

A

**DISSERTATION CONCERNING THE  
ETERNAL SONSHIP OF CHRIST,**

Shewing

**By Whom It Has Been Denied And Opposed,**

and

**By Whom Asserted And Defended In All Ages Of  
Christianity.**

The eternal Sonship of Christ, or that he is the Son of God by eternal generation, or that he was the Son of God before he was the son of *Mary*, even from all eternity, which is denied by the Socinians, and others akin, to them, was known by the saints under the Old Testament; by *David* (Ps. 2:7, 12); by *Solomon* (Prov. 8:22, 30), by the prophet *Micah*, chapter 2, verse 2. His Sonship was known by *Daniel*, from whom it is probable *Nebuchadnezzar* had it (Dan. 3:25), from which it appears he was, and was known to be, the Son of God before he was born of the virgin, or before his incarnation, and therefore not called so on that account. This truth is written as with a sun-beam in the New Testament; but my design in what I am about is, not to give the proof of this doctrine from the sacred scriptures, but to shew who first set themselves against it, and who have continued the opposition to it, more or less, to this time; and on the other hand, to shew that sound and orthodox Christians, from the earliest times of Christianity to the present, have asserted and defended it. I shall begin with,

I. The first century, in which the Evangelists and Apostles lived; what their sentiments were concerning this doctrine, is abundantly manifest from their writings. The persons in this age who opposed the divine and eternal Son-ship of Christ were,

1st, *Simon Magus*, father of heresies, as he is justly called; he first vented the notion afterwards imbibed by *Sabellius*, of one person in the Godhead; to which he added this blasphemy, that he was that person that so is. Before he professed himself a Christian he gave out that he was some *great one*; he afterwards said, he was the one God himself under different names, the Father in *Samaria*, the Son in *Judea*, and the holy Spirit in the rest of the nations of the world;[\[1\]](#) or as *Austin*[\[2\]](#) expresses it, he said that he in mount *Sinai* gave the law to *Moses* for the Jews, in the person of the father; and in the time of *Tiberius*, he seemingly appeared in the person of the Son, and afterwards as the holy Ghost, came upon the apostles in tongues of fire. And according to *Jerom*[\[3\]](#) he not only said, but wrote it; for it seems, according to him, he wrote some volumes, in which he said, "I am

the Word of God, that is, the Son of God." *Menander* his disciple took the same characters and titles to himself his master did.[\[4\]](#)

2dly, *Cerinthus* is the next, who was contemporary with the apostle *John*, of whom that well known story is told,[\[5\]](#) that the apostle being about to go into a bath at *Ephesus*, and seeing *Cerinthus* in it, said to those with him, "Let us flee from hence, lest the bath fall upon us in which *Cerinthus*, the enemy of truth is:" he asserted that Christ was, only a man, denying his deity,[\[6\]](#) and in course his divine and eternal Sonship; he denied that Jesus was born of a virgin, which seemed to him impossible; and that he was the son of *Joseph* and *Mary*, as other men are[\[7\]](#) of their parents. *Jerom* says,[\[8\]](#) at the request of the bishops of *Asia*, *John* the apostle wrote his gospel against *Cerinthus* and other heretics, and especially the tenets of the Ebionites, then rising up, who asserted that Christ was not before *Mary* hence he was obliged plainly to declare his divine generation; and it may be observed, that he is the only sacred writer who in his gospel and epistles speaks of Christ as the begotten and only begotten Son of God, at least speaks mostly of him as such.

3dly, *Ebion*. What his sentiment was concerning Christ, may be learned from what has been just observed, about the apostle *John's* writing his gospel to refute it; and may be confirmed by what *Eusebius*[\[9\]](#) says of him, that he held that Christ was a mere man, and born as other men are: and though he makes mention of another sort of them, who did not deny that Christ was born of a virgin, and of the Holy Ghost, nevertheless did not own that he existed before, being God the Word and Wisdom. Hence *Hilary* calls[\[10\]](#) *Photinus*, *Ebion*, because of the sameness of their principles, and *Jerom*[\[11\]](#) says. *Photinus* endeavoured to restore the heresy of *Ebion*; now it is notorious that the notion of the Photinians was the same with the Socinians now, who say, that Christ was not before *Mary*; and so *Alexander* bishop of *Alexandria*[\[12\]](#) observes of *Arius* and his followers, who denied the natural sonship and eternal generation of Christ, that what they propagated were the heresy of *Ebion* and *Artemas*.

Besides the inspired writers, particularly the apostle *John*, who wrote his gospel, as now observed, to confute the heresies of *Ebion* and *Cerinthus*, and in vindication of the deity of Christ, and his divine and eternal generation, there are very few writings if any in this century extant. There is an epistle ascribed to *Barnabas*, contemporary with the apostle *Paul*, in which are these words,[\[13\]](#) having made mention of the brazen serpent as a figure of Jesus, he adds, "what said *Aliases* again to Jesus the son of *Nave*, putting this name upon him, being a prophet, that only all the people might hear that the Father hath made manifest all things concerning his Son Jesus in the son of *Nave*, and he put this name upon him, when he sent him to spy the land—because the Son of God in the last days will cut up by the roots the house of *Amalek*: behold again Jesus, not the son of man, but the *Son of God*, manifested in the flesh by a type.—Likewise *David* said the *Lord said to my Lord*.—See how *David* calls him Lord, and the Son of God:" by which it appears that he believed that Christ was the Son of God before he was manifested in the flesh or became incarnate; and that he was the Son of God according to the divine nature, as well as the Son of *David* according to the human nature, which he also expresses in the same paragraph. And elsewhere he says,[\[14\]](#) "For this end the Son of God came in the flesh, that the full sum might be made of the sins of those who persecuted the prophets," so that according to him Christ was the Son of God before he came in the flesh or was incarnate.

*Clemens Romanus* was bishop of *Rome* in this century, and though the book of *Recognitions*, ascribed to him, are judged spurious, yet there is an epistle of his to the Corinthians<sup>[15]</sup> thought to be genuine: in which, after speaking of Christ our Saviour, and the high priest of our oblations, and the brightness of the magnificence of God, and of his having a more excellent name than the angels, observes, that the Lord thus says of his own Son, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*; thereby declaring his belief, that Christ is the proper Son of God, and begotten by him. *Ignatius* was bishop of *Antioch* in this century, after the first bishop of that place *Evodius*, and was early in it, if any truth in these reports that he was the child Christ took in his arms, when he rebuked his disciples; and that he saw Christ after his resurrection; but though these are things not to be depended on, yet it is certain that he lived in the latter end of the first century, and suffered martyrdom in the beginning of the second. Several epistles of his are extant, in which, as well as by words, he exhorted the saints to beware of heresies then springing up among them, and abounding, as *Eusebius* observes;<sup>[16]</sup> meaning the heresies of *Ebion* and *Cerinthus* about the person of Christ: and says many things which shew his belief, and what was their error. In one of his epistles<sup>[17]</sup> he exhorts to decline from some persons, as beasts, as ravenous dogs, biting secretly, and difficult of cure; and adds, "there is one physician, carnal and spiritual, begotten and unbegotten. God made flesh, in a true and immortal life, who is both of *Mary* and of God." In a larger epistle to the same,<sup>[18]</sup> thought by some to be interpolated, though it expresses the same sentiment; "our physician is alone the true God, the unbegotten and invisible Lord of all, the Father and *begetter* of the only begotten one; we have also a physician, or Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son before the world, and the word, and at last man of the virgin *Mary*;" and afterwards in the same<sup>[19]</sup> epistle still more expressly, "the Son of God, who was begotten before the world was, and constitutes all things according to the will of the Father, he was bore in the womb by *Mary*, according to the dispensation of God, of the seed of *David* by the Holy Ghost." And a little farther,<sup>[20]</sup> "be ye all in grace by name, gathered together in one common faith of God the Father, and of Jesus Christ his only begotten Son, and the first-born of every creature: according to the flesh indeed of the family of *David*: ye being guided by the Comforter." A plain account, as of the divine Sonship and Humanity of Christ, so of the doctrine of the Trinity. In another epistle<sup>[21]</sup> of his, he speaks of Jesus Christ, "who was with the Father before the world was, and in the end appeared," that is, in human nature in the end of the world; and exhorts all to "run to one temple of God, as to one altar, as to one Jesus Christ, who came forth from one Father, and being in him and returning to him." And a little lower he adds, "there is one God, who hath manifested himself by Jesus Christ his Son, who is his eternal word." And father on he says, "study to be established in the doctrines of the Lord, and of the apostles, that whatsoever ye do may prosper, in flesh and spirit, in faith and love, in the Son, and in the Father, and in the Spirit." A full confession of the Trinity, one of the principal doctrines he would have them be established in. All which is more fully expressed in the larger epistle<sup>[22]</sup> to the same persons: speaking of Christ, he says, "who was begotten by the Father before the world was; God the Word, the only begotten Son, and who remains to the end of the world, for of his kingdom there is no end." Again, "there is one God omnipotent, who hath manifested himself by Jesus Christ his Son, who is his Word; not spoken, but essential, not the voice of an articulate speech, but of a divine operation, begotten substance, who in all things pleased him that sent him." And father on, "but ye have a plerophory in Christ, who was begotten by the Father before all worlds, afterwards made of the virgin *Mary* without the conversation of men." And in the larger epistle<sup>[23]</sup> of his to other persons, he thus speaks of some heretics of his time; "they profess an unknown God, they think Christ is unbegotten, nor will they own that there is an holy Spirit: some of them say the Son is a mere man, and that the Father, the Son and the holy

Spirit, are the same:—beware of such, lest your souls be ensnared." And in an epistle to another people[24] he says, "there is one unbegotten God the Father, and one only begotten Son, God the Word and man, and one comforter the Spirit of truth." And in an epistle[25] ascribed unto him he has these words, "there is one God and Father,—there is also one Son, God the Word—and there is one comforter, the Spirit;—not three Fathers, nor three Sons, nor three Comforters, but one Father, and one Son, and one Comforter; therefore the Lord, when he sent his apostles to teach all nations, commanded them to *baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*; not in one of three names, nor into three that are incarnate, but into three of equal honor and glory." *Lucian*, that scoffing, blasphemous heathen, lived in the times of *Trajan*, and before, as *Suidas* says, wrote a dialogue[26] in derision of the Christian religion, particularly of the doctrine of the Trinity: which dialogue, though it is a scoff at that doctrine, is a testimony of it, as held by the Christians of that age; and among other things, he represents them as saying that Christ is *the eternal Son of the Father*. I go on,

II. To the second century, in which the same heresies of *Ebion* and *Cerinthus* were held and propagated by *Carpocrates*, the father of the *Gnostics*,[27] by *Valentinus* and *Theodotus* the currier, whose disciples were another *Theodotus* a silversmith, and *Asclepiodotus* and *Artemon* also, according to *Eusebius*. [28]

1st. *Carpocrates* was of *Alexandria* in *Egypt*, and lived in the beginning of the second century: he and his followers held that Christ was only a man, born of *Joseph* and *Mary*, of two parents, as other men,[29] only he had a soul superior to others; which, having a strong memory, could remember, and so could relate, what he had seen and had knowledge of, when in the circumference (as they express it) and in conversation with his unknown and unbegotten Father; and which was endowed with such powers, that he escaped the angels, the makers of the world; and was so pure and holy, that he despised the Jews, among whom he was brought up; and afterwards returned to his unknown Father; his soul only, not his body.[30] There seems to be something similar in this notion of the human soul of Christ, to what is imbibed by some in our day.

2dly, *Valentinus*. He came to *Rome* when *Hyginus* was bishop of that place, flourished under *Pius*, and lived till the time of *Anicetus*. [31] He and his followers held, that God the creator sent forth his own Son, but that he was animal, and that his body descended from heaven, and passed through the virgin *Mary*, as water through a pipe; and therefore, as *Tertullian*, observes,[32] *Valentinus* used to say, that Christ was born *by a virgin*, but not *of a virgin*. This is what divines call the heretical elapse; which yet those disavow, who in our day are for the antiquity of the human nature of Christ before the world was; though how he could be really and actually man from eternity, and yet take flesh of the virgin in time, is not easy to reconcile.

3dly. *Artemon* or *Artemas* who lived in the time of *Victor* bishop of *Rome*. He held that Christ was a mere man[33] and pretended that the apostles and all Christians from their times to the times of *Victor*, held the same;[34] than which nothing could be more notoriously false, as the writings as *Justin*, *Irenæus*, &c shew: and' it is said that by him, or by his followers, the celebrated text in *1 John* 5:7, was erased and left out in some copies. [35]

4thly, *Theodotus* the currier held the same notion he did, that Christ was a mere man; for which he was excommunicated by *Victor* bishop of *Rome*: which shews the falsity of what *Artemon* said; for

if *Victor* had been of the same opinion, he would never have excommunicated *Theodotus*. *Eusebius* says, this man was the father and broacher of this notion,[\[36\]](#) before *Artemon*, that Christ was a mere man; and denied him to be God. Yea, that he was not only a mere man, but born of the seed of man.[\[37\]](#) Though *Tertullian* says, that he held that Christ was only a man, but equally conceived and born of the holy Ghost and the virgin *Mary*, yet inferior to *Melchizedec*.[\[38\]](#)

The contrary to these notions was asserted and maintained by those apostolical men, not only *Ignatius*, who lived in the latter end of the preceding century, and the beginning of this, as has been observed, but by *Polycarp*, *Justin Martyr*, *Irenæus*, and others.

1. *Polycarp*, bishop of *Smyrna* a disciple and hearer of the apostle *John*, used to stop his ears when he heard the impious speeches of the heretics of his time. This venerable martyr, who had served his master Christ eighty six years, when at the stake, and the fire just about to be kindled upon him, witnessed a good confession of the blessed Trinity in his last moments, putting up the following prayer; "O Father of thy beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the knowledge of thee; God of angels and of powers, and every creature—I praise thee for all things; I bless thee, I glorify thee, by the eternal high priest Jesus Christ thy beloved Son, through whom, to thee with him in the holy spirit, be glory, now and for ever, *Amen*."[\[39\]](#)

2. *Justin*, the philosopher and martyr, in his first apology[\[40\]](#) for the Christians, has these words; "The Father of all, being unbegotten, has no name—the Son of him, who only is properly called a Son, the Word, begotten and existing before the creatures (for at the beginning by him he created and beautified all things) is called Christ." And in his second apology he says, "We profess to be atheists with respect to such who are thought to be Gods, but not to the true God and Father of righteousness, etc.; him, and his Son who comes from him, and has taught us these things, and the prophetic Spirit, we adore and worship." Afterwards he speaks of the *logos*, or word, the *first birth* of God:" which, says he, we say is begotten without mixture." And again "We speak that which is true, Jesus Christ alone is properly the Son begotten by God, being his Word, and first-born, and power, and by his will became man; these things he hath taught us." And in his dialogue with *Trypho* the Jew, who is represented as objecting to him, "What thou sayest that this Christ existed God before the world, and then was born, and became man, does not only seem to be a paradox to me, but quite foolish." To which *Justin* replies, "I know this seems a paradox, especially to those of your nation, — but if I cannot demonstrate, that this is the Christ of God, and that he pre-existed God, the Son of the maker of all things, and became man by a virgin, in this only it would be just to say, that I am mistaken, but not to deny that this is the Christ of God, though he may seem to be begotten a man of men, and by choice made Christ, as asserted by some: for there are some of our religion who profess him to be Christ, but affirm that he is begotten a man of men; to whom I do not assent, nor many who are in the same mind with me." In which he plainly refers to the heretics before mentioned, who thought that Christ was born of *Joseph* and *Mary*. And in another place, in the same dialogue, he says, "I will prove from scripture that God first *begat of himself before all creatures*, a certain rational power, which is called by the holy Spirit, the Glory of the Lord, sometimes the Son, sometimes Wisdom, sometimes the Angel, sometimes God, sometimes the Lord and the Word." And then, after observing there is something similar in the Word begetting a Word without any rejection or diminution, and fire kindling fire without lessening it, and abiding the same; he proceeds to give his proof from the words of *Solomon*, Proverbs 8 where "the word of wisdom testifies, that he is the God who is *begotten* by the Father of all, who is the word and

wisdom and the power and the glory of him that *generates*." And then observes, that "this is the *birth* produced by the *Father*, which *co-existed* with the *Father before all creatures*, and with whom the *Father* familiarly conversed, as the word by *Solomon* makes it manifest, that he the beginning before all creatures is the *birth begotten by God*, which by *Solomon* is called *Wisdom*." And in another place, in the same dialogue, on mention of the same words in *Proverbs* he says, "Ye must understand, ye hearers, if ye do but attend, the *Word* declares that "this birth was *begotten by the Father before all creatures*, and that which is *begotten* is *numerically* another from him that *begets*." What can be more express for the eternal generation of the *Son of God*, and that as a distinct person from his *Father*!

3. *Irenaeus*, a martyr, and bishop of *Lyons* in *France*, and a disciple of *Polycarp*. He wrote five books against the heresies of *Valentinus* and the Gnostics, which are still extant; out of which many testimonies might be produced confirming the doctrine of the *Trinity*, and the deity of *Christ*. I shall only transcribe two or three passages relating to the divine *Sonship* and generation of *Christ*. In one place he says,<sup>[41]</sup> "Thou art not increated and man, nor didst thou always *co-exist with God*, as his own word did, but through his eminent goodness, hast now had a beginning of beings; thou sensibly learnest from the word the dispositions of *God* who made thee; therefore observe the order of thy knowledge, and lest, as ignorant of good things, thou shouldst, transcend *God* himself" And again,<sup>[42]</sup> "should any one say to us, how is the *Son brought forth by the Father*? we reply to him, This bringing forth or *generation*, etc. or by whatsoever name it is called; no man knows his existing *unspeakable* generation; not *Valentinus*, not *Marcion*, not, *Saturninus*, nor *Basilides*, nor angels, nor archangels, nor principalities, nor powers, only the *Father* who hath *generated*, and the *Son* that is *generated*; therefore seeing his generation is ineffable, whoever attempts to declare such productions and generations (as the above heretics did) are not in their right minds, promising to declare those things which cannot be declared." And elsewhere, he says,<sup>[43]</sup> "The *Son*, the *Word* and *Wisdom*, was always present with him (*God*), and also the *Spirit*, by whom, and in whom, he made all things freely and willingly; to whom he spake, saying, *Let us make man*, etc." And a little after, "that the *Word*, that is, the *Son*, was always with the *Father*, we have abundant proof;" and then mentions *Proverbs* 3:19 and *Proverbs* 8:22, etc.

4. *Athenagoras*, who flourished at *Athens*, in the times of *Antoninus* and *Commodus*, to which emperors he wrote an apology for the *Christians*, in which he has these words,<sup>[44]</sup> "Let not any think it ridiculous in me that I speak of *God* as having a *Son*, for not as the poets fable, who make their *Gods* nothing better than men, do we think either of *God* and the *Father*, or of the *Son*; but the *Son of God* is the *Word of the Father*, in idea and efficacy *for of him, and him are all things made*, seeing the *Father* and the *Son* are one; so that the *Son* is in the *Father*, and the *Father* is in the *Son*, by the union and power of the *Spirit*; the mind, and word of the *Father* is the *Son of God*; now if any through the sublimity of your understanding would look further and inquire what the *Son* means, I will tell him in a few words, that he is the *first birth of the Father*; not as made, for from the beginning, *God* being the eternal mind, he had the word in himself (the  $\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\omega$ , or reason) being *eternally rational*, (that is, "never without his word and wisdom) but as coming forth is the idea and energy of all things." For which he produces as a proof *Proverbs* 8:22 and then proceeds, "Who therefore cannot wonder, to hear us called atheists, who speak of *God the Father*, and of *God the Son*, and the holy *Spirit*, shewing their power in unity and their distinction in order?" A little farther,<sup>[45]</sup> he strongly expresses the doctrine of the *Trinity in Unity*; "We assert *God* and the *Son* his *Word*, and the holy *Ghost*, united indeed according to power, the *Father*, the *Son*, the *Spirit*, for

the Mind, Word and Wisdom, is the Son of the Father, and the Spirit an emanation, or influence, as light from fire."

5. *Theophilus*, bishop of *Antioch*, flourished under the emperor *Antoninus Verus*: in a treatise of his<sup>[46]</sup> he has these words concerning the Word and Son of God, "God having his λογον ενδιαθετον, internal word within himself, *begat him*, when he brought him forth with his wisdom *before all things*; this word he used in working those things that were made by him, and he made all things by him. — The prophets were not when the world was made; but the wisdom of God, which is in him, and the holy word of God, was always present with him;" in proof of which he produces Proverbs 8:27, And in another place,<sup>[47]</sup> speaking of the voice *Adam* heard, says, "What else is the voice, but the word of God who is his Son? not as the poets and writers of fables, who say, the sons of the gods are born of copulation; but as the truth declares, the internal Word being always in the heart of God, before any thing was made, him he had as his counselor, being his mind and prudence, when God would do what he counseled, he begat the Word, and having begotten the Word, the first-born of every creature, he always conversed with his Word," for which he quotes John 1:1-3.

6. *Clemens* of *Alexandria*, flourished under the emperors *Severus* and *Caracalla*, towards the latter end of the second century, he bears a plain testimony to the doctrine of the Trinity, concluding one of his treatises thus,<sup>[48]</sup> "Let us give thanks, praising the only Father and the Son, both teachers, with the holy Spirit, in which are all things, in whom are all things, and by whom all are one, — to whom "be glory now and for ever, *Amen*" He speaks<sup>[49]</sup> of Christ the perfect word, as born of the perfect Father; and says<sup>[50]</sup> of the Son of God, "that he never goes out of his watchtower, who is not divided nor dissected, nor passes from place to place, but is always every where, is contained no where, all mind, all paternal light, all eye; who sees all things, hears all things knows all things by his power, searches powers, and to whom the whole militia of angels and gods (magistrates) is subject. — This is the Son of God, the Savior and Lord whom we speak of, and the divine prophecies shew." A little after he speaks of him as, "*begotten without beginning*, that is, eternally begotten, and who, before the foundation of the world, was the Father's counselor, that wisdom in whom the almighty God delighted; for Son is the power of God; who before all things were made, was the most ancient word of the Father. — Every operation of the Lord has a reference to the almighty; and the Son is, as I may say, a certain energy of the Father." This ancient writer frequently attacks and refutes the Carpocratians, Valentinians, and Gnostics, and other heretics of this and the preceding age. I proceed,

III. To the third century, The heresies which sprung up in this age respecting the Person, Sonship, and Deity of Christ, were those of *Berullus*, who revived that of *Artemon*, and of the Noetians or Sabellians, sometimes called Patripassians, and of the Samosatensians.

1st, *Beryllus*, bishop of *Bostra* in *Arctia*, who for some time behaved well in his office, as *Jerom* says,<sup>[51]</sup> but at length fell into this notion, that Christ was not before his incarnation; or as *Eusebius*<sup>[52]</sup> expresses it, that our Lord and Savior did not subsist in his own substance before he sojourned among men, and had no deity of his own residing in him, but his Father's; but through disputations he had with several bishops and particularly with *Origen*, he was recovered from his error and restored to the truth.

2. The Noetians, so called from *Noctus*, and afterwards Sabellians, from *Sabellius*, a disciple of the former; those held that Father, Son, and Spirit, are one person under these different names. The foundation of their heresy was laid by *Simon Magus*, as before observed. They were sometimes called Praxeans and Hermogeniaus, from *Praxeus* and *Hermogenes*, the first authors of it, who embraced the same notions in this period, and sometimes Patripassians, because, in consequence of this principle, they held that the Father might be said to suffer as the Son.[\[53\]](#)

3. The Samosatensians, so called from *Paul of Samosate*, bishop of *Antioch*, who revived the heresy of *Artemo*, that Christ was a mere man. He held that Christ was no other than a common man; he refused to own that he was the Son of God, come from heaven; he denied that the only begotten Son and Word was God of God: he agreed with the Noetians and Sabellians, that there was lint one person in the Godhead;[\[54\]](#) of these notions he was convicted, and for them condemned by the synod at *Antioch*.[\[55\]](#)

The writers of this age are but few, whose writings have been continued and transmitted to us; but those we have, strongly opposed the errors now mentioned; the chief are *Tertullian*, *Origen*, and *Cyprian*, besides in some

fragments of others.

1. *Tertullian*, He wrote against *Praxeus*, who held the same notion that *Noctus* and *Sabellius* did, in which work he not only expresses his firm belief of the Trinity in Unity, saying;[\[56\]](#) "nevertheless the economy is preserved, which disposes Unity into Trinity, three, not in state or nature, essence) but in degree (or person) not in substance but in form, not in power but in species, of one substance, of one state, and of one power, because but one God, from whom these degrees, forms and species are deputed, under the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," And that he means three distinct persons, is clear from what he afterwards says: "whatsoever therefore was the substance of the Word, that I call a person, and to him I give the name of Son; and whilst I acknowledge a Son, I defend a second from the Father." The distinction of the Father and Son from each other, and the eternal generation of the one from the other, are fully expressed by him "this rule as professed by me, is every where held; by which I testify, the Father, Son, and Spirit are inseparable from each other; —for Lo, I say, another is the Father, and another is the Son, and another is the holy Spirit; —not that the Son is another from the Father, by diversity, but by distribution; not another by division, but by distinction: —another is he that *generates*, and another he that is *generated*: —a "Father must needs have Son that he may be a Father, and the Son a Father that he may be a Son." And again, he explains the words in *Proverbs* 8:22. (*The Lord possessed me*) of the generation of the Son; and on the clause, *when he prepared the heavens, I was with him*, he remarks, "thereby making himself equal to him, by proceeding from whom he became the Son and first born, as being *begotten before all things*; and the only begotten, as being alone begotten of God." On these words, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*, he observes[\[57\]](#) to *Praxeas*, "If you would have me believe that he is both Father and Son, shew me such a passage elsewhere, *The Lord said unto himself, I am my Son, this day have I begotten my self*." And in another work[\[58\]](#) of his, he has these words, speaking of the Word, "this we learn is brought forth from God, and by being brought forth *generated*, and therefore called the Son of God, and God, from the unity of substance; —so that what comes from God, is God, and the Son of God, and both one:" that is, one God.

2. *Origen*. Notwithstanding his many errors, he is very express for the doctrine of the Trinity, and the distinction of the Father and Son in it, and of the eternal generation of the Son: he observes<sup>[59]</sup> of the Seraphim, in Isaiah 6:3 that by saying, "*Holy, holy, holy*, they preserve the mystery of the Trinity; that it was not enough for them to cry *holy* once nor twice, but they take up the perfect number of the Trinity, that they might manifest the multitude of the holiness of God, which is the repeated community of the trine holiness, the holiness of the Father, the holiness of the only begotten Son, and of the holy Spirit." And elsewhere,<sup>[60]</sup> allegorizing the show-bread, and the two tenth deals in one cake, he asks, how two tenths become one lump? because, says he, "we do not separate the Son from the Father, nor the Father from the Son (John 14:90, therefore each loaf is of two tenths, and set in two positions, that is in two rows, for if there was one position, it would be confused, and the Word would be mixed of the Father and the Son, but now indeed it is but one bread for them is one will and one substance; but there are two positions; that is, two proprieties of persons (or proper persons for we call him, the Father who is not the Son: and him the Son who is not the Father:" Of the generation of the Son of God he thus speaks,<sup>[61]</sup> "Jesus Christ himself, who is come, was begotten of the Father before every creature was." And again,<sup>[62]</sup> "it is abominable and unlawful to equal God the Father in the *generation of his only begotten Son*, and in his substance, to any one, men or other kind of animals: but there must needs be some exception, and something worthy of God, to which there can be, no comparison, not in things only, but indeed not in thought: nor can it be found by sense, nor can the human thought apprehend, how the unbegotten God is the Father of the only begotten Son: for *generation is eternal*, as brightness is generated from light, for he is not a Son by adoption of the Spirit extrinsically, but he is a *Son by nature*."

3. *Cyprian*. Little is to be met with in his writings on this subject. The following is the most remarkable and particular;<sup>[63]</sup> "the voice of the Father was heard from heaven, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased hear ye him*; — that this voice came from thy paternity, there is none that doubts; there is none who dares to arrogate this word to himself; there is none among the heavenly troops who dare call the Lord Jesus his Son. Certainly to thee only the Trinity is known, the Father only knows the Son, and the Son knows the Father, neither is he known by any unless he reveals him; in, the school of "divine teaching, the Father is he that teaches and, instructs, "the Son who reveals and opens the secrets of God unto us, and the holy Spirit who fits and furnishes us; from the Father we receive power, from the Son wisdom, and from the holy Spirit innocence. The Father chooses, the Son loves, the Holy Spirit joins and unites; from the Father is given us eternity, from the Son conformity to him his image, and from the holy spirit integrity and liberty; in the Father we are, in the Son we live, in the holy Spirit we are moved, and become proficient; eternal deity and temporal humanity meet together, and by the tenor of both natures is made an unity, that it is impossible that what is joined should be separated from one another." As for the Exposition of the Creed, which stands among *Cyprian's* works, and is sometimes attributed to him, it was done by *Ruffinus*, and the testimonies from thence will be produced in the proper place.

4. *Gregory of Neocaesarea*, sometimes called *Thaumaturgus*, the wonder-worker, lived in this century, to whom is ascribed<sup>[64]</sup> the following confession of faith; "One God, the Father of the living Word, of subsisting wisdom and power, and of the eternal character, perfect begetter of the perfect One, Father of the only begotten Son: and God the Son, who is through all. The perfect Trinity, which in glory eternity and kingdom, cannot be divided · nor alienated. Not therefore anything created or servile is in the Trinity, nor any thing super-induced, nor first and last; nor did the Son ever want a Father, nor the Son a Spirit: but the Trinity is always the same, immutable and

invariable." And among his twelve articles of faith, with an anathema annexed to them, this is one: "If any one says, another is the Son who was before the world, and another who was in the last times, and does not confess, that he who was before the world, and he who was in the last times, is the same, as it is written, let him be anathema." The interpolation follows; how can it be said, another is the Son of God before the world was, and another in the last days, when the Lord says, *before Abraham was, I am*; and because *I came forth from the Father, and am come*; and again, *I go to my Father*?"

5. *Dionysius*, bishop of *Alexandria*, was a disciple of *Origen*: he wrote against the Sabellians,<sup>[65]</sup> but none of his writings are extant, only some fragments preserved in other authors. And whereas *Arius* made use of some passages of his, and improved them in favor of his own notions, *Athanasius* from him shows the contrary, as where in one of his volumes he expressly says,<sup>[66]</sup> that "there never was a time in which God was not a Father; and in the following acknowledges, that Christ the Word, Wisdom and Power, always was; that he is the eternal Son of the eternal Father; for if there is a Father, there must be a Son; and if there was no Son, how could he be the Father of any? but there are both, and always were. The Son alone always co-existed with the Father. God the Father always was; and the Father being eternal, the Son also is eternal, and co-existed with him as brightness with light." And in answer to another objection, made against him, that when he mentioned the Father, he said nothing of the Son; and when he named the Son, said nothing of the Father; it is observed,<sup>[67]</sup> that in another volume of his; he says, that each of these names spoken of by me; are inseparable and indivisible from one another; when I speak of the Father, and before I introduce the Son, I signify him in the Father; when I introduce the Son; though I have not before spoken of the Father, he is always to be understood in the Son."

6. The errors of *Paulus Samosate* were condemned by the synod at *Antioch*, towards the latter end of this century, by whom<sup>[68]</sup> a formula or confession of faith was agreed to, in which are these words. "We profess that our Lord Jesus Christ was *begotten of the Father before ages*, according to the Spirit, and in the last days, born of a virgin, according to the flesh." The word  $\text{ομοουσιω}$ , *consubstantial*, is used in their creed. Towards the close of this century, and at the beginning of the next, lived *Lactantius*, (for he lived under *Dioclesian*, and to the times of *Constantine*) who asserts,<sup>[69]</sup> that God, the maker of all things, begat "a Spirit holy, incorruptible, and irreprehensible, whom he called the Son." He asks,<sup>[70]</sup> "how hath he procreated? The divine works can neither be known nor declared by any; nevertheless the scriptures teach, that the Son of God is the Word of God." Nothing more is to be observed in this century. I pass on,

IV. To the fourth century, in which rose up the: Arians and Photinians, and others, 1st, The Arians, so called from *Arius*, a presbyter of the church at *Alexandria*, in the beginning of this century, who took occasion from some words dropped in disputation by *Alexander* his bishop, to oppose him, and start the heresy that goes under his name; and though the eternal Sonship of Christ was virtually denied by preceding heretics, who affirmed that Christ did not exist before *Mary*; in opposition to whom the orthodox affirmed, that he was *begotten, of the Father before all worlds*; yet *Arius* was, the first, who pretended to acknowledge the Trinity, that actually and in express words set himself to oppose the eternal Sonship of Christ by generation; and argued much in the same manner as those do, who oppose it now: for being a man who had a good share of knowledge of the art of logic, as the historian observes,<sup>[71]</sup> he reasoned thus: "If the Father begat the Son, he that is begotten, must have a beginning of his existence, from whence it is manifest, that there was

a time when the Son was not; and therefore it necessarily follows, that he had his subsistence from things that are not;" or was brought out of a state of non existence into a state of existence. He understood *generated* in no other sense than of being *created* or *made*; and asserted, that he was created by God before time, and was the first creature, and by which he made all others; in proof of which he urged Proverbs 8:22 taking the advantage of the Greek version, which, instead of *possessed me*, reads *created me the beginning of his ways*. His sentiments will more fully appear from his own words in his epistles to *Eusebius of Nicomedia*, and to his own bishop, *Alexander of Alexandria*; in his letter to the former, he says,<sup>[72]</sup> "Our sentiments and doctrines are, that the Son is not unbegotten, nor a part of the unbegotten in any manner, nor out of any subject matter, but that by will and counsel he subsisted before times and ages, perfect God, the only begotten, immutable; and that before he was begotten or created, or decreed or established, he was not, for he was not unbegotten; we are persecuted because we say, *the Son had a beginning*, but God is without beginning: for this we are persecuted, and because we say, that he is of things that did not exist (that is, out of nothing;) so we say, that he is not a part of God, nor out of any subject-matter; and for this we are persecuted." And in his letter to his bishop, he thus expresses himself,<sup>[73]</sup> "We acknowledge one God, the only unbegotten; — that this God begot the only begotten Son before time, by whom he made the world, and the rest of things; that he begot him not in appearance, but in reality; and that by his will he subsisted, immutable and unalterable, a perfect creature, but as one of the creatures, a birth, but as one of the births — We say, that he was created before times and ages, by the will of God, and received his life and being from the Father; so that the Father together appointed glories for him; — The Son without time was begotten by the Father, and was created and established before the world was; he was not before he was begotten, but without time was begotten before all things, and subsisted alone from the alone Father; neither is eternal nor co-eternal, nor co-unbegotten with the Father, nor had he a being together with the Father." What he held is also manifest from his creed,<sup>[74]</sup> which he delivered in the following words, "I believe in one eternal God, and in his Son whom he created before the world, and as God he made the Son, and all the Son has, he has not (of himself,) he receives from God, and therefore the Son is not equal to, and of the same dignity with the Father, but comes short of the glory of God, as a workmanship; and in less than the power of God. I believe in the holy Ghost, who is made by the Son."

The Arians were sometimes called Aetians, from *Aetius*, a warm defender of the doctrine of *Arius*, and who stumbled at the same thing that *Arius* did; for he could not understand, the historian says,<sup>[75]</sup> how that which is begotten could be co-eternal with him that begets; but when *Arius* dissembled and signed that form of doctrine in the Nicene Synod, *Aetius* took the opportunity of breaking off from the Arians, and of setting up a distinct sect, and himself at the head of them. These were after called Eunomians, from *Eunomius*, a disciple of *Aetius*; he is said<sup>[76]</sup> to add to and to exceed the blasphemy of *Arius*; he with great boldness renewed the heresy of *Aetius*, who not only after *Arius* asserted that the Son was created out of nothing, but that he was unlike to the Father.<sup>[77]</sup> Hence the followers of these men were called Anomcoeans. There was another sect called Nativitarians, who were a sucker or branch that sprung from the Eunomians, and refined upon them; these held that the Son had his nativity of the Father, and the beginning of it from time; yet being willing to own: that he was co-eternal with the Father, thought that he was with him before he was begotten of him, that is, that he always was, but not always a Son, but that he began to be a Son from the time he was begotten There is a near approach to the sentiments of these in some of our days.

The Arians were also called Macedonians, from *Macedonius* a violent persecutor of the orthodox, called Homoousians,"[78] who believed that the Son is of the same substance with the Father; but this man afterwards becoming bishop of *Constantinople*, refused to call him a creature, whom the holy scripture calls the Son; and therefore the Arians rejected him, and he became the author and patron of his own sect; he denied the Son was consubstantial with the Father, but taught, that in all things he was like to him that begat him, and in express words called the Spirit a creature,[79] and the denial of the deity of the holy Spirit is the distinguishing tenet of his followers.

2dly, The Photinians rose up much about the same time the Arians did, for they are made mention of in the council of *Nice*, but their opinions differ from the Arians. These were sometimes called Marcellians, from *Marcellius* of *Ancyra*, whose disciple *Photinus* was, and from him named Photinians. He was bishop of *Syrmium*; his notions were the same with *Ebion*, and *Paul* of *Samosate*, that Christ was a mere man, and was only of *Mary*; he would not admit of the generation and existence of Christ before the world was.[80] His followers were much the same with our modern Socinians, and who are sometimes called by the same name. According to *Thomas Aquinas*,[81] the Photinians, and so the Cerinthians, Ebionites, and Samosatensians before them, as they held that Christ was a mere man, and took his beginning from *Mary*, so that he only obtained the honor of deity above others by, the merit of his blessed life; that he was, like other men, the Son of God by the Spirit of adoption, and by grace born of him, and by some likeness to God is in Scripture called God, not by nature, but by some participation of divine goodness.

These heresies were condemned by the several councils and synods held on account of them, and were refuted by various sound and valuable writers who lived in this century: to produce all their testimonies would be endless: I shall only take notice of a few, and particularly such as respect the Sonship of Christ.

1. The tenets of *Arius* were condemned by the council held at *Nice* in *Bythia*, consisting of three hundred and eighteen bishops, by whom was composed the following creed or agreement of faith, as the historian calls it:[82] "We believe in one God the Father Almighty, the maker of all things, visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only begotten, begotten of the Father, that is, out of the substance of the Father, God of God, light of light, true God of true God; begotten not made, consubstantial (or of the same essence) with the Father, by whom all things are made which are in heaven and in earth; who for us men, and for our salvation, descended and became incarnate, and was made man and suffered, and rose again the third day; ascended up into heaven, and will come to judge the quick and the dead. And we believe in the holy Spirit. As for those that say, there was a time when the Son of God was not, and before he was begotten was not, and that he was made of what does not exist (out of nothing), and say, he was from another substance, or essence, or created, or turned, or changed; the holy catholic and apostolic church anathematizes."

2. *Athanasius* was a famous champion for the doctrines of the Trinity, the proper Sonship of Christ, and his eternal generation; to produce all the testimonies from him that might be produced in proof of those doctrines, would be to transcribe a great part of his writings; it may be sufficient to give his creed; not that which is commonly called the Athanasian creed, which, whether penned by him is a doubt, but that which stands in his works, and was delivered by him in a personal disputation with *Arius*, and is as follows; which he calls an epitome of his faith.[83] "I believe in one God the

Father, the almighty, being always God the Father; and I believe in God the Word, the only begotten Son of God, that he co-existed with his own Father; that he is the equal Son of the Father, and that he is the Son of God; of the same dignity; that he is always with his Father by his deity, and that he contains all things in his essence; but the Son of God is not contained by any, even as God his Father: and I believe in the Holy Ghost, that he is of the essence of the Father, and that the Holy Spirit is co-eternal with the Father and with the Son. The Word, I say, was made flesh." After this I would only just observe, that *Athanasius* having said that the Son was without beginning and eternally begotten of the Father, farther says,[\[84\]](#) that he was begotten ineffably and inconceivably; and elsewhere he says,[\[85\]](#) "it is superfluous or rather full of madness to call in question, and in an heretical manner to ask, how can the Son be eternal? or, how can he be of the substance (or essence) of the Father, and not be a part of him?" And a little farther, "it is unbecoming to inquire how the Word is of God, or how he is the brightness of God, or how God begets, and what is the mode of the generation of God: he must be a madman that will attempt such things, since the thing is ineffable, and proper to the nature of God only, this is only known to himself and his Son."

3. *Alexander*, bishop of *Alexandria*, whom *Arius* opposed, and should have been mentioned first, in an epistle of his to *Alexander*, bishop of *Constantinople*,[\[86\]](#) acquaints him with the opinion of *Arius*, that there was a time when the Son of God wits not, and he that was not before, afterwards existed, and such was he made, when he was made as every man is; and that the Son of God is out of things that are not, or out of nothing; he observes to him, that what was his faith and the faith of others, was the faith of the apostolic church: "We believe in one unbegotten Father, — and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God; not begotten out of that which is not, but from the Father; that exists, not in a corporal manner by incision, or deflections of divisions, as seemed to *Sabeilius* and *Valentinus*, but in a manner ineffable and inexplicable."

4. *Epiphanius* wrote a volume against all heresies, and attempts a confutation of them: and with respect to the Arian heresy, he thus writes;[\[87\]](#) "God existing incomprehensible, has begat him that is incomprehensible, *before all ages and times*, and there is no space between the Son and the Father, but as soon as you understand a Father, you understand a Son, and as soon as you name a Father you shew a Son; the Son is understood by the Father, and the Father is known by the Son; whence a Son, if he has not a Father? and whence a Father, if he has not begat an only begotten Son? For when is it the Father cannot be called a Father, or the Son, a Son? Though some think of a Father without a Son, who afterwards comes to a proficiency and begets a Son, and so after the birth is called the Father of that Son: the Father who is perfect, and never wants perfection, making a progress or proficiency in the deity."

5. *Hilary*, bishop of *Poitiers* in *France*, wrote against the Arians, and says many things in opposition to their tenets, concerning the Sonship of Christ, and his eternal generation; among others, he says[\[88\]](#) "the unbegotten *begot* a Son of himself *before all time*, not from any subjacent matter, for all things are by the Son, nor out of nothing, for the Son is from him himself. — He begot the only begotten in an incomprehensible and unspeakable manner, before all time and ages, of that which is unbegotten, and so of the unbegotten, perfect and eternal Father, is the only begotten, perfect and eternal Son."

6. *Faustinus* the presbyter, wrote a treatise against the Arians; who observes, that they sometimes use the same words and phrases the orthodox do, but not in the same sense; they speak of God the

Father and of God the Son, but when they speak of the Father, it is not of one who truly begets, and when they speak of the Son, it is of him as a Son by adoption, not by nature; and when they speak of him as a Son begotten before the world was, they attribute a beginning to him, and that there was a time when he was not; and so they assert him to be of things not existent, that is, of nothing. He asks, "How is he truly a Father, who, according to them, does not beget (truly)? and how is Christ truly a Son, whom they deny to be generated of him?" And again, "How is he the only begotten of the Father, since he cannot be the only begotten, other Sons existing by adoption? but if he is truly the only begotten by the Father, therefore because he only is truly generated of the Father." And elsewhere,[\[89\]](#) "They say God made himself a Son; if he made him out of nothing, then is he a creature, and not a Son. What is he that you call a Son, whom you confirm to be a creature, since you say he is made out of nothing? therefore you cannot call him both a Son and a creature; for a Son is from birth, a creature from being made." And again,[\[90\]](#) "In this alone the Father differs from the Son, that the one is a Father, the other a Son; that is the one begets and the other is begotten; yet not because he is begotten has he any thing less than what is in God the Father" (Heb.1:3). Once more[\[91\]](#) "God alone is properly a true Father, who is a Father without beginning and end, for he did not sometime begin: he is a Father, but he was always a Father, having always a Son begotten of him, as he is always the true God, continuing without beginning and end."

7. *Gregory*, bishop of *Nazianzum*, gives many testimonies to the doctrines of the Trinity and of the Sonship and generation of Christ, against the Arians and Eunomians: among which are the following: "We ought, says he,[\[92\]](#) to acknowledge one God the Father, without beginning and unbegotten; and one Son, begotten of the Father; and one Spirit, having subsistence from God, yielding to the Father, because he is unbegotten, and to the Son, because he is begotten; otherwise of the same nature, dignity, honor and glory." And elsewhere he says,[\[93\]](#) "If you ask me, I will answer you again, When was the Son begotten? When the Father was not begotten. When did the Spirit proceed? When the Son did not proceed, but was begotten before time, and beyond expression. — How can it be proved, that they (the Son and Spirit) are, co-eternal with the Father? From hence, because they are of him, and not after him, for what is without beginning is eternal." And then he goes on to answer the several objections made to the generation of the Son by the Eunomians. Again he says,[\[94\]](#) "Believe the Son of God, the word that was *before all ages begotten* of the Father before time, and in an incorporeal manner; the same in the last clays made the Son of man for thy sake, coming forth from the virgin *Mary* in an unspeakable manner." And elsewhere he says,[\[95\]](#) "Do you hear of generation? do not curiously inquire how it is. Do you hear that the holy Spirit proceeds from the Father? do not be anxiously solicitous how it is: for if you curiously search into the generation of the Son, and the procession of the Spirit, I shall curiously inquire into the temperament of the soul and body, how thou art dust, and yet the image of God? How the mind remains in thee, and begets a word in another mind?"

8. *Basil*, called the great archbishop of *Caesarea Cappadocia*, wrote a treatise against *Eunomius*, in which he says,[\[96\]](#) "As there is one God the Father always remaining the Father, and who is for ever what he is; so there is one Son, born by an eternal generation, who is the true Son of God, who always is what he is, God the Word and Lord; and one holy Spirit, truly the holy Spirit." Again,[\[97\]](#) "Why therefore, O incredulous man, who dost not believe that God has an own Son, dost thou inquire how God begets? if truly thou askest of God how and where also, as in a place and when as in time; which, if absurd to ask such things concerning God, it will be more abominable not to believe." And a little after he says,[\[98\]](#) "If God made all out of nothing by his will, without labor,

and that is not incredible to us; it will certainly be more credible to all, that it; became God to beget an own Son of himself, in the divine nature, without passion, of equal honor, and of equal glory, a counselor of the same seat, a co-operator consubstantial with God the Father; not of a divers substance, nor alien from his sole deity; for if he is not so, neither is he adorable, for it is written *thou shall not worship a strange God.*"

9. *Gregory*, bishop of *Nyssa*, the brother of *Basil*, wrote against *Eunomius*, in which we have this passage.[\[99\]](#) "He (*Eunomius*) does say, that he (the Son) was truly begotten before the world. Let him say of whom he was begotten: he must say of the Father entirely, if he is not ashamed of the truth; but from the eternal Father there is no separating the eternity of the Son; the word Father "contains a Son."

10. *Ambrose*, bishop of *Milan*, after having said many things in opposition to *Arius*, *Sabellius*, *Phontius*, and *Eunomius*, observes, that "when you speak of a Father, you also design his Son, for no man is a father to himself; and when you name a son, you confess his father, for no man is a son to himself; therefore neither the son can lie without the father, nor the father without the son; therefore always a father and always a son." He has also these words:[\[100\]](#) "You ask me, how he can be a son if he has not a prior father? I ask of you also, when or how you think the Son is generated? for to me it is impossible to know the secret of generation; the mind fails, the voice is silent; and not mine only, but that of the angels; it is above angels, above powers, above cherubim, above seraphim, and above all understanding, if the peace of Christ is above all understanding (Phil, 4:7), must not such a generation be above all understanding?" And in another place,[\[101\]](#) "God the Father begat the Word *co-eternal* with himself and co-omnipotent, with whom he produced the holy Spirit; hence we believe that the substance of the Son and of the holy Spirit existed before any creature, out of all time; that the Father is the begetter, the Son is begotten, and the holy Spirit the holiness and the Spirit of the begetter and the begotten."

11. *Jerom* the presbyter, and a noted writer in this century, speaking of the Arians says,[\[102\]](#) "Let them understand, that they glory in vain of the testimony in which Wisdom speaks of being created in the beginning of the ways of God, and begotten and established; for it, according to them, he was created, he could not be begotten or born: if begotten or born, how could he be established and created?" And a little after he says "God, the "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is a Father according to substance (or essence,) and the only begotten is not a Son. by adoption, but by nature; whatsoever we say of the Father and the Son, this we know is said of the holy Spirit." Here the creed of *Damasus* might be taken notice of, in which he says, "God has begot a Son, not by will nor by necessity, but by nature;" and in the explanation of it, it is said, "Not because we say the Son is begotten of the Father by a divine and ineffable generation, do we ascribe any time to him, for neither the Father nor the Son began to be at any time; nor do we any otherwise confess an eternal Father, but we also confess a co-eternal Son." Also *Ruffinus's* exposition of the apostles creed, which stands among *Jerom's* works, "when you hear of a Father, understand the Father of a Son, the image of his substance; but how God begat a Son do not discuss, nor curiously intrude into the depth of this secret.[\[103\]](#)

12. The errors of the Photinians were not only confuted by the several above writers, but *Photinus* himself was condemned by the synod at *Syrmium*, of which place he had been bishop; and in the formula of faith agreed on therein, among others, are the following articles,[\[104\]](#) "We believe in

one God the Father almighty, the creator and maker of all things; — and in his only begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ, who was *begotten of the Father before all ages*; — and in the holy Spirit: — and as to those that say, that the Son is of things that are not, (or of nothing) or of another substance, and not of God; and that there was a time or age when he was not, the holy and catholic church reckons them as aliens. — If any one dare to say, that the unbegotten or a part of him was born of *Mary*, let him be anathema: and if any one say that he is the Son of *Mary* by prescience, and not begotten of the Father before the world, and was with God by whom all things are made, let him be anathema. — If any one says, that Christ Jesus was not the Son of God before the world was, and ministered to the Father at the creation of all things, but only from the time he was born of *Mary* was called Son and Christ, and then received the beginning of deity, let him be anathema, as a Samosatenean."

13. The formulas, creeds, and confessions of faith, made by different persons, and at different places, besides the Nicene creed, and even some that differed in other things from that and from one another, yet all agreed in inserting the clause respecting their faith in Christ, the only begotten Son, as *begotten of the father before all ages*, or *the world was*; as at *Antioch, Syrmium, Ariminum, Selucia, and Constantinople*.[\[105\]](#)

14. Before the Nicene creed was made, or any of the above creeds, this was an article of faith with the orthodox Christians, that Christ was the eternal begotten Son of God. From the Writings of *Cyril*, bishop of *Jerusalem*, who lived in the fourth century, may be collected a symbol or creed containing the faith of the church, and in which this article is fully expressed;[\[106\]](#) that Christ "is the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, the true God by whom all things are made;" and which article he strongly asserts and defends; and the creed which he explains, is thought to be the[\[107\]](#) same which the first and ancient church always professed, and from the beginning; and perhaps is what *Eusebius*[\[108\]](#) refers unto, who was bishop of *Caesarea* in *Palestine*, when he declared his faith in the council at *Nice*; our formula, says he, which was read in the presence of our emperor (*Constantine*) most dear to God, is as we received it *from the bishops that were before us*; and as when catechized and received the laver (that is, were baptized,) and as we learnt from the divine writings, and is in this manner, "We believe in one God the Father Almighty, — and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God, the only begotten Son, the first-born of every creature, *begotten of God the Father before all worlds*, by whom all things are made, etc." Nor indeed was the word  $\text{ὁμοουσιος}$ , *consubstantial*, which expresses the Son's being of the same substance, nature and essence with the Father, a new word,[\[109\]](#) devised in the council of *Nice*; for it was in use before,[\[110\]](#) as *Athanasius* has proved from the same *Eusebius*. "The bishops, he says, (that is, those assembled at *Nice*) did not invent these words of themselves, but having a testimony from the Fathers, so they wrote; for the ancient bishops near a hundred and thirty years before, both in the great city of *Rome*, and in our city (*Alexandria*) reproved those that said that the Son was a creature, and not *consubstantial* with the Father;" and this *Eusebius* who was bishop of *Caesarea*, knew, who first gave into the Arian heresy, but afterwards subscribed to the synod at *Nice*; for being confirmed, he wrote to his own people thus,[\[111\]](#) "We find, says he, some sayings of the ancient and famous bishops and writers, who use the word *consubstantial* in treating of the deity of the Father and of the Son." And certain it is, that it is used by *Gregory of Neocaesarea*,[\[112\]](#) who lived before the council of *Nice*, and by the synod at *Antioch* in their creed,[\[113\]](#) held A. D. 277.

V. In the fifth century Arianism continued and prospered, having many abettors, as well as many who opposed it: other heresies also arose, and some in opposition to the Sonship of Christ.

1st. *Felicianus*, the Arian, argued against it thus, "If Christ was born of a virgin, how can he be said to be co-eternal with God the Father?" To whom *Austin* replied, "The Son of God entered into the womb of the virgin, that he might be again born, who had been already begotten before, he received the whole man (or whole humanity) who had had already perfect deity from the Father, not unlike was he to the begetter, when being everlasting he was begotten from eternity, nor unlike to men when born of his mother."

2dly, *Faustus*, the Manichee, asserted, that according to the evangelists, Christ was not the Son of God, only the Son of *David*, until he was thirty years of age, and was baptized: to which *Austin* replied, "The catholic and apostolic faith is, that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, is the Son of God according to Deity, and the Son of *David*, according to the flesh: which we so prove from the evangelic and apostolic writings, as that no man can contradict our proofs, unless he contradicts limit express words." [\[114\]](#)

3dly, The Priscillianists asserted that Christ is called the only begotten Son of God, because he only was born of a virgin; to which *Leo Magnus* makes answer, "Let them take which they will, their tenets tend to great impiety, whether they mean, that the Lord Christ had his beginning from his mother, or deny him to be the only begotten of God the Father; since he was born of his mother, who was God the Word, and none is begotten of the Father but the Word." [\[115\]](#)

The writers in this century are many, who have plainly and strongly asserted the eternal generation and Sonship of Christ: as *Augustine*, *Chrysostom*, *Proclus* archbishop of *Constantinople*, *Leo Magnus*, *Theodoret*, *Cyril of Alexandria*, [\[116\]](#) *Paulinus*, *Victor*, *Maximus Taurinensis*, etc. it may be abundantly sufficient only to mention the following formulas, or confessions of faith.

1. Of *Augustine*, bishop of *Hippo*, or of *Sennadius*, presbyter of *Marseilles in France*, to whom it is sometimes ascribed: "We believe there is one God, the Father, Son, and holy Spirit; the Father because he has a Son, the Son because he has a Father; the holy Spirit because he is from the Father and the Son (proceeding and co-eternal with the Father and the Son,) — the eternal Father, because he has an eternal Son, of whom he is the eternal Father; the eternal Son, because he is co-eternal with the Father and the holy Spirit; the eternal holy Spirit, because he is co-eternal with the Father and the Son." [\[117\]](#)

2. Of *Flavianus*, bishop of *Constantinople*, which he delivered in conc. *Constantinop.* A. D. 448 approved of by the synod at *Chalcedon*, A. D. 451. "Our Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, perfect God and perfect man, of a reasonable soul and body; *begotten* indeed of the *Father*, without beginning and *before the world*, according to deity, but in the end, in the last days, the same was born of the virgin *Mary* for our salvation, according to humanity; consubstantial with the Father, according to deity, consubstantial with his mother according to "humanity; for of two natures we confess that Christ is after the incarnation in one subsistence, in one person. we confess one Christ, one Son, one Lord." [\[118\]](#)

3. Of the council at *Chalcedon*, consisting of six hundred and thirty Fathers; "Following the holy fathers, say they, we all harmoniously teach and confess our Lord Jesus Christ: that he is perfect in deity and perfect in humanity, truly God and truly man, of a rational soul and body; co-essential with the Father according to the deity, and co-essential with us according to the humanity, in all things like unto us, excepting sin, but *begotten of the Father before the world*, according to the deity: and in the last days, for us and our salvation, was of the virgin *Mary*, the mother of our Lord, according to the humanity, etc."[\[119\]](#)

VI. In the sixth century were a sort of heretics called *Bo-o-nosians*, who held that Christ was not the proper but adoptive Son; against whom *dustinian* bishop of *Valae* in *Spain* wrote;[\[120\]](#) and Arianism spread and prevailed under the Gothic kings in several parts. *Fulgentius* speaks of the tenets of the Arians in this time, that the Word or Son of God was not of the same substance with the Father.[\[121\]](#) This author wrote an answer to ten objections of theirs: to the first, concerning diversity of words and names used, he replies, "When Father and Son are named, in these two names a diversity of words is acknowledged, but neither by those two different words the nature of both is signified, for the diversity of those names does not divide the natures, but shows the truth of the generation, as from one true Father, we know that one true Son exists." To the second objection, concerning the ineffability of generation, he observes, "because the generation of the Son is unspeakable, it is not unknowable, nor does it follow, because it cannot be declared, that it cannot be known."[\[122\]](#)

*Chilpericus*, king of the *Franks*, endeavored to revive the Sabellian heresy, but was opposed by *Gregory Furnensis*:[\[123\]](#) besides *Fulgentius* and *Gregory*, there were others in this age who asserted and defended the eternal generation and Son-ship of Christ, as *Fortunatus*, *Cassiodorus*, *Gregorius Magnus*, and others;[\[124\]](#) and even by a synod consisting of Gothic bishops,[\[125\]](#) in number sixty three. In the same century the famous *Boetius* declares his faith in God the Father, in God the Son, and in God the holy Ghost; that the Father has a Son begotten of his substance, and co-eternal with him, whose generation no human mind can conceive of.[\[126\]](#)

VII. In the seventh century, towards the beginning of it, rose up that vile impostor *Mahomet*, as bitter an enemy to the true, proper and eternal Sonship of Christ, as ever was, for which he gave the following brutish and stupid reasons; "because God did not need a Son, because if he had a Son, they might not agree, and so the government of the world be disturbed."[\[127\]](#) Reasons which require no answer, Not to take notice of the several councils at *Toletum*, held in this century, in which the article of Christ's eternal Son-ship was asserted and maintained, I would observe what is said in a Roman synod, consisting of a *hundred and twenty five* bishops, in which *Agatho* the Roman pontiff presided; "We believe, say they, in God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible; and in his only begotten Son, who was begotten of him before all worlds."[\[128\]](#)

VIII. In the eighth century, the notion that Christ, though the true, proper, and natural Son of God according to the divine nature, yet according to the human nature was only the Son of God by adoption and grace, an adoptive Son, was propagated by *Elipandus* and *Felix*, Spanish bishops; but condemned by the council at *Frankfort*, called by *Charles* the Great;[\[129\]](#) and the eternal Sonship and generation of Christ was asserted and maintained by *Damascene*, *Bede*, *Albinus*, and others.[\[130\]](#)

IX. In the ninth, tenth and eleventh centuries, the controversies were chiefly about Image-worship, Transubstantiation, etc. yet in these and the following centuries, we have testimonies from various writers to the truth of Christ's proper and eternal Sonship by generation; it would be too numerous to produce them all; it will be sufficient to say, it was not opposed by any, but plainly and strongly affirmed by *Rabanus*, *Macerus*, and *Haymo* in century 9 by *Theophilact*, in century 10 by *Anselm*, in century 11 by *Peter Lombard* and *Bernard*, in century 12 by *Thomas Aquinas* and *Albertus Magnus*, in century 13, but in these and the following centuries, till the Reformation, Satan had other work to do than to stir up men to oppose the Trinity, or any of the divine persons in it, having enough to do to support the hierarchy of *Rome*, and the peculiar tenets of Popery, against the witnesses who rose up at different times to oppose them, and to endeavor to carry the pride and tyranny of the bishop of *Rome* to the highest pitch possible.

X. When the Reformation began in the sixteenth century, and spread throughout many nations in *Europe*, great evangelical light broke forth among the Reformers; and Satan fearing his kingdom would greatly suffer hereby, went to his old game again, which he had played with so much success in the first ages of Christianity, namely, to stir up an opposition to the doctrine of the Trinity, and the person of Christ; which was first begun by *Servetus in Helvetia*, who afterwards came to *Geneva* and there ended his life.[\[131\]](#) *Blandrata*, infected with his principles, went into *Poland*, and there artfully spread his poison in the reformed churches, assisted by others, and which at length issued in a division in those churches; when *Faustus Socinus*, who had imbibed some bad notions from the papers of his uncle *Laelius* about the Trinity, came into *Poland*, and joined the Antitrinitarians there, and strengthened their cause, and where the notions of him and his followers took root and flourished much: and from thence bays been transplanted into other countries, Those men, who were men of keen parts and abilities, saw clearly that could they demolish the article of Christ's Son-ship by eternal generation, it would be all over with the doctrine of the Trinity; and therefore set themselves with all their might against it.[\[132\]](#) *Socinus* himself says of it,[\[133\]](#) not only that it is error and a mere human invention, and which he represents as if it was held to be *more animantium*; but that it is most absurd, most unworthy of God, and contrary to his absolute perfection and unchangeable eternity;[\[134\]](#) and asserts, that Christ is not called the only begotten Son of God, because generated of the substance of God; and that there is no other, nor ever existed any other only begotten Son of God, besides that man, Jesus of *Nazareth*: and expressly says, it clearly appears, that the human nature of Christ is the person of the Son of God; and elsewhere[\[135\]](#) makes the same objection to Sonship by generation as *Mahomet* did, for he says, "Those who accommodate the Word *brought forth* in Proverbs 8:24 to the Son, are not according to the judgment of the Homoousians, to be reckoned very distant from the blasphemy of the Turks, who when they hear that the Christians say, God has a Son, ask, Who is his wife?" And in this article concerning the Sonship of Christ, and also with respect to the doctrine of the Trinity, the Remonstrants,[\[136\]](#) in the seventeenth century and onwards, seem to agree with them; but the contrary has been maintained by all sound divines and evangelical churches, from the Reformation to the present time, as appears by their writings and harmony of confessions: so that upon the whole it is clear, that the church of God has been in the possession of this doctrine of the eternal generation and Sonship of Christ, from the beginning of Christianity to the present age, almost *eighteen hundred years*; nor has there been any one man who professed to hold the doctrine of the Trinity, or of the three distinct divine persons in the unity of the divine essence, that ever opposed it, till the latter end of the *seventeenth* century: if any such person in this course of time can be named, let him be named: none but the followers of *Simon Magus*, *Cerinthus*, *Ebion*, *Carpocrates*,

the Gnosticks, etc. in the two first centuries, and then by the Sabellians, Samosatensians, Arians, Photinians, Mahometans, Socinians, and more lately by the Remonstrants, such as are Antitrinitarians. The only two persons I have met with who have professed to hold the doctrine of the Trinity, as it has been commonly received, that have publicly expressed their doubts or dissatisfaction about the phrase *eternal generation*, I mean such as are of any note or character, for as for the trifling tribe of ignorant writers and scribblers, who know not what they say, nor whereof they affirm, I make no account of them; I say, I have met with only two of this sort. The one is *Roell*, a Dutch Professor at *Franeker*, who lived at the latter end of the last century; this man professed to believe that there are three distinct divine persons, the Father, Son, and Spirit, and that these three are one; that the second person in the Trinity was begotten by the Father from all eternity, and that this is the first and chief reason that he is called a Son; nor did he object to the use of the phrase *eternal generation*, nor did he disuse it, but explained it to another sense than that in which it was commonly taken, that is, that it only signified the co-existence of the second person with the first, and communion of nature with him. But as the same may be said of the first and third persons, the phrase of generation so understood might be said of them as well as of the second; he therefore was obliged to have recourse to the economy of salvation, and the manifestation of the three persons in it. [\[137\]](#) On the whole, he was opposed by the very learned *Vitringa*, [\[138\]](#) and his opinion was proscribed and condemned by almost all the synods of the Dutch churches, and he was forbid by the authority of his supreme magistrate to propagate it; and most of the synods have decreed, that the candidates for the ministry shall be examined about this opinion, before they are admitted into the ministry. [\[139\]](#) The other person, who has objected to the eternal generation of the Son of God, is Dr. *Thomas Ridgeley*, Professor of Divinity in *London*, towards the beginning of the present century: [\[140\]](#) who strongly asserts, and contends for the doctrine of a Trinity of divine distinct persons in the Godhead, and yet strangely adopts the Socinian notion or Sonship by office, and makes the eternal Sonship of Christ to be what he calls his mediatorial Sonship. There is indeed a third person of great fame among us, Dr. *Isaac Watts*, who has expressed his dissatisfaction with the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son of God, but then he is not to be reckoned a Trinitarian, being so manifestly in the Sabellian scheme, as appears by his *Dissertations* published in 1725. Inasmuch that the celebrated *Fred. Adolphus Lampe*, who published his *Theological Disputations* concerning the holy Spirit, two or three years after, spares not to reckon him among the grossest Sabellians: his words are, [\[141\]](#) "Nuperius novum systema Socinianum de Trinitate Angtie J. WATS edidit, additis quibusdam dissertationibus eam illustrantibus, quarum quinta ex professo de spiritu S. agit. Existimat quidem sect. o. p. 126. eatenus se a Socino, Schlictingio, Crellio esse distinguatum, quod virituum in Deo non accidentalem, sed essentialem, seu substantialem pro spiritu S. habeat: hoc tamen ita facit, ut non censeat hanc notionem constanter ubique obtinere: nam saepius "cum crassioribus Sabellianis spiritum S. esse Deum psum, p. 130. s. 49. defendit."

Upon the whole, setting aside the said persons, the testimonies for and against the eternal generation and Sonship of Christ stand thus:

### **For Eternal Generation, etc.**

Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Athenagoras, Theophilus of *Antioch*, Clemens of *Alexandria*, Tertullian, Origen, Cyprian, Gregory of *Neocesaria*, Dionysius of *Alexandria*, the *three hundred and eighteen* Nicene Fathers; Athanasius, Alexander bishop of *Alexandria*,

Epiphanius, Hilary, Faustinus, Gregory of *Nazianzum*, Basil, Gregory of *Nyssa*, Ambrose, Jerom, Ruffinus, Cyril of *Jerusalem*, besides the *many hundreds* of bishops and presbyters assembled at different times and in different places, as, at *Syrmium*, *Antioch*, *Arminum*, *Seleucia*, and *Constantinople*, and elsewhere;

### **Against It,**

Simon Magus, Cerinthus, and Ebion, and their respective followers; Carpocrates and the Gnostick, Valentinus, Theodotus the currier, Artemon, and others their associates; Beryllus of *Bostra*, Praxeus, Hermogenes, Noctius and Sabellius, the Samosatenians, Arians, Aetians, Eunomians and Photinians, the Priscillianists and Bonotians; Mahomet and his followers; the Socinians and Remonstrants; and all Anti-trinitarians; Augustine, Chrysostom, Leo Magnus, Theodoret, Cyril of *Alexandria*, Paulinus, Flavianus, Victor, Maximus Tauriensis, *six hundred and thirty fathers* in the council at *Chalcedon*; Fulgentius, Gregory Turnasis, Fortunatus, Cassioclorus, Gregorius Magaus, the *many* bishops in the several councils at *Toletum*, the Roman synod of a *hundred and twenty-five* under Agatho, Damascene, Beda, Albinus, and the fathers in the council of *Francford*, with many others in later times, and all the sound divines and evangelic churches since the reformation.

Now since it appears that all the sound and orthodox writers have unanimously declared for the eternal generation and Sonship of Christ in all ages, and that those only of an unsound mind and judgment, and corrupt in other things as well as this, and many of them men of impure lives and vile principles, have declared against it, such must be guilty of great temerity and rashness to join in an opposition with the one against the other; and to oppose a doctrine the Church of God has always held, and especially being what the scriptures abundantly bear testimony unto, and is a matter of such moment and importance, being a fundamental doctrine of the Christian religion, and indeed what distinguishes it from all other religions, from those of Pagans, Jews and Mahometans, who all believe in God, and generally in *one* God, but none of them believe in the Son of God: that is peculiar to the Christian religion.

---