

# SURREY TABERNACLE PULPIT.

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## COMPLEXITY.

### A Sermon

PREACHED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 30TH, 1860, BY

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AT THE SURREY TABERNACLE, BOROUGH ROAD.

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“This is the true God, and eternal life.” 1 John v. 20.

OUR text, or that which it contains, is the stronghold of Zion. Here it is that our hope is an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast. The Godhead of Christ must give way before our hope in his salvation can give way. Here it is that the Lord hath indeed laid that foundation which is sure, that foundation which is immoveable. And it is pleasing to see how beautifully John in his old age—for it is supposed he was an aged man when he wrote this Epistle;—how beautifully he dwells upon the complexity of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that life, that eternal life, which we have by him; this is the very texture and theme of the Epistle before us. I shall therefore this morning, though I have noticed only the last clause as a text, I shall embody some of the preceding parts of the verse, especially the first part, where it is said, “We know that the Son of God is come;” for the God spoken of in our text is Jesus Christ, and is a complex person. And I shall first notice, then, *the person*; and secondly, *that life which is by him*. “This is the true God, and eternal life.” “Know that the Son of God is come.” Now the question is, how did the Son of God come? That I shall try to set forth this morning as carefully as I possibly can; after just observing to you that Jesus Christ is not only the Son of God, but that he is something more than the Son of God; he is God as well as the Son of God. There are men that tell as that Jesus Christ, even as God, is only the Son of God. But it is happy for such men that they do not in reality mean what they say: for if the Lord Jesus Christ in his divinity be nothing more than a Son, then he is to all intents and purposes inferior to the Father. But those who hold that even as God he is nothing more than the Son of God, they will not admit that he is inferior to the Father. I am very glad that they do not; for if they did not *undo* their own Socinian doctrine of eternal generation; if they did not after asserting that doctrine undo it by saying they do not mean inferiority, and declaring that this same Person who is the Son of God by eternal generation is a Person absolutely God; were it not that while they hold such a sentiment, they unsay it and undo it; were it not for that, I think the holding of such a sentiment would go far to prove that such men are nothing but graceless professors. But I would not do them that injustice; because some of the greatest men we have had held that doctrine; perhaps for want of clearly looking into it. For my part I do rejoice that Jesus Christ is something more than the Son of God, that he is God as well as the Son of God; and therefore as God, whatever the Father is by nature, that also is this Divine Word. “In the beginning was the Word; and the Word was with God; and the Word was God.” Now

let us see, then, how the Son of God came; and we shall find no scripture to prove that he came in the way men say he did. They say the Son of God came by incarnation; but where do you read in all the Bible that the Son of God became incarnate? They say the Son of God was manifest in the flesh; but where in all the Bible do you read that the Son of God was manifest in the flesh? You read no such scripture in all the Bible; for this simple fact and reason, that his Sonship lies in his complexity. Let us now lay aside all human opinions, and come to the word of God; and ask the question how the Son came? and you will see in the several particulars relative to his coming that I shall run through this morning, you will see how beautifully our text, "This is the true God," shines in each of these particulars; and gives a peculiarity, a dignity, and a glory to every one of these departments; so that we shall see as we go along this blessed truth, that he is not only the Son of God, but also God; something infinitely more than a Son; God as well as the Son of God. First, then, taking the word of God for my guide, the Son of God came *by birth*. Luke 1. "*That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.*" Here is his birth. Are we to believe this? Let me repeat the words; "That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Was it infinite and eternal divinity that was born of the Virgin Mary? We know it was not; we know it was manhood." "That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." And yet in connection with his birth we have also the fact—for I shall apply my text to all the particulars;—this holy thing born of the Virgin is the true God and eternal life; that is to say, he was not merely the Son of God, but God as well as the Son of God. Let me prove it; first from prediction. "Thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel;" there is his birth, you see clearly so;" whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting;" not, he was set up from everlasting, but something more than that, something greater than that; there is something done personally by him from everlasting; "his goings forth," in oneness with the Father and the Eternal Spirit; his goings forth in his absolute divinity, in his absolute Godhead, in his absolute prescience, in his love and counsels, in oneness with the Father and the eternal Spirit; "his goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Go a little further back into prophecy; and see the Godhead and Sonship of Christ beautifully united; hear the word of the Lord upon it; "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." There the prophet informs us of a child, and then assures us that this child is a son. But the prophet does not stop there; he goes on and says of this same person that he is "the mighty God, the everlasting Father." Thus then if we come to the birth of Christ we see his Sonship lies in his human nature and in his complexity; but at the same time this same person, born of the Virgin, while he is the Son of God, his goings forth were from everlasting; therefore he must have been God; Isaiah puts it beyond all doubt, that the same person who is the child born and the son given is the mighty God, the everlasting Father. O what a peculiarity does this give to the birth of Jesus Christ. Know ye, my brethren, what the Old Testament says of the birth of Christ in relation to the people? Know ye not the questions which are put by the prophet Isaiah under the illuminating and prophetic teachings of the eternal Spirit, where it is said, "Shall a nation be born at once?" We answer, yes; for when Christ was born, the whole election grace were virtually born; their new birth is founded in his birth. Here then the angels might well rejoice and worship him. Now mark, "When

he bringeth in the first begotten into the world;" why, you eternal generationists, in order to favour you it ought to read thus, "when he bringeth his only begotten into the flesh, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him;" but it does not say that; but, when he bringeth him *into the world*; why, man, he was not in the world before he was born. Men say, "When he bringeth in the first begotten into the world;" therefore he must be a begotten Son to be brought into the world. No doubt of that; he was created in the Virgin as to his human nature by the power of the Holy Ghost; while he as God assumed and took that nature as the Holy Ghost created it; and thus he was begotten and thus he was born. And thus, when God brought this begotten nature, this begotten Son, into the world he saith, "And let all the angels of God worship him." And while the babe was lying in the manger at Bethlehem, while the one angel came and testified that this was a theme of highest glory to God, and of peace on earth, and good will to men; suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of angels, obeying the divine command, "Let all the angels of God worship him;" and so they did; they did homage to him by declaring his dignity; "Behold we bring unto you good tidings; for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour," God the Saviour, "which is Christ the Lord." Thus then when he was brought into the world, let all the angels of God worship him. What a strange sort of thing that if as God he is nothing more than the Son of God, four thousand years should roll on before the angels were commanded to worship him as a Son; they were not commanded to worship him as a Son before he was brought into the world. Ah, that doctrine of generated divinity is indeed a doctrine of human produce; it is a fable derogatory to the dignity of Jesus Christ. He is God, my brethren, absolutely, and at the same time God-man. *That*, then, which was born in Bethlehem was man; but *he* who was born in Bethlehem was the true God and eternal life. I glory in his complexity, my brethren; our life, our union to God, our salvation, our eternal all, lies in the complexity of Christ; and we cannot be too well established in the delightful and literal truth that he is God and man in one person. I think I have shown it in his birth, then, that the Son came unto us by birth; "that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Thus the Son of God came by birth; and yet in and connected with that birth appears, both from prediction and from Isaiah, the complexity of Christ. Secondly, the Son of God also came, this Person who is the true God and eternal life, came also by circumcision; he was circumcised at Bethlehem. The law was that circumcision was to take place on the eighth day. Now why was he circumcised? Why, to set before us a most delightful truth; and in his circumcision again we get his complexity. "This is the true God, and eternal life." Why was he circumcised? Why, to make an acknowledgment that he was a debtor to do the whole law. He was made of a woman; that was the lowest point of humiliation as to his manner of coming; for if he had been made of a man, the same as Eve was taken out of Adam, that would not have been the sign of such deep humiliation as to be made of a woman; for this simple reason, that the woman was in the transgression, and therefore he was made of the very sex, or part, or person, that was in the transgression; so that the woman being in the transgression was several degrees lower than the man, being in the transgression; and he therefore came down so low as to be made of a woman, and to be made under the law, and to become a debtor to do the whole law. So that in his circumcision we have the declaration of it; an acknowledgment that he came into our law place, that he took whatever we owed in a way of obedience; he took upon him whatever we owed in a way of suffer-

ing. And so in connection with his circumcision we see also his complexity. Perhaps you will say, how? Thus, when he was circumcised, his name was called Jesus. Oh, how sweetly it accords with being a debtor to do the whole law. We cannot do any of the law, we cannot keep a particle; it is spiritual, we are carnal, sold under sin. His name is called Jesus; and what does Jesus mean? Jesus means a Saviour. And who is our Saviour? Why, saith Isaiah, or the Lord by Isaiah, "I am God, and there is none else; and beside me there is no Saviour." So that while in his circumcision we have his sonship and his suretyship, his being called Jesus denotes his Godhead; for he could not save unless he were God; and therefore it is expressive of the greatness of that salvation which, by his omnipotent arm, he himself should bring. Thus, then, in his birth I get his complexity, and here begin to rejoice that God dwells with man, and that man shall dwell with God; when I come to his circumcision, I again get his complexity, that he is God and man, and rejoice that this infinitely-able Person stands in my position as the surety and debtor to do the whole law; his name is Jesus, because he shall so perform his work as to save his people from their sins. "And though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things that he suffered." Does that mean abstract divinity? No; let us take God's own word: "though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." "This is the true God," that was born at Bethlehem, "and eternal life;" this is the true God, that was circumcised the eighth day, and eternal life. See, my hearer, what a sweet hope we have. Art thou pursued by thy sins? Art thou pursued by the law? Art thou pursued by the threatenings of the Bible? If the Holy Spirit reveal this wondrous Person to thee, and give thee a grain of faith in his infinite ability and his suretyship position, then thou wilt overcome the whole of it; for, saith John, who is he that overcometh the world, but him that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God; because faith brings us into the knowledge of this complex Person, that he is not only the Son of God, but also God, and therefore able to meet anything and everything, and does meet everything, and causes his people to triumph in him. Third, as he came by birth and circumcision, so he came by divine education; that is the next step; and even in this I shall find his complexity. "The child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him." Now what do you think of that? That puzzles some people amazingly. Can't make out, say they, how it is the grace of God was upon him; strange sort of thing. Go back, brethren, to the 45th Psalm; read these words concerning his manhood, and then go on to his complexity. "Thou art fairer than the children of men;" ah, because he had no sin; "grace is poured into thy lips; therefore God hath blessed thee for ever." There it is; "grace is poured into thy lips." What does it mean? It means these two things: first, that his pure mind never received anything contrary to itself; all that that pure mind received was pure; it was of God, it was truthful, it was gracious; nothing but grace was poured into his lips. When the fall of man took place, Satanic poison was poured into the lips of Eve and into the lips of Adam; they drank in that poison, and their posterity have all drank in that same poison, that Satanic falsehood, and the consequence is, that all men by nature are liars. But Jesus Christ never received an error into his mind, he never received a falsehood into his mind; he received nothing but pure truth, pure grace. "Grace is poured into thy lips." "The grace of God was upon him." But there is another idea, and that is this, an important one too. Grace there has reference to the economy of grace. As Noah received the plan of the ark not from man, but from God; as Moses received the plan of the tabernacle

not from man, but from God ; as Solomon and Zerubbabel received the plan of the temple not from man, but from God ; so Christ received the plan of salvation not from man, but from God. And Christ made no objection to God's plan of salvation ; Christ received the covenant of grace into his lips, into his heart, and spoke of it much in his life, and just as he was approaching upon his solemn death, "This is my blood of the new testament." He was the surety of the new covenant ; he received that covenant into his lips. Here is his divine education ; he was thus led by the Spirit of God ; and by the Spirit of God he received the counsel of God, and the love of God, and the covenant of God, and the order of God, and never once deviated from it ; but in the midst of all his scenes of sorrow and affliction he could appeal to God ; and it is well for us that we have such a testimony upon record ; these are the things that are to rejoice our hearts ; that "I always do those things that please him." Thus was grace poured into his lips. Now mark, he received this covenant of grace, and carried it out ; though it cost him a life of sorrow and a death of agony, that could not move him ; but he carried out all the items of that covenant, that eternal confirmation to the glory of God and to the salvation of our never-dying souls. "Therefore God hath blessed thee for ever ;" implying that if he had not carried out this covenant that he had received, he would not have been blessed for ever. Does not the Saviour bear a testimony in keeping with this ? "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come ;" as though he should say, If I do not die, you cannot live ; if I do not sorrow, you cannot rejoice ; if I do not agonise, you cannot triumph ; if I do not march on in the greatness of my strength to achieve eternal conquest, you can never be free ; if I do not pay the infinite price of your redemption, you can never return, and come to Zion ; and if I do not with my omnipotent arm accomplish salvation, there will be no salvation. But he did receive the glorious truths of the everlasting covenant, practically carried them out, and therefore "God, even thy God, hath blessed thee for ever." Mark that. Then in the same psalm, unto this same complex person he saith, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever ; the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness ; therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." Here, then, the Son of God came by birth ; and yet "this is the true God, and eternal life." He came by circumcision, a debtor to do the whole law ; and yet "this is the true God, and eternal life." He came by divine education ; he increased in wisdom, and in favour with God and with man ; he was in favour with God in the manifestation thereof ; he was never out of God's favour ; and in favour with man in the manifestation thereof ; and that this person so born, that this person so circumcised to take our law place ; that this person, so educated by the Spirit of God, and so receiving the gracious truths of the covenant, and practically carrying them out, "is the true God, and eternal life ;" he will give the same words by his blessed Spirit unto us. "The words which thou gavest me"—gracious words thou gavest me—"have I given them, and they have kept them, and have known that I came out from thee." Ah, saith the Father unto the Son, relative to this grace poured into his lips, "My words which I have put in thy mouth shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever." Jesus still speaks the same words that he ever did ; yes, mark the sacred words that fell from his pure lips after his resurrection, and you will find they were all in doctrinal keeping with the truths he had declared amidst the sorrows of his life and the agonies of his death ; he had not changed. And so the words of everlasting love, the words of everlasting life, the words of everlasting certainty, that he spoke in his life, that he spoke after his resurrection, he

speaketh still; and the same words, the same doctrines, the same truths, shall be brought into the hearts of his people, and they shall all speak one thing. And thus while grace was poured into his lips, grace also shall be poured into the lips of the people of God; that is, they shall be made willing to drink in the truth; they have drunk in iniquity as the ox drinketh water; they shall now drink in as the thirsty land, as the dry ground; their souls shall drink in the living, softening truths of the gospel; and as they drink in these living truths of the gospel they become fruitful in the Lord, bearing fruit to the honour and glory of his name, and rejoicing that this wondrous Person is the true God and eternal life. There is everything in it; it is such a divine hiding-place; it is a refuge that is so strong, it is a tower that is so lofty, and as we are favoured to climb this tower, we can look about upon the little doings of men, and contrast them with the great doings of the great God; and particularly one, the great mystery of God manifest in the flesh. Great is the mystery of godliness; the *Son* of God manifest in the flesh. *No.* What a strange thing there is no such scripture in all the Bible; what a remarkable thing that men should assume, with all the obstinacy and conceit possible, that Jesus Christ, as God, was nothing more than the Son of God. Yet when the apostle would give us a definition, as far as definition will bear upon these matters, he knew very well that the Sonship of Christ consisted in his human nature and complexity; and therefore the apostle would give us his complexity, not in that degrading way that eternal generationists would. "Great is the mystery of godliness;" "God (not *Son* of God, but God) manifest in the flesh;" God justified in the Spirit; God seen of angels, God preached unto the Gentiles, God believed on in the world, God received up into glory. "This is the true God and eternal life."

Fourth. He came by water; for so it saith, "This is he that came by water and by blood;" not by water only, but by water and by blood; and "this is the true God and eternal life." Well, what are we to understand by coming by water? Baptism, to all intents and purposes—no question about it. There are more ideas in it than that, I think; but that is one of them. How did Jesus Christ enter upon his public ministry? By baptism. He came to Jordan, and came into his public ministry by baptism, to indicate his entire consecration to God. "For their sakes I sanctify myself; for their sakes I devote myself." His baptism, therefore, was merely a ceremonial declaration of entire consecration to God. This is another step towards us. Ah, never, my hearer, under heaven was there, and never will be again, such a devotion to God as that which Christ rendered when he sweat great drops of blood; when he gave up his infinitely precious life; when he stood there as God-man, with sins innumerable between him and God; not his sins, he had none of his own, but our sins; when he stood there, with the wrath due to our sins between him and God; and when he exclaimed, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Here was a devotedness to God; here was a consecration to God; here was a sacrifice made to God such as was never made before, and such as will never be needed again; for he hath, by that one consecration to God, that one devotion of himself to God, that one offering to God, perfected for ever all them that are sanctified. Here then he came by water, came into his public ministry by baptism; that as Aaron and the priests were to be washed at the door of the tabernacle;—not that Christ needed washing; God forbid that I should insinuate a thought of that kind; for woe, woe, woe unto us if one spot had been found in the Surety;—no, I glory in those chaste, sweet, and pure words,

"His life was pure, without a spot,  
And all his nature clean."

But let us go back again to this; for this is a step towards us; his being baptized was a part of that order of things that God had established, and so he said to John, "It becometh us to fulfil all righteousness;" that refers to institutional righteousness; that did not refer to his essential obedience, by which we are justified, but refers to that institutional righteousness and conformity to that gospel institutional order of things that God had established. And when he came up out of the water, there came a voice from heaven; it was not some mortal claiming him as a son; it was not his reputed father Joseph, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;" it was not a voice on earth; but it was a voice divine, a voice from heaven; it was his heavenly Father. "This,"—what the same person that has been baptized? yes, the same person; the man that had been baptized; the God-man, Christ Jesus. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And as this bore reference to the one consecration to God, the Holy Ghost showed his delight therein, and in the character that he should sustain thereby; for the Holy Spirit descended and sat upon him in bodily shape like a dove. Ah, what a peaceful indication! pointing to the great fact that by his great consecration to God he should establish peace; hush the loud thunders, stay the lightnings, and lay the blasting winds; swallow up death in victory, and establish eternal tranquillity. Now here the Holy Ghost comes as the peaceful dove; and here, and here alone, we can find peace; for "this is the true God and eternal life." Now Christ being God, the true God, does not exclude God the Father; because the Father dwelleth in him; does not exclude the Holy Spirit, for the Spirit of God dwelleth in him; in him dwelleth all the fulness of the God-head bodily.

But, again. He came also by blood. There is the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. As he entered upon his public ministry by water, so he entered upon his atoning work by blood; that is, by that which it symbolized, signified his blood; when he handed the cup of blessing. Ah, it is the cup of blessing. Where is the cup of death gone to? Where is the cup of bitterness gone to? Ah, it is reserved for him, put into his hands; but into the disciples hands he put the cup of blessing, saying, "This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for you;" and thus as he entered into the public work of the ministry by one ordinance, he entered upon his atonement by another ordinance. And this wine, as you know, symbolized the blood of the new covenant. There is another view which may be taken of his coming by water and by blood, without at all setting aside what I have said; though I ought to say that in this ordinance also, or that which it signifies, we see his complexity. Here is man to bleed; here is God that gives to that blood an infinity of value; and "this is the true God and eternal life." There is, I say, another view which may be taken of his coming by water and by blood; and that is this—that the water may denote the word, and the blood may denote the deed. He would not separate the two ordinances, as is the practice among professed Christians now; he would not separate the two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper; not by water only, not by baptism only, not by the Lord's Supper only; but by the two. So here, I say, it may also signify that he came by word and by deed. Hence the word, as you are aware, is spoken of sometimes under that figure—water. "He loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might cleanse it with the washing of water by the word:" and the word is again and again spoken of as water. Hence what I think most of us understand by a river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb;—I think we take this to mean the gospel; I think we shall not err in taking that river to mean the gospel river—the river of God's pleasure, the river which is full of water, the river which can

never run dry; having its source in God, its safety in Christ, its end in eternal glory, which unto boundless glory flows. So that he came by word declaring the gospel. But not by word only; no, bless his dear name; so if he said, "The Son of man shall die, and rise again," he did what he said; if he said he should suffer, and he said it beforehand—he "should suffer many things of the chief priests and elders," and they should crucify him—what he said he should endure, he did endure. And he said he should rise again the third day, and so he did; and he said to his disciples, "I will see you again," and so he did; he told his disciples what he would make them—make them fishers of men; that he would send them to the ends of the earth with the wonders he had done, to proclaim his name for life and the remission of sins; and what he said, so he did. And when he should ascend on high, he promised that he would send the Holy Spirit upon them; that they were to tarry in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high; and as he said, so he did. So that he did not come by water only, not by word only; but also by deed.

Now I have said only a few things; I have not done with this text; you shall have another sermon upon it next Sunday morning, if I can get nicely at it. But one word, in conclusion, relative to the complexity of Christ under these two ideas of word and deed. Do we not see his complexity in his word? "Where have ye laid him? Roll the stone away;"—there is his manhood clear enough. "Lazarus, come forth;"—there is his Godhead clear enough; and Lazarus came forth. Do we not see in the power which attended his word his Godhead? Did he ever attempt by his word a miracle he did not perform? Would the leprosy stop with the man in spite of what the Saviour said? Would Lazarus stay in the grave in spite of what the Saviour said? Would the blindness remain in the man's eyes in spite of what the Saviour said? And would the paralysis remain in the man's hand in spite of what the Saviour had said? And would the palsy remain in the body of the palsied man in spite of what the Saviour had said? Oh, no; they all fled before him.

"Devils at his presence flee;  
Blest is the man that trusts in thee."

"This is the true God and eternal life." His complexity appears in his word; there is man to speak, and there is God to give the power. And I am sure his complexity appears in his deed,—shedding his precious blood. Ah, yes; the Old Testament saints were beautifully established in this. David knew that Jesus Christ would die as the Surety or the Shepherd; and what does he say? "Jehovah is my Shepherd." Now the 10th of John—"I am the good Shepherd;" that is, Jehovah; "and I lay down my life for the sheep." And "this is the true God and eternal life." But I must say no more.