

A Review and an Evaluation of Diverse Christological Opinions among American Evangelicals: Part 2: The Eternal Role Subordination of the Son¹

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Abstract

The writer, himself an American Evangelical, intends to discuss, in three articles, areas in which American Evangelicals disagree about how God the Son relates to God the Father and the meaning and effects of the true humanity and the true deity in Christ. Each position will be defined and exemplified. The rationale offered by proponents of each major position is provided. Evaluations are made. The first article focused primarily on the ancient doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son as held by some American Evangelicals but denied by others. This second article will be used to discuss the issue, within the perimeters of evangelicalism in America, of whether the Son is eternally or temporally only relationally subordinate to God the Father. The final article will be used to address several different understandings within American Evangelicalism regarding incarnational Christology. That article will include meanings given the Kenosis, views about what it means to say that Christ is true Man and true God, and how the two natures in the one Person of Christ relate to each other. Therefore, while this series is certainly connected to more general Trinitarian thought, the articles will be written especially to focus on Christ. Aside from just exposing, perhaps for the first time to some readers, a number of the considerable differences among Trinitarians regarding the doctrines of God and

¹ The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the beliefs of the South African Theological Seminary.

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Christ, it is hoped by the writer that these articles might also provide material useful to some to better understand the blessed Person of Jesus Christ our God, our Lord, and our Savior. To Him be glory forever.

1. Introduction

1.1. Word-Man Christology

Although, as later hopefully will be convincingly shown, eternal relational subordination may not be so easily separable from essential subordination, the issue is said by proponents of the former to be whether the Son as God is eternally and ontologically relationally, but *not essentially*, subordinate to God the Father or whether the Son only is temporally and economically role subordinate. The important related issue is whether the earthly submission of Christ occurs in Christ's humanity only or occurs in Christ's divine nature as well. While the integrity, completeness, and distinctiveness of Christ's Manhood, and how that relates to Christ's Godhead, will be discussed more fully in the last article of this series, for now the writer allows himself the premise that Christ has both a true and complete divine nature and a true and complete human nature.

The writer accordingly avers, admittedly as yet without providing evidence, that each of these two natures includes in itself, not in common with the other, but always attributable to the one Person, the faculties necessary to be in one case true God and in the other true Man; that is, each nature has in itself, not from the other, mind, will, and emotion. It follows that this writer opines that the integrity and distinctiveness of each nature in Christ allows that nature to think, experience, will, and act in manners not ascribable to the other nature. It is understood, for example, that in John 4:6 it is not the nature of God that is tired or in Luke 2:52 it is not the nature of God that increases in knowledge. Those are experiences of Christ as Man, not as God.

Likewise, other conditions apply only to Christ as God. In Colossians 1:16-17, it is not the humanity of Christ which created and sustains the universe, and in John 17:5 it is not the human nature which before the creation shared the Father's glory. Those are experiences of Christ as God, not as Man. Yet the experiences described in all four passages, and the many others too, are all

those of the one Person who is the "God-Man" with all of the implications that such a title implies.

This premise that each nature experiences in distinction from the other, if correct, provides the opportunity for the earthly obedience of Jesus to be seen as an act only of and only in Christ's humanity. But this distinguishing between the two natures of our Lord is not conceded to be a dividing of Christ into two Persons. Neither is such a dividing the confession or admission of those ancient and modern Christologists whose teachings reflect the incarnational Christology of the Antiochenes of the fifth century.

In distinguishing between the attributes and acts of Christ's natures, this writer will not go beyond the understanding of incarnational Christology as directly taught or at least clearly implied by such fathers as Tertullian, John of Damascus, Gregory of Nyssa, Theodoret of Cyprus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Leo, and Agatho and as formulated in the Creeds of Chalcedon of 451 and Constantinople of 680-681 in their reactions to perceived heresies.

That necessary cognate and substantial discussion of the two natures in the one Person and how the natures relate to each other and to the one Person as variously understood by modern North American theologians, both of the so called "Word-flesh" variety and of the so called "Word-man" conviction, follows in the third and final article of this series.

1.2. The Importance of the Issue

What might be the reasons for the study of intra-Trinal and economic Trinal relationships, and why should we even concern ourselves with the issue of whether the Son is eternally as God or temporally only as Man obedient?

First, Scripture contains many passages which concern these questions. The correct interpretation of Scripture should be a priority, but it is only to the extent that one's understanding of God and Christ is true that such Scriptures relating to God and Christ can be rightly understood.

Second, John tells us that the Son has revealed God. This revelation is surely given for us to understand, not to ignore.

Third, if our doctrine of God allows such apparent attributional dissimilarity between the Father and the Son, making One the ontological Sovereign over the Other, which Other is eternally subject and eternally submits His will to the will of the First, then can we consistently maintain the view that each Person in God is perfect and infinite and that the Three have in common only one nature and therefore only one set of attributes? Can One be the absolute authority over the Other and both have the same, identical qualities? If we say a difference in authority between the Father and the Son is eternal and ontological, how can we say that there is no eternal and ontological difference in nature?

Fourth, our Lord has said that He is to be honored just as the Father is honored. But if we honor God the Father as the supreme authority and God the Son as His loyal subject, a fair question may be, "Are we giving the Persons equal honor?"³

Fifth, defining in which nature, divine or human, the obedience of Christ occurs relates as well to our living the Christian life. If the earthly obedience of the Son, including His perfect rejection of temptation to sin, is but an extension of an intra-Trinal relationship wherein it is the very infinite nature of God the Son which obeys, then how can Christ's earthly perfect life of obedience be any example for us limited humans to try to follow? We are not God, and we do not have the resistance to temptation which God has—the precious, sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in us notwithstanding. Scripture says that God, unlike us, cannot even be tempted. God in Christ resisting temptation as One who cannot be tempted is not therefore a practical example for men to follow. But the perfect obedience of Christ as a limited man would be a fine example for us in our limited capacities to try to emulate.

Sixth, since it is not uncommon, as will be shown below, for some North American theologians to use a supposed hierarchy of authority in God as a premise for distributing authority in familial and ecclesiastical contexts on the

³ May God forgive this writer for any misrepresentation of Scripture which he most surely in some places and in some capacities has made regarding the subject of Christ. As far as the writer knows, however, it is only a passion to honor the Son that drives the writer to argue such tenets as found in this article.

basis of gender, the issue of Christ's relational subordination has been made by some to concern gender roles in marriage and church as well. This writer believes that there are several Biblical passages on those subjects which should be exegeted with an open mind (obviously outside the purpose of this article) to determine how, or even if, gender relates to positions of authority in marriage and church, but this writer denies that a supposed relationship based on authority between God and God is a viable correlation to make in order to support a hierarchical doctrine about the authority of one gender over the another (see the discussion in section 2.13 below).

Nevertheless, despite these significant reasons for carefully studying the important question of the eternity or temporality of the Son's role subordination, and disregarding the need to proceed cautiously and respectfully through the large quantity of Biblical and theological material related to this sensitive subject, it has become quite popular among theologians in North America to assert too hurriedly and too dogmatically, in this writer's view, a number of "proofs" of questionable validity in order to establish that God the Son is eternally obedient to God the Father and that this same obedience continues uninterrupted in the divine nature of the incarnated God the Son. Then some, as well, apply that conclusion to societal issues in ways it should not be done. This article is written in response to that view and practice.

Understand that this view of relational subordination is not simply that each Trinal Person has a personal, particular role in the economic works of creation and salvation. No, that is not the issue at all! Who could deny that? The issue is rather whether or not the obedience of Christ on earth is merely an extension of an eternal hierarchy of authority in God wherein God obeys God. The Father is seen as the eternal Sovereign over the Son as God who always gives the Father dutiful submission. This article will be used to identify some North American theologians who assert that God the Son eternally is obedient to God the Father and to state their reason(s) for holding that opinion. Then an evaluation of the reason(s) of each theologian will be offered. Of course, the arguments next to each of the 20 numbers are those of these theologians, and below each is this writer's response.

1.3. Hypothesis

It is the opinion of this writer that the Son as God is the relational equal of God the Father. The Son is not eternally role subordinate to the Father, but only is economically in submission. That submission is only in His humanity, not in His deity.

2. Evaluating 20 Arguments for the Eternal Role Subordination of God the Son

While it is true that each author-theologian mentioned below may offer a number of evidences for his position, and that the evidences of each are not exclusively his but may be asserted by many, this writer will usually attach to each theologian discussed just one to three arguments so that the reader can see just how widespread this tenet is in North American theological literature. This writer has attempted to faithfully mention and respond to all the major arguments advanced in the literature for the eternal, relational subordination of the Son as God to the Father. As Dahms seems especially ambitious to prove the role subordination of the Son, more than three of his "proofs" will be mentioned. A total of twenty reasons will be evaluated.

2.1. Why would the Son have been the one to incarnate unless the Son were eternally role subordinate (Ware : 2004)?

This question has its context in an article which attempts to support gender roles. Trinal relationships are taken by Ware to be evidential of the need for gender roles in church and family. In order to show that there is a hierarchy of authority among the Trinal Persons, Ware asks, if the Son is not under the authority of the Father, then why was it the Son who incarnated and not the Father? But Scripture is silent on why the Son incarnated. We do not know why the Son was the One, do we? The things to us revealed belong to us (Deut. 29:29), but things that are not revealed may not belong to us. Doctrine should not be built on silence.

Yet theories of why it was the Son who incarnated have been advanced. Anselm (1998:251) suggested that it was more proper for the Son to incarnate

because to our human mind it would seem more appropriate for the Son to be pleading for the salvation of humanity than it would be for the Father. Another theory is that of B.B. Warfield (2003:166), who denied the eternal role subordination of the Son. Warfield suggested that there is an existing "covenant" between the Trinal Persons as to who would do what in the creative and salvific acts of God. Brown (1966:25) sees the personified Wisdom and Torah of God as being in John's background of meaning for the Logos. If so, why would not the Logos, who is the Son, be the One to incarnate since by the Son's incarnation God is revealed (John 1:14, 18)? The Logos then is about both written and personified divine revelation. Even so, John 1:1 portrays the Logos as equal to God as He is God and is Creator. No subordination there! And, yes, Barth (2002:63) finds in the emphatic pronoun in Philippians 2:6 a reason to doubt that the Father's will was the ground of the incarnation. The Son chose, without duress, to do that!

No subordination is required in any of these suggestions. Since we do not really know why it was the Son who incarnated, Ware's argument based on virtual silence has a very weak voice in this discussion, at least it does in this writer's opinion.

2.2. Unless there were in God a hierarchy of authority, there would be no way tell the Trinal Persons apart (Horrell 2004:417).

Why must authority be the only clue to identity? In our societies, cannot persons be distinguished by many other means, rather than just by authority? As for God, if Scripture names One as the Father and says that He loves a second, the Son, are we not provided with sufficient data by that simple statement to tell one Person from the Other? But there is in such a statement no subordination. Love need not imply any difference of authority at all. Cannot love, and not authority, be both the basis on which persons may be told apart and the basis of relationships as well? The "only begotten God" (NASB) is in the bosom of the Father (John 1:18), and that is sufficient to tell them apart without adding "God obeys God".

2.3. One called "Son" would be subordinate to one called "Father" (Grudem 1994:250).

Yet Gregory Nazianzen (Fourth Theological Oration XX, 1999:316) says, "He is called 'Son' because He is identical with the Father in essence." And, it has been well-argued by Bess (1965:17-24) that "son of" is a Hebraic idiom meaning "of the same kind." So, for example, "the sons of the prophets" are not subordinate to prophets, but are themselves prophets. When Christ claimed that God was His Father, the Jews took that to mean an equality with God (John 5:18). Mowery (2002:100-110) has evidenced that the title "Son of God" in a particular construction in three places in Matthew exactly parallels the syntax of the Roman imperial title as found on coins, public baths, bridges, and elsewhere. Perhaps, then, first century Christians, who certainly were aware of the attribution of deity to the emperor, understood Christ in a way similar to how the imperial cult understood the emperor. The title, as understood in the imperial cult, would seem to have evoked an identification of the emperor with the gods, not a subordination of the emperor to the gods. So, the Son of God is God, not less than God. He is equal to God.

2.4. Personal distinctions (as role subordination) are not additional divine attributes to God's being (Grudem 1994:253).

The effect of Grudem's assertion is that role subordination is not at all connected to essential subordination. Or, in other words, as Frame claims (2002:721), a hierarchy of authority in God does not compromise an equality of nature between the Persons.

But, the writer of this article agrees with Chafer (1947:223) and Hodge (1986:440), who treated God's prerogative of sovereignty as a divine attribute, and with Berkhof (1996:76) and Grudem himself (1994:217), who definitively say that sovereignty is a divine attribute. Therefore, if the Father has sovereignty over the Son, how can the two have sovereignty in the same manner or to the same extent? Can an essential attribute of one Person in God be infinite and that same attribute in another Person in God be less than infinite?

God's essential attributes are all infinite. By "infinity" is meant that "there cannot be any limitations on God" (Berkhof 1996:259). But, were one Person the authority over the Other, the latter does not have infinite sovereignty. His sovereignty is limited. Yes, as Highfield does (2002:279-299) in the context of a debate between classical and open theism, the issue of God's self-limitation (i.e., of all the Persons in God) of His not exercising sovereignty, becomes a topic of discussion related to the issue of man's free will. The will is free, it is supposed, because God limits His sovereignty.

But for this article, the question is not really whether all who are God ever together limit themselves, but whether one Trinal Person only in God, the Son, exclusively is limited in exercising the attribute of sovereignty, while the Other, the Father, is not limited. How could this be if the divine attributes inhere in the one divine nature?

Yet, attributes are said to inhere in the undivided nature. The power of infinity which God has, says Aquinas (1920a), is due to the infinity of God's essence. Essence determines attributes. Attributes cannot be separated from essence (Shedd 1980:1:335; Wiley 1940:321). Frame insists that God cannot exist without His attributes; each attribute is necessary to God's being (2002:226). So how can the Son have a different sovereignty without having a different essence?

Erickson, observing that since each Trinal Person performs different economic roles, each Person has His own set of "properties." But Erickson defines these properties as functions or activities or acts—not as attributes (1989:265). Since the attributes are essential to the divine nature, the Trinal Persons do not each have Their own set of attributes (1989:265). Were they to, the essence of God would be divided.

So, these data occasion important questions: if sovereignty is a divine attribute and that attribute is unlimited, then how can the Son's sovereignty be less than the Father's? If divine attributes inhere in the divine nature and by having that nature the Father has sovereignty over the Son, then how can the Son by having the very same nature be ruled by the Father?

It would seem that any limitation on the Son's attributional equality would be a limitation as well on the Son's essential equality. Grudem, while teaching that there is no difference in attributes between the Persons, and that sovereignty is an attribute, can still insist, in this writer's conviction contradicting himself, that God the Father commands and the God the Son obeys. A reversal of that, Grudem adamantly, and without basis, insists would cause the Son to cease being Son and the Father to cease being Father (1994:250). Thus, what makes a Person in God is His place in the hierarchy of authority? Where does Scripture say this? Where's the proof for Grudem's bold statement? Grudem's dogmatic assertion is not only without Scriptural support, but also without logical support.

2.5. John 5:19 shows that God the Son is eternally submissive to God the Father (Lewis and Demarest 1987:277).

Is this a fair conclusion to draw from John 5:19? It is curious, but not unique (see also Westcott 1980:196; Morris 1984:312) that a text which Athanasius (1999:476) took to be evidence of the equality of the Son with the Father and which Augustine (On The Creed 5; 1995:370) used to argue that the Father is not greater than the Son, is by Lewis and Demarest wrested to mean that the Father is God the Son's Superior or that God is dependent on God. But others think John 5:19 is not teaching a dependence of God the Son on the Father; it is teaching instead a unity of nature and operation between the Two (Brown 1966:218).

Perhaps neither the unity nor the dependence approach exemplified above is attending closely to the context. Verse 20 says that the Father will show the Son greater works. Does that not restrict this dependence to time? If it does, how is that dependence eternally happening in God or existing between God and God? If the Son as God must wait around for the Father to show Him things, then does God have two minds? Does God know more than God? Does God teach God?

These propositions seem foolish views to hold in the light of God's unity in nature and attributes. So, just as Aquinas (1920b) asserts, John 5:19 refers to the humanity of Christ not to His deity. As such John 5:19 is no evidence at all of the eternal relational subordination of the Son. The vastly different

understandings of John 5:19 severely limit its value as a proof text of a supposed hierarchy of authority in God.

2.6. Teaching in church history shows that the vast majority of Christian scholars have taught the eternal relational subordination of God the Son (Kovach and Shemm 1999:462-470).

But let's take a sampling of some Christian scholars:

- John of Damascus (1999:59) wrote that the Son is not obedient in His Godhead, but only as man. No eternal obedience of God to God here!
- Hilary (1999:157) chided the heretics who do not distinguish between God and Man in Christ, and Hilary says it is in Christ's condition as Man that He subjected Himself to the Father. No eternal obedience of God to God here!
- Gregory Nazianzen (1999:311) taught that it is not in Christ's character as the Word that He was obedient. No eternal obedience of God to God here!
- Augustine (1995a:25) asserted that it is in His humanity that the Son is subject to the Father. No eternal obedience of God to God here!
- Anselm (1998:251, 276) expressed the position that only as man did Christ suffer, and that only man's will in Christ can supplicate—not God's. No eternal obedience of God to God here!
- Aquinas (1920b) explained that Christ's human nature is subject to the Father, not His divine nature. No eternal obedience of God to God here!
- Chemnitz (1971:59), the Lutheran reformer, ascribed such subordinist passages as John 5:30, 6:38, Matthew 26:39, and Isaiah 7:15 only to the human mind and will of Christ, not to His deity. No eternal obedience of God to God here!
- Calvin (1975:416) insisted that Christ doing the Father's will, and not His own, applies "entirely to His humanity." No eternal obedience of God to God here!.
- According to Jonathan Edwards (1834:632), as God, Christ has absolute sovereignty, and the decrees of God are Christ's sovereign decrees. No eternal obedience of God to God here!

- R.A. Torrey (1933:88) was of the opinion that all passages referring to a subordination of the Son “have reference to the incarnated Christ and not to the pre-existent Word.” No eternal obedience of God to God here!
- B.B. Warfield (2003:176) saw it that subordinative passages in the New Testament likely have their full explanation in the doctrines of the covenant, the humiliation, and the two natures in the incarnated Christ. No eternal obedience of God to God here!
- Charles Hodge (1981:395) asserted that none of Christ’s obedience occurred in the divine nature. No eternal obedience of God to God here!
- A.B. Bruce (1905:20-21) believed that God the Son took the human nature in order to become the Father’s servant; it was in that nature that He became obedient. No eternal obedience of God to God here!
- Millard Erickson (2000:90) thinks that subordinating the Son to the Father is a mistake resulting from confusing economic Trinal relationships with eternal ones. No eternal obedience of God to God here!

This sampling does not disprove Kovack and Shemm’s assertion, but it does suggest that a good many Christians thinkers have questioned the veracity of the tenet that God the Son is eternally role subordinate to the Father.

2.7. As Christ’s subordination was decreed, that subordination is eternal (and so, ontological) (Kovach and Shemm 1999:471).

Christ’s obedience is in the decree of God (Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 4:28; 1 Pet. 1:20). As Chafer (1947, 3:37) and Barth (1958:35) say, the incarnational, historical life of our Lord was decreed. So, does that mean that this is an ontological relationship in God, which is decreed? How so, since God does not decree that which is in Himself? “The decrees have reference to things outside of God” (Strong 1907:353). Shedd also says that nothing pertaining to Trinitarian distinctions can be decreed (1980:395-396; see also Chafer 1947, 1:228; Klooster 1989:303). Therefore, because Christ’s obedience is decreed, rather than that evidencing that God in God obeys God, it instead evidences that Christ’s obedience is not in God at all; it is only is economic.

2.8. John 14:28 shows that the Son as God eternally obeys the Father (Kitano 1999:99).

Wayne Grudem, who also subscribes to the eternal role subordination of God to God, was the “first reader” on Kitano’s Th.M. thesis committee at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Yet it seems no one questioned Kitano as to why, since Kitano devotes an entire chapter to “The Eary [sic] Church Fathers’ Understanding of Eternal Relational Subordination,” his interpretation of John 14:28 is so very different from that of some early Church fathers. For example:

- Augustine insisted that John 14:28 refers not to the Son as God but only to Christ’s incarnated form of a servant (1995a:24).
- Ambrose explained that John 14:28 was written of Christ’s humanity. (1999:231).
- Theodoret applies John 14:28 to “the flesh and not the Person of the Godhead” (1999:181).
- Basil suggested that the text referred to the Word made flesh (Letter 8:5 1999:118).
- Leo preached that John 14:28 refers to Christ as Man not as God (1999:192-193). [It is true that some Church Fathers took John 14:28 to be based on the eternal essentiation of the Son; One essentiated was thought unequal to One who essentiates].

The understanding that John 14:28 is about Christ’s humanity or economic work is also that of many later writers as well, such as Calvin (2003:103), Hengstenberg (1980, 2:234), Hendricksen (1979, 2:288), Dods (n.d.:827), Lenski (1961:1020), Morris (1984:658), Bruce (1983:306), and others.

It would, perhaps, have been worthwhile for Kitano in the Th.M. thesis to interact with the rationale of those many who disagree with his understanding of John 14:28. God cannot be greater than God. But since Christ as Man is sent (John 13:16), Christ as Man is subordinate to God. As Augustine said, in the form of God He is greater than Himself, but in the form of Man, He is less than Himself (1995a:24).

2.9. 1 Corinthians 11:3 shows that the Father is the eternal authority over the Son (Kitano 1999:102).

Kitano's "first reader," Grudem, has, by using a University of California computer programme, researched 2000+ occurrences of *kephalē* in Greek literature (Grudem 1985; 1990). Despite Cervin's (1989) ineffective counter, Grudem's findings established beyond reasonable doubt that the noun *kephalē* ("head") in the New Testament means "authority over" not "source of."

But, must 1 Corinthians 11:3 mean that the Son as God has the Father as His authority? Why so since the title or name "Christ" need not refer exclusively to the divine nature? Ambrose thought that the term "Christ" here means "His form as a servant" (1999:266). Augustine said the text refers to Christ's human nature (1995a:329). Charles Hodge taught that 1 Corinthians 11:3 refers to "the incarnate Son" (1972:119). The virtue of 1 Corinthians 11:3 to prove Kitano's assertion is limited, therefore, as his interpretation of it is often doubted. God is Head of Christ as Man, not Head of Christ as God.

2.10. As John 6:57 shows that the Son depends on the Father for life, the Son must be role subordinate (Kitano 1999:97).

But the text clearly references the humanity of Christ, because it refers to His body and blood. The context is the cross, not a precreational relationship in God. Unless God the Son has life in Himself, as says John 1:4, then God the Son does not have the Father's attribute of aseity. Having different attributes means having a different essence. So, as Frame correctly says, "if the Son is fully God, then He has no origin or cause. . . . He is a *se*" (2002:708).

2.11. Eternal generation is the corollary of eternal role subordination (Williams 1996).

The reader is referred to the first article in this series (Grover 2008) and point 2.10 above. An unproven hypothesis makes a poor corollary.

2.12. Unless what we see in the economic Trinal relationship is true of eternal relationships, the Persons are acting contrary to their natures (Dahms 1989:497).

Dahms does not appear to have thought this through. First, what he does not correctly factor into his logic is that the Son added in His incarnation a second nature. In that nature, the Son experiences and acts in distinction from the divine nature. He does, that is, unless one chooses to imagine that God cries in his crib, increases in size, sleeps in a boat, and bleeds. It was as Man, according to Philippians 2:8, that Christ humbled Himself and became obedient. It does not say there that in the form of God He obeyed.

Second, neither has Dahm's connected to his thinking what we see in the different sorts of temporal relationships between the Trinal Persons. In Matthew 4:1, the Spirit leads the Son. But in John 16:7, the Son sends the Spirit. In which text, then, do we see the Persons acting according to Their natures? In John 17:4, the Son glorifies the Father. But in 17:5, the Father glorifies the Son. In which text, then, are the Persons acting according to their natures? The economic works of the Trinity are not intended by Scripture to dictate to us how the Trinal Persons in the ontological Trinity must act.

2.13. The hierarchy in God is a basis for personal ethics (Dahms 1989:498-499).

Dahms says that God obeying God teaches us as Christians to obey those who have authority over us in state, church, and home. While Dahms does not here give more specific examples of the application of this premise, others do. In his over 800 page book on gender roles, Wayne Grudem uses the supposed submission of God the Son to God the Father as an argument for Grudem's view of the how one gender should submit to another (2004:433-437). One of Grudem's points is that an authority of one over the other can occur even among those of the same nature. This present article is not a discussion of gender roles, but the reader should be aware that some in North America relate supposed Trinal relationships to gender roles in church and family.

However, in this writer's view, the texts which Grudem employs to evidence God obeying God and thus creating a divine corollary to gender roles can all

be understood as Christ as Man obeying God, not as God obeying God. All of the texts to which Grudem alludes, as John 5:30, easily fit into the submissive relationship of the incarnated Son to the Father, occurring only in His humanity, and do not require us to take that relationship as being an eternal one.⁴

2.14. John 17:5 implies that as the Father gives glory to Son, so the Son is subordinate (Dahms 1994:354).

But John 17:5 does not teach that in eternity God the Son receives glory from God the Father. As Wallace explains, the preposition *para* with the dative (here a pronoun), suggests nearness not agency as it does when used with the genitive (1996:378).

2.15. The Son reveals the Father (John 1:18), but unless the subordination seen in the earthly Jesus is ontological as well, that revelation of Trinal relationships is untrue (Dahms 1994:359).

What Dahms is claiming is that unless what we see in the incarnated Christ is true of God as God is, then Christ's revelation of God is not accurate. However, when Christ was tempted (Matt. 4:1), does that mean that God as God is tempted? When Christ matured (Luke 2:52), does that mean that God as God grows up? When Christ slept in a boat (Luke 8:23), does that mean that God as God takes naps? Can we not suppose that the authors of Scripture would presume that the readers of Scripture are able to separate what is true of Man from what is true of God?

⁴ The writer's comments on the efficiency of Grudem's statements about how Trinal relationships connect to human relationships are not intended to imply that the writer thinks that Grudem is incorrect about his opining on all of the other 100+ arguments he makes.

2.16. 1 Corinthians 15:24, 28 evidences the eternity of the Son's role subordination to the Father because the Son gives His Kingdom over to the Father (Dahms 1994:362).

There are some difficulties with that conclusion. First, as this text says nothing about Christ's pre-existent status, it is no proof for the eternal relational subordination of the Son. Second, as the positions of Strong (1907:314, 699) and Hodge (1972:186) show, it is not uncommon to connect the passage to Christ's humanity, not to His deity. Third, Luke 1:32-33, Daniel 7:14, Revelation 11:15, and 2 Peter 1:11 teach us that the Kingdom of Christ is everlasting, just as Chafer reminds us (1974, 2:366; 5:372-376). That is why, fourth, some such as Augustine (1995b:25), Bruce (1971:148) and Lenski (1963:684) see the text as not teaching a stepping down of the Son at all, but instead teaching a merging of the Son's Kingdom with that of the Father's.

2.17. Since the Logos was the Agent of creation, according to John 1:1, that shows an eternal subordination (Dahms 1994:358).

What Dahms is attempting to prove in his article is "the essential subordination of the Son" (1994:351). He argues that because the divine Persons have different economic roles, these roles prove essential differences between the Persons in God. Is it not curious that Grudem, who holds to the eternal role subordination of the Son, argues for that tenet, as cited above, by saying that the subordination of one gender to another does not prove that genders are essentially different. However, Dahms, who agrees with Grudem about the eternal subordination of the Son, argues for that tenet by saying that different roles in God's creative acts prove there are essential differences between the Persons in the Trinity.

But it is not proven that a difference in roles in the creative work of the Trinity is evidence of eternal differences in authority in God. How could it be when creation is, in fact, for God the Son according to Colossians 1:16? If creation was done for the Son, how does creation prove that the Son is subordinate?

2.18. As in the fourth Gospel, one who is sent is subordinate to the one who sends, the Son as sent is eternally subordinate to the Father (Cowan 2006:117-118).

Cowan argues that because the Baptist who was sent by God is subject to God and because the disciples who were sent by Christ are subject to Christ, therefore as the Son was sent by the Father, the Son as God is subject to God.

But first, it might be mentioned that it is perilous to base our understanding of how God relates to God on how humans relate to God or to other humans. Is how parents care for their children illustrative of how God the Father nurtures God the Son? Does God need nurturing? Is God disciplined by God as parents discipline their children? Does God require disciplining? If you think these are foolish comparisons to make, then how can Cowan's comparison be convincing?

Second, while Augustine labors to prove that God sending God does not require an inequality (1995b:82-86) and, he may be right, this writer sees it that the Son as born of a woman (Gal. 4:4), and not as the Pre-existent God, and Who is in the form of a servant, not in the form of God (Philippians 2:6-8), is the One Who was sent. Therefore, the sending of the Son as Man by God is not proof of an inequality in authority between the Son as God and God the Father.

2.19. The articulated infinitive in Philippians 2:6 has the force of separating "form of God" from "equal with God," so the Son is not the relational equal of the Father (Burk 2000).

Burk argues that the articulated infinitive *to einai isa* (literally, "the to be equal") in Philippians 2:6, drives a grammatical wedge between "form of God" and "equal to God." Therefore, Burk opines that the Son "obeys the Father from all eternity." Burk also, as do some above, then makes subordination in God correspondent to subordination among genders.

Burk is aware that many, as N.T. Wright (1986), take the regular use of the articulated infinitive to refer back to something previously mentioned. So, as "form of God" was previously mentioned, "equal to God" is complementary to

that according to Wright. But Burk thinks Wright is wrong about that grammaticism having application to this text because the lexemes “form of God” and “equal to God” are not identical. Burk explains, for example, that in Romans 7:18 “the to wish” is identical to “the to do.” So, there the articulated infinitive, he concedes, is anaphoric. But if it is not so, Burk insists, in Philippians 2:6. This is because “form of God” is not equivalent to “equal with God.”

However, Burk is assuming a conclusion in his argument. He must first prove that “form of God” is not an equivalent lexeme with “equal with God.” Only then can he build a grammaticism based on the infinitive being articulated in this text to evidence that the Son is not equal. *Morphē* regularly is taken to imply nature and qualities (e.g., Braumann 1967:706; O’Brien 1991:207). And so, before making his argument on grammar, Burk first must convincingly establish that Paul would not take having “equality with God” as being implied in having the “*morphē* of God.”

So, a good reader of Greek, Burk seems to imply, would, when seeing that the lexemes are not identical, and the infinitive has the article, not take Philippians 2:6 to mean that God the Son is equal to the Father. Now that is a questionable implication given that experts in Greek regularly have taken the text to mean that the Son is equal.

Both ancient and modern experts in Greek have interpreted the text in that manner. Chrysostom, for example, had Greek as his native tongue, yet he said Philippians 2:6 means that the Son is equal (1983:213). Athanasius also spoke and wrote in Greek. Yet he too said that Philippians 2:6 means that the Son is equal (1999:396). Should we suppose that these know less than Burk about their own language? Moderns too, such as Barth (2002:61) Fee (1995:208), Feinberg (1980:34) and Hawthorne (1983:84-85) all see it that the Son is equal according to Philippians 2:6. How, then, can it be so very clear to Burk that the Son in Philippians 2:6 is said not to be equal? Could it possibly be that theology is controlling Burk’s exegesis and not exegesis controlling his theology?

2.20. The meaning of *harpagmos* (“not robbery” KJV; “to be grasped” NIV) in Philippians 2:6 likely requires that Christ does not have relational equality with God (Wallace 1995:634-635).

It is curious that Wallace, when discussing that noun, does not refer to the findings of Hoover (1971:95-119). As the reader may know, at times theses or dissertations have very narrow topics. And such was the case with Hoover, who wrote his Th.D. dissertation at Harvard on one Greek word. And that word was *harpagmos*.

Hoover did extensive research in both Biblical and secular Greek literature. What Hoover found was that when *harpagmos* is used as a predicate accusative, as it is in Philippians 2:6, with any of a group of six verbs, it has idiomatic meaning. The meaning is, “not using what one possesses for one’s own benefit.” One of those six verbs is *hēgēsato* (deemed [it]), which is the very verb in 2:6. Therefore, Philippians 2:6 is saying that while God the Son is equal with God the Father, the Son did not use that equality for His own benefit.

3. Conclusion

This writer has evaluated and found wanting twenty arguments which are advanced to teach the eternal relational subordination of God the Son. In this writer’s opinion, none of the twenty nor even the cumulative effect of the twenty is convincing. Therefore, it remains this writer’s opinion that God is not the authority over God. As St. Augustine wisely wrote of the Son: “if He is not equal in anything, He is not equal in all” (1995b:99). May this article bring glory to God the Son our Lord.

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