

Sovereignty or Deity ?

THE SOVEREIGNTY of God has long been affirmed by teachers of the Word. Yet in their teachings the significance of His Deity is really made to be of low order, though teachers also affirm that He is almighty. But when the Scriptures say that "all is of God", then teachers seek to add their own reserve to the words, thus offering a limit to the statements.

The scriptural basis of God's Deity has not really been subjected to any close consideration in the light of the term 'sovereignty,' and so 'sovereignty' is allowed to cover God's authority, as well as that of other authorities whom He has appointed. At the same time, there is also expressed the idea that this "sovereignty of God" is subject to the requirements of the Deity. In other words, 'sovereignty' is assumed to express the attributes of deity. Thus we lose the clarity of thought that exists when both words are understood in respect of their individual and unique meaning.

"And He is the Head of the body, the ecclesia, Who is Sovereign, Firstborn from among the dead, that in all He may be becoming first, for in Him the entire complement delights to dwell, and through Him to reconcile all to Him (making peace through the blood of His cross), through Him, whether those on the earth or those in the heavens."

(Col. 1:18-20.)

Sovereignty is ascribed directly to God's SON in the Scriptures. Does this rank Him with the Deity? Truly His authority is placed very high. The Scriptures ascribe sovereignty to Him Who is Firstborn of creation, as also from among the dead, these give to Him a very special and unique position.

In the latter position, the term "Firstborn of Creation" is standing in comparison with Him in His Own first unique glory, when He was exalted from His glory as "Firstborn of every creature." Yet even in that prior glory, He had a uniqueness above all others: in fact, there were no other ranks or authorities beside Him at that first moment.

But the Scriptures hereabout show the Firstborn of creation as being exalted by His God and Father. He was made to be the creative original, and this gave to Him the glory of being the image of the invisible God.

It is usual for this exaltation to be overlooked, and so when this One is spoken of as emptying Himself, then it is not known as to what this emptying consisted in its actuality. But it stands that he did empty Himself, and this is part of His obedience to His God and Father. When speaking to Nicodemus, His self-emptying was behind His words, and so His hearers could not at all understand. This is often likewise of others, even in these days.

It is most evident that that of which He emptied Himself was placed in the bosom of the Father (John 1:18). To Nicodemus it was made the background as to the means by which He would die, and thus did He indicate that they would molest Him to the full. But we still have to bring forward the points regarding His sovereignty and also to indicate that God is regarded in the Scriptures as being more than Sovereign. God is SUPREME!

"Blest is Abram by the Al Supreme, Owner of the heavens and the earth. And blest is the Al Supreme Who awards your foes into your hands"

(Gen. 14:18).

Herein is a feature which the making of the Concordant Version extends beyond the limits of the New Testament. When we had sorted out our required vocabulary¹ and its requirements for the Hebrew Scriptures, defining them by STANDARDS and so making them into their word families, we were able to discern that this subject of "sovereignty" was much clarified, for He Who in our A.V. and its terms is the Most High, He comes to be termed SUPREME.

Thus, the Father is Supreme, and the Son is Sovereign. Is not this a most satisfactory position? At the close of

the Self-emptying of the Lord, He could logically and truly and spiritually ask that His Father shall glorify Him with the glory He had left in the care of His Father, and by it will the Son, as Head, carry forward His vast work, leading creation, both in the heavens and on the earth, into that position of subjection, corresponding to His headship. Thus also will creation be brought into that position where it finds ALL in God.

In this we discern both Christ's headship, and creation's subjection to the Father, so that to creation may come the blessedness of God being All in all. Christ's ecclesia, grown into His headship now, will during the fifth eon have ministered with Him in effecting this glorious result. Herein lies the glory of our lot "being cast in Him" (Eph. 1:11).

A word is perhaps necessary with regard to our English dictionary and the usages which it records. This applies to all words within the books, but here is a case where God's usage of His words must be judged from His contexts, and not from our English usages. This is no real burden to a C.V., for the cases are few of this kind, and we are most happy to follow the course hereabouts required. We will thus have truth, and that is a vast gain, and for it we are truly thankful.

Perhaps we may well add that our Authorised Version does not have the words sovereignty or supreme for either the Hebrew or the Greek. It is in reference to matters around Melchizedec that the A.V. uses the words "most high" (Gn. 14:22, Melchizedec was the priest of Al Supreme C.V.). It was the SUPREME Who made Nebuchadnezzar and Belteshazzar to know what concerned them, in regard to the ways of the SUPREME.

A reference to all the cases of "most High" in our A.V. will furnish confirmation: we will see that the Psalmist makes many of his references to God by the use of this Hebrew term oliun: this is when he reaches the climax of his expressions concerning the Deity. Upon occasions he also associates the name leue, and the title Alueim, with SUPREME.

The position sums up to this: for the Hebrew Scriptures, the Deity is SUPREME. For the Greek Scriptures, since the Son is most distinctly revealing the Deity, He is the One Who is SOVEREIGN in the fullest sense and this reaches its pinnacle with His vivifying. Then it is said of Him that He is Head of every sovereignty, so that though this term may be used to indicate others who function in such a capacity, and in a particular relation, yet the glory of God's Son is so superlative that He is THE SOVEREIGN, whilst His Father is SUPREME.

"This glory gives to God's Son the headship over all, and it is in this capacity and glory that He is given to the ecclesia (church). Thus with them as His complement, He will complete the universe, so making it possible for Him to reach the position where the universe finds its all in the Father."

The headship of the Son pertains far wider than the ecclesia, and this brings to the ecclesia the delightful position of God having glory in it, in that eon, as well as in Christ Jesus. Its extension is characterised thus: "all the generations of the eon of the eons" (Eph. 3:21). The vastness of this grace is most notable, covering as it will a full eon, the glory of which will reach a consummation.

This position will indeed demonstrate that, in the Firstborn, creation has its cohesion. This will clearly be an indication that the disruption was ordered of God, for He gave to His Son the keeping of all His ways. When the ultimate stage is reached, and the ecclesia will have sustained its glory as given to the Son by His God and Father, then will the Father be wholly upheld by the glory of His Son.

Here then is our great joy, and here too we may, at present, anticipate that great joy and delight — chosen in Him for such an outcome!! But let us keep it in its true position, that is, that the glory we will have enjoyed is some measure of the glory of our God and Father and His Son.

1 Cor. 15:24 - whenever He should be nullifying all sovereignty and all authority and power.

Ephes. 1:21 -(Christ) up over every sovereignty and authority and power and lordship, and every name that is named

3:10 - that now may be made known to the sovereignties and the authorities among the celestials the multifarious wisdom of God....

Col. 1:16–18 - whether thrones or lordships, or sovereignties and HE is the Head of the Body, the ecclesia,

WHO IS SOVEREIGN Firstborn from among the dead

2:10 - in Him, Who is the HEAD OF EVERY SOVEREIGNTY and authority....

2:15-stripping off the sovereignties and authorities, with boldness He makes a show of them, triumphing over them in it"

1 E.H.Clayton was one of the original team who worked on the making of the Concordant Version.

E. H. Clayton

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