arius, claim; but I say: And God was the Word, which can be understood in no other way than that this same being which every one calls God and regards as such, is the Word.

Again, that Sabellius and reason may not think that I side with them, and mingle the persons, and revoke what I have said on this point, I repeat it and say again:

"The same was in the beginning with God."

25. The Word was with God, with God, and yet God was

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the Word. Thus the Evangelist contends that both assertions are true: God is the Word, and the Word is with God; one nature of divine essence, and yet not one person only. Each person is God complete and entire, in the beginning and eternally. These are the passages upon which our faith is founded and to which we must hold fast. For it is entirely above reason that there should be three persons and each one perfect and true God, and yet not three Gods but one God.

26. The Scholastics have argued much pro and con with their numerous subtleties, to make this doctrine comprehensible. But if you do not wish to become entangled in the meshes of the enemy, ignore their cunning, arrogance, and subtleties, and hold to these divine words. Press into them and remain in them, like a hare in a rocky crevice. If you come out and deign to listen to human talk, the enemy will lead you on and overcome you, so that you will at last not know where reason, faith, God, or even yourself are.

27. Believe me, as one who has experienced and tried it, and who does not talk into an empty barrel; the Scriptures are not given us for naught. If reason could have kept on the right road, the Scriptures would not have been given us. Take an example in the case of Arius and Sabellius. Had they clung to the Scriptures and disregarded reason, they would not have originated so much trouble in the church. And our Scholastics might have been Christians, had they ceased fooling with their subtleties and had clung to the Scriptures.

"All things were made through him."

28. Has this not been put clearly enough? Who would be surprised, if stubborn men reject every effort to convince them of their error, however plainly and earnestly the truth may be told them, when the Arians could evade this clear and explicit passage and say: All things are made by the Word, but the Word was itself first made, and afterwards all things were made by it? And this in opposition to the direct words: "All things were made through him." And there is no doubt that he was not made and cannot be counted among the things that were made. For he who mentions all things excludes

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nothing, as St. Paul also explains Psalm 8, 6, when he says, in Heb. 2,8: "Thou didst put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he subjected all things unto him, he left nothing that is not subjected to him." Again, 1 Cor. 15, 27: "For he put all things in subjection under his feet. It is evident that he is expected who did subject all things unto him."

So also the words, "All things were made through him," must certainly be understood to except him by whom all things were made, and without whom is nothing that is made. This passage is also based upon the first chapter of Genesis, 1, 7, where all created things are mentioned which God had made, and in each case it is said: "And God said, and it was so," in order to show that they were all made by the Word. But St. John continues and explains himself still more fully when he says:

"And without him was not anything made that hath been made."

29. If nothing was made without him, much less is he himself made without whom nothing was made; accordingly the error of Arius should never have attracted any attention, and yet it did. There is no need of comment to explain that the Word is God and the real Creator of all created things since without him nothing was made that ever was made.

30. Some have been in doubt about the order of the words in this text; the words "that was made", they take with the following words, in this way: "That which was made, was in him life." Of this opinion was St. Augustine. But the words properly belong to the preceding words as I have given them, thus: "And

without him was not anything made that hath been made." He means to say that none of the things that art; made, are made without him; so that he may the more clearly express that all things were made through him, and that he himself was not made. In short, the Evangelist firmly maintains that the Word is true God, yet not of himself, but of the Father. Therefore we say: Made through him, and Begotten of the Father.