

The Purple Pulpit

Installment #5

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Greater Obliquity Requires Greater Precision

A couple of weeks ago we treated the eternity of Christ, referencing how Arianism attacked the true, full, and essential Deity of Christ by the “oblique” approach: not assaulting the Person of Christ straightforwardly, but by denying to Him an attribute of Deity, namely His eternity. When we speak of the oblique substantively, its noun is “obliquity.” Obliquity is the nature of something being beside another, or a sideways direction. The American Heritage Dictionary, in its most recent edition, defines “obliquity,” in one of its definitions, as “indirection in conduct or verbal expression; lack of straightforwardness.” As Arianism was exposed, it took refuge in an increasing obliquity of language and terminology. Those every bit as antichrist as Arius began to veil their infidelity in increasingly oblique lingo. Orthodox reaction against “there was a time when he was not” saw them retreat into hiding behind language of philosophy, saying that there never was a “time” when he was not, because the Word had his beginning before time. They still asserted that Jesus, as the Son, was created (thus yet denying His eternity), but avoided the earlier battle cry of Arianism. This is a tenet of most false doctrine: it is dishonest. Extreme dishonesty is seen in the heirs of Arius in modern garb – Jehovah’s Witnesses. Their presentations on the doorsteps of their victims are couched in hypocritical clothing of lying motivation and rhetoric.

As antichrist deceivers (2 Jn.7) upstepped the obliquity of their deception, a greater sharpness of accuracy in thinking was required on the part of true worshippers of Christ. That accuracy was arrived at by an even greater meticulousity with the treatment of the Scriptures, and found its expression in the perfect word to describe the being of the

Son relative to the Father. That perfect word was one which no Arian could countenance, and it became the “line drawn in the sand” between the true believer in Christ and any strain of Arianism. That word was the Greek word “homoousian.” It means “of the same essence,” or “of same substance,” or (most accurately) “of the same being.” To say that the Lord Jesus Christ is “homoousian” with the Father is to affirm that whatever the ineffable “stuff” is that makes up Deity, the Christ is such by nature. He naturally exists as real “God-ness.” The Arian could say that Jesus is “homoiousian” (note the one letter difference) that means that he is “of a like essence,” but to say that He is of the exact essence as the Father is anathema to the most obliquity-loving Arian.

But does the Scripture teach this one essence of Father and Son? It does! The clearest verse in the Scripture to this effect is Heb. 1:3. It refers to the Son as “the brightness of the glory, and the exact image of His essence.” That is to say that, whatever one may conceive of as the essential (relating to essence) being of the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ exists and subsists as that very Being! Thus, to deny the one essence of Father and Son is to subsume oneself under the heading of “antichrist.” (1 Jn. 2:22)

We will teach more about this homoousian existence of the Son with the Father in our next number of installments.