

Seven Questions on the 1
Two Natures in Christ 2

A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY FOR 3
SERIOUS BIBLE STUDENTS 4

Bill Grover, ThD 5

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19

For Matt: A fine son who prayed so often for me.

1

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How Do Evangelical Scholars Disagree about the Two Natures in Christ?

The propositional framework behind this book is that understanding the doctrines of Scripture is an essential part of being a Christian. A vital part of that learning should be comprehending Christ's Person. But this objective of teaching the Person of Christ is not being accomplished as well as it should by popular books about Christ. Scholars of the evangelical position adamantly disagree on a number of Christological issues. All relevant problems are not covered by authors and positions contrary to their own often are ignored. One would suppose, given the fourth- to seventh-century ecumenical creeds which defined Christ and His position in the Trinity

1 and the evangelical belief in the clarity of Scripture,¹ that to-
2 day's doctors who have written on Christology would not ex-
3 press contradictory opinions of Christ's nature. But they do.

4 To begin, note these differences in several popular, evan-
5 gelical systematic theology textbooks: Berkhof believes that
6 the ontological personal attribute of the Son is being eternally
7 generated by the Father (see Chapter 3 below), and that this
8 means the Father is "first" in that He generates the personal
9 subsistence of the Son. This affects the Father's and the Son's
10 roles in authority and submission in the economic Trinity.²
11 Yet, Erickson does not endorse eternal generation and argues
12 that unequal roles in the economic Trinity equate to unequal
13 essences.³

14 Also, Berkhof attributes an uninterrupted omniscience to
15 the divine nature of the incarnate Son of God,⁴ but Erickson
16 teaches that the Son as God on Earth did not, in general,

17 1. Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000),
18 108.

19 2. Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust,
20 2003 reprint), 93, 95.

21 3. Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013), 308.

22 Erickson here takes the position that an ontological inequality in authority be-
23 tween the Father and the Son would result in an inequality in essence between them.
24 On page 309, Erickson says there may be temporal divisions of authority among the
25 trinal Persons but not eternal ones. Erickson argues a necessary difference in func-
26 tion between the trinal Persons cannot be maintained as were the functional differ-
27 ence permanent, it would be a difference in being. 307.

28 4. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 94.

29 With that sentiment Chemnitz concurs, saying each nature in Christ acts but in
30 concurrence with the other nature. *The Two Natures in Christ*, Transl. J.A.O. Press, (St.
31 Louis: CHP, 1971 reprint), 222–223, 237.

exercise omniscience and was not omnipresent.⁵ Were a believer reading Erickson’s systematic, he may, upon completion understand that Christ, being confined in and limited to a human nature, was of necessity unable to utilize the powers which are God’s. He might hold substantial differences about a God incarnate than those who read Berkhof’s volume. Yes, there are other doctrinal differences between believers too, as one may call one’s church leadership “elders” and another “deacons” or one may have been immersed and the other sprinkled. But should such opposing tenets regarding Christ Himself exist as He is so central to the beliefs of all Christians?

Another example: Grudem asserts that, in Christ, “one nature does some things that the other nature does not do.”⁶ But Erickson instead insists that Jesus’ natures did not function independently and that He did not exercise His deity at times and His humanity at other times.⁷

One can imagine how such contradicting beliefs will affect, for example, the interpretation of the words and acts of Christ

5. *Christian Theology*, 637, 670.

Erickson bases this on Mark 13:32. But in contrast Calvin teaches the Markan text alludes only to the ignorance of Jesus’ human nature. *Commentaries XVII* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003, reprint), 154.

6. Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 558.

This likely means the one Christ acts differently through His two natures.

7. Erickson insists the incarnation “was a circumstanced induced limitation on the exercise of his (Christ’s) powers and capabilities.” *Christian Theology*, 670. Calvin rejects that position: *Institutes 2:13.4 and 14:1,2*. Unlike many notables, as Shedd (*Dogmatic Theology II*:328–335, Nashville: Nelson, 1980), and Hodge (*Systematic Theology II*: 392–393, 395), Erickson is determined not to distinguish what is done by the Person of Christ through one nature only in distinction from the other nature. So, the unchangeable God the Son incarnated becomes ignorant and is no longer omnipresent in Erickson’s view.

1 in the Gospels in preaching and teaching. In Christ, is it God's
2 nature that falls asleep in a boat (Mark 4:38), or is it man's na-
3 ture, which is the great "I AM"? (John 8:58)? Can such questions
4 be avoided from the pulpit or never raised in the adult Sunday
5 school class? Perhaps they can if learning Christian doctrine
6 has nothing to do with being a Christian (see Chapter 2). But
7 that path leads to poorly informed believers and such igno-
8 rance is clearly contrary to the objectives of the New Testament
9 (Col. 1:10; Jude 1:3).

10 Erickson asserts that the title "Son of God" means "likeness
11 to God,"⁸ but Grudem avers that being the Son of God means
12 He is eternally role-subordinate to the Father.⁹ Is this not as-
13 tonishing? Evangelicals who are devotedly clutching in their
14 hands the inspired Bible with the stated purpose of inducing
15 belief in Jesus Christ as "the Son of God" (John 20:31) cannot
16 even agree on what being the "Son of God" means! The situa-
17 tion is deplorable, and were unbelieving critics of Christianity
18 aware of it, surely it would find a powerful place in their attack
19 arsenal. "How can Christianity be divinely revealed to us," they
20 could jeer, "it if cannot be understood even by its own experts?"

21 Clearly a believer learning doctrine could be benefited,
22 were s/he made aware of how and why differences in under-
23 standing Christ's Person exist among evangelical writers of
24 theology books; the serious student of Christian beliefs could
25 surely profit by being provided with a source as this present

26 8. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 307.

27 9. Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 251.

28 Unless the Son is eternally role-subordinate to the Father, the Trinity could not
29 exist is Grudem's contention on that page.

book, which is designed to critically interact with the rationale 1
behind such differences so that a believer could competently 2
weigh the material to arrive at his or her own opinions. If I am 3
correct, that could result in more complete learning. 4

But that these controversies exist in the teaching by evan- 5
gelicals about Christ is not the entire problem. Another unfor- 6
tunate fact is that it is common for authors of these textbooks 7
both not to address some issues in Christology and to fail to 8
critically interact with opinions contrary to their own. Just as 9
a few examples, note: (1) Berkhof does not deal with functional 10
kenoticism¹⁰; (2) Grudem does not answer arguments for the 11
Lutheran view on communication of attributes¹¹ or inform that 12
some, as Warfield, suggest that the Covenant of Redemption 13
could be evidence against the eternal role-subordination of the 14
Son¹²; and, (3) Erickson fails to respond to arguments against 15
his positions that the Son as God temporarily lost the indepen- 16
dent use of some divine powers and that neither of the two na- 17
tures in Christ acts distinctly.¹³ 18

Consequently, those reading one of these systematic the- 19
ology textbooks may finish the book not informed about a 20

10. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 327–329. 21

11. Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 562–563. 22

12. Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, “The Biblical Doctrine of the Trinity” in *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield*, vol II, (Grand Rapids, MI : Baker, 2003 reprint), 166–167. 23
24
25

Warfield here questions that a subordination in the modes of operation is an ef- 26
fect of a subordination in the modes of subsistence within the Trinity. He suggests 27
rather that all subordinist passages placing the Son in subjection to the Father may 28
be readily explained by the doctrines of the Covenant of Redemption between the 29
trinal Persons, the humiliation of the Son, and the two natures of Christ. 30

13. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 637, 670. 31

1 number of alternate views and some significant issues regard-
2 ing Christ's Person. That obviously would result in inadequate
3 learning.

4 And this is where I will try to do something about the situ-
5 ation. I cannot, of course, rewrite the books of others, but I
6 do hope to offer this volume as a source that explains varying
7 evangelical viewpoints regarding Christ's Person and critically
8 evaluates the evidences for each. I believe this has the potential
9 to improve the learning about the natures in Christ.

10 What should prove helpful in understanding Christology,
11 in this writer's estimation, is attending to the matter of mak-
12 ing the learner aware of arguments for and against some of the
13 positions taken on Christ's Person. So, for example, if an au-
14 thor chooses not to interact with the various views opposite his
15 on the meaning of the term *monogenēs*, a reader might be in-
16 troduced to writers who disagree.¹⁴ Or when a writer avers that
17 Christ incarnate could not be omnipresent because God's na-
18 ture is limited by the body, the reader may be introduced to the
19 reasons why John of Damascus rejects that belief.¹⁵ Or when a
20 book affirms, correctly in this writer's view, the omnipresence
21 of the incarnated Son of God, the student can nevertheless be

22 14. For example, Irons versus Moody or the KJV on John 3:16 versus the NIV.

23 15. John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, chapter 4. The Damascene
24 counsels us not to attribute to Christ's deity what is applicable only to His humanity,
25 for each nature keeps its own individuality strictly unchanged. That is Leo's posi-
26 tion as well who asserts the Word performs what is proper to it and the flesh what
27 is proper to it (sermon 54.1). The actions of the one Person belong either to the hu-
28 manity or to the deity—not to both natures. Letter 28:4. Also see Tertullian, *Against*
29 *Praxes* 29, 30. These believe Christ works through each nature in distinction from
30 the other nature.

made aware of the dialectics of the functional kenoticists who
question how the omni-attributes as omnipresence be utilized
in the human nature as God incarnate surely must have been
limited by His body.¹⁶

My principal ambition and focus in writing this book is to
improve the understanding of our Lord's Person. Of course, I
have personal opinions on most of the issues discussed, but
I will endeavor to keep these in check and allow a fair repre-
sentation of and interaction with the argumentation on each
question, which is a good rule to follow for all theologians. To
accomplish that objective, I have written this book based on
the writings of many ancient and modern evangelical authors
covering scores of debated doctrinal and biblical questions in
Christology to supplement the understanding of the Person
of Christ taught in popular literature about the natures in our
Savior. Such a document should prove helpful to learners of
Christian beliefs by providing for them analyses of issues and
arguments regarding Christology which frequently are lacking
in most writings dealing with that subject matter.

A reader of this book very possibly will be exposed for
the first time to a great number of biblical, doctrinal, and

16. Ronald J. Feenstra, "A Kenotic Christological Method for Understanding
the Divine Attributes" in *Exploring Kenotic Christology, The Self-Emptying of God, C.*
Stephen Evans, ed., (Vancouver B.C. Regent College Publishing, 2006).

Feenstra argues the omni attributes as omniscience are not necessary to the
divine nature. God's incarnate could remain divine without retaining some divine
powers. It should be obvious that Feenstra rejects the position of two minds in
Christ which would allow the divine mind to remain omniscient and the human
mind ignorant of some things. That is the classical position expressed by many as
Chemnitz in his *The Two Natures in Christ*, 235.

1 historical issues that relate to the two natures in Christ. It will
2 be soon demonstrated that opinions on the meanings of many
3 Scriptures concerning our Lord's Person even by evangelical
4 scholars are much argued. Doctrines as the meaning of the in-
5 carnation, enhypostasia, kenoticism, and the integrity of Jesus'
6 humanity will be seen to be much debated. It will be valuable
7 to learn of certain aspects of the history of dogma as the early
8 heresies, the early creeds and the conflicts between Cyril and
9 Nestorius and Word-flesh versus Word-man Christology. Such
10 will be shown as germane to the understanding of our topic.
11 How and why the Lutheran understanding of Jesus' humanity
12 differs from that of the Reformed may be new knowledge to
13 some readers. Terminology as *homoousios*, eternal generation,
14 eternal role-subordination, functional kenoticism, dyothele-
15 tism, Nestorianism, monophysitism, miaphysitism, monothe-
16 litism, and the communion of attributes will be shown to be
17 relevant to our understanding of the two natures in Christ.

18 It should not be denied that accurate, comprehensive teach-
19 ing on the Person of Christ to Christians is crucial to the well-
20 being of the Church. Church members should expect that their
21 pastors and adult Sunday school teachers would address the
22 meaning of the natures in Christ in some of their sermons
23 and lessons. Of course, such instruction should be simplified
24 where required, but teachers have an obligation to clarify for
25 their people the Person of Christ. Those given that calling,
26 most especially, are obligated to become enabled to "contend
27 for the faith that was once for all delivered" (Jude 3, NIV) and to
28 "keep the pattern of sound teaching" (2 Tim. 1:13, NIV). Meeting

those biblical benchmarks includes understanding the tenets of Christology despite the doctrines of it being variate, complex, and most often quite subject to argument. Instruction of the congregation on the natures in Christ must not be avoided. Of course, arriving at unalterable conclusions on every issue is not to be expected of the laity, pastors, Bible teachers, or even theology professors. But knowing what differences there are and why those differences exist seem basic to comprehending Christ. And, understanding Christ's Person as well as we can, being human, should be the goal of every believer.

So, let's continue to note how and why those evangelicals who write on the Person of Christ disagree about how the Persons in God relate to each other and the meaning of the natures in Christ. To expand on the examples in the foregoing pages that show significant differences in understanding the Person of our Lord Jesus exist between popular, evangelical systematic theology textbooks, the following paragraphs from sources other than systematic theologies will further illustrate the issues and complexities of some of these difficulties which beset the task of defining Christ's Person. These additional resources will serve to demonstrate why a source such as this book is useful in studying Christology.

Oliver Crisp (*Word Embodied*) writes the first example. This author has opted to spend some energy in affirming the eternal generation of the Son. This is the ancient belief always taught in the early church creeds and by many church fathers. (Please refer to chapter three of my book for a detailed discussion.) The doctrine involves the Son's personhood and/or divine essence

1 being generated from the Father in eternity. The importance
2 of this doctrine according to Crisp is that it satisfactorily dis-
3 tinguishes between the trinal Persons. The Father begets the
4 Son and the Son is begotten. Crisp believes if eternal genera-
5 tion is implied in Scripture—in texts such as John 3:16–17 and
6 Galatians 4:4—plus is clearly taught in ecumenical creeds as
7 the fourth-century Nicene and the fifth-century Chalcedonian,
8 then the tenet should be accepted by modern evangelicals. This
9 begetting of the Son, though, is not a causation of the Son,
10 Crisp says, as causation would entail a difference in essence.¹⁷
11 Yet opinions contrary to that view of eternal generation held
12 by Crisp are expressed by some systematic theologians such as
13 Buswell¹⁸ and Reymond.¹⁹

14 Crisp also details his understanding of Christ’s Person in
15 which the human nature of Christ is said to be “concrete” be-
16 cause Christ has a human will.²⁰ Crisp believes the will inheres
17 in nature, not in Person.²¹ But others have denied that Christ
18 has two wills because that would require Christ to be two in
19 one Person.²² Crisp would reject, however, that having two

20 17. Oliver Crisp, *The Word Enfleshed* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016),
21 3–4.

22 18. James Oliver Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* (Grand
23 Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), 111–112.

24 19. Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, 2nd ed.
25 (Nashville: Nelson, 1998), 335.

26 20. Crisp, *Enfleshed*, 92, 95.

27 21. *Ibid.*, 89.

28 22. Gary W. Derickson, “Incarnational Explanation for Jesus’ Subjection in the
29 Eschaton” in *Looking Into the Future: Evangelical Studies in Eschatology*. David W. Baker,
30 ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001), 221. Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic*
31 *Theology*, 3 vols in 1, (Valley Forge: Judson, 1967), 695.

wills requires Christ to be two *hypostaseis* (persons) as the human nature is personalized by the divine nature. Nevertheless, in the sense that Christ's humanity is the "proximate cause" of Christ's human acts, "The human nature of Christ does those things."²³ That position appears to be in conflict with Erickson who, as mentioned before, insists that Jesus did not exercise His deity at times and His humanity at other times. So, Crisp's views have many detractors.

As Crisp affirms dyothelitism (both a divine and a human will in Christ), he sees no difficulty with restricting Christ's submission to the Father to the humanity of Christ. He denies, contrary to Grudem,²⁴ that the Son's subordination in role occurs in eternity. Crisp further questions that the divine nature of Christ could even be eternally role-subordinate if the Son is one in essence with the Father.²⁵ Crisp's declarations above on eternal generation are also contrary to Grudem's conviction that without eternal role-subordination there is no way to

Strong argues the Creed of Constantinople, which sanctioned the two-wills in Christ, was not regarded by the Greek church as ecumenical, and that were the humanity of our Lord to have a will distinct from the divine, then Christ would be two Persons. Since the humanity of Christ never had its own subsistence, Strong argues, it is impersonal, which requires it not to have its own power of volition. In contradiction, Oliver Crisp argues were Christ not to have a human will, then He could not be fully human. *Divinity and Humanity* (Cambridge: University Press, 2007), 63, 71.

23. Crisp, *Enfleshed*, 113.

24. Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 251.

25. Crisp, *Enfleshed*, 6.

According to Crisp, the Son only is role-subordinate to the Father in His humanity, not in His deity. Crisp argues that as God is one in essence, in God there cannot be one Person in role subjection to Another. To think otherwise leads to Arianism. But Crisp's position is contested by many as by John Frame in *The Doctrine of God* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2000), 720.

1 distinguish how the Persons in God relate to each other, and
2 that would have the effect that “the Trinity has not eternally
3 existed.”²⁶ The personal qualities of begetting and being begot-
4 ten, Crisp believes, would sufficiently differentiate between
5 the Father and the Son; role hierarchy, therefore, becomes un-
6 necessary for that purpose in Crisp’s opinion.

7 Jowers and House edit the second source²⁷ which is a useful
8 Christological reference. It contains sixteen chapters evenly
9 divided between those who espouse the eternal relational sub-
10 ordination of the Son to the Father and those who deny that
11 tenet. That fact contributes to its excellence. The former opin-
12 ion is argued primarily biblically and historically. For example,
13 Keener, in Jowers and Houses’ book, takes John 14:28 to mean
14 that the Father is greater in position and that Jesus, as in John
15 5:18, is not equal in sovereignty to the Father.²⁸ Equality in
16 divinity does not exclude differences in authority.²⁹ Keener’s
17 view is contrary to that of others such as Hilary who posits John
18 14:28 only in the Incarnation wherein Jesus is subordinate in
19 His earthly ministry,³⁰ and Calvin, who teaches that John 5:18

20 26. Grudem, *Ibid.*

21 On the other hand, it has been argued the doctrine of eternal generation is ad-
22 equate to distinguish the Son from the Father. Crisp, *Enfleshed*, 7.

23 27. Dennis W. Jowers and H. Wayne House, *The New Evangelical Subordinationism*
24 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012).

25 28. Craig S. Keener, “Subordination Within the Trinity: John 5:18 and 1
26 Corinthians 15:28,” 41–42.

27 29. *Ibid.*, 52.

28 30. Hilary, *On the Trinity* IX:2–6.

29 Hilary says Christ subjected Himself to the Father “in His condition as a man.”
30 It was in his form of a servant that Christ was obedient (9:5); Christ is not obedient
31 as God (9:14). Yes, Christ will deliver up the Kingdom to the Father (1 Cor. 15), but
32 that does not mean He does not retain possession of it (9:29).
33

only applies to the Son of God in the flesh.³¹ Kenner opts not to interact with these. Again, this is a failure to address opposing views.

Claiming authorities from the past has become popular in the defense of Christological positions. But doing this requires careful research without presumption. In House's chapter in the book he edits, he cites Hodge as being amenable to the eternal relational subordination doctrine that the Son, as God, always has been obedient to the Father.³² Hodge, however, quite clearly asserts that "neither the obedience nor the suffering of Christ was the obedience or suffering of the divine nature."³³ So, how could Hodge could be teaching eternal role-subordination?

House also suggests that Calvin might have condoned the doctrine of the Son's eternal role-subordination had he not resisted entering into debates, since Calvin recognized "an ordering of the Persons of the Triune God." House explains that Calvin "does not speak of relational subordination."³⁴ However, Calvin does, in fact, address that concept of relational subordination, though not using that term, and when he does, he distinctly opines that Christ, being relationally the servant to

Regarding 1 Corinthians 15, Calvin informs that the kingdom of Christ has no end (Dan. 7:14, 27; Luke 1:33; and 2 Pet. 1:11); only as man, Christ delivers up the kingdom to the Father. *Commentaries XX*: 31–32.

31. *Calvin's Commentaries XVII*:198.

32. "The Eternal Relational Subordination of the Son to the Father in Patristic Thought," 143.

33. Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology, vol II*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981 reprint), 395.

34. "The Eternal Relational Subordination," 141.

1 the Father and not doing His own will, belongs solely to His hu-
2 manity.³⁵ So how could Calvin be teaching that a relational hi-
3 erarchy exists in the eternal Godhead? Such information about
4 the opining of Calvin and Hodge on Christology certainly is ap-
5 propriate learning for those engaged in the study of theology
6 in seminary. We all should do that carefully.

7 Ware, in the same book, discusses Augustine, whom Ware
8 implies taught the eternal relational subordination of the Son.³⁶
9 But did Augustine teach that? How so if (1) Augustine believed
10 that Christ's servanthood to the Father only began when He
11 took human substance; (2) 1 Corinthians 11:3 means that only
12 in Christ's humiliation is the Father greater in authority; and
13 (3) it is the Son as man, not as God, that is subject to the Father
14 in 1 Corinthians 15:28?³⁷

15 While the student of Christology should correctly learn
16 what our theological ancestors of the past have really believed
17 about the Person of the Son of God, this information is sparse-
18 ly treated in popular systematic theologies and incorrectly, at
19 times, reviewed in other doctrinal literature.

20 Jowers, the second editor of "The New Evangelical
21 Subordinationism?", authors a chapter that explains a philo-
22 sophical reason to oppose the eternal role-subordination of the
23 Son. The writer argues that divine simplicity means only one
24 will and one power are in God, and as there is only one will in
25 God, the Father cannot command the Son and the Son cannot

26 35. *Institutes* II. 14.2

27 36. "Equal in Essence, Distinct in Roles," 31–32.

28 37. *On the Trinity* 2.3; 6.9; *On Faith and the Creeds* 9.17

obey the Father. None of the trinal Persons can exercise power in a manner that the others do not. Consequently, in Jowers' view, the Son as God cannot be role-subordinate.³⁸ However, neither the issue of whether God has one only power of volition residing in God's unified nature or instead has three one of which resides in each of the trinal Persons individually is not an argument developed in any of the three systematic theology textbooks previously mentioned.

Ware and Starke edit the third reference³⁹, which, in its entirety, is an apologetic for the view that the second Person of the Godhead is eternally role-subordinate to the first Person of the Godhead. For example, chapter two by Cowan argues that the Son, being sent, being obedient to and dependent on the Father, and being called Son, evidence an eternal difference of authority between the divine nature of the Son and the Father.⁴⁰ Chapter three by Claunch has 1 Corinthians 11:3 as its focus. It begins with exegetical observations on the text, then proceeds to consider the question of whether eternal relations

38. Dennis W. Jowers, "The Inconceivability of Subordination Within a Simple God," 384, 385, 408.

In asserting that in God there is only one faculty of will, Jowers agrees with Charles Hodge who affirms "there are not in God three intelligences, three wills, and three efficiencies. The Three are one God, and therefore have one mind and will." (*Systematic Theology*, vol 1, 461.) So, Jowers and Hodge concur also with Augustine who states as God has but one nature, it follows that God has but one will. (*On the Creed*, 3.)

39. Bruce A. Ware and John Starke, *One God in Three Persons* (Wheaton, IL: Crossways, 2015), 11.

40. Christopher Cowen, "I Always Do What Pleases Him," 48–64.

1 are its referent. Claunch says the text refers to a Christ incar-
2 nate but still expresses an eternal state.⁴¹

3 To continue, the fourth chapter by Hamilton has as its focus
4 1 Corinthians 15:24–28. The author contends that the flow of
5 Paul’s argument there demonstrates that Christ in His deity
6 will submit to the Father.⁴² Unfortunately, Hamilton opts not
7 to inform his readers that both Chrysostom and Augustine⁴³
8 reject his position, as these fathers teach that the text refers
9 only to Christ’s humanity. Chapter 9 by Gons and Nasalli is
10 an attempt to counter three arguments used in opposition to
11 the eternal role-subordination of the Son. These are that role-
12 subordination is contrary to the *homoousion*, that if only the
13 Son could incarnate, the Father is not omnipotent, and that
14 if God the Son submits to the Father, He must also submit to
15 the Spirit.⁴⁴ Chapter eleven, composed by Ware, argues that
16 the Son, having eternal relational submission as His person-
17 al property, is not a denial of the *homoousion* since the fathers
18 taught that being eternally generated was the Son’s personal
19 property.⁴⁵ But Ware fails to interact with the rationale of those
20 as Crisp and Giles who accept eternal generation but reject
21 eternal role-subordination.⁴⁶

22 41. Kyle Claunch, “God is the Head of Christ,” 93.

23 42. James M. Hamilton, “That God May Be All in All,” 108.

24 43. Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians*, 39:7; Augustine,
25 *Commentaries XX.33*.

26 44. Philip R. Gons and Andrew David Naselli, “An Examination of Three Recent
27 Philosophical Arguments Against Hierarchy in the Immanent Trinity.”

28 45. Bruce A. Ware, “Does Affirming an Eternal Authority-Submission
29 Relationship in the Trinity Entail a Denial of the *Homoousion*,” 241.

30 46. Crisp, *Enfleshed*, 1,6; Kevin Giles, *The Trinity and Subordinationism* (Downers
31 Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2002), 34, 81.

Evans edits the fourth reference, which has the second 1
chapter, by Fee, defending the position that in the Incarnation, 2
the Son discontinued the use of His omni-attributes resulting 3
in His becoming totally dependent on the other Persons of the 4
Trinity. God needs God's help to perform God's acts, is Fee's 5
position! Fee observes that Acts 10:30 states that Christ worked 6
His good not by being God but because God was with Him.⁴⁷ 7
That the text may possibly be alluding to the human nature of 8
Christ being empowered by the divine nature of Christ seems 9
to not be in Fee's hermeneutical repertoire. Then Fee observes 10
that Hebrews 5:7–9 also demonstrates Christ's dependence 11
on God in that Christ learned obedience.⁴⁸ Fee unfortunately 12
chooses obscurity by not noting that one holding to the 13
two-minds-in-Christ position, as Morris, would view Christ's 14
learning as a domain only of the human mind of Jesus.⁴⁹ This is 15
yet another example of refusing to interact with the opposing 16
views of other informed believers; that's why I wrote this book. 17

One can observe, then, that Fee disagrees with some class- 18
ical writers as the Damascene and Augustine⁵⁰ who teach that 19
Christ's dependence on the other trinal Persons could only have 20

47. Gordon D. Fee, "The New Testament and Kenosis Christology" 27, 34 in 21
Evan's *Exploring Kenotic Christology*. 22

48. *Ibid.*, 36. 23

49. Thomas V. Morris, *The Logic of God Incarnate* (London: Cornell University 24
Press, 1986), 107. 25

This same position is taught by Hodge who states the human soul of Christ has 26
its own intelligence which is finite and kept distinct from the divine intelligence 27
which is omnipresent, *Systematic Theology II*:389–391. Likewise, Calvin explains only 28
in His humanity did Christ grow in wisdom because in His deity, He knows every- 29
thing. (*Institutes LL.XIV.2.*) 30

50. John of Damascus, *Exposition*, XV; Augustine, *Trinity*, II.4.3. 31

1 been that of His human nature. Fee, as noted above, opts to not
2 mention such commonly expressed opinions that are contrary
3 to his position. It seems that willful neglect to acknowledge
4 and deal with views that challenge one's own permeates writ-
5 ers of Christology and is not confined to some of those writing
6 systematic theology textbooks.

7 In the sixth chapter by Feenstra, the author opines that it
8 is quite difficult to mesh some divine qualities as omniscience
9 with Mark 13:32; therefore if Jesus is God, such qualities must
10 not be essential to being God.⁵¹ However, Feenstra proposes
11 that Christ giving up the use of omniscience on Earth does
12 not require a permanent loss of that attribute and that now,
13 redemption being complete, all three Persons in God enjoy
14 omniscience.⁵² Feenstra obviously, then, unlike Athanasius and
15 Calvin,⁵³ cannot entertain that Mark 13:32 is describing a con-
16 dition only true of Christ's human nature.

17 In the eighth chapter, Evans, after defining Kenotism as
18 the Son emptying Himself of some of His divine prerogatives,
19 states the strengths of that opinion. These, he asserts, are that
20 the meaning and power of the Incarnation are heightened by
21 it, a unified Christ is portrayed by it, and the position coheres
22 with the human Christ of the Gospels.⁵⁴

23 Chapter eleven by van Driel is not written by a kenoti-
24 cist. The writer explains that classical Christologists take the
25 Incarnation to be an addition of a limited human nature,

26 51. Feenstra, "A Kenotic Christological Method," 146, 151.

27 52. *Ibid.*, 153.

28 53. Athanasius, *Four Discourses Against the Arians III*:28; Calvin, *Institutes II. XIV.2.*

29 54. Edwin Chr. Van Driel, "The Logic of Assumption," 268.

but the kenotic Christologist takes it to be an abandonment 1
of some divine qualities by the divine nature that are not es- 2
sential to being God.⁵⁵ van Driel observes that in the book, 3
Exploring Kenotic Christology, the two recurring arguments for 4
kenoticism are that Jesus, being limited, must embarrass clas- 5
sical Christologists; and the classical view suggests that Christ 6
has two personalities.⁵⁶ van Driel attempts a refutation only 7
of the second argument by clarifying the difference between 8
person and nature, the communication of human properties 9
to the Word by the addition of a human nature, and that a na- 10
ture may be personalized by fulfilling a number of conditions, 11
as Duns Scotus proposes, not by adding a positive entity.⁵⁷ The 12
following several paragraphs indicate a number of additional 13
issues not effectually examined in the several systematic theol- 14
ogy textbooks before referenced. Thus, my book is provided its 15
niche. Using it could improve the learning of Christology. 16

The next reference is by McCall. McCall argues that modi- 17
fied kenoticism is not a heresy, and he defines this view as the 18
Son, while remaining God, temporally gave up those divine 19

55. *Ibid.*, 265–266. 20

56. *Ibid.*, 268. 21

57. *Ibid.*, 269–278. 22

The doctrine of enhypostasia is that the Logos is the individuality of the hu- 23
man nature of Christ. But will that allow Christ to be truly human? Therefore, 24
Pannenberg questions enhypostasia on the basis that if Jesus' humanity were only 25
individual by its unification with the Logos, then His humanity is problematic. 26

Wolfgang Pannenberg, *Jesus-God and Man*, transl. Lewis L. Perkins and Duane 27
Priebe, (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 340. 28

Can Christ truly be human if He has no center of human individuality? 29

1 attributes that are inconsistent with being human.⁵⁸ This
2 may seem in contradiction to McCall later saying that modi-
3 fied kenotism is not hinting that “the Son gave up or emptied
4 Himself of any of the essential divine attributes (omni-attrib-
5 utes or otherwise).” But the keys are the adverb “temporally”
6 in the first definition and the adjective “essential” in the sec-
7 ond. McCall is further convinced that modified kenoticism af-
8 firms the two-nature doctrine of Christ.⁵⁹

9 McCall focuses on what may be perceived as modified
10 kenoticism’s problem with the *homoousion*. He first discusses
11 at length why this view handles Scriptures well which teach
12 that Christ does divine works. He cites texts as John 1:3 and
13 Colossians 1:16–17 and opinions on these in patristics.⁶⁰
14 McCall stumbles a bit in his attempt to evidence that modi-
15 fied kenoticism’s acceptance of Christ’s miracles shows that
16 this view teaches that Christ incarnate is active in the work of

17 58. Thomas H. McCall, “Modified Kenotic Christology, the Trinity, and Christian
18 Orthodoxy” 2004 Ph.D. dissertation, Calvin Theological Seminary; accessed 2/19.

19 McCall’s position that the divine nature of the Son may have given up some di-
20 vine qualities in the incarnation, which qualities were not compatible with His tak-
21 ing on humanity, is rejected both Berkof and Grudem. The former states in the in-
22 carnation, the Son remained “the infinite and unchangeable Son of God” (Berkhof,
23 *Systematic Theology*, 334), and the latter, more particularly and emphatically, insists
24 the eternal Son of God never ceased to be omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipres-
25 ent. Were the Son to lose the divine attributes, He could no longer be affirmed as
26 being fully God (Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 551). On the other hand, Erickson af-
27 firms the view that the incarnate Son of God was required to accept functional limi-
28 tations. He no longer could be omnipresent because He became spatially limited to
29 a body. Other divine qualities, as omnipresence, could only be exercised in depen-
30 dence on the Father (Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 670, 704).

31 59. *Ibid.*, 46.

32 60. *Ibid.*, 79–104.

“sustaining the universe.”⁶¹ It is rather this view’s position that Christ performed His miracles by the Spirit’s power—not His own.⁶² Furthermore, Christ walking on water or raising dead seems not to be the equivalent of what is being described in Colossians 1:17b where God the Son, Himself, is designated as accomplishing that work.

McCall is confusing regarding what modified kenoticism teaches regarding the ignorance of Christ as in Mark 13:32. He says this view teaches that the ignorance is predicated to only one nature, not to the Person.⁶³ One could understand that one nature to be the humanity as this section is about the human nature. But the implication is that in the other nature (the divinity), the Son is not ignorant. But Feenstra, who adheres to modified kenoticism, rather teaches that the Son of God “during His life on earth was not omniscient.”⁶⁴ And that view seems most consistent with this sort of Christology, given the definitions of Fee and Feenstra above.

If I am correct in understanding McCall, then I question McCall’s assertion that modified kenoticism is orthodox. Orthodoxy in Christology is measured by adherence to Chalcedon. But that formula includes the affirmations that Christ is “perfect in Godhead,” and all properties of that Godhead in Christ are preserved.⁶⁵ Of course, modified

61. Ibid., 86.

McCall provides no sources for this point.

62. Fee, “The New Testament and Kenosis Christology,” 27.

63. McCall, “Modified Kenotic Christology,” 110.

64. Feenstra, “A Kenotic Christological Method,” 151.

65. Philip Schaff, ed., *The Creeds of Christendom, vol II* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1983 reprint), 62.

1 kenoticists can assert that some omni-attributes—such as
2 omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence—are not in-
3 cluded in what constitutes God’s perfection,⁶⁶ then, if that is
4 true, modified kenoticism is absolved of heresy on that par-
5 ticular matter. But did not the church fathers whose writings
6 preceded and followed Chalcedon teach that God’s perfection
7 included omniscience? They did as Geisler and House demon-
8 strate.⁶⁷ So can modified kenoticism really escape a charge of
9 misrepresenting what the framers of Chalcedon had in mind
10 by “perfect in Godhead”? I think not! Nor does the declaration
11 by Chalcedon that the properties of deity are “preserved” in
12 Christ seem to fit well with McCall’s citation of Davis, who is a
13 modified kenoticist. Davis says that the Jesus Christ incarnate
14 did not possess some divine properties but was still God.⁶⁸ The
15 literature on modified kenoticism is not adequately treated in
16 many books on Christology but you will find a discussion of
17 it in chapter six. I confess that in that chapter I am unable to
18 maintain a neutral view on the subject as, in my opinion, it is
19 heresy to say that the incarnate Son of God gave up the use of
20 His divine qualities.

21 The next example is by Erickson.⁶⁹ This book contains eight
22 chapters. The first two define the gradational author-
23 ity view (that Christ’s role-subordination is eternal) and the

24 66. McCall, 156

25 67. Norman Geisler and H. Wayne House, *The Battle for God* (Grand Rapids, MI:
26 Kregel, 2001). 28–38.

27 68. Stephen T. Davis, *Exploring Kenotic Christology*, 116.

28 69. Millard J. Erickson, *Who’s Tampering With the Trinity?* (Grand Rapids, MI:
29 Kregel, 2009).

equivalent- authority view (that Christ’s role-subordination is 1
temporal). In the third chapter, Erickson discusses a number 2
of criteria to measure the truthfulness of a position. These in- 3
clude whether a view has internal consistencies and coherence, 4
has applicability to Scripture, and handles biblical texts that 5
are significant to its position adequately. The fourth chapter 6
refutes exegeses of several biblical texts, which are claimed to 7
role-subordinate the Son. The fifth chapter counters the claims 8
that tradition supports a gradational authority in the Godhead. 9
The sixth, seventh, and eighth chapters address philosophical, 10
theological, and practical issues. 11

One may find cause to inquire whether some of Erickson’s 12
opining is in line with his own criteria in the above paragraph. 13
For example, regarding Philippians 2:8, that Christ “became 14
obedient,” Erickson suggests, “Obedience also was something 15
He acquired that was not present before.”⁷⁰ However, that can 16
be questioned since the phrase follows Christ being made in 17
human likeness. Might the “becoming obedient” only connect 18
to His added humanity and thus not necessarily be a denial 19
that Christ was obedient before the Incarnation? Might the 20
immediate context suggest possibly that Erickson is wrong? 21
Also Erickson says that Ware is incorrect in teaching that there 22
are “distinguishing properties of the Person from the divine 23
essence.”⁷¹ However, Chalcedon maintains that the Son was 24
“begotten before all ages by the Father.”⁷² So, were Chalcedon 25

70. Ibid., 120. 26

71. Ibid., 173. 27

72. Schaff, *Creeds vol I*, 62. 28

1 correct, and Erickson does not here deny that it is, is a “dis-
2 tinguishing property” of the Father not that He generates the
3 Son and a “distinguishing property” of the Son not that He is
4 generated by the Father?

5 **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

6 Explain your answers as a learning experience.

- 7 1. Do you agree with Erickson’s position as expressed in
8 footnote #3?
- 9 2. Do you think that Reymond is correct, according to foot-
10 note #7, that Erickson is a kenoticist?
- 11 3. Do you agree with Warfield’s explanation of the subor-
12 dinist passages stated in footnote #12?
- 13 4. What biblical evidence might either support or refute
14 John of Damascus and Leo’s position as stated in foot-
15 note #15?
- 16 5. Do you agree with Feenstra in footnote #16?
- 17 6. With which do you agree: Strong or Crisp in footnote
18 #22?
- 19 7. Do you think that Hilary and Calvin are correct in foot-
20 note #30 regarding their understanding that Christ as
21 God, in 1 Corinthians 15, retains the Kingdom while, as
22 man, He gives it up to the Father?
- 23 8. What biblical evidence might support Hodge (footnote
24 #49) that in Christ are two intelligences, one finite and
25 one infinite?

9. Do you agree with the teaching of enhypostasia which is 1
that the -Llogos is the only individuality of the humanity 2
of Christ (footnote #57)? 3
10. Who is right, Grudem or Erickson, regarding Christ 4
and His retention or loss of the use of the divine omni- 5
attributes (footnote #58)? 6



Does the Bible Require that We Learn Theology and Christology?

This chapter is used to elaborate on the requirement for 7
believers to acquire an understanding of the doctrines of 8
Christianity in general and to understand what the Bible teach- 9
es about the Person of Christ in particular. Here it also will be 10
demonstrated that pastor-teachers must include the content 11
of theology and Christology in their teaching. (Scriptures are 12
from the NET.) 13

1 Believers' Requirement to Learn Theology in General

2 1. *Believers must adhere to doctrinal tradition.* "Hold to the tradi-
3 tions we taught you whether by speech or by letter" (2 Thess.
4 2:15).

5 The plural noun (traditions) is *paradoseis*. This substantive
6 refers to the transmission of doctrine.¹ It appears at times to
7 assume a fixed verbal form of teaching as in 1 Corinthians 11:23,
8 where Paul recalls the Lord Jesus' words in the Gospel account
9 of the Last Supper. Buchsel notes that Christian teaching is
10 the tradition which must be kept, according to 1 Corinthians
11 15:2 because salvation depends on keeping it.² The text in 2
12 Thessalonians alludes to all doctrinal teachings of Paul to that
13 church. One should not think that the apostle would expect less
14 of other churches. So, by extrapolation, members of churches
15 in the Christian tradition today should adhere to the Pauline
16 theology, including topics as Christ's Person, salvation, the
17 work of the Holy Spirit, the Church's ordinances and officers,
18 the after-life, and the Second Coming.

19 Yet, these topics and more besides have numerous compo-
20 nents and involve many scriptural texts that can be difficult
21 to assimilate and comprehend. This complexity shows the
22 need for theological learning so that church members can un-
23 derstand Christian doctrine correctly. Thus, acquiring a solid
24 theological education becomes the duty of those aspiring to
25 pastoral positions. Without such training and devotion to

26 1. Hartmut Beck, "*paradidomai*" in NIDNTT, vol II, Colin Brown, ed. (Grand
27 Rapids, MI: Regency, 1971), 368.

28 2. Friedrich Buchsel, "*paradosis*" in TDNT vol II, Gerhard Kittel, ed. (Grand
29 Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 172.

theology, how could pastors perform their duty of instructing church members on the tradition?

2. *Believers must be able to discern what is false teaching.* “Now I urge you brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who create dissensions and obstacles contrary to the teaching that you have learned” (Rom. 16:17).

The command in Romans 16:17 is that Christians turn away from incorrect theology. The “brothers and sisters” are the ones loved by God as in Romans 1:7; that inclusiveness disqualifies the view that pastors, teachers, or the “super” Christians one may find in most every congregation are the only ones meant to be the subjects of 16:17. By extension, therefore, this command is applicable to all believers. That the text should be understood as an apostolic command is indicated by the imperative mood regardless of whether the correct reading is aorist or present. Yes, the imperative can simply reflect urgent entreaty³ and not strictly decree. Furthermore, Cranfield⁴ finds it difficult to envisage that Paul would authoritatively interfere with church discipline in a church which he has not founded. Yet, weighing on the side of taking the imperative as a command is not only Paul’s self-concept as the apostle of Christ (note e.g., 1 Cor. 14:37–38; 2 Cor. 11:5), but also his burning zeal for doctrinal purity exhibited in numerous texts following in sections below. Moreover, Cranfield seems not to take into account the

3. H.E. Dana and Julius Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (New York: Macmillan, 1927), 176.

4. C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans, vol. II*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), 799.

1 authority over belief and practice expressed by Paul in this
2 same letter as indicated in texts such as 1:18–28, 2:1–5, 6:1–3,
3 9:19–20, and 14:15–16. Consequently, this appears to be a com-
4 mand for the Roman Christians to turn away from incorrect
5 theology, and it thus represents the Pauline injunction for all
6 believers today as well. To assess the text as being anything less
7 dissipates the authority of Scripture over believers.

8 This command includes several requisites. One is being at-
9 tentive to the doctrine that is being heard from pulpits, taught
10 in Sunday school classes, preached by TV evangelists, or read
11 in literature. “Watch out” is from a verb meaning to inspect,
12 examine, even scrutinize.⁵ The verb is present tense, which
13 may suggest an ongoing practice. A second requirement is ac-
14 tion. The Christian is to turn away from bad theology after an
15 examination of it is completed. A third is to acquire the head
16 knowledge in correct theology, which enables one to evaluate
17 what is heard or read. It would miss the mark to envision that
18 16:17 refers to mere feeling states. “Taught” in the text referenc-
19 es receiving instruction from someone⁶ as in being disciplined;
20 texts as Matthew 13:52 and 28:19 show this. The teaching that
21 the Romans learned means the totality of correct doctrine.⁷

22 Cranfield convincingly argues that the apostle’s motive in
23 penning this letter was to inform the Romans of his own the-
24 ology.⁸ It follows that believers today should grasp the apos-
25 tolic doctrines in Romans of Christ’s Person (1:3–4, 9:5); natural

26 5. Hans-George Schultz, *DNTT vol II*, 393

27 6. *Analytical Greek Lexicon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1977), 257.

28 7. Rengstrof, *TDNT II*:163.

29 8. Cranfield, *Romans II*, 814–823.

revelation (1:18–22); the nature and effects of sin (2:1–3:20); 1
salvation (3:21–5:11); baptism and sanctification (6:1–7:25; the 2
after-life (8:1–39); election and Israel’s future (9:1–11:36); as well 3
as proper conduct in the Church (chapters 12–16). To suppose 4
that the average Christian has a sound comprehension of these 5
at times complex tenets is likely misguided optimism. 6

3. *Believers need to advance in doctrinal acumen.* “Growing in the 7
knowledge of God” (Col. 1:10). 8

The language of Colossians demonstrates that portions of 9
the Book are responses to specific lines of false teaching⁹ by 10
those claiming to possess doctrinal knowledge; these respons- 11
es by Paul include 2:9, 15–16, 18, and 23. It should be noted that 12
these texts express informational, theological tenets. The apos- 13
tle uses correct theology to fend off incorrect theology. This 14
clearly suggests that false teaching should be combatted with 15
true teaching. Learning theology is a requisite to growing in 16
the faith, and this learning is accomplished by being taught. 17

A cluster of cognate terms is used by Paul to demonstrate 18
the need for teaching. In 1:7 *manthanō* (learn) is used of re- 19
ceiving instruction from Epaphras. *Didaskō* (teach) in 1:28 20
is stated to lead to maturity in Christ. This term often refers 21
to the passing on of theological knowledge (e.g., Acts 18:25; 2 22
Tim. 2:2). The verb occurs again in 3:16 where it is said that the 23
Colossians should teach each other. Melnick seems not to have 24
ingested the context of 3:16 well when he suggests that concern 25

9. Peter T. O’Brien, *Colossians and Ephesians* (Waco, TX: Word, 1982), xxxii. 26

1 for the Gospel message is the apostle's topic.¹⁰ The "Word of
2 Christ" would seem to include the broader "Christian teaching"
3 than just the Gospel.¹¹ "Exhorting" (noutheteō) in 3:16 includes
4 the ideas of admonishing, warning, and teaching.¹² Such activ-
5 ity suggests more extensive doctrinal concerns than just the
6 Gospel.

7 Whether the genitive "of God" in 1:10 means knowledge
8 by God or knowledge about God is not decisive regarding the
9 need to impart theological teaching. The Colossians learned
10 through human teachers who represented the Lord. Yet, Paul
11 deems it that the educative ministry of Epaphras and the oth-
12 ers at Colossae may not be sufficient to counteract the threat-
13 ening heresies. Paul would supply more advanced doctrinal
14 teaching. The Colossians were not only to remain in their state
15 of having a good foundation; they were to grow by knowledge.
16 That fuller¹³ knowledge is *epignōsis*. As the word appears to be
17 intensified by its prefix (*epi*), it is thought that good conduct
18 "can only grow by such knowledge."¹⁴ That directs one to the
19 position that Christian growth is accomplished through be-
20 coming educated in doctrine. Such a conclusion should

21 10. Richard R. Melnick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* in *The New American*
22 *Commentary*, (USA: Broadman, 1991), 303.

23 11. E.K. Simpson and F.F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians*
24 *and the Colossians* in *NICNT* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 283.

25 12. William F. Arndt and F. Wilber Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New*
26 *Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press),
27 546.

28 13. "full knowledge" (NIV); also Liddell and Scott, *Intermediate Greek Lexicon*
29 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, reprint 1989), 289.

30 14. James D.G. Dunn. "The Epistles to Colossians and Philemon" in *NIGTC*
31 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 72.

motivate believers to esteem the theological training which enables them to understand correctly the teachings of Scripture.

4. *Believers must be doctrinally informed.* “We do not want you to be uninformed” (1 Thess. 4:13).

Apparently, the Thessalonians were lacking in their comprehension of the condition of believers in the after-life, the relation of those dying in the faith to the resurrection of the dead, and of the second coming of Christ. Bruce considers the clause to be “an emphatic way of saying ‘we wish you to know.’”¹⁵ The expression is common in Paul’s teachings (e.g., Col. 2:1; 2 Cor 10:1; Rom. 11:25). Here again, one sees that the heart of the apostle is to theologically educate believers. He enlightens their mind with tenets relating to the particulars of believing in Christ, concurrences in the Rapture, the resurrection, and the Day of the Lord. Yet, these doctrines are much debated even among evangelicals today,¹⁶ and to acquire a grasp of them means a serious study of eschatology by persons endeavoring to become informed about Christian beliefs. This brings up the question of whether a pastor has a knowledge of the theological weaknesses of his people. Has he even made himself aware of doctrinal areas where his church is uninformed?

15. F.F. Bruce, 1 & 2 Thessalonians in *Word Biblical Commentary*, David L. Hubbard, ed. (Waco, TX: Word, 1982), 95.

16. For example, note in Grudem’s *Systematic* pages 1131–1135 the discussion of the timing of the rapture between pretribulationism, mid-tribulationism, and post-tribulationism.

1 5. *Believers should not be confused about what is correct doctrine.* “Let
2 no one deceive you in any way” (2 Thess. 2:3).

3 The mistaken belief of some at the church of Thessalonica
4 that the Day of the Lord¹⁷ had already come, was corrected eas-
5 ily by Paul, who insists that the arrival of the man of lawless-
6 ness will precede that Day. But other issues in subjects of es-
7 chatology and, indeed, Christian doctrine in general, cannot
8 be resolved so easily. And this text informs us that we can be
9 deceived in our understandings. Apply that principle to this
10 purpose of this book.

11 6. *Believers are to measure the truthfulness of those who assert doctri-*
12 *nal authority.* “You have even put to the test those who refer to
13 themselves as apostles” (Rev. 2:2).

14 Whether these false apostles were Nicolaitans as Gregg
15 states¹⁸ on the basis of 2:6 or whether the aorist tenses in 2:2
16 place the event of testing in verse two to have occurred in the
17 past¹⁹ before the present hatred of the perpetrators of that her-
18 esy (2:6), Paul’s exhortation in Acts 20:29–30 seems to have

19 17. Chafer informs the Day of the Lord extends from the time of Christ’s
20 Second Advent to the passing of heaven and Earth. He distinguishes the Day of
21 the Lord from the Day of Christ. The latter more particularly refers to time of the
22 Resurrection of the dead and to the judgment.

23 Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology, vol VII* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press,
24 1948), 110. On the other hand, Gary M. Burge equates the two- “Day of Christ, God,
25 the Lord” in *The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Walter A. Elwell, ed (Grand Rapids,
26 MI: Baker, 1989), 297.

27 18. Steve Gregg, *Revelation Four Views* (Nashville: Nelson, 1997), 64.

28 19. David E. Aune, “Revelation 1–5” in *Word Biblical Commentary*52A (Dallas:
29 Word, 1997), 143.

borne fruit. We are to evaluate the teachings of those claiming
authority.

7. *Believers should understand doctrine thoroughly.* “I want to make
clear for you brothers and sisters” (1 Cor. 15:1).

The NET rendering “brothers and sisters” suggests that
women are not to be left out in the learning of Christian theo-
logy. The plural “brothers” (*adelphoi*) “can mean brothers
and sisters.”²⁰ The source of the Corinthians questioning the
resurrection is unclear. Perhaps, as Hodge, Robertson, and
Plummer suggests, it was Jewish Sadducees²¹ (e.g., Acts 24:6–
9), yet Riddlebarger²² and Godet²³ prefer the view that it was the
Corinthians’ background of Greek philosophy, e.g. Acts 17:32
(this philosophy taught that at death the soul was liberated
from the body), which induced the Corinthians to question the
resurrection.

Regardless of the cause of the Corinthian misunderstanding,
the apostle, after learning of that error in doctrine, en-
deavors to correct it. This is yet another example of the pasto-
ral need to become aware of the particulars of beliefs held in
his congregation and to become involved in correcting errors
in belief as they are discovered.

20. BAG 115

21. Charles Hodge, *Commentary on 1, 2 Corinthians* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth
Trust, reprint 1974), 309. Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer. *First Epistle of
Paul to the Corinthians* (T&T Clark: 1958 reprint), 329.

22. Kim Riddlebarger, *First Corinthians*. (Powder Springs, GA: Tole Lege Press,
2013), 413.

23. F. Godet, *Commentary of the First Epistle to the Corinthians vol II*, transl. A.
Cusins (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1957), 322–323.

1 8. *Believers should strive to defend correct theology.* “Contend ear-
2 nestly for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints”
3 (Jude 1:3).

4 The “faith” in this text refers not to the act of believing but the
5 content of what is to be believed. The referent is a “fixed body
6 of doctrine.”²⁴ Believers are to preserve this body of doctrine by
7 energetically protecting it from false teaching. Bullinger notes
8 several examples where the “faith” is alluding to the content of
9 what is believed. These include Acts 6:7, Ephesians 4:5, and 1
10 Timothy 4:1.²⁵

11 The ability to meet this requirement goes beyond merely be-
12 ing able to state what is true doctrine; it involves the apologetic
13 skill of refuting incorrect doctrine. Can church members ex-
14 plain how the 21st-century array of cults in America promote
15 teachings that are contrary to the faith and use Scripture to
16 rebut those teachings? Yes, it is a challenging vision that the
17 laity should be expected to attain that level of competency. But
18 evangelical theological writers should bear a major responsi-
19 bility in preparing believers to meet Jude’s requirement. And
20 pastors should consider a series of sermons on the major cults
21 or a year’s curriculum on departures from the faith taught in
22 the adult Sunday school classes could be in order.

23 9. *Believers should move beyond basic theology.* “We must progress
24 beyond the elementary instruction about Christ” (Heb. 6:1).

25 24. Richard J. Bauckham, “Jude, 2 Peter” in *Word Biblical Commentary*, 50 (Waco,
26 TX: Word, 1983), 32.

27 25. E.W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker,
28 1968 reprint), 600.

Unfortunately, many believers grow little in their comprehension of doctrine beyond what they learned in the first few months of their faith. This maturation in Hebrews 6 is not an abandonment of any doctrine but it rather is a progression toward a deeper theology suitable for the mature believer (5:14) that the writer has in mind. The six doctrines which follow refer to the requirements for entering into a saving relationship with Christ (repentance, faith), outward acts symbolizing that (baptism and laying on of hands), and the future of believers (resurrection and judgment).²⁶ It is, of course, vital that believers have a firm grasp on basic doctrines of the faith, but the writer of Hebrews himself introduces advanced Christology in his explanations in chapters one and four where the Son is said to be the representation of the divine essence and sustainer of all things, yet was tempted as we are and learned obedience. The pastor in his teaching needs to cover the major doctrines of Scripture, even those which are more advanced.

Believers' Requirement to Learn About the Person of Christ

The references above in Hebrews concerning Christ witness to the need of believers to acquire a clear understanding of the doctrines concerning the Person of Christ.

10. *Believers are to remain in the teaching.* "Everyone who goes ahead and does not remain in the teaching of Christ does not have God" (2 John 1:9).

26. Paul Ellingworth, "The Epistle to the Hebrews" in *NIGNT* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 313.

1 Possibly behind the circumstances of this letter is a Docetic
2 denial²⁷ of the two natures in Christ which was a heresy already
3 attacking the church. In one form of Doceticism, Jesus only ap-
4 peared to have a body;²⁸ in another, the Person of the Christ
5 entered into the person of Jesus, perhaps at His baptism, and
6 departed at the body's death as God cannot suffer.²⁹ The "Elect
7 Lady" (v. 1) likely should not be understood as an individual, as
8 the subject matter better fits a group and the Church is often
9 referenced in a feminine manner.

10 Were the recipients of John's exhortation the members of
11 that church, then it follows that the responsibility to under-
12 stand Christ's Person as coming in the flesh and existing in two
13 natures in a single unified Person is a congregational goal for
14 modern believers as well. "The Teaching" in verses nine and ten
15 is articulated, referring to a fixed body of doctrine. The phrase
16 "of Christ" probably should be considered objective, that is,
17 teaching "about Christ" given verse 7.

18 Yet, 2 John does not elaborate on the many tenets which
19 comprise the doctrines concerning Christ's Person. But these
20 are found in John's Gospel and include Christ's pre-existence,
21 the Incarnation, His relationship to the Father, His deity, His
22 humanity, and His passion. All such doctrines are included
23 in the teaching about Christ. But some of these include theo-
24 logical and biblical issues that are complex. Yes, Jesus is God

25 27. G.L. Borchert, "Doceticism," EDT 326.

26 28. Pierson Parker, "Doceticism," *The Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible*, vol 1.
27 George Arthur Buttrick, ed., (New York: Abingdon, 1962); also, Donald Guthrie, *New*
28 *Testament Introduction*. (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1973), 870.

29 29. K. Wegenast, *DNTT III*, 770.

having the same powers of the Father, but is He nevertheless
in eternal subjection to the will of God the Father? Did the de-
ity of Christ become limited when Jesus became man? Does
Christ act and experience distinctly in each of His natures? All
of these issues are addressed in Scripture, and they are part of
understanding the Person of Christ. And, each of them is de-
bated among evangelicals.

11. *Believers are to comprehend the deity of Christ.* “He is the image
of the Invisible God ... the representation of his essence” (Col.
1:15ff; Heb. 1:3).

These two texts could hardly be more definitive in their at-
testing divinity of Jesus Christ. It is likely that the term “im-
age” (*charaktēr*) in Hebrews denotes a stamp on a thing done by
an instrument for engraving.³⁰ It implies an “essential unity”
between the Son and the Father as does “essence” (*hypostasis*)
of the reality of God.³¹ In Colossians, “image” (*eikon*) possibly
looks back on Old Testament texts, as Proverbs 8:22, where a
personalized Wisdom is seen as being in the divine image.³²
The text requires belief that Christ is “the very image and being
of God.”³³

30. Leon Morris, “Hebrews” in EBC Frank E. Gabelein, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), 15.

31. Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 99–100.

32. Hawthorne, *Colossians*, 43.

James D.G. Dunn, “The Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon in NIGNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 88.

33. E.K. Simpson and F.F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 103.

1 It does not seem unreasonable, therefore, given these texts,
2 that one supposedly well-grounded in the faith through years
3 of church and Sunday school attendance should become able to
4 state where the Bible elaborates on the divine names and titles
5 given to Christ, the divine works accomplished by Christ, and
6 the divine perfections ascribed to Christ. Perhaps the church
7 leadership should investigate the memberships' ability to use
8 the Scriptures to detail such Christological affirmations and
9 the leadership should feel a responsibility to bring about reme-
10 diation where required.

11 12. *Believers are to understand the basic meaning of the Incarnation*
12 *of Christ.* "(He) emptied himself by taking the form of a slave ...
13 by sharing in human nature" (Phil. 2:7).

14 It is to be expected that believers should have a grasp on sev-
15 eral basics regarding the Incarnation including that the emp-
16 tying of Christ cannot refer to a curtailment of His possession
17 or the use of His divine powers.³⁴ Christ taking humanity to
18 His Person does not result in the removal of His divinity. So, an
19 understanding of the unchangeableness of the divine nature
20 forms a background for understanding the Incarnation.³⁵ Also,
21 what essentially must be included in the humanity of Christ
22 as a human will and intelligence should be understood.³⁶ And
23 whether after the Incarnation the one Person of Christ operates

24 34. e.g., John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 2.13.4 ;2:14.2.

25 35. e.g. Robert Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*
26 (Nashville: Nelson, 1998), 161

27 36. e.g., see chapter 6, *Compositional Christology*, in Oliver D. Crisp, *The Word*
28 *Enfleshed*.

individually through each of His two natures is basic for un- 1
derstanding the Christ of the Gospels.³⁷ 2

13. *Believers are to grasp that two natures are in Christ.* “By hu- 3
man descent came Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. 4
Amen” (Rom. 9:5). 5

Translations differ on this text. By putting a period after 6
“Christ,” the NEB renders it: “Christ. God who is over all be 7
blessed,” making the clause a doxology to God, not a descrip- 8
tion of Christ. However, doxologies practically universally be- 9
gin with “Blessed.” This does not. Also, as Paul had just defined, 10
the humanity of Christ that he should now note, the Lord’s de- 11
ity is in order. Finally, the “who is” phrase should modify a pre- 12
vious word, namely Christ. 13

That Christ is both human and divine is apostolic theolo- 14
gy. It is the clear teaching in John: “You are trying to kill me, a 15
man” (8:40); “My Lord and my God” (20:20). It also is the doc- 16
trine of Peter: “Jesus, the Nazarene, a man” (Acts 2:22); “Our 17
God and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 1:1). Yet it has been argued 18
that Paul in Romans 9 would not be ascribing deity to Christ 19
because, it is claimed by Paul himself, nowhere else does.³⁸ Yet, 20
Paul clearly calls Christ “God” in Titus 2:13: “Our great God and 21
Savior, Jesus Christ.” 22

Believers not only need to be reminded of the dual na- 23
tures in Christ. They should be taught to know the Scriptures 24

37. e.g., Martin Chemnitz, *The Two Natures in Christ*. J.A.O. Preus transl. (St. 25
Louis, 1971), 237. 26

38. Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (UBS: 27
Stuttgart, 1975), 522. 28

1 behind that doctrine. It is arguable that all Christological her-
2 esy concerns either a denial of Christ's deity or His humanity.
3 Therefore, it is essential that believers be confirmed in this
4 regard so that heresy can be identified. The doctrine of the
5 two natures in Christ should be preached and taught in adult
6 Sunday school with frequency and force.

7 14. *Believers are to reflect on the meaning of Christ's subjection to the*
8 *Father.* "The Father is greater than I am" (John 14:28).

9 It seems incontestable that the incarnate Son of God on
10 earth is in subjection to God the Father. God is the head of
11 Christ (1 Cor. 11:3), and the Son always does what pleases the
12 Father (John 8:29). Still, do texts as these indicate a relation-
13 ship in God which is eternal or temporal? And, moreover, do
14 they pertain to the divine nature or only to the humanity of
15 Christ? The answer is not one that determines orthodoxy.
16 However, some of the interpretation of Scripture and a great
17 deal of theology about Christ and God revolve around whether
18 Christ is subject to the Father in His humanity only or in His
19 divinity also.

20 The Christian should reflect on several issues: Christ's hu-
21 man will could only be the locale for His obedience. Also, if
22 Christ has the identical nature of the Father, could that nature
23 in the Son be subservient to the same nature in the Father? And
24 does Philippians 2:7-8 indicate that obedience of Christ began
25 in the Incarnation? Arguments are prevalent in the literature
26 defending both understandings of the Son's obedience. While
27 it may not be a requisite for the believer to take a position on

the question of whether Christ is obedient as God or as man 1
only, to be aware of the issues involved in the question would 2
fall under an obligation for believers since much of Scripture 3
pertains to the issues. Whether all leaders of a church are ca- 4
pable of instructing on the issues involved is to be doubted. But 5
there much literature on the subject.³⁹ 6

14. *Believers are to comprehend the Person of Christ.* “Until we all at- 7
tain the unity of the faith ... the knowledge of the Son of God” 8
(Eph. 4:13). 9

Abbott understands the text to refer to a “thorough 10
knowledge”⁴⁰ of Christ given the context which alludes to ma- 11
turity. This teaching of the fullness of knowledge is said in 12
the previous verses to be the responsibility of gifted ones as 13
apostles, prophets, and pastors-teachers. These are to instruct 14
the believers until the unity of the faith is reached. Lincoln ob- 15
serves it is the ministers who are to lead believers to reach this 16
goal.⁴¹ Thus, by this, the following section is justified. 17

The Pastoral Duty to Teach Theology 18

15. *Pastors are to labor in teaching.* “Work hard in speaking and 19
teaching” (1 Tim. 5:17). 20

39. For a look at both sides of the argument, see: Dennis W. Jowers and H. 21
Wayne House, *The New Evangelical Subordinationism?* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012). 22

40. T.K. Abbott, “Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians”: in ICC 23
(Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1968), 120. 24

41. Andrew T. Lincoln, “Ephesians” in *WBC vol 42* (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 25
255 26

1 Fee and Ward think that not all elders spoke and taught.⁴²
2 On the other hand, it is Mounce's opinion that every elder
3 taught, given 1 Timothy 3:2 and the error in Ephesus, which
4 required refutation.⁴³ Pastors cannot disregard their primary
5 obligation to arduously work at teaching.

6 16. *Pastors must protect church membership from false doctrine.*
7 "Men will arise speaking perversions of the truth to draw the
8 disciples away after them. Therefore, be alert" (Acts 20:30–31).

9 Included in the teaching elders are to give is the guiding of
10 church members away from persons teaching perversions of
11 the true doctrine. "Be alert" is a present imperative meaning
12 that elders should remain ever watchful over their flock and
13 be vigilant in exposing false theology. Surely, in order to suc-
14 ceed in this, the pastor must acquire an understanding of what
15 doctrines are held by his members and whether his church un-
16 derstands what is or is not theological heresy. But how many
17 ministers take steps to know the particulars of the doctrinal
18 abilities or beliefs of the various members of their congrega-
19 tion? Yet, how can Paul's injunction be met by pastors if they are
20 not cognizant of the understanding of their church members?

21 17. *Pastors are to correct wrong Christology.* "If someone spreads
22 false teachings" (1 Tim. 6:3).

23 42. Fee, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, 128; Ronald A. Ward, *Commentary on 1 & 2*
24 *Timothy & Titus* (Waco, TX: Word, 1974), 87.

25 43. William D. Mounce, "Pastoral Epistles" in *WBC vol 46* (Dallas: Word Books,
26 2000), 307

The false teachings are contrary to the “sound words (that is, those of our Lord Jesus Christ).” Probably, these are teachings about Christ, not the teachings of Jesus in the Gospels.⁴⁴ As pastor, Timothy was obligated to correct wrong Christology, which threatened his congregation. Today, as religious television, written literature, and churches of cultish beliefs could be read, heard, and even visited by church members, there exists the possibility of church members being exposed to bad Christology. Ministers need to learn correct Christology.

18. *Pastors are to reprimand those who spread incorrect doctrine.* “Give exhortation in such healthy teaching and correct those who speak against it” (Titus 1:9).

Doctrinal fitness is a necessary requirement for the elder who must not only teach true theology, but also refute bad theology. But in recent years, this writer has heard little from the pulpit that corrects the many theological errors taught in non-evangelical environments. A lack of attention to correcting doctrinal deviation on the part of a minister might be rightly seen as the result of inefficient training or worse—an irresponsible attitude.

19. *Pastors are to equip others by teaching them Pauline doctrine.* “What you have heard me say ... entrust to faithful people who will be competent to teach others” (2 Tim. 2:2).

Pastors are obliged to cultivate the giftedness of church members to teach Sunday school, lead home studies, or offer

44. Ibid., 337.

1 communion devotions. What should be the content of that
2 preparation? It is the teaching of Paul, which of course is re-
3 flective of apostolic doctrine in general, which should be the
4 curriculum for equipping church members to serve in didactic
5 capacities. While Paul’s teaching covered areas other than the-
6 ology, much of it was theological. The pastor in equipping oth-
7 ers, then, includes teaching them theology. This requires that
8 the pastor himself understands doctrine proficiently.

9 20. *Pastors are to use the Bible correctly to guide the beliefs of their*
10 *church members.* “Every Scripture is inspired by God and is use-
11 ful for teaching, for reproof” (2 Tim. 3:16).

12 Pastors generally use the Scriptures in their sermon prepa-
13 ration and delivery. But this text is more specific than mere
14 Bible usage from the pulpit. Frequently, topics of sermons con-
15 tain little doctrinal content. Yet, Paul’s injunction to Timothy
16 has theology as its focus. “Teaching” refers to instruction in
17 Christian doctrine and “reproof” alludes to the refutation of
18 heresy.⁴⁵ The relationship between systematic theology and
19 homiletics may not have been made as clearly as it should have
20 been in some seminary curricula. We have seen Paul’s prac-
21 tice and prescription (Acts 20:27–31; Eph. 4:12–13; 1 Tim. 6:3)
22 are emphatic that church leaders are to teach church members
23 Christian theology. Ministers in training should acquire theo-
24 logical knowledge to do this in seminary.

25 This chapter has been used to expose to Christians their re-
26 sponsibility to learn the theological teachings of the Christian

27 45. *Ibid.*, 570.

faith. One of the best ways to do this is to study a systematic 1
theology by a popular evangelical writer. But it should be un- 2
derstood that the particulars expressed in such works on most 3
any major doctrine could be contested by some other evan- 4
gelical writer. So, for example, while all evangelicals affirm 5
the second coming of Christ, we differ on whether that will 6
occur before a great tribulation. And while all evangelicals be- 7
lieve in the Holy Spirit, we disagree on how that divine Person 8
of the Trinity relates to Christians in terms of Spirit baptism 9
and gifting. Likewise, while all evangelicals, as said in chapter 10
one, believe Jesus Christ is both God and man, we have varying 11
opinions on whether the Son as God receives His Personhood 12
and/or divine essence from God the Father in eternity, whether 13
the Son as God is eternally role-subordinate to God the Father; 14
whether human nature of Christ has a distinct human center 15
of volition, experience, and action; whether in becoming man 16
the Son lost the use of some of His powers of God; and whether 17
the human nature of our Lord is given the attributes or powers 18
of God by His divine nature. Theological, biblical, and histori- 19
cal issues related to these five problems are unpacked in the 20
following chapters. 21

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS 22

Explain your answers. 23

1. In your experience, do pastors sufficiently focus on 24
teaching the doctrines of Scripture? 25

- 1 2. Do you think teachers of adults in Sunday school are
2 sufficiently knowledgeable to provide instruction in
3 Christian beliefs?
- 4 3. What percentage of doctrinal teaching should have the
5 Person of Christ as its subject?
- 6 4. In a curriculum of instruction of theology, which doc-
7 trine should first be studied and why: Salvation? The au-
8 thority and inspiration of the Bible? The Trinity? Or....?
- 9 5. What three biblical texts most show the apostle Paul's
10 concern over believers learning Christian doctrine?
- 11 6. What percentage of sermons should consist of learning
12 Christian doctrine?
- 13 7. How does learning theology relate to defending the
14 Christian faith against the onslaught of cults?
- 15 8. What reasons or arguments might be made against
16 learning theology?
- 17 9. Why would one think what the apostles in the first cen-
18 tury wrote about learning Christian beliefs pertain to us
19 who live in the 21st century?
- 20 10. Do TV evangelists faithfully teach with any depth on
21 the doctrines that believers should understand?
- 22 11. What should you look for in choosing a book to read to
23 learn theology?

24 **PREVIEW OF CHAPTER THREE**

25 The topics included in this chapter are varied and, at times,
26 complex. Therefore, these brief summaries are offered may as-
27 sist in preparing a reader to better comprehend some of the

issues covered. The eternal begetting or generation of the Son	1
is thought by some be alluded to in the KJV translation of John	2
3:16, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His <i>only begotten</i>	3
Son.” The word translated as “only begotten” is <i>monogenēs</i> .	4
1. Berkhof’s doctrine that the Son receives the divine es-	5
sence in eternal generation is questioned by Hodge and	6
Frame, who suggest only Christ’s Person, not His es-	7
sence, is generated eternally.	8
2. Before Nicaea, Patristic opinion is uneven on whether	9
the Son is eternally begotten and is fully equal to the	10
Father.	11
3. De Jung thinks Calvin believed eternal generation is	12
timeless and results in the Son receiving divine es-	13
sence, but Reymond questions that Calvin taught these	14
doctrines.	15
4. Many Reformation-era creeds mention eternal genera-	16
tion but do not define it.	17
5. Greek dictionaries disagree on whether <i>monogenēs</i>	18
means “only begotten” or “only.”	19
6. Some argue that <i>monogenēs</i> in the Septuagint means	20
“only” not “only begotten” because, obviously, all chil-	21
dren are born and “ <i>yahid</i> ,” which it translates, does not	22
mean “begotten.”	23
7. Irons disagrees with Moody’s conclusion that <i>monogenēs</i>	24
in Luke means “only” because, Irons argues, if it meant	25
just “only,” it could apply to many things besides humans.	26
8. The meaning of <i>monogenēs</i> in Hebrews 11:17 is problem-	27
atic, as Abraham had other sons.	28

- 1 9. The suffix *genēs* in ancient Greece usage practically al-
2 ways alluded to a begetting.
- 3 10. Clement of Rome applies the adjective *monogenēs* to a
4 fabled bird. Harris argues that a begetting is still a fit-
5 ting description of the unique origin of that bird, but
6 Irons holds “unique” is instead Clement’s meaning.
- 7 11. Giles’ opinion that Psalm 2:7 refers to eternal generation
8 is disputed by Carson and Feinberg because they say
9 “day” in the text refers to the temporal events of either
10 the establishment of the Davidic dynasty or the resur-
11 rection of Christ.
- 12 12. Calvin states the Father giving the Son life in John 5:26
13 refers to the incarnated Son, but Augustine believes it
14 alludes to the pre-incarnate Son.
- 15 13. Giles opines that “-Wisdom” in 1 Corinthians 1:24, 30 has
16 Proverbs 8:22, 25 as its reference, but Kantzer under-
17 stands “Wisdom” in Proverbs 8 to be a divine attribute,
18 not a Triunal Person.
- 19 14. The NET Bible states 1 John 5:18 is saying the believer is
20 begotten, but Dahms says it is instead Christ who, in the
21 text, is said to be begotten.
- 22 15. Berkhof and Solulen believe the names “Father” and
23 “Son” are convincing proof of eternal generation, but
24 Hodge and Frame aver that the terms instead indicate
25 an equality.
- 26 16. Giles and Berkhof believe John 15:26 evidences the
27 Holy Spirit proceeds eternally, but Warfield, Buswell,
28 Frame, and Boettner question that. It is noted the verb

“proceeds” in that verse, while present, is not necessarily timeless, as the verb “send” in it refers to a temporal event. 1
2
3



Is the Son Eternally Begotten?

In this chapter, I intend to complement the discussions 5
 given to the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son 6
 by the Father in several systematic theologies. In the case of 7
 Grudem and Erickson, I will recapitulate arguments advanced 8
 by proponents of the tenet, which these two systematics ignore 9
 or with which they do not adequately interact. As for Berkhof, 10
 the evidence he provides for his acceptance of the eternal gen- 11
 eration of the Son and the particulars in his definition of the 12
 doctrine will be weighed. The bulk of this chapter will, there- 13
 fore, provide data for both sides of the question for the reader 14
 to consider in order to possibly formulate his or her own con- 15
 clusions regarding eternal generation and efficiently evidence 16
 those conclusions. After introductory comments, three major 17
 areas of evidence will be addressed here: (1) tradition, (2) the 18

1 meaning of the Greek compound adjective *monogenēs*, and (3)
2 biblical texts.

3 Erickson (2013 reprint) and Grudem (1994) reject the te-
4 net of the eternal generation of the Son. The subject index in
5 Erickson does not even include a reference to it, and in his dis-
6 cussion of the Trinity, he makes no mention of the doctrine.
7 In 2000, Grudem added an appendix to his 1994 systematic in
8 which he suggests the doctrine of eternal generation should be
9 abandoned in theology textbooks.¹ It is reported that Grudem,
10 in 2016, changed his view and now believes the Son to be eter-
11 nally begotten. Other systematic theologians, as Buswell and
12 Reymond, also have not endorsed it. Buswell argues that the
13 key term *monogenēs* does not mean “only begotten.”² Reymond
14 asserts that point as well and adds that the names “Father” and
15 “Son” indicate equality, not generation, and further, that the
16 eternal generation doctrine implies a subordinate position—
17 essential subordination is, I think, Reymond’s meaning. And
18 Reymond notes that Calvin adamantly rejects any position that
19 subordinates the Son.³

20 Yet, Berkof is quite confident of the correctness of the tenet
21 of eternal generation in general, and further is explicit in de-
22 fining it. His evidences for the doctrine are that Christ was the
23 Son in His pre-incarnate state (if Christ is the eternal Son, then
24 He must be eternally begotten); also Christ is called “only be-
25 gotten;” and further that the names “Father” and Son” suggest

26 1. Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1234.

27 2. Buswell, *Systematic Theology*, 110–111.

28 3. Reymond, *Systematic Theology*, 324–327.

a generation.⁴ In Berkhof's opinion, it is the Son's personal property to be eternally begotten and that begetting is both a necessary and a timeless act of God in the eternal present. It is a generation of the personal subsistence of the Son in which the entire divine essence of God is communicated to the Son; by that generation, the Son has life in Himself.⁵

Shedd agrees substantially with the particulars in Berkhof and even says one who believes there are a "Father" and "Son" must accept begetting and begotten as "absolute truths." Shedd insists it is the divine essence which is communicated, and Shedd further asserts that it is an unceasing emanation.⁶

But others, while not denying eternal generation, are less definite about its meaning and they challenge some of Berkhof's particulars. Hodge questions that eternal generation involves a communication of essence and that the terms "Father" and "Son" must denote a relationship of generation.⁷ Frame also questions that in eternal generation, the Son receives His existence or divine nature; instead, it is His Personhood only that is generated. Yet, Frame affirms the Son is not originate and has aseity.⁸ Thus, while agreeing with Berkhof that the Son is eternally begotten, some question Berkhof's position that the divine essence is communicated in eternal generation. Also, some argue that Calvin rejected an ongoing generation (see below), which would be contrary to Berkhof. So, if a student of

4. Berkhof, 91–92.

5. *Ibid.*, 93–94.

6. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 1: 295–297.

7. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 1:464–466.

8. Frame, *The Doctrine of God*, 708–709.

1 theology espouses the doctrine of the Son’s eternal begetting,
2 one may aspire to particularize his or her view as to what that
3 means. Or, instead, one could adopt Irenaeus’ confession that
4 eternal generation, while a true tenet, is incomprehensible.⁹

5 Yet, if we cannot know basic particulars about the meaning
6 of the doctrine of eternal generation, can belief in it be vital?
7 Yes, Boersma implies that the doctrine is “the bedrock of the
8 Christian confession of the triune God.”¹⁰ And Shedd asserts
9 that eternal generation proves the deity of the Son.¹¹ So, with-
10 out that doctrine, we lack evidence to show Christ is divine?
11 And, Dahms insists the doctrine is an essential component of
12 the theological basis for biblical ethics (i.e., submission to au-
13 thority just as the Son being begotten would be in submission
14 to the Father) and that eternal generation provides the onto-
15 logical basis for the dissimilarity (in preeminence, I take it not
16 in essence) of the Father and the Son.¹²

17 But, if the basic particulars of a doctrine cannot be under-
18 stood, can belief in it be vital to one’s faith? Of course, it could
19 be countered that we cannot understand the Trinity either.
20 But we do understand, as evangelicals, that the Trinity means
21 the Persons are equal in essence, work jointly in creation and
22 salvation, have separate roles in their economic functions and
23 so forth. So, we do understand some components of triune
24 theology.

25 9. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, XXVIII.6.

26 10. Hans Boersma, in Praire section for the book *Retrieving Eternal Generation*,
27 Fred Sanders and Scott R. Swain eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017).

28 11. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 1:325.

29 12. John Dahms, “The Generation of the Son,” *JETS* 32/4 (December 1989), 497–498.

Further, in all my experiences in churchgoing, I do not recall ever hearing a sermon or a Sunday school class devoted to explicating the doctrine of eternal generation. If average Christians are unaware of it, how is it vital to their beliefs? And does the attention eternal generation is afforded in the Old Testament and the New Testament clearly support the view of its importance to Christian belief as Boersma, Dahms, and Shedd maintain above? Is the reader ever informed of it anywhere in the Synoptics or Acts or Peter or James or Jude? Is it anywhere given attention in the letters of Paul who writes on so many doctrinal points which he deems important? Yet, Paul who, one can well argue, does not instruct his readers on eternal generation. Why is that? Yes, possibly Hebrews, more likely John, and several Old Testament Scriptures may allude to it. But on the other hand, one needs to recall other important tenets as the virgin birth or even the divinity of the Holy Spirit do not receive a great deal of attention in Scripture, although they strongly relate to and are embedded in other major scriptural doctrines.

Tradition

Is church tradition regarding eternal generation normative for evangelicals? Giles takes the position that theological traditions, especially of the Nicene Creed and the Reformation, should provide a norm for understanding the Trinity.¹³ Crisp also believes the eternal generation doctrine should be accepted

13. Giles, *The Eternal Generation of the Son* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2012), 55.

1 in part because it was endorsed by the ecumenical creeds; he
2 says these creeds are a “second tier of theological norm.”¹⁴ Yet,
3 as seen below, Reformed creeds vary in their teaching of eter-
4 nal generation. A look at some important persons in the two-
5 hundred years following the completion of the New Testament
6 will indicate the teaching on eternal generation in those cen-
7 turies was uneven. As for making the Nicene creed, itself, nor-
8 mative, Charles Hodge expresses belief that the Nicene fathers
9 wrongly decided eternal generation meant a derivation of es-
10 sence; Hodge states it is instead the Person of the Son which
11 was generated.¹⁵

12 As Nicaea of the fourth century is represented as the ortho-
13 dox position by Giles and Crisp, a survey of Christian writers
14 who preceded the Nicene Creed should prove interesting. Did
15 the framers of that creed articulate the opinions of the fathers
16 of the second and third centuries? Clement of Rome, who is
17 thought to have known the apostle Paul, in his first letter to
18 the Corinthians, cites from Hebrews 1:5, “Today I have begot-
19 ten thee.”¹⁶ But the immediate biblical context in Clement,
20 which appears to connect Christ’s inheritance and exaltation
21 to the begetting, may suggest a generation from eternity is not
22 necessarily Clement’s meaning. In writing to the Philippians,
23 Polycarp refers to Christ as “Son of God.”¹⁷ But Polycarp, who
24 was thought to have been taught by John the apostle, does not
25 mention an eternal begetting. Yet Ignatius, who is also believed

26 14. Crisp, *Enfleshed*, 7

27 15. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 1:468.

28 16. Clement of Rome, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, XXXVI.

29 17. Polycarp, *Epistle to the Philippians*, XII.

to have known John, in writing to the Ephesians, does state the 1
Father is the Begetter of the only begotten Son; that this oc- 2
curred before time began; and that Christ is “God Himself”¹⁸ in 3
human form. In his epistle to the Smyrnaeans, Ignatius states 4
Christ is “God, the Word, the only begotten Son.”¹⁹ Also in his 5
letter to Polycarp, Ignatius affirms that the Son, who existed 6
before time, was, as God, impassible, but He became passible 7
as man.²⁰ 8

The Apologists of the second and third centuries allude to 9
the Son being begotten by God before time or before creation 10
began. In his first apology, Justin Martyr explains Christ is the 11
first begotten Word of God and is God Himself.²¹ In his dialogue 12
with Trypho the Jew, Justin explains the One Solomon calls 13
“Wisdom” was “begotten as a beginning before all creatures.”²² 14
But should it not be asked whether Justin’s description is the 15
equivalent of an eternal begetting? Does “before all creation” 16
mean “from eternity”? On the other hand, Irenaeus asserts 17
the Son co-existed from eternity from the Father.²³ Earlier, 18
Irenaeus, if the Syriac text is correct, calls Christ “the only be- 19
gotten God.”²⁴ Yet Tatian, a student of Justin Martyr’s, appears 20
to teach there was a beginning to the generation of the Son. 21
The Word was in God, Tatian asserts, but when springing forth 22
becomes the “first begotten work of the Father at the beginning 23

18. Ignatius, *Epistle to the Ephesians*, VII, XIX. 24

19. Ignatius, *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans*, I. 25

20. Ignatius, *Epistle to Polycarp*, II. 26

21. Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, LXIII. 27

22. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue With Trypho*, LXII. 28

23. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, XXX.9. 29

24. *Ibid.*, XX:11. 30

1 of the world.²⁵ Tatian's teaching appears to be in harmony with
2 that of Theophilus who, in his letter to Autolycus, submits the
3 theory that the Word, who is God's own mind, was begotten as
4 first born of all creation.²⁶ It appears some of these writers are
5 expressing the opinion that the Son was begotten at the begin-
6 ning of creation in order to create the universe. That would not
7 agree with the Nicene definition.

8 This investigation of whether the earlier church theolo-
9 gians espoused what was later required in the 4th-century
10 creed could continue with a look at the Ante-Nicene Fathers
11 Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Novatian, and Origen.
12 Clement of Alexandria confesses Christ as "the only begotten
13 God."²⁷ Christ is in a Trinity, which is composed of the Father,
14 the Son, and the Holy Spirit.²⁸ Tertullian, in his *Against Praxeas*,
15 spends several chapters on the Trinity. The Son is derived from
16 the substance of the Father.²⁹ The Word, always in God, was
17 begotten before creation (in order to create).³⁰ The Word be-
18 came the Son when He proceeded forth from God. The Father
19 is the entire substance and the Son a portion of the whole, so
20 the Father is greater.³¹

21 That last statement in Tertullian also seems in discord from
22 Nicaea. Novatian of Rome wrote his *Treatise Concerning the*
23 *Trinity* slightly after Origen, and he speaks of the begetting of

24 25. Tatian, *To the Greeks*, V.

25 26. Theophilus, *To Autolycus*, XXII.

26 27. Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata*, V.12.

27 28. *Ibid.*, V.14

28 29. Tertullian, *Against Praxeas*, IV.

29 30. *Ibid.*, VI.

30 31. *Against Praxeus*, IX.

the Son as having a beginning and so is subject to the Father.³² 1
Christ is repeatedly called “God” by Origen.³³ But it would be 2
incautious to understand Origen by this means that the Son is 3
God in the fullest degree (see below). Still, the Son is eternal. 4
Were the Son to have a beginning, that would mean there are 5
two Gods.³⁴ 6

Origen writes profusely about the Trinity. In his commen- 7
tary on John, Origen teaches there are three hypostases but 8
only the Father is “uncreated.” Further, the Holy Spirit was cre- 9
ated by the Son.³⁵ Still, in *De Principiis*, Origen states the Father 10
never existed without having generated His wisdom, His first 11
born, the only begotten Son. The generation of the Son is eter- 12
nal, and that position possibly is echoed in Origen’s Creed 13
where Origen says Christ “was born of the Father before all 14
creation”³⁶ and also in his commentary on John where Origen 15
references Psalm 2:7, saying the “day” there is timeless.³⁷ Yet, 16
to some, Origen may seem to vacillate on whether the Son is 17
fully equal to the Father. Yes, in *De Principiis*, Origen speaks of 18
the unity of the Trinity, but in his commentary on John, Origen 19
differentiates the deity of the Son from that of the Father as 20
only the Father is God from Himself and the Son is only God be- 21
cause He is “with the Father.” Origen cites John 17:3 as evidence 22

32. Novatian, *Concerning the Trinity*, XXXI. 23

33. Origen, *De Principiis*, I.II.VII; *Against Celsus* XII. 24

34. *Commentary on John*, II.vi. 25

35. *De Principiis*, I.II.iii 26

36. Philip Schaff, *The Creed of Christendom*, vol II (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998 reprint), 23. 27

37. Origen, *Commentary on John*, 1:32. 29

1 of his position: the Father is “the only true God.”³⁸ It does not
2 seem incontestable that the majority of the early church writ-
3 ers did not plainly teach the Son, though eternal, may not be,
4 from eternity, begotten of the Father. But it seems clear that
5 Origen, while holding the Son to a subordinate position, did
6 teach the eternity of the Son’s generation.³⁹ The later fourth-
7 century church was forced to become more explicit and more
8 in conformity in the matters of the eternal generation of the
9 Son and His ontological equality with the Father by the on-
10 slaught of the teaching of Arius.

11 Arianism differs from the subordinationism of Origen
12 (Christ is made God only by participation in the Father’s divin-
13 ity) and even of Tertullian (the Father is the entire substance
14 of deity, but the Son is only a part of it). The difference is that
15 whereas the other two taught the Son is God being begotten
16 of the nature (substance) of the Father, Arius insisted the Son
17 is not God and that the Son was created, not begotten, of the
18 Father.⁴⁰ Arius asserted that the Son is neither eternal—though
19 wisdom was eternal in God, wisdom is a power, not a person,
20 and were the Son to be the same nature of the Father, there
21 would be two Gods, not one.⁴¹

22 Those are the issues that the framers of the creed of Nicaea
23 wished to resolve. Is the Son eternally begotten and thus equal
24 to the Father in essence? In the end, the fathers of Nicaea

25 38. *De Principiis*, III.viii.

26 39. *Commentary on John*, II.2; *De Principiis* I:II:2,3.

27 40. Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol 1 (Atlanta: John Knox, 1975),
28 227–228.

29 41. Adolph Harnack, *History of Dogma*, vols IV, V (New York: Dover, 1961), 15–17.

produced the Creed of 325, which reads: “And in one Lord, 1
Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father; that is, of 2
the essence of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God 3
of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance (*homo-* 4
ousion) with the Father.”⁴² 5

It should be noted this statement is open to the interpre- 6
tation that the Son receives His essence from the Father by 7
His being begotten from the Father (see Calvin below). A key 8
player in the Nicæan contest against Arianism was Alexander, 9
the bishop of Alexandria. He was assisted in this effort by his 10
deacon, Athanasius, who, at Alexander’s death, became a bish- 11
op himself.⁴³ Athanasius ably refuted Arianism and defended 12
the Nicene Creed in his *Four Discourses Against the Arians*. Here, 13
Athanasius explains many texts used by the Arians in their 14
argumentation for the essential subordination of the Son. 15
Athanasius teaches Philippians 2:9–10 means only as man is 16
the Son not equal to God.⁴⁴ Psalm 45:7 means as man, Christ 17
is anointed with the Holy Spirit.⁴⁵ Regarding Hebrews 1:4, 18
by using the verb “became,” the writer does not indicate the 19
Son is originate because what is originated is not generated.⁴⁶ 20
Hebrews 3:2 (Athanasius translation) says, “faithful to the one 21
who made Him” refers to Christ assuming humanity.⁴⁷ Acts 22

42. Schaff, *Creeds*, vol I, 29. 23

43. Hans Lietzmann, *A History of the Early Church*, vols III, IV (New York: 24
Meridian Books, 1961), 128. 25

44. Athanasius, *Four Discourses Against the Arians*, I:xi:39 26

45. I. xii.46 27

46. I.xiii.56 28

47. II.xiv.1 29

1 2:36 refers not to the Godhead of the Son but to His humanity.⁴⁸
2 It is plain that Athanasius based his arguments much on the
3 two natures in Christ and that any subordination in essence
4 occurs in the humanity of our Lord.

5 Moving to Augustine, this father writes prolifically on the
6 Trinity in his fifteen books on that topic. Near the beginning
7 of this large work, Augustine, like Athanasius, insists we are to
8 distinguish “what relates to the form of God, in which He (the
9 Son) is equal to the Father, and to the form of a servant which
10 He took, in which He is less than the Father.”⁴⁹ According to
11 Augustine, for example, the texts John 14:28 and 1 Corinthians
12 11:3 and 15:28 refer only to Christ’s humanity not to His deity.⁵⁰

13 But if the Son were sent by the Father, how is the Son equal
14 to the Father? Isn’t He who sends greater than the One sent?
15 Yet, Augustine states⁵¹, it was as a man that He was sent ac-
16 cording to Galatians 4:4–5 and He is sent not because He is un-
17 equal but because He is an emanation of God.⁵² In his *On Faith*
18 *and the Creed*, Augustine summarizes his views: “The Son is not
19 created because He is instead begotten; the Son was not begot-
20 ten in time because God is eternal; and the Son is not unequal
21 with God because He exists in the form of God.”⁵³

22 Skipping some centuries to Calvin, it has been argued that
23 Calvin was not in full agreement with some definitions of the

24 48. II.xv.11

25 49. Augustine, *On the Trinity*, I.xi.22.

26 50. *On the Trinity*, I.viii.14; VI.x.9; *On Faith and the Creed*, IX.17.

27 51. *On the Trinity*, II.v.7

28 52. *On the Trinity*, IV, xx.27

29 53. *On Faith and the Creeds*, IV.5

Nicene Creed in that the Reformer held that in generation the Son is given personhood, not the divine essence, and that the generation, while eternal, is not timeless or ongoing. Reymond, for example, notes in 1.12.23, Calvin, in his Institutes, rejects the doctrine of the essentialiation of the divinity of the Son, and Reymond also denies Calvin affirmed the continuous generation of the Son. To prove this, Reymond cites further from the Institutes: “For what is the point in disputing whether the Father always begets? Indeed, it is foolish to imagine a continuous act of begetting, since it is clear that the three Persons have subsisted in God from eternity” (1.13.29).⁵⁴

On the other hand, Philip Kheng Hong Djung argues Calvin accepted both the communication of essence and the perpetual generation of the Son.⁵⁵ Djung insists Calvin, in context, was only refuting the heretical view that by essentialiation the Son is proven to be different in substance from the Father and that as Calvin confessed agreement with Justin, Ignatius, and Augustine in 1.13.29, Calvin must have agreed with perpetual begetting too. But 1.13.29 does not mention continuous begetting and Djung does not indicate where Justin, Ignatius, or Augustine teach that. It does not seem that Djung has given full appreciation to Calvin’s position in 1.12.26, which says the Father is not the beginning by essentialiating, but in respect of order, continual generation is absurd fiction. Yet, none of this needs to be understood as meaning that Calvin rejected

54. Reymond, *Systematic Theology*, 327–328

55. Philip Kheng Hong Djung, “Calvin’s Doctrine of the Trinity” in *Jurnal theologi Reformed Indonesia* (January 2012): 34–47.

1 eternal generation; what he seems to have rejected is that eter-
2 nal generation is continuous, and that by it, the Son received
3 the divine essence.

4 Before looking at some creeds that followed the Reformation
5 to note how the doctrine of eternal generation is represented
6 in them, one should be reminded of Berkhof's definition that
7 eternal generation is a timeless act, and that in it, the Father
8 communicates to the Son the divine essence.⁵⁶ But are these
9 explicit teachings enunciated in the Reformed creeds? The
10 Westminster Confession (1647) states, "the Son is eternally
11 begotten of the Father." The Belgic Confession (1561) states
12 the co-essential Son, in His divine nature, was begotten from
13 eternity. The Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England
14 (1571) affirm the Son was begotten of the Father from everlast-
15 ing. The Heidelberg Catechism mentions the only begotten
16 Son but does not reference eternal generation. The Augsburg
17 Confession (1530), in Art. III on the Son of God, does not refer-
18 ence eternal generation, but earlier, in Art. 1, indicates agree-
19 ment with the Nicene Synod. But none of these say the beget-
20 ting is ongoing or that the Son receives essence or deity by it.

21 Clearly, then, it cannot be affirmed that Reformation-era
22 Protestant Creeds articulate the particulars of eternal gen-
23 eration in the manner of Berkhof. None of the creeds refer-
24 enced affirm an essentiation of deity to the Son and neither
25 do they affirm eternal generation to be ongoing. Still, the bibli-
26 cal evidence for the doctrine of eternal generation has not yet

27 56. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 93.

been considered; it is that which is the highest norm for the
evangelical.

What Is the Meaning of *Monogenēs*?

The meaning of the compound adjective in John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; and 1 John 4:9 rendered “only begotten” in the KJV and but “only” in the ESV and “one of a kind” in the NET footnote on John 3:16 is central to the question of the eternal generation of the Son. Some proponents of that doctrine, as Berkhof, who accepts the meaning “only begotten,” employ that translation as a primary evidence for eternal generation. But others take the word to mean “only,” without any connotation of a begetting and so see the word as not being any proof of the doctrine of eternal generation; instead Christ is the “unique” Son of God. A number of complex issues have been raised in determining the meaning of *monogenēs*, but each of these have been be discussed in ways to either support or reject eternal generation. These issues include:

1. Do the expert authorities in Greek lexicons define *monogenēs* as “only begotten”? Some do and some do not. Bartels favors the meaning of “only” and cites experts as Westcott and R.E. Brown, also noting the word translates the Hebrew *yahid* in the LXX.⁵⁷ This is significant as *yahid* does not mean “begotten” but “only,” “only one,” or “unique.”⁵⁸ The position advanced by

57. Karl Heinz Bartels, “*monos*” in *NIDNTT*, vol 2, Colin Brown, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Regency, 1971), 725.

58. F. Buchsel, “*Monogenēs*” in *TDNT*, vol IV Gerhard Kittel, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromily transl. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981 reprint), 741.

Robert L. Alden “*yahid*” in *NIDOTT&E vol II*, William A. Van Gemeren ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 434.

1 Bartels is also that of Thayer, who bases his opinion on readings
2 in Josephus, Plato, and the LXX and others.⁵⁹ It is also the opin-
3 ing of BAG, which alludes to Josephus, Clement of Rome, and
4 others to evidence this meaning.⁶⁰ Also, Moulton and Milligan
5 understand the term to mean “only,” not “only begotten,” cit-
6 ing several non-biblical sources as well noting the usage in the
7 LXX.⁶¹ But on the other hand, the meaning of “only begotten”
8 is approved of by Buchsel. He argues this biblically from 1 John
9 5:18 and Proverbs 8:25. These texts and other biblical evidence
10 will be considered below. But clearly, a simple appeal to Greek
11 dictionaries will not determine the meaning of the adjective as
12 the lexicons do not agree.

13 2. Several sources above allude to sources in the Septuagint.
14 But does the usage in that translation of the Hebrew support
15 the meaning of “only begotten”? Here again, opinion is divid-
16 ed. According to *Morrish’s Concordance of the Septuagint*,⁶² the
17 term is found in four places in the canonical Old Testament:
18 Judges 11:34; Ps. 21:21 (22:20), 24:16 (25:16), and 34:17 (35:17).
19 Additionally, in the *Books of the Apocrypha*, the term is found
20 in Tobit 3:15 and 8:17 and in the Wisdom of Solomon 7:22. The
21 seven references as translated by Brenton⁶³ read:

22 59. Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (New York:
23 American Book Company, 1889), 417.

24 60. BAG, 529.

25 61. James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek*
26 *Testament* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1952 reprint), 417.

27 62. George Morrish, *A Concordance of the Septuagint* (Grand Rapids, MI:
28 Zondervan, 1976), 164.

29 63. Lancelot C.L. Brenton, *The Septuagint With Apocrypha: Greek and English*
30 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998 reprint)

His daughter came forth to meet him... and she was his only 1
(*monogenēs*) child; he had not another son or daughter (Jud 11:34). 2
Deliver my soul from the sword my only begotten (*monogenē*) 3
from the power of the dog (Ps. 22:20) have mercy upon me for 4
I am an only (*monogenēs*) child and poor (Ps. 24:16). Deliver my 5
soul from their mischief, mine only-begotten (*monogenē*) one 6
from the lions (Ps. 34:17). I am the only (*monogenēs*) daughter 7
of my father, neither hath he any child to be his heir (Tobit 8
3:15) thou hast had mercy of two that were the only begotten 9
(*monogeneis*) children of their fathers (Tobit 8:17). For wisdom, 10
which is the worker of all things, hath taught me: for in her is 11
an understanding spirit, holy, one only (*monogenēs*). (Wisdom 12
of Solomon 7:22) 13

Given the usage of the adjective in some of the above texts, 14
John V. Dahms⁶⁴ acknowledges the LXX may use *monogenēs* to 15
mean “unique” when referencing something other than per- 16
sons like a soul, but he suggests such usage does not determine 17
the meaning when used of people. Harris, however, makes 18
the claim that the soul of man is begotten out of the spirit of 19
man, and therefore the use of the adjective to mean a beget- 20
ting in Psalms is proper even if the soul is the topic.⁶⁵ But I 21
know of no Scripture, or evangelical theologian, that teaches 22
that man’s spirit begets man’s soul. And, Carson⁶⁶, in contra- 23
diction to Harris’ view, expresses the opinion that the references 24

64. John V. Dahms. “The Johannine Use of *Monogenēs* Reconsidered.” *New Testament Studies*, vol 29, 223. 25

65. B.P. Harris, *Studies in the Usage of the Greek Word Monogenēs* (Sacramento: Assembly Bookshelf, 2012), 170. 26

66. D.A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1989), 29. 27

1 in Psalms contain no thought of a begetting. Further, the texts
2 above alluding to the life or soul seem, to some, to carry the no-
3 tion of being alone (only one) as *monogenēs*, there translates *ya-*
4 *hid* which, again, means “only,” or similar, as being “precious”
5 because of there being just one.⁶⁷

6 So, to some, it would appear that one could possibly find
7 little support in the Greek version of the Psalms for the view
8 that *monogenēs* means a begetting. Further, the texts in Judges
9 and Tobit could be understood as indicating the uniqueness of
10 those children as they have no siblings. One may easily doubt
11 that the writers’ purpose was to reveal that these children were
12 begotten since all children obviously are begotten. So, how
13 might this data from the LXX and the Apocrypha be factored
14 into shaping one’s position on the meaning of *monogenēs* in
15 John? Would John be more likely to use the adjective as mean-
16 ing “only one” like Jews before him appear to have used it, or
17 instead would John use it like ancient Greeks more often did,
18 meaning “only begotten”? Would the translation of *yahid* by
19 *monogenēs* in the LXX influence John’s usage, or not?

20 Below the consideration of the stem *genēs* by ancient Greeks
21 will be noted, which shows that the stem, most frequently in
22 ancient Greek usage, connected to words alluding to a birth-
23 ing. But, given the probability that meanings in language can
24 change over time and may vary from culture to culture, perhaps
25 some may feel the usage of the Greek adjective by Jews in the
26 LXX, which was, after all, the Bible of much of the first-century

27 67. Robert L. Alden, “*Yahid*” in NIDOTT&E, vol 2, William A. Van Gemeren, ed.
28 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 434.

church,⁶⁸ and in the Apocrypha too, written as well by Jews, should be given considerable weight in deciding our understanding of what, John the apostle—who was a Jew, after all, not an ancient Greek—meant in his New Testament usage of *monogenēs*.

3. Does *monogenēs* in Luke mean “only begotten”? “A man who had died was being carried out, the only (*monogenēs*) son of his mother” (7:12) “because he had an only (*monogenēs*) daughter, about twelve years old, and she was dying” (8:42). “Teacher, I beg you to look at my son—he is my only (*monogenēs*) child” (9:38) (NET).

Is it Luke’s goal in these texts to inform his readers that these children had been born of their parents? Not according to Caffese, who reasonably argues Luke is not attempting to explain these children were physically generated, but that each child was unique, being the only son or daughter of the parent.⁶⁹ The NET Bible’s footnote on 1 John 4:9 takes that position too by asserting that in Luke, the meaning is “one of a kind.” Moody also does, saying surely Luke does not feel a need to remind his readers that these parents begat their children.⁷⁰ I find it curious that while Dahms references Philo, Clement of

68. Robert B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 9.

John D. Grassmick, *Principles and Practices of Greek Exegesis* (Dallas: Seminary Press, 1976), 157.

69. Dan Caffese, “The Meaning of Monogenes in the Gospel of John,” sgbephx.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/OnlyBegottenLanguageFinal1pdf (accessed 9-15-19), 11.

70. Dale Moody, “God’s Only Son,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, vol 72, no. 4 (Dec. 1953), 216.

1 Rome, Psalms, Tobit, Justin Martyr, and others in his attempt
2 to define *monogenēs* so as to prove in John the word means “only
3 begotten,” he does not reference Luke’s usage.⁷¹ Irons does
4 name the Lukan texts, however, instead of actually explaining
5 why, in Luke, *monogenēs* appears not to mean a begetting, Irons
6 insists if the word means “only,” then “we would expect it to
7 modify other nouns that do not involve the concept of being
8 begotten or being an offspring.”⁷² In countering Irons, it can be
9 noted the Scriptures above do in fact include that idea of other
10 things being “only” besides children as “soul” or “life.” Also, as
11 seen below, the adjective has been used to describe a unique
12 bird. Some may see Irons’ objection is avoiding what, to many,
13 is the evidence in Luke that the term appears to mean unique.
14 The question is not why the adjective should not be possibly
15 used for other than humans, but the question is instead how
16 biblical writers use it when referencing humans and our Lord.
17 If Luke uses *monogenēs* to indicate uniqueness, not begotten,
18 that seems valuable in understanding how John uses it since
19 both are 1st-century writers.

20 4. How is *monogenēs* used in Hebrews 11:17? “By faith Abraham,
21 when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received
22 the promises was in the act of offering up his only (*monogenē*)
23 son, of whom it was said, ‘Through Isaac shall your offspring
24 be named.’”

25 71. Dahms, “The Johannine Use of *Monogenēs* Reconsidered.”

26 72. Charles Lee Irons, “A Lexical Defense of the Johannine ‘Only Begotten,’ in
27 *Retrieving Eternal Generation*, Fred Sanders and Scott Swain, eds. (Grand Rapids, MI:
28 Zondervan, 2017), 106.

At issue is how Isaac could be called Abraham’s “only begotten” son since Abraham had other sons. He could be called the “only” (as in unique) son if his being “child of promise” were the meaning. But that view could be rejected by those who understand the adjective to refer to a begetting. A bit of syntax is argued over the effect of this text on the meaning of the term as shown by two leading New Testament scholars, Irons and Carson, who disagree on the issue in the recent book, *Retrieving Eternal Generation*. Note that this book is entirely devoted to evincing eternal generation. First, Irons asserts that Isaac can be called “only begotten,” though Abraham had other sons, because of the precedent of Monobazo (in Josephus Antiquities 20.2.2), who had other sons, yet treated Izates as if he were his only (*hōs eis monogenē*) son.⁷³ But Carson, in the same book, rejects Irons’ opining on the basis that in Hebrews 11:17, *hōs* is missing. The text in Josephus has *hōs* to link Izates to only begotten. Hebrews does not. Hebrews does not say “as if (*hōs*) he were the *monogenēs*,” it says, “he was the *monogenēs*.” Consequently, Carson asserts that in Hebrews 11:17, *monogenēs* cannot mean “only begotten” because Abraham had other sons; it means instead “unique son.” Note that Carson does not say the usage in Hebrews must determine the usage in John.⁷⁴

A second argument used to show the adjective in this text can properly be rendered “only begotten” is based on understanding the definite article (*ton monogenē*) should not be

73. Irons, 108

74. D.A. Carson, “John 5:26: *Crux Interpretum* for Eternal Generation” in *Retrieving Eternal Generation*, 89–90.

1 rendered “his” as a possessive pronoun. It should instead be
2 translated, Harris insists, as “*the* (not his) only begotten son.”
3 In that case, Harris believes, the text is stating Isaac was the
4 only begotten child of promise.⁷⁵ However, it is Wallace’s opin-
5 ion that the article is to be translated as a possessive pronoun
6 when the context reveals it should.⁷⁶ An example could be “hus-
7 bands love (*tas*) *your* wives.” The context shows using the ar-
8 ticle as a personal pronoun modifying “wives” of “husbands” is
9 needed. And, in Hebrews 11, Isaac is clearly noted to be the off-
10 spring of Abraham by verse 18. Consequently, the context there
11 indicates that rendering the article in verse 17 as a possessive
12 pronoun is correct. Isaac can be seen as Abraham’s only unique
13 son, not his only begotten son. I think Harris is reaching again.
14 It seems if Hebrews 11:17 should be translated as the NET has
15 it translated, then *monogenēs* can be taken here as not meaning
16 “only begotten.”

17 5. So, up to this point, data has been addressed that suggests
18 to many that the multiple Jewish writers of the Greek transla-
19 tion of the Old Testament, and the Apocrypha, Luke, and the
20 author of Hebrews as well, use *monogenēs* to mean “only” or
21 “unique,” not “only begotten.” The question now to be consid-
22 ered is whether ancient Greek usage should prevail over this
23 Jewish usage in deciding the meaning of John’s chosen term to
24 describe Christ as Son of God.

25 75. Harris, “Studies,” 33–35.

26 76. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids, MI:
27 Zondervan, 1996), 215–216.

In the summary of his unpublished paper⁷⁷, Lee Irons argues the *genēs* stem practically always indicates a birthing in ancient Greek usage. Irons bases this on his research in the massive Thesaurus Linguae Graecae program at the University of California- Irvine. Irons notes that in 145 occasions of the *genēs* stem, only a dozen or so are connected with terms indicating “only.” The vast majority denote a birthing. Further, fifty-eight names also demonstrate that as does *Diogenes*, meaning “born of Zeus.” Proponents of the eternal generation doctrine may find Irons’ findings conclusive. On the other hand, others recalling the way the adjective may seem to be used as “only” or “unique” in the Septuagint, the Apocrypha, Luke, and in Hebrews may inquire as to whether one should be obliged to prefer usage in ancient Greece over Jewish usage to define a term used in John, who was Jewish. Even Irons, in his summary, observes language is “inherently flexible.” So, one may wonder why John could not have used the adjective differently than many Greek writers did, especially given the antecedents in the Septuagint.

6. Clement of Rome, thought to have been with the apostle Paul in Philippi in AD 57,⁷⁸ in his first letter to the Corinthians uses the term *monogenēs* but not in describing humans or our Lord. Clement writes:

77. Irons, thegospelcoalition.org/article/lets-get-back-to-only-begotten (accessed 10/28/19).

78. A. Cleveland Cox, “Introductory Notice to Clement of Rome” in *The Antenicene Fathers, vol I*, Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987 reprint).

1 There is a certain bird which is called a phoenix. This is the
2 only (*monogenēs*) one of its kind, and lives 500 years. And when
3 the time of its dissolution draws near that it must die, it builds
4 itself a nest of frankincense, and myrrh, and other spices, into
5 which, when the time is fulfilled, it enters and dies. But as the
6 flesh decays a certain kind of worm is produced, which being
7 nourished by the juices of the dead bird, brings forth feathers.
8 Then when it has acquired strength, it takes up that nest in
9 which are the bones of its parent...

10 Clearly, being acquaintances with an apostle did not guar-
11 antee the inerrancy of Clement’s ornithology. But the question
12 is, can this first-century usage by the Christian Clement, shed
13 light on the meaning of the adjective in the writings of the first-
14 century Christian John? Irons, himself, states that in Clement
15 “there is no thought of the phoenix being begotten;” it rather is
16 “utterly unique.”⁷⁹ But Dahms argues that a birthing of sorts
17 could be implied in coming forth from its predecessor.⁸⁰ And
18 Harris also would take exception to Irons by citing Pythagoras,
19 “From the father’s body a young phoenix is reborn.” And so,
20 Harris argues, it is that we must take Clement to mean that the
21 phoenix is begotten.⁸¹ But, it cannot be shown that Clement
22 was influenced by Pythagoras, and a worm being produced
23 by decaying flesh is not a begetting. So, if Irons is correct that
24 Clement uses *monogenēs* to mean “unique” or “only one,” some

25 79. Irons, “A Lexical Defense,” 111.

26 80. Dahms, *Monogenēs Reconsidered*, III.

27 81. Harris, *Studies*, 39

may see this as a support for not translating the adjective in
John as “only begotten.”

The Bible on Eternal Generation

The disagreement among biblical scholars shown in the discussion on the meaning of *monogenēs* carries over into the area of the meaning of biblical texts and phrases related to the issue of whether the Son is eternally generated or is not. Here are examples of how and why opinions vary regarding the biblical evidence for eternal generation.

NET Bible translations:

Psalm 2:7: “The king says, ‘I will tell you what the LORD decreed. He said to me: “You are my son! This very day I have become your father.””

It is the opinion of Giles that Psalm 2:7 “gives a biblical justification” for the eternal begetting of the Son.⁸² That would mean “day” in the text is eternal. In contradiction, Carson argues that “day” in the text cannot be interpreted as an “eternal today” because the establishment of the Davidic dynasty is the imagery.⁸³ Charles Hodge also surmises that “day” in Psalm 2:7 refers to the day the Sonship of the King of Zion will be manifested.⁸⁴ And, Feinberg states that it is dubious that Psalm 2:7 refers to an eternal begetting because Acts 13:32–33 equates Psalm 2:7 with Christ’s resurrection, and the verses

82. Kevin Giles, *The Eternal Generation of the Son* (Downers Grove, IL, Intervarsity, 2012), 83.

83. Carson, John. 5:26, 91

84. Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology vol I* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986 reprint), 475.

1 in Hebrews 1:5 and 5:4–6 are not specific.⁸⁵ Additionally, Bess
2 argues that the clause could be rendered, “This day I have de-
3 clared thy sonship,” were the verb to be taken as declarative.⁸⁶
4 Consequently, some may see good cause to not rely on Psalm
5 2:7 as conclusive evidence for eternal generation.

6 John 5:26: “For just as the Father has life in Himself, thus He
7 has granted the Son to have life in Himself.”

8 Augustine’s understanding of this text⁸⁷ is that the Father,
9 in begetting the Son, in eternity gave the Son to have life in
10 Himself; that position is popular among those espousing eter-
11 nal generation.⁸⁸ But that interpretation is rejected by Calvin
12 in two places. In his *Institutes*, Calvin asserts it is in the human-
13 ity of Christ that this life in Himself is given. That is why the
14 flesh and blood of Jesus can give life to others. And in his com-
15 mentaries, Calvin advances the belief that the text is strictly
16 applied to Christ manifested in the flesh.⁸⁹ Charles Hodge
17 follows the Reformer in this interpretation by affirming that
18 the passage refers to Christ as He appeared on Earth, not to
19 an eternal begetting.⁹⁰ In possible support for the interpreta-
20 tion that 5:26 refers to Christ incarnate is that the Father, in the
21 next verse, is said to have granted the Son authority to judge at
22 the resurrection of the dead. But it would not seem proper to

23 85. John S. Feinberg, *No One Like Him* (Wheaton, IL: Crossways, 2001), 490.

24 86. Herbert S. Bess, “The Term Son of God in the Light of Old Testament Idiom”
25 *GTJ* 6.2 (Spring 1965), 22.

26 87. Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 15.27.

27 88. Giles, *The Eternal Generation of the Son*, 85.

28 89. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4.17.9; *Calvin’s Commentaries*,
29 vol XVII (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003 reprint), 207.

30 90. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 1: 470–471.

suggest this judicious capacity was afforded to Christ by being 1
eternally begotten. If 5:26 does mean the Father gives the Son 2
life, is Augustine’s position proven that this giving occurred by 3
an eternal begetting of the Son? 4

Neither the word “eternal” nor the word “begotten” appear 5
in the verse. And to some, if the Father is the source of the Son’s 6
life, the two are not equal. To paraphrase Feinberg⁹¹ (substi- 7
tuting “life” for “divine essence”): If Christ does not begin to 8
receive the divine life because as divine, He always exists as 9
God, how does it make sense to speak of the Father making in 10
common with Him something He (Christ) always has had any- 11
way ... how can this make sense? 12

Proverbs 8:22, 25 with 1 Corinthians 1:24, 30: “The Lord cre- 13
ated Me as the beginning of His way ... before the mountains 14
were settled, before the hills, I was brought forth. Christ is the 15
power of God and the wisdom of God ... Jesus, who became for 16
us wisdom from God.” Of these verses, Giles opines that Paul 17
connects Christ to the divine Wisdom in Proverbs 8:25, us- 18
ing the argument that the activities and attributes of Wisdom 19
compare to Christ’s. These include descending from heaven 20
(Prov. 8:31), creating (Prov. 8:27–30), and being born of God 21
(Prov. 8:25).⁹² With that, Athanasius concurs.⁹³ Yet, a number 22
of exegetes do not connect the wisdom in Corinthians with 23
wisdom in Proverbs.⁹⁴ 24

91. Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, 489. 25

92. Giles, *The Eternal Generation of the Son*, 80. 26

93. Athanasius, *De Decretis* 3.3.14 27

94. Charles Hodge, *1 & II Corinthians* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1978 28
reprint), 23. 29

1 However, Bruce does in stating the comparison was espe-
2 cially as God's agent in creation and revelation;⁹⁵ that concurs
3 with Giles' understanding. And Grudem, while denying eternal
4 generation in his systematic, argues convincingly that wisdom
5 in Proverbs 8 is not a mere personification for literacy's sake
6 because it requires a person to work as a craftsman and rejoice
7 in God's presence. Further, Grudem asserts the word in verse
8 22 does not mean "create" as *qānāh*, not *bārā*, is the verb there,
9 and the former means "to get, to acquire." Grudem suggests
10 the Father summoned the Son to assist in creation.⁹⁶ On the
11 other hand, Kantzer takes wisdom in Proverbs 8 to be "a per-
12 sonification of the divine attribute which God exercised in the
13 creation of all things."⁹⁷

14 1 John 5:18: "We know that everyone fathered by God does
15 not sin, but God protects the one He has fathered...."

16 Dahms asserts, "According to John 5:18, the Son of God was
17 born of God. In this verse, it is explicitly stated that the Son was
18 generated by the Father."⁹⁸ This interpretation is supported
19 by a number of others⁹⁹, but the NET Bible's footnote on the

20 C.K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Peabody, MA: 2000 reprint), 54.
21 Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary of*
22 *the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1958 reprint), 23.

23 Kim Riddlebarger, *First Corinthians* (Powder Springs, GA: Tolle Lege Press,
24 2013), 49.

25 95. F.F. Bruce, *I and II Corinthians* (London: Marshal, Morgan, and Scott, 1971),
26 36.

27 96. Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 230.

28 97. Kenneth S. Kantzer, "Wisdom" in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Walter A.
29 Elwell, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1989), 1174.

30 98. John V. Dahms, "The Generation of the Son," *JETS* 32.4 (December 1989), 496.

31 99. Donald W. Burdick, *The Letters of John the Apostle* (Chicago: Moody, 1985),
32 392–393.

text lists four other grammatically possible translations, all of which have the believer as the one begotten by the Father, not Christ. The footnote argues that the context weighs against understanding Christ to be the one said to have been begotten in that a reference to Jesus would be sudden; the author could have mentioned “Son of God” but did not, or he could have used the pronoun *ekeinos* (“that person”) to refer back to Jesus. Even Giles comments that 1 John 5:18 does not have “weighty evidence” because its interpretation is disputed.¹⁰⁰ But even were John 5:18 to mean Jesus was born of the Father, the eternality of that birthing still is not mentioned.

The Names “Father” and “Son”

Berkhof opines, “The names Father and Son suggest the generation of the latter by the former.”¹⁰¹ Soulen writes eternal generation “is, indeed, all but inescapably implied by the Bible’s language of divine Father and Son.”¹⁰² On the other hand, it could be countered that in the Old Testament, the phrase “son of” denotes not generation from but membership in a group. One can observe this usage in texts speaking of “sons of the prophets” (1 Kings 20:35; 2 Kings 2:3ff), “sons of the troop” (2 Chron. 25:13), and others where “son of” does not denote a begetting. The same argument is advanced by texts showing “son of” to indicate a condition as “sons of affliction” (Prov. 31:5), or

Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 252.

Stephen S. Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John* (Waco, TX: Word, 1984), 303.

100. Giles, *The Eternal Generation of the Son*, 83.

101. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 93.

102. R. Kendall Soulen. “Generatio, Processio Verbi, Donum Nominis: Mapping the Vocabulary of Eternal Generation” in *Retrieving Eternal Generation*, 144.

1 character, as “sons of wickedness”(Ps. 89:23). Could it be, then,
2 that in the New Testament “Son of God” denotes something
3 other than being begotten? That is the position of Erickson¹⁰³
4 and Warfield.¹⁰⁴ Likewise, Boettner surmises “Son of God”
5 means sameness in nature.¹⁰⁵ Charles Hodge also suggests the
6 terms “Father” and “Son” may denote equality and likeness.¹⁰⁶
7 And Frame explains, “To Jews ‘son of’ someone (or figuratively
8 of something) shares the nature of his parent.” Frame evidenc-
9 es this with John 5:18 and 10:31.¹⁰⁷

10 This review of some of the popular topics related to the
11 doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son from the Father
12 should suggest arguments for and against that tenet are com-
13 plex and are deserving of the most diligent evaluation so that
14 one may honestly arrive at his or her conclusions on the tenet.
15 While the subject matter is an important academic pursuit,
16 what is even more vital is that the Christ being studied fills the
17 life of the believer and controls his will, and for this, we all pray.

18 The Question of the Eternal Procession of the Holy Spirit

19 According to Berkhof, the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds
20 from God the Father and the Son in necessary act and this is
21 evinced by John 15:26.¹⁰⁸ Giles insists “the eternal procession

22 103. Millard J. Erickson, *Making Sense of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker,
23 2000), 89.

24 104. Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Person and Work of Christ* (Philadelphia:
25 Presbyterian and Reformed, 1970), 77.

26 105. Loraine Boettner, *Studies in Theology* (Presbyterian and Reformed, 1971),
27 111–112.

28 106. Hodge, *Systematic Theology* vol 1, 469.

29 107. Frame, *The Doctrine of God*, 660.

30 108. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 97.

of the Spirit is a corollary doctrine complementing the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son.”¹⁰⁹ The position offered by Berkhof is found in the Westminster Confession but rejected by the Greek Orthodox Catechism. The latter holds that the Spirit proceeds from the Father only.¹¹⁰ Berkof’s view is also held by some other Reformed theologians and some Arminian theologians as well.¹¹¹ Yet, others as Buswell, Frame, Boettner, and Warfield reject the tenet,¹¹² Berkhof’s evidence of John 15:26, the only biblical proof, is not conclusive, since while the verb “proceeds” there is present tense, it likely is not timeless since the context is temporal.¹¹³ The verb “send” can be understood as controlling the verb “proceeds.” And “send” alludes to a temporal event.¹¹⁴ So, it appears to many that the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit lacks any biblical basis. But it should perhaps be recalled that the Spirit, who inspired Scripture, sought to explain Christ, not Himself. So possibly that the Spirit’s eternal procession is not revealed in the Bible, is not a strong argument against that tenet. On the other hand,

109. Giles, *The Eternal Generation of the Son*, 89.

110. Constantine N. Callinicos, *The Greek Orthodox Catechism* (New York: Greek Archdiocese of North and South America, 1953), 33.

111. A. A. Hodge, “Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit” in Benjamin B. Warfield’s *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit* (Amityville, NY: Calvary, 1997 reprint), 165.

John Miley, *Systematic Theology vol I* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989 reprint), 260.

112. Buswell, *Systematic Theology vol 1*, 120.

Frame, *The Doctrine of God*, 715.

Boettner, *Studies in Theology*, 122–123.

Warfield, “Biblical Doctrines” in *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), 165.

113. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 525.

114. George R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 276.

1 our doctrine should be based on what the Scriptures say, not
2 what they do not say.

3 **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

4 Provide a convincing argument for each response.

- 5 1. Do you agree with the reasons given by Boersma, Shedd,
6 and Dahms to evidence that the doctrine of eternal gen-
7 eration is important?
- 8 2. Explain why Calvin has been understood by some to have
9 disagreed with Shedd's position on eternal generation.
- 10 3. Weigh the evidence for and against understanding
11 *monogenēs* to mean "only begotten."
- 12 4. Do you think the particulars of Berkhof's doctrine on
13 eternal generation is supported by the first four cen-
14 turies of Christian tradition? Provide specifics for your
15 answer.
- 16 5. Defend your position on the question of whether the
17 names "Father" and "Son" are or are not proof of eternal
18 generation.
- 19 6. Do you agree with Giles on the eternal procession of the
20 Holy Spirit?
- 21 7. Do you agree with Giles on Psalm 2:7?
- 22 8. Explain how the Nicene Creed refutes Arianism.
- 23 9. Defend your opinion on whether the Old Testament us-
24 age of the phrase "son of" is or is not useful in defining
25 how Christ is the Son of God.
- 26 10. What single biblical text would you say is the strongest
27 proof of eternal generation?

Prefatory Remarks on Chapter Four	1
It has been several times stipulated that that all evangelical scholars subscribe to the belief that that Jesus Christ has both a human nature and a divine nature. Chapter four will note in detail how such scholars do not concur in regard to what it means to say Christ is human despite Jesus repeatedly being called a man in the New Testament. Witness: “For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the <i>man</i> Jesus Christ” (1 Tim. 2:5, KJV). “Ye men of Israel, hear these word: Jesus of Nazareth, a <i>man</i> approved of God” (Acts 2:22a, KJV).	2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
However, we shall see in chapter five that there has been no concurrence over the issues of whether Christ has a human will, whether the human nature is only personalized by the divine nature, and whether the humanity is given God’s powers by the divine nature in Christ. And, of course, our Lord is also called God, is said to possess divine attributes, and is credited with doing divine works. He truly is God. All evangelicals believe, despite the protestations of the ancient Arians in the time of Athanasius and the heresies of modern cults today.	11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19
However, despite our common belief that our Lord is essentially identical to the nature of God, we evangelicals still cannot agree how the deity of Jesus Christ stands relationally to God the Father. Is the Father of a superior authority? Is Christ’s divine nature eternally role-subordinate to the Father or is His divine nature only temporally (in His time on earth) role-subordinate, or is it only the humanity of Christ that is less than the Father in authority?	20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27

1 The issues are difficult, and while I subscribe to the last po-
2 sition, I will attempt to honestly represent the argumentation
3 for the others. Bear with me, reader. Here we go!

4 **PREVIEW OF CHAPTER FOUR**

5 This chapter addresses a number of complex topics, and it
6 might assist the reader to preview of some of the essentials. At
7 issue is whether Christ as God has forever been subordinate in
8 role to God the Father.

- 9 1. Jowers believes God's simplicity (wherein every divine
10 characteristic is identical to the being of God) disproves
11 eternal role-subordination, but Feinberg questions
12 God's simplicity is ever clearly stated in Scripture and
13 doubts it can be correctly deduced from the Bible.
- 14 2. John of Damascus', Gregory Nazianzus', Augustine's,
15 and Hodges' teaching that there is only one faculty of
16 will in God is contrary to Horrell's Social Trinity doc-
17 trine. Horrell states there are three faculties of will in
18 God.
- 19 3. McCall and Erickson disagree with Gons, Nasalli, and
20 Ware over whether role-subordination is a personal
21 property of the Son because McCall and Erickson argue
22 that were the Son to have that property and the Father
23 not have it, then the two would be different in essence.
- 24 4. Torrance's opinion conflicts with that of Jowers' on
25 whether the activities of the economic Trinity show
26 roles in the immanent Trinity. Jowers believes the hu-
27 man nature of Christ does not reveal the divine nature.

5. Grudem’s belief that predestination evidences the role-
subordination of the pre-incarnate Son is at variance
with Shedd, Strong, and Chafer as these say God predes-
tinates nothing about immanent relationships between
the trinal Persons. 1 2 3 4 5
6. Kitano’s understanding of John 14:28 contradicts that of
John of Damascus and Gregory of Nazianzus since these
teach this text refers to origination (eternal begetting),
not authority. 6 7 8 9
7. Cowan’s position on Galatians 4:4 is contrary to that of
Theodoret’s, Gregory Nazianzus’, and Augustine’s, as
these three fathers teach the text refers only to the in-
carnated Christ. 10 11 12 13
8. Keener and Cowan disagree with Calvin, as the former
states “Son” in John 5:19 refers only to Christ as man, not
to Christ as God. 14 15 16
9. Burk’s conclusion on Philippians 2:6 that the Son does not
have equality with God is at variance with the NT Greek
professors Hellerman, Melnick, Muller, and Fee, and the
Greek speaking fathers Athanasius and Chrysostom as
these six affirm, in contradiction to Burk’s discovered
grammaticism, that the text stipulates that Christ has
both the form of God and equality with God. 17 18 19 20 21 22 23
10. Butner contradicts Grudem’s understanding of 1
Corinthians 15:38 in that Butner argues the context
shows the human nature, not the divine nature, is the
referent. 24 25 26 27

- 1 11. Ware disagrees with Martin Chemnitz and Gregory of
2 Nazianzus on John 6:38 as the latter two believe that the
3 human will of Christ, not the divine will, is the topic in
4 that text.
- 5 12. Cole challenges Grudem on Hebrews 5:8 as Cole rejects
6 the view that this text means the Son, as God, is role sub-
7 servient. The Son, as God, does not learn.
- 8 13. Frame and Dahms do not concur on Mark 14:62 in that
9 Frame denies this verse refers to the divine nature
10 of Christ because the Son of Man is said to die and be
11 resurrected.
- 12 14. Dahms states that “Lord” in the verse is contrasted
13 with “God” and that this indicates a subordination, but
14 Athanasius, Calvin, and Hodge on 1 Corinthians 8:6 dis-
15 agree. These three teach the text affirms the full equality
16 of the Son.



Is the Son Eternally Role-Subordinate?

(All Scripture citations are from the NET Bible)

It has already been manifestly demonstrated that the views of evangelical exegetes and theologians widely differ on a number of Christological issues. Of late there has been considerable disagreement over the question of whether the God the Son is eternally role-subordinate to God the Father. I suggest there are three views: (1) In Grudem's view, unless God the Son is eternally role-subordinate to the Father, "The Trinity has not eternally existed."¹ But (2), according to Erickson, functional subordination of the Son as God was only temporary.² Then, (3) is the position that the role-subordination of the Son occurs only in His human nature and not ever in His divinity. Calvin

1. Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 251.

2. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 307.

1 appears to represent this view in saying Christ being servant
2 of the Father and not doing His own will “apply entirely to His
3 humanity.”³ This is also Hodge’s view, who believes “it is as
4 the God-man that He is economically (note, not eternally) sub-
5 ject to the Father ... neither the obedience nor the suffering of
6 Christ was the obedience or suffering of the divine nature.”⁴
7 But many others disagree.

8 Perhaps it saddens the heart of God that we evangelicals are
9 mired in such debates, but surely individuals on both sides are
10 prayerfully wishing, in surrender to Him, to glorify the Lord
11 Jesus by their teachings and to interpret the Bible correctly.
12 Students of theology should, therefore, be exposed to the theo-
13 logical issues and the disputed meanings of biblical texts in-
14 volved, regarding a possible hierarchy of authority in God and
15 to the reasons why there are differences on these issues. To
16 work toward this objective, I will use chapter four to begin in-
17 teracting with theological issues, then I will move on to biblical
18 texts.

19 **Does God’s Simplicity Disprove Eternal Role-Subordination?**

20 Must each Person in God have the identical faculty of vo-
21 lition as do the others because of the simplicity of God? Not
22 according to Lewis and Demarest, who assert there are three
23 faculties of will in God: one for each Person. Were that true,
24 then one Person in God could submit His will to the will of an-
25 other Person in God. The biblical proof of their position, they

26 3. Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.14.2.

27 4. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 2:394, 395.

contend, is the Father is said to will (Matt. 6:10), the Son is said 1
to will (Luke 22:42), and the Holy Spirit is said to will (1 Cor. 2
12:11).⁵ It appears not to have occurred to these theologians that 3
if an action is ascribed to one Triunal Person, that does not re- 4
quire said action is exclusive to only that Person. Take, for ex- 5
ample, Lewis and Demarest's use of 1 Corinthians 12:11, where 6
it is said the Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to those whom He 7
wills. Does this exclude another Triunal Person from giving 8
those gifts? How so, as Ephesians 4:8 reveals that also Christ 9
wills to give them? Or consider Lewis and Demarest's example 10
of Matthew 6:10, where it is said the Father has a will regarding 11
what happens on earth. Should we assume, therefore, the oth- 12
er Persons in God do not have a will concerning that? So, does 13
each Person in God have a distinct, personal power of volition 14
or could the divine simplicity, that God does not have parts, 15
and so has just one will, be a counter to that view? But is God's 16
simplicity a universally accepted doctrine among evangelicals? 17

It does not appear so, as opinion is divided even among our 18
three systematics often referenced. Berkhof affirms the sim- 19
plicity of God and defines that attribute as God not being com- 20
posite and that His perfections are identical to His being.⁶ 21
Grudem also affirms God's simplicity, explaining God is not 22
composed of parts and that the divine attributes are not ad- 23
ditions to the divine being.⁷ However, Erickson takes the op- 24
posite position by calling simplicity a strange and problematic 25

5. Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest, *Integrative Theology*, 3 vols in 1 (Grand 26
Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 1:273. 27

6. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 62. 28

7. Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 177, 179. 29

1 tenet.⁸ What, to me, is curious is that as shown below, Jowers
2 argues from the divine simplicity that the Son cannot be sub-
3 ject to the Father. But Grudem, who accepts divine simplicity,
4 strongly defends eternal role-subordination. Yet Erickson,
5 who argues against eternal role-subordination, questions di-
6 vine simplicity. Consequently, it is not the case that affirming
7 the simplicity of God or denying that doctrine will necessar-
8 ily determine one's view on whether there is a hierarchy of au-
9 thority among the Triunal Persons.

10 Widening input on the issue, we see two other theolo-
11 gians at odds on the tenet of the simplicity of God: Geisler
12 and Feinberg. Geisler argues that other qualities of God as His
13 unity, aseity, immateriality, immutability, and infinity evince
14 God's simplicity. Geisler answers objections to his position
15 by saying simplicity, while being unintelligible to us, is intel-
16 ligible in itself, and the fact that God is a Trinity does not dis-
17 prove God's simplicity because simplicity refers to the divine
18 essence, not to the Persons.⁹ Feinberg, however, observes
19 there is no verse that explicitly teaches God's simplicity, and so
20 the doctrine must be inferred from other aspects of the divine
21 Being. And those inferences may be questionable.¹⁰

22 With that backdrop of differing opinions on God's simplic-
23 ity, the logic of Dennis Jowers' argument can be better evaluat-
24 ed. Jowers reasons if every divine characteristic is identical to
25 the substance of God, then there is not internal differentiation.

26 8. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 269.

27 9. Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology*, vol II (Minneapolis: Bethany, 2003),
28 40–43.

29 10. John S. Feinberg, *No One Like Him* (Wheaton, IL: Crossways, 2002), 327–330.

Each divine Person is identical to the one, simple essence of God. And as simplicity means only one power and one will in God, there can be no role-subordination of one Person to another.¹¹ But it would seem this argument is only sound if it can only be convincingly evidenced that every characteristic of God is identical to the essence of God. If submission to the Father is a personal property of God the Son, then Jowers' opinion becomes suspect. Much related to this issue are the corollary questions of whether there are three faculties of wills in God—one in each Person—or one which resides in the divine essence, and whether affirming role-subordination among the Persons in God is a contradiction of the homoousios.

Does God Have Three Faculties of Will?

Let's look further into the question of the wills in God. Were there to be only one faculty of will in God, then that would seem to be problematic for the doctrine of the role-subordination of the divine Son to the Father. And so, the question of whether the God the Son has a faculty of will in distinction from the Father is a suitable issue to explore when considering whether there is a hierarchy in God. To begin, as it has been noted in the above chapters, Christian tradition has often been referenced to argue the worthiness of theological positions. And so, it would seem proper to look at the question of wills in God in the writings of the church fathers.

The opining of three church fathers will be noted. John of Damascus, in his *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, teaches the

11. Jowers, *The New Evangelical Subordinationism*, 383–385.

1 three Persons in God have the same essence, energy, and will.
2 And so, as there is only one will, there is only one authority in
3 God.¹² Were this true, it does not seem the Son as God could
4 be under the authority of the Father. Augustine, in his *On the*
5 *Creed*, affirms there is only one will shared between God the
6 Father and God the Son, therefore, it is impossible that the
7 will of the Son differs from that of the Father.¹³ Augustine is
8 consistent with that position when he, in his *On the Trinity*,
9 states all subordination texts refer only to Christ in his form as
10 a servant.¹⁴ With that sentiment, Gregory Nazianzus concurs.
11 As God, Christ was neither obedient nor disobedient. Why?
12 Because Gregory Nazianzus believed there is only one will in
13 the Godhead.¹⁵ This position, which inheres the power of will in
14 the one nature of God, not in the three Persons, parallels with
15 the understanding that the two wills in Christ, human and di-
16 vine, reside in the two natures of Christ, not in His Person as
17 Grudem teaches.¹⁶ Yet, that belief of two wills in Christ allows
18 one to see passages alluding to the incarnated Son's obedience
19 as possibly being applicable to only the human will of Christ.
20 But that topic too is in dispute and requires more attention in
21 chapter five.

22 Yet, a number of modern theologians teach there are three
23 powers of will in God and inhere the wills rather in the Persons
24 of God. Again, I am surprised by Erickson in this matter

25 12. John of Damascus, *Exposition*, chapter 8.

26 13. Augustine, *On the Creed*, paragraph 3.

27 14. Augustine, *Trinity*, 1.1.3

28 15. Gregory Nazianzus, *Theological Orations*, 4.6.12.

29 16. Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 560.

because of his supporting the possibility of three wills in God. 1
I am surprised because the one will theory, as Giles shows, is a 2
better posture for rejecting eternal role-subordination.¹⁷ And 3
Erickson rejects eternal role-subordination. Erickson states 4
Luke 22:42 evidences a difference between the will of the Father 5
and the will of the Son, but he quickly adds this text may allude 6
only to the human will of Christ.¹⁸ One may do well to think 7
that is the meaning of the text, given that a divine will would 8
not fear death, as Gregory Nazianzus, who teaches one will in 9
God, explains.¹⁹ 10

In the social Trinity of Horrell's theology, we see each trinal 11
Person manifesting His unique intelligence and volition; there 12
are distinct centers of consciousness in God. There are both 13
one mind and three minds, one will and three wills.²⁰ With 14
that perspective, it would seem one Trinal Person could fol- 15
low the directives of another. Yet Shedd, who also affirms each 16
Person has a distinct consciousness, insists a consciousness is 17
neither an understanding nor a will. He states there is only one 18
will in God.²¹ And that position is represented also in Charles 19
Hodge, who, along with those fathers above, affirms God has 20
only one intelligence, power, and will, despite each Person 21
having "a certain property."²² Hodge's affirmation of there be- 22
ing only one will in God is consistent again with his view that 23

17. Kevin Giles, *Jesus and the Father* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 310. 24

18. Erickson, *Who's Tampering*, 216. 25

19. Gregory Nazianzus, *Fourth Theological Oration*, 12. 26

20. J. Scott Horrell, "Complementary Trinitarianism" in *The New Evangelical Subordinationism*, 354–359. 27

21. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology* 1:283. 28

22. Hodge, *Systematic Theology* 1:461. 29

1 Christ, in His divine nature, is not obedient to the Father.²³
2 Claunch, who believes in the eternal role-subordination of the
3 Son, concedes teaching three wills in God is contrary to Nicene
4 and Reformed tradition.²⁴ Could the Son as God be subject to
5 the Father if there is only one will in the divine nature of God?
6 But if there are three, then, it seems, He could.

7 **Does Eternal Role-Subordination Deny the Homoousion?**

8 This term means the Son is the same (*homo*) substance (*ousia*)
9 as the Father. The issue of whether eternal role-subordination
10 contradicts *homoousios* revolves around the question of wheth-
11 er the Persons in God have personal properties that the oth-
12 ers do not have. McCall argues if God the Son has the eternal,
13 personal property of being role-subordinate to the Father, then
14 the Son is essentially different from the Father, and this is a
15 denial of the *homoousion* of the Son with the Father.²⁵ Erickson,
16 in a like vein, argues if the Father has the essential, personal
17 property of having authority over the Son and the Son has the
18 essential, personal property of being subject to the Father, then
19 these Persons do not have the same essence.²⁶ Erickson makes
20 this same argument in his systematic: If a Trinal Person has
21 essential personal qualities the Others do not have, then the
22 Persons are different in essence.²⁷

23 23. Hodge, *Systematic Theology* 2:395.

24 24. Claunch, "God is the Head of Christ," 88.

25 25. Thomas H. McCall, *Which Trinity? Whose Monotheism?* (Grand Rapids, MI:
26 Eerdmans, 2010), 179.

27 26. Erickson, *Who's Tampering*, 172.

28 27. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 308.

However, Gons and Nasalli counter that the Church, for 1
1700 years, has taught that the Persons in God have different 2
personal properties that distinguish them from the others. I 3
assume that the properties in mind are in regard to the Son 4
being begotten. Each Person has, they say, properties shared 5
with the others because of the commonality of essence, and 6
also has properties that are individual, belonging to Him 7
alone.²⁸ According to Gons and Nasalli, the “authority-submis- 8
sion” property belongs to the Persons, not to the essence.²⁹ But 9
would this not mean the Persons are unlike the divine essence? 10
Ware, who agrees with that position of Gons and Nasalli, evi- 11
dences it by alluding to Athanasius’ teaching that “begetting 12
and being begotten” are personal qualities of the Father and 13
the Son, respectively.³⁰ Yet, even were the qualities of “beget- 14
ting-begotten” accepted as qualities unique to the Father and 15
the Son respectively, must it follow that the “authority-submis- 16
sion” properties also are? 17

Certainly Athanasius, whom Ware references, believed be- 18
ing begotten is an eternal personal property of the Son, but is 19
that conclusive proof that Athanasius taught, as well that an 20
eternal personal property of the Son is being obedient? Did 21
Athanasius believe the Son, in His divine nature, is subject to 22
the Father’s will, or rather that the Son, only in His human- 23
ity, is obedient to the Father? While the doctrine that this 24

28. Gons and Nasalli, “Three Recent Philosophical Arguments Against Hierarchy,” 202. 25
26

29. Ibid., 201. 27

30. Bruce A. Ware, “Does Affirming and Eternal Authority-Submission Relationship in the Trinity Entail a Denial of *Homoousios*?” in *One God in Three Persons*. 28
29

1 father was occupied with was the co-essentiality of the Son
2 with the Father, some can infer from several of observations
3 in Athanasius' writings that he did not believe in His deity the
4 Son was subject to the Father.

5 One could first observe that according to Athanasius, the
6 works of Christ were divided between those pertaining to His
7 deity and those pertaining to His humanity. While walking as
8 a man, Christ as the Word was quickening all things.³¹ While
9 ignorant as man, Christ as the Word was omniscient.³² And
10 His being troubled or feeling forsaken are attributable only to
11 His human nature.³³ So, if works, feelings, and powers of one
12 nature in Christ differ from those in the other nature, perhaps
13 the way is open for role-submission to be different among the
14 natures as well. And this possible understanding of Athanasius
15 would seem to be supported by the father's contention that the
16 Son is equal to the Father³⁴ and that Christ became obedient in
17 His incarnation.³⁵

18 One can observe the same in Hillary, another Nicene-era
19 theologian, who sees a distinction in the works between the
20 Father and the Son³⁶ but repeatedly exclaims only as man did
21 Christ subject Himself to the Father.³⁷ Consequently, it rea-
22 sonable to accept that each Trinal Person has some properties

23 31. Athanasius, *Incarnation of the Word*, 17.

24 32. Athanasius, *Against the Arians* 3.25.37.

25 33. *Ibid.*, 29.55

26 34. Athanasius, *De Synodis*, 3.49.

27 35. *Against the Arians*, 1.11.39.

28 36. Hillary, *On the Trinity*, 4.21.

29 37. *Ibid.*, 9.5; 14.

distinct to themselves but that “authority-submission” may not be one of these properties.³⁸

Does the Economic Trinity Demonstrate Roles in the Immanent Trinity?

Dahms boldly asserts if there is no eternal subordination of the Son to the Father, then Christ misrepresents God by saying He was sent by the Father and is dependent on the Father. How God acts in creation and salvation, then, are but workings out of eternal relationships. Were they not, Dahms says, Scripture misinforms about the divine nature?³⁹ Likewise, Torrance believes the activity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the economic Trinity is grounded in the ontological Trinity. Torrance agrees with Rahner that to think otherwise “would create havoc between mission and the intra-divine life.”⁴⁰ Bird and Shillaker say, “The God who is known in the economy of salvation corresponds to the way God actually is.”⁴¹ If not, they suggest, the Bible is deceiving us. So, accept their view or the Bible is deceptive?

However, a counter to this position that the economic Trinity is equivalent to the immanent is seen in both Giles and Jowers. Giles believes what Christ experienced as man cannot

38. For example, Giles argues for eternal generation in *The Eternal Generation of the Son* but he rejects eternal role-subordination in *Jesus and the Father*. One can accept personal properties but deny hierarchy.

39. Dahms, *Subordination of the Son*, 364.

40. Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 198, 200.

41. Michael F. Bird and Robert Shillaker, “Subordination in the Trinity and Gender Roles” in *The New Evangelical Subordinationism*, 297.

1 be predicated to Christ as God.⁴² And Jowers likewise main-
2 tains Christ’s human nature does not reveal His divine nature,
3 as divinity can neither change nor die.⁴³ This logic appears to
4 coincide with Calvin, who teaches that expressions, as Christ
5 being servant to the Father or doing the Father’s will, not His
6 own, “apply entirely to His humanity.”⁴⁴ Dahms’ claim that if
7 Christ is not role-subordinate to the Father, then the Bible
8 misleads us on the nature of God is possibly to be questioned,
9 should the submissive role of Christ be correctly viewed as oc-
10 ccurring only in His humanity. Could the two-nature doctrine
11 be a remedy to the eternal role-subordination debate?

12 **Does Either Predestination or Creation Evidence Eternal** 13 **Role-Subordination?**

14 Grudem points out to his readers that it is the Father who
15 predestines and the Father creates through the Son. He says
16 this means the Son is subservient to the Father.⁴⁵ Grudem’s
17 evidence for the first proposition is Ephesians 1:3–5: “Blessed
18 is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed
19 us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly realms in Christ.
20 For He lovingly chose us in Christ before the foundation of the
21 world ... He did this by predestinating us to be adopted as His
22 Sons through Jesus Christ, according to the pleasure of His
23 will.”

24 42. Giles, *Jesus and the Father*, 256.

25 43. Jowers, *The Inconceivability of Insubordination in a Simple God*, 401.

26 44. Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.14.2.

27 45. Grudem, “Biblical Evidence for the Eternal Submission of the Son to the
28 Father” in *The New Evangelical Subordinationism*, 232, 242–243.

Grudem further supports his position on predestination by the Father by alerting his readers to the texts Romans 8:29, 2 Timothy 1:9, and 1 Peter 1:18–20: “Those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.... He is the one who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not based on our works but on His own purpose and grace, granted to us in Christ Jesus before time began.... You were ransomed ... by precious blood like that of an unblemished and spotless lamb, namely Christ. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world.”

Grudem insists these texts indicate that prior to creation, the Son was eternally subject to the planning and authority of the Father.

But it seems fair to ask whether it was the Son as God or the Son as man that was predestined by the Father and so was under the Father’s authority. Look at Grudem’s texts. In Romans 8, are we not conformed to the image of Christ’s humanity, not to Christ’s deity? We obviously are not invested with the powers of God. And in 2 Timothy 1, are we not saved by the passion of Christ as man? And in 1 Peter 1, is it not the shedding of the blood of the man Jesus Christ that is foreknown? Perhaps, then, it is Jesus as man who is predestined and is the Father’s servant. Can God predestine God? Not according to Shedd, who teaches there is no necessary activity of God pertaining to Trinitarian distinctions that can be part of the divine decree.⁴⁶ And, Strong believes God decrees nothing in Himself.⁴⁷

46. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 1:395–396.

47. Strong, *Systematic Theology*, 353.

1 Likewise, Chafer, in his systematic, explains God did not, how-
2 ever, decree anything concerning Himself, His attributes, and
3 the mode of His subsistence in three Persons or any inherent
4 relationship of responsibility within the Godhead. The Decree
5 of God relates to His acts, which acts are not immanent and
6 intrinsic and are outside of His own being.⁴⁸

7 But, if only subjects outside of the Being of God are predes-
8 tined by the Father, then the Son, as God, cannot be the object
9 of predestination, and so Grudem's argument appears ques-
10 tionable. Perhaps Grudem is not rightly distinguishing be-
11 tween what is true of each nature in Christ.

12 Still, Grudem may have a poignant argument to substanti-
13 ate his doctrine of the eternal subordination of the Son by his
14 noting the differing roles of the Father and the Son in creation.
15 Grudem names this part, "The Father's authority and the Son's
16 submission in the process of creation." He reminds us that ac-
17 cording to the Scriptures John 1:1 and Hebrews 1:1–2, it is the
18 Father who initiates and the Son who carries out the Father's
19 will. The Father creates through the Son and this means a sub-
20 mission on the part of the Son.⁴⁹ This argument was used by
21 Dahms as well, who says as the Logos was the Father's agent
22 in creation, He therefore must have been in submission to the
23 Father.⁵⁰

24 Yet do differing roles in creation require a difference in au-
25 thority? That is not a concept favored by some fathers. Ambrose

26 48. Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 1:228.

27 49. Grudem, "Biblical Evidence," 242–243.

28 50. Dahms, "The Subordination of the Son," 357.

believes, in creation, “there is no subjection as that of a servant in the Godhead of Christ.”⁵¹ And, Augustine teaches that as Christ created, that shows the Son and Father are equals.⁵²

But could Augustine’s meaning be limited to an equality in essence, not in authority? That is unlikely, as the next chapter is devoted to explaining how the Father is greater than the Son. And here Augustine explains it is Christ according to the flesh and in the form of a servant who is less than the Father. And so, perhaps one does well to acknowledge there are difficulties with Grudem’s conclusion.

Does Interaction Between the Father and the Son Set a Standard for Gender Relationships?

This section is not intended to evince either the complementarian or the egalitarian view on gender roles in marriage or church. Instead, it is purposed to evaluate this position of Grudem as it relates to roles in the Trinity: “As the Father has authority over the Son in the Trinity, so the husband has authority over the wife in marriage. The husband’s role is parallel to that of God the Father and the wife’s role is parallel to that of God the Son.”⁵³

Grudem’s biblical support is 1 Corinthians 11:3, where it is said the head of the woman is her husband and the head of Christ is God. One might note that “God,” not specifically the

51. Ambrose, *Of the Christian Faith*, 5.13.163.

52. Augustine, *Trinity*, 4.19.25.

53. Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 257.

Grudem has vigorously defended the view that *kephale* in 1 Cor. 11:3 means “authority over.” “Does *Kephale* (Head) Mean ‘Source’ or ‘Authority Over’ in Greek Literature? A Survey of 2, 336 Examples” in *Trinity Journal* 6 NS (1985): 39–60.

1 Father, is mentioned. Does “God” in 8:3 or 10:20, 30 or 11:7, 12,
2 16 just mean the Father? And does “Christ” in 8:11 and 10:16 not
3 mean the humanity of Christ in particular? Was “Christ” not
4 born, crucified, and killed only in His humanity? So, by what
5 rule of exegesis is it proven that Grudem is correct in his in-
6 terpretation that the divinity of Christ is Paul’s topic in 11:3?
7 Why cannot the meaning of Grudem’s proof text be that God
8 the Son, as well as the Father and the Spirit, are the head of
9 the human nature of our Lord? Note Augustine’s view, who
10 says the statement, “The head of Christ is God” refers to “when
11 Christ took upon Himself the nature of a man.” And that is the
12 view also of Hodge and Groshiede.⁵⁴ Certainly, Grudem’s opin-
13 ion may be correct, but his interpretation has been be seriously
14 questioned.

15 **Does John 14:28, “The Father is greater than I am,” Mean the**
16 **Father Is Greater in Authority?**

17 The NET Bible has this to say regarding this text: There have
18 been two orthodox interpretations: (1) The Son is eternally
19 generated, (2) as *man* the Son was less than the Father.⁵⁵ There
20 are only these two. But Kenji Kitano, in his 1999 Th.M. thesis
21 at TEDS, asserts there is a third: “This text clearly teaches the
22 eternal relational subordination of the Son.”⁵⁶

23 54. Augustine, *Faith and the Creed* 9.1.

24 Hodge, *Corinthians*, 207.

25 F.W. Grosheide, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids,
26 MI: Eerdmans, 1984 reprint), 251.

27 55. *The New English Translation* note on John 14:28

28 56. Kenji Kitano, “The Eternal Relational Subordination of the Son to the
29 Father,” unpublished Th.M. Thesis, Trinity Evangelical School, April 1999.

Kitano meets two objections to his interpretation: (1) An equality in essence does not require an equality in relationships, (2) The Covenant of Redemption cannot be proven to be the basis of Christ's subjection.⁵⁷ Kitano's first reader who approved this thesis was Wayne Grudem. Kitano's interpretation is also that of some modern Johannine exegetes as well. Bruce, on 14:28, states the father's authority is greater than that of the Son's. And, Beasley-Murray believes this text shows subordination to the Father cannot be limited to the Incarnation.⁵⁸

Yet, notables among the church fathers reject that opinion: Gregory Nazianzus informs that "greater" in this text refers to origination, not authority. And that also is the opinion of John of Damascus.⁵⁹ These say "greater" refers to eternal generation, not eternal role-subordination. But regarding 14:28, Augustine has it that only in the Son's humanity is the Father greater. Likewise, Ambrose teaches 14:28 refers to the humanity of Christ. So, these fathers agree with the NET Bible's comment

57. Berkhof explains the Covenant of Redemption was an eternal, voluntary agreement among the Persons of the Trinity to provide salvation for mankind. *Systematic Theology*, 266.

B.B. Warfield suggests a subordination in the modes of subsistence of the Son may be explained the Covenant of Redemption. *Biblical Doctrines* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003 reprint), 166–167.

And even Grudem himself defines the Covenant of Redemption to be "an agreement among the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in which the Son agreed to become man" and as a man be obedient to the Father. *Systematic Theology*, 518.

58. F.F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 306.
Beasley-Murray, *John*, 263.

59. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 3.7.

John of Damascus, *Exposition*, 9.

Augustine, *Trinity* 1.13.7.

Ambrose, *Christian Faith*, 5.13.224.

1 that there are two views on 14:28. And Calvin remarks the
2 Father is greater only than the Son “clothed in flesh.”⁶⁰

3 **Does Galatians 4:4, “God sent out His Son born of a woman,”**
4 **Mean the Son is Eternally Role-Subordinate?**

5 As will be shown, it is not uncommon to attribute subjec-
6 tion to the Son as God because He was sent by the Father.
7 Yet in the minds of some, this is again confusing as to what
8 pertains to the Son as God with what pertains to the Son as
9 man. Theodoret, speaking as Orthodoxes, in his interchanges
10 with Eranistes, cites Amphilochius, who explains the Father
11 is only greater than the Son enfleshed.⁶¹ And, being sent, ac-
12 cording to Gregory, applies entirely to the humanity.⁶² And so
13 says Augustine who writes that the Son was sent as “made of a
14 woman,” and that being sent indicates no inequality with the
15 Father.⁶³ While it is likely that Paul had Christ’s pre-existence
16 in mind,⁶⁴ an argument can be made that the sending of Christ
17 is not conclusive evidence of eternal role-subordination. Also,
18 Erickson questions that it is an assumption that being sent
19 equates to being subordinate.⁶⁵

20 But these views are not shared by many others. Cowan im-
21 plies a Jewish Midrash and John 13:16 suggest it seems natural

22 60. Calvin, *Commentaries*, 17.103.

23 61. Theodoret, *Dialogues*, 1.

24 62. Gregory Nazianzus, *Oration* 3.18

25 63. Augustine, *Trinity*, 2. 5. 8; 4. 19. 27

26 64. Ronald Y.K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans,
27 1988), 181.

28 Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians* (Waco, TX: Word, 1990), 170.

29 65. Erickson, *Who’s Tampering*, 187.

to assume we should see the sending of the Son to indicate a subordination of the Son.⁶⁶ Keener also develops his case that Christ, being sent, must have been in submission to the Father's will. His reasoning is that as the apostles were in subordination when being sent out by Jesus, God the Son must have also been subordinate when being sent out by the Father.⁶⁷ One must decide whether relationships between the Lord and men are a correct analogy of how relationships in the immanent Trinity must be.

Does John 5:19, “the Son can do nothing on His own” Mean as God, the Son Is Dependent on the Father?

As has been repeatedly shown, competent scholars disagree over the meanings of a large number of Scriptures. There are three views on this text as well: (1) Keener thinks the passage shows God the Son only acts with delegated authority from the Father,⁶⁸ and Cowan too believes God the Son is here shown to be dependent.⁶⁹ This view is that of Ayres, who also states, “The incarnate Son’s humility before the Father reveals something about what it means for the Son to be eternally who he is.”⁷⁰ But (2), in contrast, Beasley-Murray rather states the text demonstrates the identity of action between the Son and the Father,⁷¹ and Augustine appears to teach that as well in say-

66. Cowan, “The Father and the Son in the Gospel of John,” 49.

67. Keener, “Subordination Within the Trinity,” 47–48.

68. *Ibid.*, 44–45.

69. Cowan, 51.

70. Lewis Ayres, “As We Are One,” in *Advancing Trinitarian Theology*, Oliver Crisp and Fred Sanders, eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 108.

71. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 75.

1 ing John 5:19 means “the working of the Father and the Son
2 is indivisible” and that it does not mean the Son is less than
3 the Father.⁷² Both of these views could be understood as tak-
4 ing “Son” here to refer to the divine Son. But (3) Calvin instead
5 thinks 5:19 is limited in application to the Son as man in the
6 flesh. Calvin apparently is convinced of that, given the context
7 in which the Jews could only see Christ as man.⁷³ One must de-
8 cide for himself whether it seems feasible that God can only do
9 what God sees God doing.

10 **Does Philippians 2:6, “did not regard equality with God**
11 **something to be grasped,” Mean the Son is Not Equal to the**
12 **Father in Authority?**

13 Burk argues this verse shows while the Son is in God’s form,
14 He is not equal in authority to the Father.⁷⁴ Burk bases his ar-
15 gument on particulars in the Greek as the articulated infinitive
16 (“*the* to be equal”) which Burk insists acts as a wedge between
17 “form of God” and “equal to God.” It is appropriate to discover
18 how other experts in the Greek understand this text.

19 Consider both modern and ancient Greek experts. First
20 moderns: Melnick, then professor of New Testament at

21 ^{72.} Augustine, *Trinity*, 2.1.3.

22 ^{73.} Calvin, *Commentaries* 17: 198–199.

23 ^{74.} Dennis Ray Burk, “The Meaning of Harpagmos in Philippians 2:6: An
24 Overlooked Datum for Functional Inequality in the Godhead” (a presentation to the
25 ETS Spring 2000).

26 “Christ’s Functional Subordination in Philippians 2:6: A Grammatical Note
27 With Trinitarian Implications” in *The New Evangelical Subordinationism*.

28 See page 104: “equality with God” is not something Jesus possessed!

29 See footnote 61: Jesus did not grasp equality with God because of His subordi-
30 nate role. Burk is saying that “form of God” does not mean “equal to God.”

Mid-America Baptist Seminary, says equality with God is an expression of Jesus' nature. Hellerman, professor of New Testament at Talbot University, takes this verse as meaning equality with God is something that Christ possessed. Muller, then professor of New Testament Exegesis at Stellenbosch, states 2:6 shows Christ exists in a manner equal to God. And Fee, then professor of New Testament at Regent College, informs this text means Christ never stopped being equal with God.⁷⁵ Then, looking at some Church fathers whose language was Greek: Chrysostom states 2:6 means Christ possesses equality with God. Also, Athanasius informs that according to 2:6, the Son has both the essence and the equality with God.⁷⁶ These experts provide a strong reason to question the validity of Burk's discovered grammaticism.

Does 1 Corinthians 15:28, "Then the Son himself will be subjected to the one who subjected everything to Him," Mean the Son is Eternally Role-Subordinate?

According to Dahms, this text is the *locus-classicus* proof of the eternal role-subordination of the Son; and further, to

75. Richard R Melnick Jr. *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* (USA: Broadman, 1991), 101.

Joseph A. Hellermann, *Philippians* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2015), 112.

Jac J. Muller, *The Epistles of Paul to Philippians and Philemon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978 reprint), 80.

Gordon D. Fee, *Philippians* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1999), 96.

76. Chrysostom, *Homilies on Philippians* 7.

Athanasius, *De Synodis* 3.49.

Arians 3:23.6.

I suppose one could reasonably think these fathers whose actual language was Greek could understand the meaning of the Greek in Philippians 2:6.

1 question his view amounts to a denial of the unity of the incar-
2 nated Son of God.⁷⁷ Kovack and Shemm are in agreement with
3 Dahm’s understanding.⁷⁸ An interpretation that takes “God”
4 to refer to the Trinity is countered by Hamilton’s observation
5 that the Father is the likely referent, given 15:24 where the
6 Father is mentioned.⁷⁹ Grudem also rejects the position that
7 “Christ” in the text has the humanity of Christ as its referent
8 and that in that nature He turns the Kingdom over to the
9 Trinity.⁸⁰ So, the passage, these say, must mean God the Son
10 gives the Kingdom over to God the Father, and two arguments
11 for this view are that the unity of Christ’s natures precludes
12 Christ in the passage pertaining only to His humanity and that
13 the Father is mentioned in 15:24. As for the second argument,
14 I think the context does suggest “God” in the passage has the
15 Father in particular as its referent. But, the first argument
16 seems to fall flat, given what the human nature of Christ ex-
17 perience as birth, maturation, sleeping, not knowing, suffer-
18 ing, and dying; such cannot be attributed to the divine nature.
19 But the theology of this requires an expanded coverage in the
20 next chapter. However, the context of the present passage it-
21 self strongly suggests the humanity of Christ in delivering up

22 77. Dahms, “Subordination,” 76.

23 78. Stephen D. Kovack and Peter R. Shemm, “A Defense of the Doctrine of the
24 Eternal Subordination of the Son,” *JETS* 42.3 (September 1999), 462.

25 79. James M. Hamilton, “That God May Be All in All” in *One God in Three Persons*,
26 101.

27 80. Grudem, “Biblical Evidence,” 252.

the Kingdom to the Father is what Paul has in mind. This is 1
evidenced by Butner.⁸¹ 2

Butner believes the convincing evidence for his position is 3
that the passage is concerned with the resurrection of Christ 4
(15:20) and the Son as the second Adam (15:45). But these re- 5
fer to the manhood of Christ exclusively, not to His divinity. 6
The divine nature was not resurrected from the dead and the 7
second Adam is qualified as human in 15:21. Consequently, 8
Butner believes 15:28 has nothing to do with eternal, trinal re- 9
lationships such as the rule of God over God (my expression). 10
Butner's position that the referent of "Son" in 15:28 is the hu- 11
manity of Christ is shared by some notable church fathers as 12
Augustine,⁸² and Ambrose.⁸³ 13

**Does John 6:38, "I have come down from heaven not to do my 14
own will but the will of the one who sent me," Prove Eternal 15
Role-Subordination? 16**

One should be reminded many have believed there is only 17
one faculty of will in God. In commenting on this very text 18
(and on Luke 22:42), Gregory Nazianzus explains as we have 19
only one God, so we understand there to be only one divine 20
will. So, Gregory believes Christ's will here refers to the will 21
of the human nature.⁸⁴ Another Gregory would agree to that, 22
as the bishop of Nyssa derides those teaching that the Son in 23

81. D. Glenn Butner Jr., *The Son Who Learned Obedience* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2018), 167–171. 24

82. Augustine, *On Faith and the Creed*, 11.18. 25

83. Ambrose, *Of the Christian Faith*, 5.14.171. 26

84. Gregory Nazianzus, *Third Oration*, 12. 27

1 His deity is the servant of the Father and under the Father's
2 domain.⁸⁵ In regard to 6:38, Chemnitz, the Lutheran, says this
3 is the will of the human nature.⁸⁶ One should also recall that ac-
4 cording to Warfield, subordinate passages may be explained by
5 the Covenant of Redemption, in which God the Son mutually
6 agreed with (not was ordered by) the Father to perform specific
7 processes to attain the salvation of man.⁸⁷ In that scenario, the
8 Son's work in salvation need not be understood as the result of
9 a personal property of obedience. Yet, Ware believes John 6:38
10 "could not express more clearly that obedience to the will of
11 the Father took place in eternity as the pre-incarnate Son came
12 from heaven at the will of the Father." How could it be made
13 clearer, Ware asks, that the Son obeyed the will of the Father?⁸⁸
14 Yet, it is not clear to Gregory, Chemnitz, and Warfield.

15 But let us look at the passage. First, yes, 6:38 does stipulate
16 the Father sent the Son. But as in Augustine (f.n. 63), the send-
17 ing of the Son does not require one to assume the Son is less
18 in authority: "He was not sent in respect to any inequality of
19 power or subsistence, or *in any thing* (emphasis mine) that in
20 Him was not equal to the Father." Second, the context suggests
21 the obedience of the human nature is what is involved. It is the
22 human nature that is seen by the Jews (6:40), and it the human
23 flesh that is to be "eaten" (6:54). So, a possible interpretation
24 may be that the Son covenanted with the Father (not was or-
25 dered by the Father) to be incarnated and in the human will

26 85. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius*, 6.4.

27 86. Chemnitz, *The Two Natures in Christ*, 59.

28 87. Warfield, *Biblical Doctrines*, 187.

29 88. Ware, "Equal in Essence," 23.

resulting from that incarnation obeyed the Father. As Hodge 1
informs: “Neither the obedience nor the suffering of Christ 2
was the obedience or suffering of the divine nature.”⁸⁹ I leave it 3
to the reader to decide whether Ware has overstated his case. 4

**Does Hebrews 5:8, “Although He was a Son, He learned obe- 5
dience,” Show the Son as God to be Subject to the Father? 6**

The confusion among biblical scholars could embolden 7
atheistic apologists. One expert, Graham Cole, states Hebrews 8
5:8, among other texts, persuades him that the Son’s subser- 9
vience is not eternal.⁹⁰ Yet Grudem believes this verse to be a 10
biblical evidence for the eternal role-submission of the Son be- 11
cause it is the eternal son who is discussed in the first chapters 12
of Hebrews as in 1:2, 4, 6.⁹¹ One of these experts is confused. 13

But some will see Grudem’s view as problematic. First, most 14
evangelicals surely would agree with Geisler that God knows 15
everything.⁹² As Job replied to Zophar, “Can anyone teach God 16
knowledge?” So, if the divine nature of Christ is omniscient, 17
how can the Son as God learn? Second, “Son” in Hebrews 18
clearly at times refers distinctly to the acts or experiences of 19
the human nature as in 6:6 (God’s nature was not crucified). 20
Third, 5:8 is immediately preceded by 5:7, “During His earthly 21
life...” which should lead the reader to suspect the author has 22

89. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, II:395. 23

90. Graham Cole, “Trinity Without Tiers,” in *Trinity Without Hierarchy*, 282. 24

91. Grudem, “Biblical Evidence,” 241. 25

92. Geisler, *Systematic Theology*, II:180. 26

1 the human nature as his referent in 5:8. Fourth, exegetes of
2 Hebrews 5:8 often find Christ's humanity to be what is learned
3 in 5:8.⁹³

4 **Does Mark 14:62, "You will see the Son of man sitting at the**
5 **right hand of power," Mean God the Son is Less in Authority**
6 **than the Father?**

7 Dahms and Grudem think as the Son is at the right hand of
8 power, He is, therefore, less in authority than is God. Dahms
9 argues seeing the Son as He is (1 John 2:28, 3:2) must mean see-
10 ing Him as He essentially is in eternal reality.⁹⁴ So, Mark 14:62
11 would have the divine nature as its referent. And, Grudem
12 avers that sitting at the right hand is not a position of equal
13 authority and that "Son of Man" refers to the Son's divine na-
14 ture.⁹⁵ On the other hand, Frame understands the title Son of
15 Man "refers in the first instance to Jesus' humanity." Frame
16 evidences this with Scriptures as the Son of Man's being the
17 second Adam (1 Cor. 15:22), the Son of Man dying (Mark 8:31),
18 and the Son of Man being buried (Matt. 12:40), and the Son of
19 Man being resurrected (Mark 9:9).⁹⁶ And further, Vos believes
20 to sit at God's right hand means to have the divine authority
21 flow over into Christ.⁹⁷ In addition, Bilezikian argues Christ is

22 93. Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 293.

23 Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand
24 Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 187.

25 94. Dahms, "Subordination," 357.

26 95. Grudem, "Biblical Evidence," 248
27 *Systematic Theology*, 546.

28 96. Frame, *The Doctrine of God*, 673.

29 97. Geerhardus Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, III, transl. Richard B. Gaffin
30 (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press: 2014), 236.

also said to share the Father’s throne in texts as Revelation 3:21, 1
12:5, and 22:3.⁹⁸ 2

Does 1 Corinthians 8:6 Imply the Essential Subordination of God the Son to the Father? 3 4

What is perceived by some as an issue in the doctrine of 5
the eternal role-subordination of the Son to the Father is that 6
the tenet is in danger of making the Son lesser in being than 7
the Father. No evangelical, of course, intends to do that. But 8
Dahms’ thoughts on this text might cause concern to some. 9
He believes Paul in 8:6 deliberately contrasts “Lord” with “God” 10
with the effect that, “the essential subordination, not merely 11
the economic subordination, is intended.”⁹⁹ We see here in 12
8:6, again, how the interpretations of some proponents of eter- 13
nal role-subordination appear in conflict with common views. 14
Athanasius uses this verse as evidence of the Son’s equality 15
with the Father.¹⁰⁰ And, Calvin says from this text we can infer 16
Christ is the same God as in Isaiah 33:22.¹⁰¹ And Hodge informs 17
“God” in 8:6 does not refer to the Father only, but to the Triune 18
Jehovah.¹⁰² If Keener is correct,¹⁰³ it would be in error to sup- 19
pose “Lord” applied to the ascended Christ means anything 20
less than God alone. 21

98. Gilbert Bilezikian, “Hermeneutical Bungee Jumping: Subordination in the 22
Godhead.” *JETS* 40/1 (March 1997), 63. 23

99. Dahms, *Subordination*, 359. 24

100. Athanasius, *De Synodis*, 3.49. 25

101. Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.15.5. 26

102. Hodge, *I and II Corinthians*, 144. 27

103. Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John, vol 1* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003), 28
298. 29

1 **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

2 Try to provide a convincing argument for each response.

3 1. In your opinion, was it the activity of Christ's divine na-
4 ture which was predestined in Ephesians 1:3-5?

5 2. In your opinion, as Christ was sent by the Father, does
6 that require Christ as God to be eternally role-subordi-
7 nate to the Father?

8 3. How does the two-nature doctrine of Christ relate to the
9 issue of the Son's obedience?

10 4. Do you agree with Kitano on John 14:28?

11 5. Do you think God has three faculties of will or just one?

12 6. How do you think John 5:19 fits into the issue of eternal
13 role-subordination?

14 7. Do you think each Person in the Trinity has personal
15 properties?

16 8. Do you think references to the church fathers have
17 any particular merit in the discussion of eternal
18 role-subordination?

19 9. In your opinion, does how we see the Persons in the
20 Trinity relate in the economic functions as creation
21 and salvation indicate how they relate in immanent
22 relationships?

23 **PREVIEW OF CHAPTER FIVE**

24 This chapter is used to remark on a great deal of
25 Christological territory, so it might be helpful for some readers
26 to be given an idea of the ground to be covered. In some cases,
27 these summaries reflect this writer's personal persuasions.

1. The three systematics by Berkhof, Erickson, and Grudem appear to express different understandings on who is the subject of the human activity of Christ. 1
2
3
2. Whereas Word-flesh Christology places limits on the wholeness of Christ's humanity, Word-Man Christology emphasizes the completeness of the human nature. 4
5
6
3. Apollinaris denied Christ has a human *nous* (mind), and he said the divinity took the place of that. 7
8
4. Nestorius is wrongly understood to have believed Christ is two Persons. 9
10
5. Cyril taught that after the incarnation, Christ has only one nature. 11
12
6. Eutyches claimed to accept Cyril's Christology. 13
7. Pope Leo, who condemned Nestorius for denying Mary is God's mother, follows Nestorius' understanding that each nature in Christ acts in distinction from the other. 14
15
16
8. Chalcedon of 451, which teaches two natures in Christ, has been criticized. 17
18
9. The most energetic critics of this Creed are the non-Chalcedonians who believed the two natures have united forming one composite nature (miaphysitism). 19
20
21
10. Leonitius of Byzantium attempted to remedy Chalcedon's omission of an answer to how a nature can exist without a hypothesis. Leonitius said the Logos supplied the hypostasis of the human nature. This theory is called enhypostasia. 22
23
24
25
26
11. Enhypostasia is accepted by many as John of Damascus and Charles Hodge. 27
28

- 1 12. But enhypostasia is criticized by McIntyre.
- 2 13. Charles Hodge, despite his adherence to enhypostasia,
3 nevertheless, states Christ's human nature is an entity
4 that acts. But this is denied by Buswell.
- 5 14. Crisp, Baillie, Knox, Morris, Wiley, Shedd, Warfield, and
6 Clark are examples of varying degrees of Word-Man
7 Christology.
- 8 15. Pope Agatho endorsed the 7th-century Creed of
9 Constantinople, which teaches Christ has two wills.
- 10 16. A human center of experience and activity in Christ,
11 which is distinct from the divinity, can be argued from
12 particulars in the incarnational life of our Lord.



Does Christ Have a Distinct Human Center That Wills, Acts, and Experiences?

There is no agreement about the question of whether Jesus' human center is distinctly the subject of the human activity of Christ. The issue is difficult and one would profit from being able to ask these theologians the meaning of some things they write. Vital points are often given in a page or two, and explications are sometimes inadequate to provide sufficient detail. Still, despite these limitations, this present writer concludes: (1) Berkhof envisions the Logos as the center of Christ's human activity; (2) Erickson understands both the hypostatic

1 divinity and the humanity to be the center of Christ’s human
2 activity; and (3) Grudem sees the human nature only as the
3 center of Christ’s human activity. They all rightly see Christ as
4 one in Person.

5 Berkhof endorses enhypostasia (that the humanity of Jesus
6 is only personalized in the Logos). The human nature, Berkhof
7 believes, is impersonal. He stipulates Christ has a human will,
8 soul, and consciousness, but he denies these qualities result in
9 Christ’s humanity having a personal existence. The humanity
10 is only personalized in the divine nature. Yet, while Berkhof
11 insists each of Christ’s natures “works with its own special
12 *energeia*,” a mere nature, he says, does not have individuality.
13 Christ’s individuality is only the Logos.¹ But, can that which
14 exists with its own human will, intelligence, consciousness,
15 and energy not be individualized in itself?

16 Erickson believes Christ has a human “psyche,” which only
17 gradually became aware of who He was. One might think this
18 premise would result in Erickson believing the human nature
19 experiences distinctly from the divine. But that is incorrect.
20 Erickson insists Christ did not exercise His deity at times and
21 His humanity at other times. His actions were always those
22 of the divinity-humanity.² So, did God get tired in John 4:6, or
23 take a nap in Mark 4:38, or did the omniscient incarnate One
24 only gradually become aware of His own deity?

25 In contrast, Grudem believes “One nature (in Christ) does
26 some things the other does not.” Yet, what each nature does

27 1. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 321–323.

28 2. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 670–671.

is done by the Person. In Christ are two centers of consciousness and two wills. The wills inhere in the natures, not in the Person. Grudem states this is not teaching that there are two Persons in Christ as in Nestorianism. Grudem, however, suggests Nestorius, himself, did not even teach Nestorianism.³ I see Grudem's position as being different than Erickson. Erickson denies the natures work independently of each other. Grudem maintains they do. For example, as man, Christ has limited knowledge, Grudem says, but as God, Christ is omniscient. But, according to Erickson, Christ as God gave up the use of divine omniscience when incarnating.⁴

Obviously one issue that should early on not be omitted in discussing whether the human nature of Christ acts distinctly from the divine nature is understanding that there are three views regarding the nature(s) of Christ. These are: (1) the dyophysitic, which is that Christ has two distinct natures after the Incarnation; (2) the monophysitic, which is that Christ has only one nature; and (3) the miaphysitic, seen as different from monophysitism by some oriental churches, which is that the two natures are united into one nature. These three contrasting positions will be discussed in ensuing pages.

An issue much related to the question of whether the human nature or the divine nature of Christ is the center of the activity of Jesus' human life in willing, experiencing, and acting is the difference between Word-flesh Christology and Word-Man Christology. It is thought Athanasius of Alexandria

3. Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 555, 558–559.

4. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 637.

1 is the founder of Word-flesh Christology.⁵ Attesting to this is
2 my reading in the father's *Incarnation of the Word* wherein, for
3 example, the Logos used His body as His instrument and wield-
4 ed it.⁶ Here, I think, the deity is perceived as being the acting
5 subject of the activity of the humanity. To do this, "The Logos
6 must accommodate Himself to human conditions."⁷ While this
7 is not a denial of Christ's human soul (as in Apollinarianism),
8 that soul is not viewed as being the agent of the works of its
9 own body. It has therefore been surmised that Logos-flesh
10 Christology has monophysitism at its root.⁸

11 In contrast to the above is Word-Man Christology. The dif-
12 ference is in this form of Christology to be true, Man requires
13 Christ's humanity to have self-determination.⁹ So, it would
14 seem, then, that here the humanity of Christ is the subject of
15 the human experiences of Jesus. "The humiliation of Christ
16 belongs only to His humanity," an adherent to Word-man
17 Christology would say. God is not human. So, God was not
18 born of Mary or grew in knowledge or suffered or died. The
19 Word-Man Christology may ask, "Can the Logos be the bearer
20 of Jesus' humanity if Christ is not "real, individual man"?¹⁰
21 However, a common criticism of the Logos-Man view is that
22 it tends not to explain how there is unity between the natures
23 in Christ.¹¹ Further, if there are two acting subjects—divinity

24 5. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus-God and Man*, 287.

25 6. *Incarnation*, 43, 17.

26 7. Tapia. *The Theology of Christ Commentary*, 111.

27 8. Pannenberg, 291.

28 9. Sellers in Tapia, 119.

29 10. Pannenberg, 290.

30 11. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 99.

and humanity—in our Lord’s works, can our Lord be but one in Person? These and other issues should be clarified in the following discussions of Apollinaris, Nestorius, Cyril, and Eutyches.

Apollinaris of the 4th century had the goals of refuting the Arians by explaining how “the divine Son could coexist with the human Jesus to make the one Christ.”¹² But there also was a soteriological purpose. Believing a human mind must yield to sin, Apollinaris,¹³ was obliged to deny Christ a human *nous*; the Logos, instead, must be the intellect of Jesus. As Apollinaris explains in fragments 25 and 76, Christ has “God as His spirit—that is His intellect ... what was needed was an unchangeable intellect, which did not fall under the dominion of the flesh on account of its weakness.”¹⁴ Only then could Christ save.

The body and the Logos form only one nature, not two. This is because rather than being a distinct entity, the flesh is a property of the Logos. The Logos is the mover of the body.¹⁵ Apollinaris believed a union of two complete natures was an impossibility as two natures means two persons.¹⁶ Apollinaris opined that a nature (*physis*) is a self-determining being.¹⁷

12. Mark Harris. “When Jesus Lost His Soul: Fourth Century Christology and Modern Neuroscience” (Edinburgh: Research Explorer, 2017), 4.

13. William P. Anderson. “Some Reflections on the Christology of Apollinaris of Laodicea” in *Marian Library Studies* 17/23, 199–200.

14. These fragments are found in Richard A. Norris Jr., *The Christological Controversies* (Fortress Press, 1980), 108–109.

15. Anderson, 197, 204.

16. H. Maurice Relton. “A Study in Christology.” (Doctoral thesis, The University of London, 1929), 10.

17. Aloys Grillmeier. *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol I. Transl. John Bowden (Atlanta: John Knox, 1975), 335.

1 Therefore, a second personality is present if Christ has a hu-
2 man mind.¹⁸

3 As would be expected, this Christology was enthusiastically
4 opposed. One individual who wrote energetically against the
5 views of Apollinaris was Gregory of Nazianzus in his first and
6 second letters to Cledonius. Gregory informs his reader that it
7 is a heresy to say in Christ “the Godhead supplies the soul, rea-
8 son, and mind.” Gregory complains those who espouse these
9 views wrongly attribute the birth, temptation, hunger, and
10 weariness to the divinity.¹⁹

11 Turning to Nestorius of the 5th century, we find a notable
12 example of Word-Man Christology. It will be good to focus
13 on the paramount question: Did Nestorius teach Christ is
14 two Persons? It frequently is asserted that he did. For exam-
15 ple, Chemnitz teaches Nestorius “predicated two persons in
16 Christ.”²⁰ Yet, the great Lutheran scholar of the Reformation
17 era, whose Christology I appreciate, offers no evidence to back
18 up that claim. But, Grillmeier rather remarks Nestorius “can-
19 not be accused of teaching such a doctrine of two persons” in
20 Christ.²¹ What has changed? I think it must be that whereas in
21 the 16th century, a scholar may tend to interpret the teaching
22 of Nestorius by what others as Cyril say of him, in the 19th cen-
23 tury, it should be noted, a document was discovered in Syriac

24 18. Adolph Harnack. *History of Dogma vols IV, V.* transl. Neil Buchanan (New
25 York: Dover Publications, n.d.), 156.

26 19. found in Edward R. Hardy, ed. *Christology of the Later Fathers.* (Philadelphia:
27 Westminster, 1954), 226, 228.

28 20. Chemnitz, 335.

29 21. Grillmeier, 455.

(translated from Greek), which is believed to have been written 1
by Nestorius in exile, and it portrays a different Christology by 2
Nestorius. It is named *The Bazaar of Heracleides*. It is thought 3
Nestorius used a pseudonym because his treatise would not 4
have been read bearing his name. Bethune-Baker is convinced 5
of its authenticity²² as is Loofs.²³ Reading this in my copy, an 6
English translation, one clearly can see Nestorius denies he 7
taught that Christ is two in Person. Instead, Nestorius states 8
“that two natures should be united in one *prosōpon* makes, 9
not two Sons or two Christs.” Again he writes, “There is one 10
prosōpon in two *prosōpa*. Both of them are one Son, one Lord.”²⁴ 11

Aside from his denying Mary is God’s mother, why else 12
would Nestorius be understood to be teaching Christ is two 13
Persons? In my opinion it much has to do with semantics and 14
most particularly with the noun *prosōpon*, which can mean 15
a “countenance” or the “presence of a person” (i.e., “face to 16
face”).²⁵ But in general, according to Grillmeier, Nestorius did 17
not by *prosōpon* mean a person but the appearance of a per- 18
son, i.e., what a person looks like or better what that person’s 19
nature looks like, and Bethune-Baker suggests “personality” 20
is Nestorius’ meaning.²⁶ Looking again at the Bazaar, we see 21
Nestorius states there are two *prosōpa* in Christ, one for each 22

22. J.F. Bethune-Baker. *Nestorius and His Teaching* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 23
1998), 3. 24

23. Friedrich Loofs. *Nestorius and His Place in the History of Christian Doctrine* 25
(Cambridge: The University Press, 1914), 11. 26

24. Nestorius. *The Bazaar of Heracleides* (USA: Beloved Publishing, 2015), 187, 237. 27

25. BAG, 720 28

26. Grillmeier, 459, 460. 29

Bethune-Baker, 51. 30

1 nature and that these together form one *prosōpon*.²⁷ It should
2 be noted in the opinion of Nestorius, there is not a natural
3 union of two natures, but is instead the union is of the two
4 *prosōpa*. This required no change in the divinity.²⁸ As we look
5 at Nestorius' nemesis, Cyril of Alexandria, we can see a stark
6 difference in how these two understood the Person of Christ.

7 The question now to be asked is whether Cyril believed
8 Christ is only one in nature. For an answer to that question,
9 one can read Cyril's own writing, *On the Unity of Christ*. There,
10 Cyril asserts there is one Son, and even after the incarnation,
11 He has only one nature. Cyril also repeats this opinion shortly
12 after stating, "We speak of the single nature of God the Word
13 incarnate and made man."²⁹ In my opinion, these comments
14 should lead one to conclude Cyril rejects the two-nature doc-
15 trine of Christ. But to check my conclusion with some scholars,
16 I observe Harnack states Cyril held that before the incarna-
17 tion, there were two natures (*physeis*), but after the incarna-
18 tion, one.³⁰ Grillmeier explains Cyril accepted the one nature
19 formula of Apollinaris, though Cyril did not deny to Christ a
20 human soul.³¹

21 But according to Cyril, is this soul functional or is it the
22 Logos who wills, experiences, and acts through the body?
23 Helpful in answering this question are the anathemas between

24 27. Bazaar, 207, 237, 247.

25 28. Ibid., 69, 119, 136, 60–61.

26 29. St. Cyril of Alexandria. *On the Unity of Christ* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's
27 Press, 1995), 77, 79.

28 30. Harnack, 179.

29 31. Grillmeier, 473.

Cyril and Nestorius in 431. Here Cyril's fourth anathema is that no acts of Jesus can be separated from the action of the Word of God. The twelfth anathema requires a confession that the Logos suffered in the flesh in Christ's crucifixion.³² Further substantiation for the opinion that in the view of Cyril, Christ's human soul is inactive is A.B. Bruce's exposure of Cyril's explanation of Mark 13:32. Is this Christ's human intellect that did not know the time of His return? No, according to Cyril, it was the intellect of the Logos feigning ignorance. As Cyril asserts in *Adversus Anthropomorphitas*, "The only begotten Word of God pretended not to know ... He affected to have put on the fashion of our ignorance."³³ In contrast to Nestorius, who acknowledged the full and distinct participation of Jesus' humanity in the activities of Christ, Cyril downplayed that. And despite Chalcedon stipulating the properties of Christ's human nature are preserved, so, the attributes of the humanity are distinct from those of the deity, Nestorius is banished and Cyril is sainted.

Perhaps even more indicative of Cyril's monophysitic (or miaphysitic; see Malaty below) tendencies is that Eutyches, who is deemed a heretic, claims Cyril's Christology to be his own. In his interrogation by Florentius, Eutyches denies Christ exists in two natures. Eutyches said, "I confess our Lord was of two natures before the union, but after the union of one nature. I follow the teachings of the blessed Cyril."³⁴ And, as

32. These are found in Robert L. Ferm's *Readings in the History of Christian Thought* (London: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1964), 162–166.

33. A.B. Bruce. *The Humiliation of Christ* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1905), 366, 370.

34. Ferm, 170.

1 Farrington points out, “Cyril also refused to speak of two na-
2 tures after the incarnation.”³⁵ Later in this chapter it will be
3 noted that while the “one nature” as taught by Cyril is defended
4 by denominations that reject the Creed of Chalcedon, the view
5 of Eutyches is denounced by them. With the death of Cyril and
6 the condemnation of Eutyches, the Church finds itself on the
7 edge of Chalcedon.

8 But first, an important observation in answering the ques-
9 tion of whether the humanity of Christ includes a distinct hu-
10 man center that experiences and acts is the contribution of
11 Leo, the 5th-century bishop of Rome, on that topic. Yes, Leo
12 denounces Nestorius, but the record appears to show this was
13 because of Nestorius’ objection to saying Mary is the mother
14 of God. We see that repeatedly in Leo’s letters. In Letter LIX,
15 Leo explains, “Nor do we say the blessed Virgin Mary con-
16 ceived a Man without Godhead ... which we deservedly and
17 properly condemned Nestorius for preaching.” And in Letter
18 CXXIV, Leo avers, “Nestorius, therefore, must be anathema-
19 tized for believing the blessed Virgin to be the mother of His
20 manhood only.” And in Letter CXIX, Leo insists Nestorius was
21 anathematized for “separating the nature of the Word and the
22 flesh in the blessed Virgin’s conception, for dividing the one
23 Christ into two.”³⁶ Others may see, as I do, what Leo condemns

24 35. Peter Farrington. “Eutyches and the Oriental Orthodox Tradition.” [www.](http://www.academic.edu/6904967)
25 [academic.edu/6904967](http://www.academic.edu/6904967) (accessed 12/19), 5.

26 But under duress, Cyril agreed to “two natures” in the union of 433.
27 Harnack, 190.

28 36. These letters are found in NPNF Second Series vol 12.

Nestorius for is teaching that Mary is not God’s mother, and 1
to Leo, this means Nestorius believes Christ is two in Person. 2

Yet, are Leo and Nestorius so different in their concep- 3
tions of the activities of the natures in Christ? Recall in the 4
Anathemas of the Council of Ephesus in 431 that Nestorius de- 5
nies Cyril’s claim that no acts of Christ in the Gospels should 6
be attributed to only one nature, and Nestorius insists things 7
that pertain to the humanity do not pertain to the Word.³⁷ But 8
in this respect, Leo appears to be in agreement with Nestorius, 9
not Cyril. In Leo, while the acts of Christ are of one Person, 10
“From the character of the act we perceived what belonged to 11
either form (‘nature’) and both the nature of the Word and the 12
nature of the flesh act in accordance with the other.”³⁸ And 13
in Letter XXVII, the famous “Tome,” Leo affirms, “Each form 14
does what is proper to it with the co-operation of the other: 15
that is, the Word performing what appertains to the Word and 16
the flesh carrying out what pertains to the flesh.”³⁹ It, there- 17
fore, appears to me that Leo must envision that in Christ is a 18
human center of activity that experiences and acts. 19

Up to this point in our review, we have moved from 20
Apollinaris’ view that the Logos is the only acting subject in 21
Christ—because there is only one nature in Christ even after 22
the incarnation—to Leo’s belief that there are two natures in 23
Christ and that each nature in Christ does what is proper to 24
it. (Certainly, in either case, the one Christ does the works.) 25

37. Ferm, 163; Bazaar, 129 26

38. Letter CXXIV, Sermon LIV. 27

39. Part IV, Letter XXVIII. 28

1 But where does Chalcedon of 451 fall into these conflicting
2 positions?

3 Three positions were represented among the three hundred
4 bishops in attendance at Chalcedon. One was the Antiochene
5 Word-Man Christology. A second was those who favored the
6 Christology of Leo as explicated in his Letter XXVIII. The
7 third was the group who followed the Word-flesh teachings of
8 Cyril of Alexandria.⁴⁰ There was not an equal division among
9 the participants; instead, the majority endorsed a Cyrillian
10 Christology, which envisions that Christ exists in only one na-
11 ture after the Incarnation.⁴¹ As we will soon see, some of this
12 group were so unsatisfied with the Chalcedonian definition
13 that they separated from the Church of that period, forming
14 their own denominations that are extant today.

15 With that background, there follows the Christological defi-
16 nition contained in Chalcedon:

17 Jesus Christ is to be confessed as one and the
18 same (Person), that He is perfect in Godhead
19 and perfect in manhood, very God and very
20 Man, of a reasonable soul and a (human) body
21 ... made in all things like us, sin only excepted;
22 begotten of the Father before the worlds accord-
23 ing to His Godhead, and consubstantial with us
24 as touching His manhood ... (He) must be con-
25 fessed *in* two natures unconfusedly, immutably,

26 40. Francis X. Murphy, "The Dogmatic Definition at Chalcedon." journals.sage-
27 pub.com.(accessed 12/19).

28 41. Harnack, 216.

indivisibly, inseparately (united) and that without the distinction of natures being taken away by such union, but rather the peculiar property of each nature being preserved and being united in one Person and subsistence, not separated or divided into two Persons.

I have emphasized the preposition “in” (two natures) because shortly before the formula was finalized, Anatolius of the Cyrillian party proposed instead the phrase “from two natures.”⁴² But, Hefele informs the correct text is that of the old Latin, which has “in two natures.”⁴³

Others also have criticized Chalcedon. In my opinion, some have made the factitious observation that the Creed does not explain the mystery of the incarnation. I think no one has or can! But Jay makes some acute observations: (1) Chalcedon uses concepts as “nature,” which are not found in Scripture; (2) it is dualistic in distinguishing between the natures in Christ; (3) it raises unanswered questions, as is the Logos the only Subject of the activities of Christ, and if He is, was Christ praying to Himself, and how could He be tempted? On the other hand, neither is the word “Trinity” in the Bible. And, the dual natures on Christ appear to be based on particulars of the life of Christ and the description of Him by the apostles.⁴⁴

42. Hans Boersma. “The Chalcedonian Definition.” WTJ 54.1 (Spring 1992), 62.

43. *NPNF Second Series*, vol 14, 263.

44. E.G. Jay. “Criticism of Chalcedon” in *The Theology of Christ: Commentary*. Ralph J. Tapia, ed. (New York: Bruce, 1971), 171–175.

1 As has been indicated, the most vitriolic criticism of
2 Chalcedon was from those who believed they were following
3 the teachings of Cyril who taught that after the incarnation,
4 Christ exists in only one nature. In Chalcedon, the union be-
5 tween the natures is not said to be natural; the divinity has not
6 absorbed the humanity; and two hypostases in Christ were not
7 specifically condemned.⁴⁵ For these reasons, the non-Chalce-
8 donian movement was formally begun, and the Christology of
9 these churches illustrates the position that there are not two
10 centers of activity in Christ, human and divine. I will now first
11 summarize the opinions of three modern examples of non-
12 Chalcedonian Christology; then I will briefly answer some
13 arguments offered by a fourth, which are intended to show
14 Christ is one composite, united nature.

15 St. Mark's Coptic Church of New Jersey has posted H.H.
16 Pope Shenouda's summary of the Coptic position on Christ.
17 There is a unity of one nature out of two in the incarnate Logos.
18 There is no mingling, no confusion, and no transmutation of
19 the natures in this union. All acts of Christ are attributed to
20 Him as a whole, not to either nature alone. The one united na-
21 ture retains the properties of both natures.⁴⁶

22 The Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches
23 posted these agreements in their Christology about thirty
24 years ago. There is one composite hypostasis, not two. The two

25 45. Harnack, 222.

26 46. Pope H.H. Shenouda III. *The Nature of Christ*. <http://www.saintmark.com>.

natures form an inseparable and unconfused composite unity. 1
He who wills and acts is the hypostasis of the Logos incarnate.⁴⁷ 2

Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty has uploaded his understanding of his 3
Orthodox church's Christology. He condemns the Nestorian 4
school for its teaching that Christ is two Persons. Cyril is the 5
defender of the faith against Nestorianism. And Cyril correct- 6
ly taught there is only one nature of the incarnate Logos. All 7
physical disabilities (weaknesses) of Christ were those of the 8
incarnate Word. Note: Malaty distinguishes between mono- 9
physitic (as in Eutyches) and miaphysitic (as in Cyril). The for- 10
mer, he states, refers to a simple nature, but the latter means 11
a composite nature.⁴⁸ I observe from my experience of several 12
years of email exchanges with a non-Chalcedonian, Ethiopian 13
professor of theology that at least some non-Chalcedonian 14
churches do not admit to being monophysitic. It should have 15
been observed these three examples all portray the human 16
activities of Christ as birth, maturation, sleeping, eating, not 17
knowing the time of His return, suffering, dying, being resur- 18
rected, and being exalted to not be the experiences of a distinct 19
human center of activity in Christ, the human nature only, but 20
the experiences of the incarnate unified, composite nature of 21
the Logos. 22

Now we turn to a former professor of the Coptic Theological 23
Seminary of Cairo to see some biblical and theological argu- 24
mentation that Christ is of only one nature, not two. 25

47. 1989–1990. 26

48. Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty. "Christology According to the non-Chalcedonian 27
Orthodox Churches." (accessed 5/20). 28

1 A. Giurgis Waheeb presents a number of biblical and theo-
2 logical arguments to evidence miaphysitism⁴⁹ to which I will
3 briefly respond:

4 **1. The pronoun “I” shows no duality.** However, a singular per-
5 sonal pronoun is equally appropriate, were Christ one Person
6 having natures distinct from each other that do not form a
7 composite nature.

8 **2. Acts 20:28 speaks of the blood of God, which only would be**
9 **appropriate were Christ to have one nature of the incarnate**

10 **Logos.** (See the NIV: “The church of God which He bought with
11 His own blood.”) However, the possessive genitive (“His own”)
12 used by Paul likely has the incarnate Christ as its referent,⁵⁰
13 and Paul in Philippians 2:6–7 explains Christ has two natures,
14 not one composite nature. Further, Charles Hodge, who, when
15 discussing the acts of Christ, explains the act of one nature
16 ascribed to Him may be the act of the other nature. Hodge il-
17 lustrates this by noting Christ is called the Lord of glory even
18 in His passion. But such rebuttals are unlikely to convince one
19 who believes God in Christ grows up (Luke 2:40,52), gets tired
20 (John 4:6), takes naps (Mark 4:38), is not omniscient (Mark
21 13:32), and suffers and dies.

22 **3. The expression “in two natures” does not denote a real**
23 **union.** It perhaps will be remembered this was regarded as
24 a failure on the part of Word-Man Christology. If the union
25 between the natures of Christ is not natural (that is, is not a

26 49. A. Guirgis Waheeb. “The Christology of the Coptic Church.” *Orthodoxy*
27 (Winter 1961), 252–256. (accessed May 1991)

28 50. F. LeRon Shults. “A Dubious Christological Formula: From Leonitius of
29 Byzantium to Karl Barth.” *Theological Studies* 57 (1996, 431–446), 431.

composite union of natures), then how is Christ one Person? 1
Yet, how that union was accomplished is a mystery, isn't it? 2
If the union is of the natures, as the non-Chalcedonians aver, 3
what is the function of the human will, human intelligence, 4
and human energy? How would these manifest themselves 5
if Christ has only one nature? And, how is Christ's humanity, 6
which is not omnipresent or omniscient or omnipotent, united 7
in one composite nature with that which is omnipresent and 8
omniscient and omnipotent? 9

4. If only the human nature were crucified, and not the en- 10
fleshed divine nature of the Logos, Christ's death could not 11
be redemptive. But that is the problematic issue for the non- 12
Chalcedonian. God is not passible; He does not suffer or die. 13
This is because God cannot change as Malachi 3:6 indicates. 14
Consequently, only the human nature of Christ suffered on 15
the cross. That requires one to separate the natures in Christ 16
and reject a single, composite nature. Furthermore, Waheeb 17
provides no proof that the blood of the human nature of our 18
Lord is not efficacious in saving sinners. It is the humanity of 19
Jesus that stands between us and God. As Paul writes, "There 20
is one mediator between God and humanity, Christ Jesus, 21
Himself human" (1 Tim. 2:5, NET Bible). 22

5. "The expression 'two natures' cannot explain the dogma 23
professed by the adherents of Chalcedon that our Lady is the 24
Mother of God." And, that may be an effective argument if one 25
is attempting to question the logical consistency of that Creed 26
instead of attempting to judge one's beliefs by Scripture itself. 27
As shown in the historical and theological conflict between 28

1 Nestorius and Cyril and the banishment of the former, as well
2 as in the tenets of Protestant-evangelical beliefs, Mary is not
3 uniformly accepted as being God’s mother. This is because the
4 Bible does not say she is. Mary was blessed to birth the human-
5 ity of our Lord, not the divine nature.

6 A major criticism of Chalcedon is the Creed leaves unex-
7 plained how a nature can exist without a hypostasis. One at-
8 tempt to explain that, approved by many today, is the proposal
9 of Leonitius of Byzantium. His doctrine is termed “*enhypos-*
10 *tasia*.” An enhyposton is a nature that has its existence in the
11 hypostasis of another nature.⁵¹ The divine Logos is the hypos-
12 tasis of the human nature of Christ. This supposedly remedies
13 Chalcedon’s failure to provide an explanation of how Christ
14 lacks a separate human hypostasis.⁵² The human nature is
15 not self-hypostatic, but instead it is enhypostatic in God the
16 Word.⁵³

17 John of Damascus in his Exposition of the Orthodox Faith
18 promotes this theory. We should be reminded the Damascene
19 insists Christ has two sets of natural qualities: one set for each
20 nature. There are two wisdoms, two knowledges, two wills,
21 and two energies in the one Person of Christ.⁵⁴ Nevertheless,
22 John insists there can be no nature without a subsistence. But
23 that subsistence is not provided by the human nature; instead,

24 51. Dirk Kraussmuller. “Making Sense of the Formula of Chalcedon: The
25 Cappadocians and Aristotle in Leonitius of Byzantium’s *Contra Nestorianos et*
26 *Eutychianos*.” *Vigiliae Christianae* 65 (2011, 484–513), 484.

27 52. Irineu Ion Popa. “Christology of Chalcedon, After the Council of Chalcedon.”
28 *Studia Teleologiczno-Historyczne* (2016, 15–35), 15.

29 53. *Exposition*, XIII, XIV.

30 54. *Exposition*, IX.

the subsistence of the divine Word has become the subsistence
of both natures.

I think Charles Hodge in general does not depart from
Leonitius' doctrine of enhypostasia although Hodge uses dif-
ferent terminology. Hodge teaches while Christ is said to have
a human intelligence and will, the "personality of Christ is
the divine nature." The human nature is impersonal. This is
because personality is said to require a distinct subsistence
which the human nature of Christ never possessed.⁵⁵ But
how does Hodge know the humanity of Christ is impersonal?
Must "personality" be a synonym for "person"? As the incarna-
tion was a unique, event and is a mystery, could it not be that
one Person of Christ has two "personalities"? Can human in-
telligence and will even be impersonal in itself? Is God acting
through human intelligence and His will truly human? How
are we to understand the limitations of Jesus' intellect (Luke
2:40,53; Mark 13:32; Heb. 5:8)? Can such be rightfully attributed
to the hypostasis of the omniscient, divine nature? Is Cyril's
claim true, that divinity in Christ pretended to be ignorant?

Issues as these have raised queries about the tenet of enhy-
postasia. For example, McIntyre levels three criticisms against
it: (1) if the human nature has no strictly personal center, then
"there is no ego around which the human life can move and
upon which it experiences." (2) It is questionable that the di-
vine hypostasis can function in the place of a human one. (3)
As Nazianzus says, "What Christ did not take, He did not re-
deem." Human beings have human hypostasis: if Christ does

55. *Systematic Theology II*, 391.

1 not have one, the argument is, He cannot redeem humanity.⁵⁶
2 One might add a fourth criticism. If, as Chalcedon stipulates,
3 Christ is made like us *in all things* except for sin, how can He
4 not have a human hypostasis just as we do?

5 Despite Hodge denying a distinct personality to the human-
6 ity of Christ, his understanding of the activities of the natures
7 in Christ tends toward Word-Man Christology. Each nature in
8 Christ has its own “substance,” which manifests the attributes
9 and powers of that substance. When we see those attributes
10 and powers, we believe this substance, which is a nature, is “*an*
11 *entity that acts.*” (emphasis mine). Some acts are those of the
12 Man; others are those of the divinity.⁵⁷

13 But Buswell argues against Hodge’s position regarding the
14 natures in Christ. Buswell denies a nature is a substantive en-
15 tity. Instead, it is a complex of attributes. A nature does not
16 feel, think, or act, he writes. It was the Person of Christ, for ex-
17 ample, not the human nature that died on the cross. And that
18 Person is the eternal Son of God.⁵⁸ But, that again raises the
19 question of whether God can die. Yet, if only the human nature
20 died, how can that nature not be able to experience? The fol-
21 lowing paragraphs summarize the opinions of some evangeli-
22 cal Christologists who, in varying degrees, illustrate the Word-
23 Man position.

24 Oliver Crisp advances what he calls the “concrete nature”
25 view of the human nature of Christ. This position affirms

26 56. *Systematic Theology II*: 387, 395.

27 57. John McIntyre. *The Shape of Christology*. (T&T Clark: Edinburgh, 1998), 97–98.

28 58. J. Oliver Buswell. *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids,
29 MI: Eerdmans, 1976).

the body and soul of Christ are distinct from the Word and form a concrete particular. In contrast, the abstract view of Christ's humanity is that the human nature is a "property, or set of properties."⁵⁹ Crisp believes his doctrine differs from Nestorianism in that the concrete nature view does not say the Logos assumed an existing person.⁶⁰ Yet, Crisp is dogmatic that the human nature has its own will,⁶¹ which some say would make the humanity to be an individual personality. Strong, for example, teaches Christ must have a single consciousness and a single will because there is a single personality.⁶²

Baillie's book includes a statement which would startle a Word-flesh Christologist. Baillie quotes R.C. Moberly: "Human nature which is not personal is not human nature."⁶³ So, Christ's human nature is in itself personal. Baillie defends that position with several arguments: (1) If the only subject of the experiences of Christ is the divine Logos, "then there seems to be no room left for what we surely find in the Gospel story: Jesus as a Man having experience with God in faith and prayer." (2) The life lived by Jesus was faced with choices and He overcame temptations; this indicates Him to be true Man. (3) To deny Christ a human consciousness which experiences and acts follows the heresy of Apollinarianism.⁶⁴

59. Oliver D. Crisp. *Divinity and Humanity* (Cambridge: University Press, 2007), 41, 94.

60. *Ibid.*, 61, 64.

61. *Ibid.*, 60

62. Augustus Hopkins Strong. *Systematic Theology 3 vols in 1.* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1907), 695.

63. D.M. Baillie. *God Was in Christ.* (New York: Scribner's, 1948), 86.

64. *Ibid.*, 88, 130.

1 John Knox also expresses a strong Logos-Man Christology.
2 He believes the Christology of the patristic age did not take the
3 humanity of Christ with sufficient seriousness.⁶⁵ Knox ques-
4 tions whether a humanity without a personal, human center
5 should be called human at all.⁶⁶ Also, Knox claims unless Christ
6 has both a human consciousness and subconsciousness, He
7 is not human.⁶⁷ But, again, if Christ's humanity is so distin-
8 guished from His deity, some will ask how we can avoid saying
9 Christ is two Persons.

10 Morris' book is primarily a refutation of kenoticism. But, an
11 argument in it is valuable in the discussion of there being a
12 distinct human center of activity in Christ. Morris labels his
13 position the "two-minds" view.⁶⁸ Morris thinks there are two
14 consciousnesses in Christ, and that the human consciousness
15 did not have full access to the divine consciousness.⁶⁹ Morris
16 notes modern psychology says one person can have two ranges
17 of consciousness, and that the two-minds view allows us to
18 take seriously Jesus' earthly limitations. Otherwise, our incar-
19 national Christology is "God merely dressed up as a man."⁷⁰

20 The two consciousnesses view is common in the lit-
21 erature across different theological traditions. H. Orton
22 Wiley, a Wesleyan Arminian, avers that while Christ's two

23 65. John Knox. *The Humanity and Divinity of Christ* (Cambridge: University Press,
24 1967), 62.

25 66. *Ibid.*, 64.

26 67. *Ibid.*, 68.

27 68. Thomas V. Morris. *The Logic of God Incarnate* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University
28 Press, 1986), 102.

29 69. *Ibid.*, 103.

30 70. *Ibid.*, 103, 107.

consciousnesses have but one self, the consciousnesses meet
and have communion with each other. In fact, Wiley believes
the human nature acquired personality by its union with the
divine nature.⁷¹ And, William G.T. Shedd, a Reformed theo-
logian, also teaches the human nature acquired personality
through its union with the divine nature, that there are two
consciousnesses in Christ, and that these consciousness yield
to each other in continual fluctuation.⁷² Likewise, B.B. Warfield
contends that in Christ are dual centers of consciousness, and
to think otherwise is Doceticism.⁷³

Gordon H. Clark's small volume, *The Incarnation*, assumes
an attitude of Nestorianism in its Christology. Clark notes how
the soul of Christ relates to the divine Person "is, perhaps, the
most difficult problem in all theology."⁷⁴ Clark challenges the
view that the human nature in itself is not a person: What in ad-
dition to will and intellect is required to make a person, he asks.
How can Christ be a true man unless He is a human Person?⁷⁵
Personality cannot be denied to Christ's human nature; in fact,
Clark suggests, maybe the Logos and Jesus did "have some sort
of conversation."⁷⁶ This author further argues the personhood
of the human nature by asking who or what was tempted and

71. H. Orton Wiley. *Christian Theology II* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1952), 179–181.

72. William G.T. Shedd. *Dogmatic Theology vol II.* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1980), 269, 320.

73. Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield. *The Person and Work of Christ* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1970), 258–259.

74. Gordon H. Clark. *The Incarnation.* (Jefferson, MA: The Trinity Foundation, 1988), 4.

75. *Ibid.*, 17.

76. *Ibid.*, 44, 45.

1 suffered on the cross. It could not be the divine nature, he says,
2 as God cannot be tempted and is impassible.⁷⁷

3 One common element in the Logos-Man Christology il-
4 lustrated in the paragraphs above is that Christ's human na-
5 ture has a human will in distinction from His divine will. This
6 doctrine was stipulated in the sixth ecumenical Council at
7 Constantinople in 680–681. It reads: “We likewise declare in
8 Him two natural wills and two natural operations ... these two
9 natural wills are not contrary the one to the other (God forbid)
10 as the impious heretics assert, but His human will follows and
11 that as not resisting and reluctant, but rather as subject to His
12 divine and omnipotent will.”⁷⁸

13 Due to the reassertion of monophysitism in the forms of the
14 monergist and monothelite controversies of the 7th century,
15 Pope Agatho had written two letters of instruction to the leg-
16 ates that were to attend this Council. In these, Agatho writes,
17 “The rule of piety instructs us that He has two natural wills
18 and two natural operations, as perfect God and perfect man.
19 When He says, ‘Father, if it be possible, let the cup pass from
20 me,’ His human will out of the weakness of the flesh was flee-
21 ing away from the passion, but His divine will was ready for
22 it. (Therefore), He had a human will by which He obeyed His
23 Father.”⁷⁹

24 A criticism could be made of the Creed that dyothelitism “is
25 in acute danger of completely tearing apart Jesus’ unity.” But

26 77. *Ibid.*, 67, 71.

27 78. *NPNF Second Series* 14, 345.

28 79. *Ibid.*, 333–334, 341.

some see the council’s declaration that the human will is obedient to the divine will, exonerating dyothelitism from that accusation.⁸⁰ Still, one might argue against the two-wills position that it finds no warrant in Scripture, that many Protestants do not accept the sixth ecumenical council as normative, that John 6:38 means the Father and Son share one will, and that natures are not conscious—only persons are conscious.

For the most part, the discussion in chapter six has not interacted with the biblical portrayal of the life of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels and elsewhere in Scripture. It is appropriate to do that now before concluding this chapter and to attempt to discern whether occasions in and characteristics of our Lord’s life seem more fitting to a Word-flesh or Word-Man Christology or, in other words, how they may provide an answer to the question of whether there is, in Christ, a human center (a human consciousness, will, and intellect) through which the one Person of Christ experiences and acts in distinction from the activity of the divine center. It should be noted that these points refer only to the human nature of our Lord and that a convincing case can easily be made from Scripture to evince Christ’s divine nature. (All Scripture quotations are from the NET Bible.)

1. Jesus’ humanity is composite

Our Lord’s human nature consisted of more than a body. Jesus is said to have the essential non-material part(s) of human nature. “My soul is deeply grieved” (Matt. 26:38). “He was intensely moved in spirit” (John 11:33). The attributing of a soul/

80. Pannenberg, 294.

1 spirit to Jesus suggests He has a human center of emotions and
2 understanding.

3 **2. Jesus learned.**

4 “And, Jesus increased in wisdom” (Luke 2:52). “He learned
5 obedience” (Heb. 5:8) This would seem to indicate our Lord
6 possesses a human intelligence that is distinct from His omni-
7 scient, divine intelligence.

8 **3. Jesus got tired.**

9 “He was tired from the journey”(John 4:6). This likely in-
10 cluded a weariness of both mind and body, as Jesus is noted to
11 have slept. If so, one could postulate Christ has a human mind.

12 **4. Jesus slept.**

13 “He was in the stern sleeping on a cushion” (Mark 4:38). But
14 were Christ to have only a divine mind, it would not seem that
15 He could take naps. God does not sleep.

16 **5. Jesus did not know some things.**

17 “But of that day or hour no one knows it—neither the angels
18 in heaven, nor the Son” (Mark 13:32). Here again, a human in-
19 tellect is in evidence.

20 **6. Jesus was tempted.**

21 “Tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin” (Heb.
22 4:15). This requires a human consciousness in Christ, as God
23 cannot be tempted (James 1:13).

24 **7. Jesus experienced great emotional stress.**

25 “And in His anguish He prayed more earnestly, and His
26 sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground” (Luke
27 22:44). This suggests a human center of emotions since, as
28 God, He knows He is in control of all events (Isa. 46:10–11).

8. Jesus died.

1

“Then Jesus cried out with a loud voice and gave up His spirit” (Matt. 27:50). However, the divine nature has aseity and is not subject to death (Jer. 10:10; 1 Thess. 1:9). Thus, the humanity of our Lord experiences what the divinity cannot. And this would seem to indicate a distinction between the two natures in Christ.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

8

Provide an reasonable response to each as a learning experience.

9

1. Do you believe after the incarnation there are two natures in Christ?

10

11

2. Do you think the theory of enhypostasia is correct?

12

3. Who is right on the activity of Christ’s natures: Hodge or Buswell?

13

14

4. Would you criticize Apollinaris’ Christology? Why or why not?

15

16

5. Compare Leo’s Christology with your own.

17

6. Do you think Mary is the mother of God?

18

7. In your estimation, is Clark’s Christology biblical?

19

8. What in Christ’s life best supports a two-nature doctrine?

20

9. Explain the differences between Word-flesh and Word-Man Christology.

21

22

10. Do you think if Christ has two wills, then He must be two Persons?

23

24

25

1 PREVIEW OF CHAPTER SIX

- 2 1. Modified kenoticism is defined as the belief that in the
3 incarnation, the God the Son gave up the use of some
4 divine attributes.
- 5 2. Both Berkhof and Grudem reject kenoticism.
- 6 3. Erickson, Lewis and Demarest, Fee, Davis, Williams,
7 Feenstra, and McCall state their acceptance of modified
8 kenoticism.
- 9 4. The church fathers Athanasius, Augustine, and Gregory
10 Nazianzus express views that are not compatible with
11 kenoticism.
- 12 5. John Calvin denies the incarnate Son gave up any pow-
13 ers of divinity.
- 14 6. The omni-attributes are predicated both of God in gen-
15 eral and Christ after the incarnation.
- 16 7. The divine attributes are inseparable from God's essence.
- 17 8. Chalcedon is shown to be contrary to modified
18 kenoticism.
- 19 9. Some examples are provided of a number of theologians
20 from various theological persuasions who reject the doc-
21 trine that God can lose the use of His divine attributes.
- 22 10. Scripture implies the incarnate Son exists in two
23 consciousnesses.
- 24 11. Philippians 2:7 should not be understood as teaching that
25 Christ emptied Himself of the use of divine attributes.



Did Christ Lose the Use of Divine Powers in the Incarnation?

Modified kenoticism—also called “functional kenoticism”—is the belief that when incarnating, Christ had to give up the use of some divine attributes. Modified kenoticism differs from the doctrine of an early advocate of kenoticism, Gottfried Thomasius, as he taught that upon incarnating, Christ was forever stripped of some divine qualities, such as omnipresence and omniscience. However, modified kenoticism takes the more subtle position. For example, while the incarnate God the Son may have in some manner retained the omni-attribute of omniscience, because He was human, He was unable to access that quality. His potential omnipresence

1 was also curtailed, perhaps only temporally, by His body. The
2 Son is still God, but using such divine attributes is not thought
3 by modified kenoticists to be essential to being God.

4 Our three systematic theologies are not in agreement on
5 the issue of kenoticism. Berkhof writes that kenotism subverts
6 the doctrine of God's immutability. Also, were the Son to self-
7 empty Himself of some divine qualities, He could no longer
8 be a divine Member of the Trinity, as it should not be thought
9 that attributes are separable from essence.¹ Grudem likewise
10 also rejects any form of kenoticism. He observes the doctrine
11 was not taught for 1,800 years, that Philippians 2:7 does not say
12 Christ was emptied of any divine attribute, and that such a loss
13 of omni-attributes would be clearly and repeatedly be taught in
14 the New Testament.²

15 However, Millard Erickson has a different view on the ques-
16 tion of whether God the Son discontinued the use of some di-
17 vine qualities. He says Christ's humanity imposed functional
18 limitations on His deity. The divine attributes were not lost,
19 but the addition of humanity rendered them inoperable. So,
20 for example, while He had the potential ability to be omnipres-
21 ent, He could not actually be everywhere as He was spatially
22 confined in a body. And while, in some capacity He still knew
23 all things, He simply could not access that knowledge because

24 1. Louis Berkhof. *Systematic Theology* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust. 2003
25 reprint), 328–329.

26 2. Wayne Grudem. *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994),
27 550–551.

of His human brain.³ So, Jesus gave up the independent use of
some of the divine attributes.

This doctrine is not new to Erickson, as it is expressed in
his 1991 volume, *The Word Became Flesh*. Here Erickson explains
the Christ incarnate could only exercise divine qualities in con-
nection with His humanity. So, some omni-attributes became
latent. His omniscience only then resided in His unconscious.
He could not access it except by the Father’s permission.
During His time on Earth, He could not be omnipresent be-
cause He was localized in His physical body. Perhaps, through-
out much of His life, Jesus did not even know of His potential
powers.⁴ One should note, and it later will be commented on,
that it can be questioned whether Erickson’s view is in keeping
with Chalcedon wherein it is stipulated that the two natures
in Christ are not “confused,” and that all the properties of each
nature are preserved.

Similar to Erickson’s understanding of the kenosis are the
views of those of Lewis and Demarest in their own systematic
theology. In the incarnation, Christ chose at times not to take
advantage of the powers of His divinity. He did not access His
omniscience as His consciousness was mostly that of the hu-
man nature. The divine will was not often used. And, the in-
carnated One gave up direct fellowship with God the Father.⁵

3. Millard Erickson. *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013), 637, 670,
705..

4. Millard Erickson. *The Word Became Flesh* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1991),
559–561.

5. Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest. *Integrative Theology*, 3 vols in 1.
(Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 2:344.

1 Despite the third step of their theological approach being a
2 supposed close examination of Scripture relevant to their per-
3 suasions, these authors offer only two texts to support such
4 assertions: Luke 2:40, 51 and 22:42. But neither of these texts
5 states Christ uses mostly one consciousness or that He did
6 not use His divine will or that He gave up fellowship with the
7 Father. And despite their supposed fifth theological step being
8 interacting with contrary opinions, these authors fail to evi-
9 dence why attributing all weaknesses to the humanity only, in-
10 stead of to the immutable, divine nature, is invalid.

11 Gordon D. Fee also has expressed the opinion that the di-
12 vine nature of Christ was limited by His humanity. To be truly
13 human required Jesus to “limit certain prerogatives that in
14 the end seem truly incompatible with His being truly human.”
15 Christ was required to limit His omnipresence, omnipotence,
16 and omniscience in order to live out a human life. This allowed
17 Christ to be in utter dependence on the Father and to submit
18 His will in obedience to the Father.⁶ Here again, one may ob-
19 serve a total neglect for the appreciation of Chalcedon’s dogma
20 of two natures in Christ and in the Patristic insistence—soon
21 to be shown in such as Athanasius, Augustine, and Gregory of
22 Nazianzus—that each nature in Christ retains its full use of
23 the qualities unique to that nature. These say the weaknesses
24 of Christ are only in His humanity.

25 6. Gordon D. Fee. “The New Testament and Kenosis Christology” in C. Stephen
26 Evans, ed. *Exploring Kenotic Christology* (Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing,
27 2006), 29, 34.

In the same volume, Feenstra finds the opinion that the Christ incarnate can be both ignorant of the time of His return yet be omniscient to be problematic. Instead, incompatible properties should not be attributed to Him. So, omniscience cannot be predicated of Jesus, but this is no problem as omniscience is not essential to God's nature. Were Christ not incarnate, He could be omniscient. So, Christ was divine, yet lacked some qualities often associated with divinity.⁷

Also in the same volume, Davis insists he is ascribing "full humanity and divinity" to Christ. Yet, Davis says it is impossible that Christ has simultaneously both sets of attributes: divine and human. So, Christ emptied Himself of certain divine properties that are inconsistent with Him being truly human. Davis believes his opinions are consistent with Chalcedon and that they do not make Christ a "reduced God."⁸

Williams also is a defender of kenotic theory. Christ emptied Himself of attributes thought to be characteristic of God. One of these is immutability, but this is no problem if immutability is understood as faithfulness. Nor is Christ upholding of the universe problematic as the other divine Persons could have taken up that task. The kenosis of Christ contributes to our understanding of salvation because the crucifixion is most exemplary of self-limitation.⁹

7. Ronald J. Feenstra, "A Kenotic Christology of the Divine Attributes" in *Exploring Kenotic Christology*, 151–154.

8. Stephen T. Davis. "Is Kenosis Orthodox?" in *Exploring Kenotic Christology*, 116–121.

9. David T. Williams. "Kenosis and the Nature of the Persons in the Trinity." *Koers* 69/42004: 625, 637.

1 McCall wrote a dissertation that defends the doctrine of
2 modified kenoticism. In it, McCall boldly declares modified
3 kenoticism is compatible with Scripture, Leos' Tome, and
4 Chalcedon.¹⁰ That soon will be shown to be wrong on all points.
5 Modified kenoticism is stated not to be Arian, Apollinarian,
6 monophysitic, or monothelistic.¹¹ Christ retained the poten-
7 tial but not actual use of the omni-attributes. No essential at-
8 tribute was given up.¹² McCall makes the claim that modified
9 kenoticism performs well with the Scripture's witness to the
10 humanity of Christ and it "can stay with the tradition" that
11 Christ is God.¹³

12 But so many others distinguish the properties and acts of
13 one nature in Christ from the other in ways that make kenoti-
14 cism unnecessary. Athanasius deems the notion that ---Christ
15 incarnate did not retain full use of His attributes of deity to be
16 incorrect. Instead, "Christ was not circumscribed in the body,
17 nor while present in the body was He absent elsewhere." Thus
18 Athanasius, in a single stroke disputes, the notion that Jesus
19 ever lost the attribute of omnipresence. "He was not bound to
20 the body," and "He was at once walking as Man and as Word
21 was quickening all things."¹⁴

22 With equal certitude, Augustine urges us to divide the acts
23 of Christ according to what pertains to His deity and what

24 10. Thomas H. McCall. "Modified Kenotic Christology, the Trinity and Christian
25 Orthodoxy." Calvin Theological Seminary, 2004.

26 11. *Ibid.*, 7, 17, 209.

27 12. *Ibid.*, 8, 209.

28 13. *Ibid.*, 44, 45, 7, 89.

29 14. Athanasius. *Incarnation of the Word*, 17.16.

pertains to His humanity. As Man, Christ can do nothing of Himself, but as God, His works equal those of the Father.¹⁵ “We are to distinguish in them (the natures of Christ) what relates to the form of God, in which He is equal to the Father, and what relates to the form of a servant which He took, in which He is less than the Father.”¹⁶ A primary shortcoming of modified kenoticism is that it fails to appreciate the differences between the natures in Christ, which is contrary to the Augustinian Christology and seems monophysitic.

A third example of the patristic refusal to attribute both divine and human qualities to a seemingly one-natured Christ is Gregory Nazianzus. Gregory verbally humiliates those holding the position that ignorance, subjection, obedience, servanthood, increase, sleep, hunger, agony, or death are qualities of Christ’s divine nature. Instead, we are to apply what is lofty to Christ’s divinity and what is lowly to Christ’s humanity.¹⁷

Theologians regularly make a practice of distinguishing between the acts and qualities of Jesus’ human nature versus Jesus’ divine nature. Calvin, in his *Institutes*, explains, regarding omnipresence, believing the Word of God was enclosed in His body is “sheer petulance ... the acts which were performed in His human nature are transferred improperly, but not causelessly, to His divinity.” The Son descended from heaven “without abandoning heaven.” In fact, in summary, Calvin insists

15. Augustine. *On the Trinity*, 2.3.

16. *Ibid.*, 1.11.

17. Gregory Nazianzus. *The Theological Orations*, 3:18.

1 the “entire properties of each nature remain entire.”¹⁸ And, in
2 his commentaries, the reformer tackles the problem of Jesus’
3 ignorance of the time of His return in Mark 13:31. Calvin ex-
4 plains two natures are united in one Person, and that the two
5 natures act differently. Consequently, Calvin avers that “there
6 would be no impropriety, therefore, in saying that Christ who
7 knew all things (John 21:17) was ignorant of something in re-
8 spect of His perception of a Man.”¹⁹ So, Calvin has accounted
9 for two attributes, the divine omnipresence and the human ig-
10 norance, which both can exist in the one Christ by virtue of His
11 having two natures. Modified kenoticists cannot agree with
12 the reformer’s teaching.

13 Likewise, Charles Hodge attributes Christ’s weaknesses
14 only to His humanity and only Christ’s divine perfections to
15 His deity. The sleeping and suffering of Christ belong only
16 to His human nature, but His pre-existence and creative acts
17 belong to His divinity. “Each nature retains all its own prop-
18 erties unchanged.” In Christ are both a finite and an infinite
19 intelligence.²⁰

20 This teaching that Christ in one Person possesses both di-
21 vine and human qualities is called the *communicatio idiomatum*.
22 Riccardi ably explains it: Because the single Person has both
23 a divine and a human nature, Scripture can affirm seemingly

24 18. John Calvin. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. 13.4; 14.1, 2 (Grand Rapids, MI:
25 Eerdmans, 1979).

26 19. John Calvin. *Calvin’s Commentaries*, vol XVII (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker,
27 2003), 154.

28 20. Charles Hodge. *Systematic Theology*, vol 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans,
29 1981), 391, 393, 395.

different qualities to the one Christ. He is eternal yet temporal, 1
omniscient yet ignorant, omnipotent yet weak.²¹ 2

With this background, seven questions that challenge mod- 3
ified kenoticism positions will be raised. (All Scripture cita- 4
tions are from the NET Bible.) 5

I would like to begin with a review of some of God’s attri- 6
butes as noted in the Scriptures. Hopefully, not many become 7
so enthusiastic about arguing particular doctrines, as I do 8
about the natures in Christ, that they forget to glorify our God 9
for His awesome qualities. 10

1. Does God possess omni-attributes? 11

Our God is omnipresent. 12

Acts 17:27–28: “He is not far from each one of us. For in Him 13
we live and move about and exist.” 14

Psalm 139:7: “Where can I flee to escape your presence?” 15

Our God is omnipotent. 16

Genesis 17:1: “I am the sovereign God.” 17

Jeremiah 32:17: “Nothing is too hard for you.” 18

Our God is omniscient. 1 John 3:20: “God is greater than our 19
conscious and knows all things.” 20

Isaiah 46:9: “I am God and there is none like Me, who an- 21
nounces the end from the beginning.” 22

Our God is eternal. 23

Psalm 90:2: “Even before the mountains came into existence 24
or you brought the world into being, you were eternal God.” 25

21. Mike Riccardi. “Veiled in the Flesh the Godhead See: A Study of the Kenosis 26
of Christ. *MSJ* 30/1 (Spring 2019), 109. 27

1 1 Timothy 6:16: “He alone possesses immortality.”

2 *Our God is unchangeable.*

3 Psalm 102:25–27: “In earlier times you established the earth,
4 the skies are your handiwork. They will perish but you will
5 endure.”

6 James 1:17: “The Father of lights, with Whom there is no
7 variation or the slightest hint of change.”

8 *Our God is impassible*, which is deduced from His eternality
9 and immutability. I suggest the divine “impassibility” means
10 God, in time, cannot be caused to suffer by the acts of His
11 creation.

12 (A prayer: Please forgive me, Lord, when I so enwrap my-
13 self with trying to explain and argue particular dogma and for-
14 get to daily glorify you for your greatness and to thank you for
15 what have done for me.)

16 **2. Did Christ in incarnating lose the use of His omni-attributes?**

17 *Christ, after the incarnation, is omnipresent.*

18 Matthew 28:20: “I am with you always.”

19 Ephesians 1:23: “The fullness of Him who fills all in all.”

20 (Note: See the remarks below on whether Jesus’ exaltation re-
21 stored His divine powers.)

22 *Christ, after the incarnation, is omnipotent.*

23 Colossians 1:17: “All things are held together in Him.”

24 Revelation 1:8: “I am ... the All Powerful.”

25 *Christ, after the incarnation, is omniscient.*

26 John 21:17: “Lord, you know everything.”

Colossians 2:3: “In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” 1
2

Christ, after the incarnation, is eternal. 3

Revelation 1:8: “The One who is, who was, and is coming.” 4

Hebrews 1:8: “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.” 5

Christ’s deity, after the incarnation, is immutable. 6

Hebrews 1:12: “You are the same.” 7

Hebrews 13:8: “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” 8
9

But does Philippians 2:9, “God highly exalted Him,” mean 10
in His exaltation, our Lord could have had His divine powers 11
restored that were lost in the incarnation? Davis suggests the 12
“Logos emptying Himself, *during the period of Jesus’ earthly life*, of 13
those properties that normally characterize divinity but are in- 14
consistent with humanity”²² (emphasis mine). Also, Erickson 15
writes, “In His earthly ministry, Jesus was dependent on the 16
Father for the exercise of His divine attributes ... it needs to be 17
observed at this point that a *temporary* limitation, not a perma- 18
nent finitude, was involved”²³ (emphasis mine). 19

However, neither Philippians 2:9 nor any other Scripture 20
state Christ as God lost in His incarnation divine powers but 21
regained them in His exaltation. In my view, were such an in- 22
terpretation advanced, that would be a hopelessly ineffective 23
effort to harmonize the kenotic hypothesis with the Bible. 24
25

22. Stephen T. Davis. “Is Kenosis Orthodox?” *Exploring Kenotic Christology*, 115. 26

23. Erickson. *Christian Theology*, 637. 27

1 **3. Does modified kenoticism contradict Chalcedon?**

2 Some adherents of modified kenoticism assert their
3 Christology is in agreement with Chalcedon's creed of 451. That
4 is deemed important, as Feenstra explains, because "the touch-
5 stone for Christological orthodoxy is the Chalcedonian defini-
6 tion of the faith." Feenstra believes some kenotic theologians
7 do agree with Chalcedon because they say "the essential divine
8 attributes must be rethought." For example, Christ could have
9 omniscience but chose not to be non-omniscient for a time.²⁴
10 Thompson and Plantinga argue that modified kenoticism se-
11 cures the Chalcedonian nonnegotiable regarding the Person of
12 Christ. The nonnegotiable is claimed to be the unity of Christ's
13 Person. And, modified kenoticism, they say, unifies Christ's
14 Person by teaching that the eternal Son becomes a human
15 soul.²⁵

16 Yet, Chalcedon does not say Christ as God gave up the use
17 of divine attributes or that the divine nature was transformed
18 into a human soul. But let's allow someone closer to the forma-
19 tion of that creed to comment on it, as we are nearly 1,600 years
20 from its writing. So, we can compare Leo's Christology with
21 statements in Chalcedon.

22 Chalcedon states: Our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in
23 Godhead. The property of each nature being preserved.

24 24. Feenstra, 140, 152, 156.

25 25. Thomas R. Thompson and Cornelius Plantinga, Jr. "Trinity and Kenosis" in
26 *Exploring Kenotic Christology*, 167, 171.

Leo states: The properties of His divine nature remain inseparable (Letter XXVIII to Flavian). That which is different by any equality can, in no true sense, be One (Sermon XXVIII).

These two are united in saying that Christ, as God, did not lose the use of any divine powers.

Chalcedon states: [Christ exists] in two natures inconfusedly.

Leo states: The Word was not turned into flesh or into soul (Letter XXXV). Neither nature passed its own properties into the other (Sermon LIV).

These two are united in saying the incarnation did not cause God's nature to change into man's nature.

4. Does modified kenoticism's doctrine that Christ as God lost the use of the omni-attributes when incarnating conflict with teachings of some popular theologians?

John Calvin (mostly paraphrased): Another absurdity is the Word of God was enclosed in a human body ... we maintain that the divinity was so conjoined and united with the humanity, that the entire properties of each nature remain entire.²⁶ Calvin says the Son as God lost nothing!

Charles Hodge: "His human intellect increases, His divine intelligence was and is infinite ... if human attributes be transferred to God, He ceases to be God.... each nature retains all its own properties unchanged."²⁷ Hodge says the Son as God lost nothing!

26. Calvin. *Institutes*. 2:13:4; 2:14:2.

27. Hodge. *Systematic Theology*. II:389, 391.

1 H. Orton Wiley: The Godhead and manhood each retain their
2 respective properties.²⁸ Wiley says the Son as God lost nothing!

3 William G.T. Shedd: “Each substance, however, still retains
4 its own properties ... the divine nature remains divine in its
5 properties.”²⁹ Shedd says the Son as God lost nothing!

6 John Miley: “There is neither change nor mixture of the
7 natures.”³⁰ Miley says the Son as God lost nothing!

8 Thomas F. Torrance: “There is nothing here about any so-
9 called metaphysical change in God the Son as an emptying out
10 of God the Son of any divine attributes or powers.”³¹ Torrance
11 says the Son as God lost nothing!

12 **5. Is modified kenoticism correct in distinguishing God’s** 13 **attributes from God’s essence?**

14 Modified kenoticists maintain Christ can retain the divine
15 nature while losing the use of the qualities belonging to that
16 nature. The divine Logos limits His divine powers so as to be
17 compatible with being human.³² Or, as Feenstra claims, Christ
18 on earth was truly divine but not omniscient.³³ But can God’s
19 attributes be separated from His essence?

20 They cannot, according to highly recognized theologians
21 who say the divine attributes cannot be divided from God’s

22 28. H. Orton Wiley. *Christian Theology, vol II* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1952), 183.

23 29. William G.T. Shedd. *Dogmatic Theology, Vol II*, 267, 268.

24 30. John Miley. *Systematic Theology, vol II* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989),
25 23–24.

26 31. Thomas F. Torrance. *Incarnation*. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008),
27 75.

28 32. Thompson and Plantinga, 170.

29 33. Augustus Hopkins Strong. *Systematic Theology, 3 vols in 1* (Valley Forge, PA:
30 Judson Press, 1967 reprint), 244–245.

essence. Strong teaches the attributes of God are inseparable from the idea of God and inhere in the divine essence.³⁴ Frame explains “each attribute is necessary to God’s being.”³⁵ It is Pannenberg’s opinion that “the attributes are those of the things itself. They belong to its essence.”³⁶ Bavinck explains, “His attributes coincide with His being. Every attribute is His being.”³⁷ And Lewis defines, “The attributes of God, then, are essential characteristics of the divine Being. Without these qualities, God would not be what He is—God.”³⁸

6. Is modified kenoticism biblical in saying Christ has only one consciousness?

Thompson and Plantinga write it is biblical to believe Christ has but one consciousness.³⁹ Consciousness has been understood as “sensation,” “mind,” “intelligence,” or “awareness.”⁴⁰ Do we see in the biblical record of the one incarnate Christ what B.B. Warfield asserts, “The self-consciousness of Jesus is, in other words distinctly complex and necessarily implies dual centers of consciousness”?⁴¹ Did Jesus have both human and divine sensations, awareness, and minds (or intelligences)? Our

34. John M. Frame. *The Doctrine of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2002), 121, 226.

35. Wolfhart Pannenberg. *Systematic Theology vol 1* transl. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 360.

36. Herman Bavinck. *Our Reasonable Faith*. transl. Henry Zylstra (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1956), 135.

37. Gordon R. Lewis. “God, Attributes of.” In EDT, 451.

38. Ibid. MISSING FOOTNOTE: PLEASE FILL IN

39. Thompson and Plantinga, “Trinity and Kenosis,” 171.

40. Peter Mark Roget, *Roget’s International Thesaurus* (New York: Crowell, 1962), 764.

41. Warfield, *The Person and Work of Christ*, 258

1 Lord both anguished over His upcoming passion (Luke 22:44)
2 and yet recalled His preexistent glory (John 17:5). Those texts
3 indicate two different levels of sensation and awareness, sug-
4 gesting two consciousnesses. And Christ knowing everything
5 (John 21:17) but not knowing something (Mark 13:32) indicates
6 our Lord has two intelligences or minds. Again, two conscious-
7 nesses, not one, are implied.

8 **7. Does modified kenoticism understand Philippians 2:7**
9 **correctly?**

10 At issue is whether the apostle meant, in the Incarnation,
11 God the Son emptied Himself of anything, such as the use
12 of some divine powers. Davis writes: “Some who oppose the
13 kenotic interpretation insist that since the text does not pre-
14 cisely say what Christ Jesus emptied Himself of (which is true),
15 it follows that He did not empty Himself of anything, and thus
16 certainly not of any divine attributes. But that is not a very
17 impressive argument. Both in English and in Greek, some
18 verbs, when used, immediately cry out for a direct or indirect
19 argument.”⁴²

20 However, even were that usage in general correct, it seems
21 important to first note this text does not specify of what Christ
22 was emptied. It does not say, “Christ lost His powers.” And sec-
23 ond, Paul seems to explain in the text what he means by “emp-
24 tied Himself.” Paul explains, “by taking the form of a slave.” It
25 was not that something was lost; it was that something was

26 42. Davis, “Is Kenosis Orthodox?” in *Exploring Kenotic Christology*, 131.

added. In my opinion, modified kenoticists are reading into
Philippians 2:7 what simply is not there.

In summary, I think the tenets of modified kenoticism are wrong because the attributes of God named in Scripture are said to be those also of Christ incarnate. These divine attributes cannot be separated from God's essence. If Christ remains divine after the incarnation, He must retain them. Modified kenoticism does not agree with Chalcedonian Christology, and therefore, it is not orthodox. Popular theologians reject the conclusions of modified kenoticism. Scripture requires the understanding that Christ exists in two consciousnesses, and that would imply that He can possess two sets of attributes. And finally, Philippians 2:7 states Christ emptied Himself only by adding to His divine Person a human nature that is subservient to God and not by giving up any divine qualities belonging to His divine nature.

ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the strongest argument for modified kenoticism?
2. What is the strongest argument against modified kenoticism?
3. What, in your opinion, is the meaning of Philippians 2:9?
4. Compare Erickson and Fee with Athanasius and Calvin on the emptying of Christ.
5. Do you agree that the divine attributes are inseparable from the divine essence?
6. Summarize the meaning a Greek dictionary gives to *kenoō*.

- 1 7. Evaluate Grudem's three arguments against kenoticism.
- 2 8. Look at two commentaries on Philippians 2:7 and note
- 3 their agreement and disagreement, if any.
- 4 9. Read the creed of Constantinople of 681 and explain why
- 5 it does or does not support kenoticism.
- 6 10. Relate Luke 2:40, 52 to the question of Christ having
- 7 two consciousnesses.

8 **PREVIEW OF CHAPTER SEVEN**

- 9 1. Neither Grudem nor Erickson respond to the Lutheran
- 10 dogma that the human nature of Christ has divine
- 11 attributes.
- 12 2. Berkhof raises a few arguments against the Lutheran
- 13 view.
- 14 3. Chemnitz, a 16th-century Lutheran references Scripture
- 15 to evidence his position.
- 16 4. He also contends that church fathers taught what now is
- 17 the Lutheran particular on the humanity of Jesus being
- 18 having divine attributes.
- 19 5. Pieper, a Lutheran, explains the three genera of the com-
- 20 munication of attributes.
- 21 6. He proceeds to attempt to justify the belief that the
- 22 humanity of Christ is omniscient, omnipotent, and
- 23 omnipresent.
- 24 7. Charles Hodge explains his understanding of the
- 25 Lutheran position.
- 26 8. Then he raises several objections to it.

9. The interpretations of several Scriptures by Lutherans
are questions. 1 2
10. The Lutheran Christology seems inconsistent with
Chalcedon. 3 4



Does Christ's Divine Nature Give Divine Attributes to His Human Nature?

The Lutheran position is that the divine nature of Christ communicates to the human nature of Christ—divine powers as omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence. In addition to the three systematics on this subject, which are often the focus in this work, this chapter discusses the teaching in the systematics of Charles Hodge and Francis Pieper, and also Chemnitz's work, *The Two Natures in Christ*. Readers may not be not familiar with the last two writers. Francis (or Franz) Pieper (1852–1931) was a Lutheran scholar who authored the four volume *Christliche Dogmatik*, which, in translation (*Christian Dogmatics*), has been used in Lutheran schools

1 in America. Volume II of this work contains around 140 pag-
2 es on the subject of the communication of attributes. Martin
3 Chemnitz was a 16th-century Lutheran who was a longtime
4 friend of Melanchthon and heard Luther preach. His work on
5 Christology, in its general defining and detailing of two natures
6 of our Lord, should have interest to evangelical Christians.
7 More particularly, Chemnitz also devotes about 150 pages to
8 explaining and defending the Lutheran view on the communi-
9 cation of attributes. The explanations and argumentations of
10 these last two writers will provide the data for me to describe
11 the Lutheran position and respond to it.

12 But this important disagreement between Lutheran and
13 other Protestants over how the natures of our Lord relate is at
14 times ignored by evangelical theologians. Neither Erickson nor
15 Grudem even define the Lutheran position much less mount
16 a defense against it. Yet, as will be shown, a great number of
17 Scriptural texts and theological issues and arguments are in-
18 volved and are advanced by the Lutherans in regard to their
19 view on the communication of attributes. One would think a
20 pastor-in-training should become aware of these matters.

21 In the following paragraphs, I will first summarize
22 Berkhof's view on the topic at hand and provide his reaction to
23 the Lutheran dogma. Then, I will devote a majority of space to
24 the data in first Chemnitz and then Pieper. From there, I will
25 go to Hodge's view on the communication of attributes and his
26 counters to the Lutheran doctrine. Finally, I will offer my own
27 opinions on some of the issues involved.

Berkhof affirms a three-fold communication: There is a communication of properties wherein the properties of each nature become the properties of the Person of Christ. This means Berkhof could say the weaknesses of our Lord's humanity are to be ascribed to the unified Person but not to the divine nature. Also, there is a communication of operation, which means while each nature has its own energy, the redemptive works of the human nature have both a human and a divine character. Third, there is a communication of charismatum, wherein the human nature is given spiritual gifts beyond any other, the ability not to sin, and the glory of being united with the divine nature.¹ But no omni-attributes are shared with the human nature.

Berkhof objects to the Lutheran position. He avers that attributes cannot be separated from essence, so were the humanity to be given God's attributes, it would no longer be human. He claims the Lutheran position has no Scriptural foundation. This will soon be tested. He also states the Lutheran tenet of the communication of attributes is inconsistent. If the divinity gives attributes to the humanity, he says, then the humanity must also give attributes to the divinity.² This, of course, is denied by Lutherans.

Chemnitz defines the communication of divine attributes to Christ's humanity by saying the assumed nature in Christ by reason of the hypostatic union possesses the attributes

1. Berkhof. *Systematic Theology*, 324.

2. *Ibid.*, 326.

1 and characteristics of the divine nature.³ However, Chemnitz
2 says these powers are not given to the human nature essen-
3 tially in the same sense that they are inherent to the divine na-
4 ture. That, he explains, would result in a sameness of nature.
5 Chemnitz agrees with Berkhof in saying, “The attributes of de-
6 ity cannot be communicated essentially to anyone unless, at
7 the same time, the very essence of deity is communicated.... the
8 attributes of deity are actually its divine essence.”⁴

9 But, despite that admission, Chemnitz launches into an ex-
10 position of a number of Scriptures that he feels demonstrate
11 that the deity in Christ does communicate divine attributes to
12 the humanity. He believes Colossians 2:9, “In Him all the full-
13 ness of deity dwells in bodily form,” is clear evidence of this
14 doctrine.⁵ Chemnitz observes it would make no sense to un-
15 derstand this as the fullness of deity indwelling deity. So, the
16 meaning is deity is dwelling in the human nature, that is, both
17 the body and soul of Jesus (*sōmata* is thus defined by him).
18 Therefore, the body, flesh, and blood of Christ receive the full-
19 ness of divinity and so it possesses not only human qualities
20 but the powers of divinity too. An example of this, Chemnitz
21 explains, is found in Mark 5:30 where divine “power went out
22 of Him.”⁶

23 Chemnitz elaborates on Matthew 28:18 (KJV): “All power
24 is given unto Me.” “Me” here cannot refer to the divine na-
25 ture, Chemnitz explains, because the power is given in time,

26 3. Chemnitz, *The Two Natures in Christ*, 259.

27 4. *Ibid.*, 269, 270.

28 5. *Ibid.*, 313.

29 6. *Ibid.*, 315.

but the divine nature has this power as an essential property. 1
Chemnitz denounces the view that only “authority,” not “pow- 2
er,” is the subject. The meaning is both, and so the human na- 3
ture has the divine power and ability to rule, together with the 4
divine nature, over everything.⁷ That is, the human nature is 5
omnipotent. 6

Chemnitz also is motivated to comment on Hebrews 1:3, “He 7
sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high.” Chemnitz 8
feels he must counter the interpretation that Christ’s divinity 9
only is the subject. Here again, this sitting occurs in time, but 10
the Logos always is at God’s right hand. Therefore, the mean- 11
ing is that the assumed human nature through which the 12
Logos acts now sits in a place of power. Chemnitz supplements 13
this interpretation with Ephesians 1:20–22, Acts 5:31, Hebrews 14
8:1–2, and 1 Peter 3:21–22. But Chemnitz is quick to add that 15
because the human nature is “sitting” in one place in heaven 16
does not mean the human nature is not present elsewhere. He 17
says the omnipresence of the humanity of Jesus is proven by 18
texts such as Ephesians 4:10.⁸ This dogma will receive fuller 19
treatment when discussing Pieper. 20

Chemnitz is fond of using the church fathers to evince his 21
positions. But sometimes I think he errs in applying them to 22
his views. For example, he cites John of Damascus’ example 23
of a sword heated in a fire becoming able to heat. But heat 24
is not inherent to the sword. Chemnitz applies this to Christ 25

7. Ibid., 321. 26

8. Ibid., 322–324. 27

1 receiving divine attributes from the divine nature.⁹ However,
2 the context of the Damascene’s chapter is that Christ has two
3 energies (not two sets of attributes). While John does say the
4 humanity receives “glory” by its connection with the Logos
5 (which Berkof also confesses), the Damascene teaches the
6 Word performs actions proper to it and the body (humanity)
7 performs the actions proper to it.¹⁰ He does not teach that the
8 humanity is omnipotent.

9 Chemnitz spends several pages in his attempt to elicit from
10 Athanasius witnesses to the position that Christ’s humanity
11 possesses divine qualities. Chemnitz correctly remarks that
12 Athanasius applies passages to the humanity of Christ, which
13 the Arians instead represent as references to the higher nature.
14 Chemnitz quotes Athanasius saying, “The assumed flesh was
15 anointed with and sanctified by the Logos.”¹¹ But these par-
16 ticulars, while true, are not equivalents to Athanasius’ teaching
17 that Christ’s humanity possesses omni-attributes. It is rather
18 the case, as in his *Incarnation of the Word*, that Athanasius re-
19 peatedly distinguishes the activity of the divine nature from
20 that of the humanity. For example, “He was at once walking as
21 man, and as the Word was quickening all things.”¹² Again, the
22 church father teaches that as man, Christ is like us, but as the
23 Word, He gives the Spirit.¹³ Chemnitz, I think, is reading into
24 Athanasius what is not there.

25 9. *Ibid.*, 295.

26 10. *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, chapter 15.

27 11. Chemnitz, 346–347.

28 12. *Incarnation of the Word*, 17.5.

29 13. *Discourse Against the Arians*, 2:15.18.

Although others, as Ware, think “the subjected Son” in 1
Corinthians 15:28 is or includes the divine nature,¹⁴ Chemnitz
may correctly understand Ambrose’s doctrine that it is the hu-
manity of Christ, not the deity, which has had all things put
under His feet in that text. Ambrose states, “According to the
flesh then, all things are given to Him in subjection.” But, first
note the time of this “putting all things under His feet” occurs
in the end time, not during Jesus’ time on Earth. Second, this
verse does not seem to say Christ then becomes omnipotent
because the context in the verse is ruling the Kingdom—not,
for example, creating universes. Third, we should observe that
Ambrose states Christ “can subdue all things unto Himself” ac-
cording to His *Godhood* (emphasis mine).¹⁵ Chemnitz cites from
other church fathers as well as these three. But I do not see in
those references any belief stated the humanity of our Lord is
endued with omnipresence, omniscience, or omnipotence.

Pieper at length explains the genera of the Lutheran under-
standing of the communication of attributes. The first is the *ge-
nus idiomaticum*, which is that because Christ is one Person, the
attributes of both natures belong to the Person.¹⁶ The second
is the *genus maiestaticum*, which is that the humanity of Christ
is given divine attributes.¹⁷ The third the *genus apotelesmati-
cum*, is the belief that all the works of Christ are attributable

14. Ware, *One God in Three Persons*, 248.

15. *Of the Christian Faith*, 15.183.

16. Francis Pieper. *Christian Dogmatics vol II* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing, 1951), 143.

17. *Ibid.*, 152, 154.

1 to both natures.¹⁸ Then, of course, the humanity participates
2 in the use of the divine attributes. Of the three, the Reformed
3 only accept the first. This will become more evident when the
4 opinions of Hodge are covered.

5 Pieper asserts, “The communication of divine properties to
6 the human nature is clearly taught in Scripture.¹⁹ He, after this
7 claim, proceeds to evidence that by showing the humanity of
8 Jesus is in possession of omni-attributes. Several arguments
9 are offered as evidence that the human nature is all-powerful.
10 First, Ephesians 1:22 means the humanity has been given di-
11 vine omnipotence. As this occurs in time, the divine nature
12 cannot be the recipient. Second Matthew 28:18–20 demon-
13 strates the human nature of Christ has infinite sovereignty.
14 Third, the texts, as Matthew 11:27 and John 3:35, evidence the
15 human nature was omnipotent even before the resurrection.
16 Fourth, the miracles of Jesus accomplished by His own omnip-
17 otence show the humanity has all power. And fifth, if the blood
18 of Jesus cleanses from all sin, then the human nature must
19 have divine powers.²⁰

20 Pieper proceeds to demonstrate the humanity of Christ also
21 is omniscient. He uses John 3:31–32 as evidence that the Son
22 knew all that other members of the Trinity knew, and that be-
23 cause that knowledge took place in and through the humanity,
24 therefore, the humanity is omniscient. Pieper asserts that in
25 the case of Mark 13:32, the divine omniscience of the human

26 18. *Ibid.*, 243, 247.

27 19. *Ibid.*, 157.

28 20. *Ibid.*, 158–161.

nature did not always “become functional.” The divine knowl- 1
edge is “dormant” in Christ’s human nature. Christ has only 2
one consciousness, so the human nature is also omniscient.²¹ 3

Finally, Pieper works diligently to argue that Christ’s hu- 4
manity also is omnipresent. He says we cannot deny that doc- 5
trine unless we also deny that union of the humanity with the 6
deity. Further, Ephesians 4:10, “the one who ascended above all 7
heavens, in order to fill all things” must refer to Christ’s human 8
nature, as the divine already fills all things. Nor can the mean- 9
ing be that “fill” only means “rule,” Pieper insists, since it is the 10
Person who ascended and not a power.²² Further, Matthew 11
28:20 requires the human nature of Jesus be omnipresent. 12

Pieper wants his readers to understand Christ’s body exists 13
in three manners. The first is local in which the body occupied 14
a particular space. This was the general mode of subsistence 15
while on Earth. The second, wherein the body was not sub- 16
ject to space and matter, is demonstrated when Jesus passed 17
through closed doors (John 20:19) and vanished (John 8:59). The 18
third, is a divine mode of subsistence wherein the body of Jesus 19
literally is everywhere at once. This is necessary as Christ is one 20
Person with God. So, wherever God is, there Christ’s body is 21
also.²³ This must be as the two natures of Christ do not exist 22
merely side by side; “they rather interpenetrate each other, the 23
divine penetrating the human.”²⁴ 24

21. Ibid., 162–165. 25

22. Ibid., 167–168. 26

23. Ibid., 176–181. 27

24. Ibid., 123. 28

1 Throughout his teaching on the communication of the at-
2 tributes, Pieper disparages the Reformed doctrine. One display
3 of this is his claim that Calvin's logic contradicts itself. First,
4 Pieper explains, Calvin taught the Son of Man descended from
5 heaven without ever leaving Heaven. Second, he says, Calvin
6 taught the humanity of Christ was assumed into the Person of
7 the Son of God. Therefore, Pieper says, Calvin must admit the
8 human nature in its humiliation also was in heaven. So, the
9 humanity is omnipresent. But the conclusion is only valid if
10 Pieper's second premise is correct. However, Calvin insists in
11 the incarnation neither nature was changed nor intermingled
12 with the other.²⁵ So, Pieper's second premise misrepresents
13 Calvin's opinion. Pieper also frequently attributes error con-
14 cerning the communication of attributes to Charles Hodge. It
15 is seemly that we examine Hodge's positions on the subject.

16 Hodge defines the Lutheran with these points.

- 17 1. The human nature receives divine attributes from the
18 divine nature. (Note: Hodge also states the Lutheran
19 view is the humanity also receives the divine essence.)
- 20 2. The divinity, however, receives nothing from the
21 humanity.
- 22 3. The human nature then is almighty, omniscient, and
23 omnipresent.
- 24 4. These powers were acquired while in the womb of Mary.
- 25 5. The humiliation of Christ consisted of hiding, or not
26 often using all these divine powers. Hodge bases these
27 points on the eighth chapter (i.e., Article) of the Formula

28 ²⁵ *Institutes* 2.14. 1.

of Concord.²⁶ Hodge mounts three major objections 1
to the Lutheran doctrine on the communication of the 2
attributes. 3

The first objection is that the Lutheran doctrine of the com- 4
munication of attributes is an attempt to explain what cannot 5
be understood. What we know is Christ has both a human and 6
a divine nature; we cannot fathom more than that.²⁷ One can 7
see Hodge’s point, however, he, himself, had used nearly twen- 8
ty pages to explain the hypostatic union. So, perhaps this criti- 9
cism is not justified. 10

The second objection is the Lutherans developed their dog- 11
ma on the communication of attributes to substantiate their 12
view of the Lord’s Supper, which is that the body of Jesus is 13
present in the Eucharist. On the other hand, Pieper rejects that 14
conclusion, saying rather that the Lutheran view of the bodily 15
presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper is evidenced by Jesus’ 16
own words, “Take eat; this is My body.”²⁸ 17

Hodge’s third objection is that the Lutheran position is “ut- 18
terly unsatisfactory.” Several reasons are offered to support 19
this. Hodge first states the Lutheran tenet implies the Logos is 20
not active outside the body and that the Logos did not exercise 21
His powers during the period of the humiliation.²⁹ The second 22
of these denials by Lutherans appear to bear a resemblance to 23
the tenet of modified kenoticism. 24

26. *Systematic Theology, vol II*, 407–408. 25

27. *Ibid.*, 413–414. 26

28. 27

29. Pieper, 191. 28

1 Another reason for Hodge holding that the position of the
2 Lutherans on the communication of attributes is incorrect is
3 that their view is based on false hermeneutics. Hodge main-
4 tains when the Person of Christ is referenced, Lutherans often
5 wrongly assume the human nature is included in that refer-
6 ence. Hodge illustrates: If one takes “all power is given unto
7 Me” as proving Jesus’ humanity is omnipotent, then one must
8 also take “Before Abraham I AM” as proving that the humanity
9 of Jesus is eternal.³⁰

10 Further, Hodge argues the Lutheran doctrine “destroys the
11 integrity of the human nature of Christ.” A body that is omni-
12 present is not a human body, Hodge says, and a soul that is omni-
13 nipotent and omniscient is not a human soul. But the Scripture
14 teaches, Hodge continues, that Jesus is a man like us in that He
15 has experienced the weaknesses of human nature.³¹

16 Finally, Hodge expounds on the tenet that attributes can-
17 not be separated from essence. He writes, “According to the
18 Lutheran doctrine, the attributes of the divine nature or es-
19 sence are transferred to another essence.” But were the hu-
20 manity to receive the attributes of God, then the humanity
21 must receive the divine essence as well.³² This conclusion is
22 seemingly denied by Chemnitz, who writes, the communica-
23 tion of the divine attributes to the human is “not through an
24 outpouring of the natures or essences.” But Chemnitz, in the
25 minds of some, may appear to complicate that matter when

26 30. Hodge, 416.

27 31. *Ibid.*, 416–417.

28 32. *Ibid.*, 417–418.

he opines, “The assumed nature ... possesses ... the entire full- 1
ness of the Godhead” and “the divine and eternal power itself, 2
which is an essential property of the divine nature alone, which 3
through the union dwells personally in the assumed nature.”³³ 4

If the attributes of God dwell in the human nature of Christ 5
“personally,” must it not follow that they dwell in the humanity 6
essentially? 7

Hodge’s view on the communication of attributes is first 8
that the one Person of Christ has the attributes of both na- 9
tures.³⁴ So, some biblical texts refer to the deity, others to the 10
humanity, and some to the unified Christ. Second, “the acts of 11
Christ are the acts of His whole Person.”³⁵ The results of this, 12
while only the humanity acts according to its humanity, those 13
acts are those of the one Person (but not those of the divine na- 14
ture). Scripture is our norm, of course, so a closer look at some 15
of the texts that Lutherans use to justify their view that the hu- 16
manity of Jesus has been given divine attributes is in order. 17

John 3:31–32 is said to prove the humanity of Christ is om- 18
niscient. It reads, “The One who comes from above is superior 19
to all. The one who is from the earth belongs to the earth and 20
speaks about earthly things. The One who comes from Heaven 21
is superior to all. He testifies about what He has seen and 22
heard, but no one accepts His testimony.” 23

But do these words spoken by the Baptist evidence that 24
the humanity of Christ knows everything? The One who came 25

33. Chemnitz, 321, 315, 317. 26

34. Hodge, 392. 27

35. Ibid., 394. 28

1 above is the divine Person. This One by the incarnation is
2 joined to the humanity and speaks through it. That does not
3 require the human nature is omniscient any more than Jesus
4 taking naps in a boat means God gets tired and sleeps.

5 Matthew 28:20 and Ephesians 4:10 are said to prove the hu-
6 manity of Christ is omnipresent. The first reads, “And remem-
7 ber, I am with you always until the end of the age.” Does this
8 mean the Christ’s body is with us? How so since it is Christ’s
9 Spirit that is said to be sent in our hearts (Gal. 4:4) and dwells
10 in us (Rom. 8:9–10)? When Paul languished in the Roman pris-
11 on, it was the Spirit of Jesus, not His body, that Paul looked to
12 for help (Phil. 1:19). Scripture nowhere says we are to be filled
13 with the flesh of our Lord.

14 Ephesians 4:10 states, “He, the very one who descended, is
15 also the One who ascended above all the heavens, in order to fill
16 all things.” But “filling” likely should be understood as reigning
17 over all, not being in all. The Person of Christ is nowhere said
18 to reside in evil persons or spirits. Having Christ in one is the
19 hope of glory (Col.1:27). So, not having Christ in himself would
20 not enjoy that hope. Further, it would seem that 4:10 should be
21 understood by 1:20–22 where the topic is the authority is given
22 to Christ.

23 As seen above, Pieper avers Matthew 11:27 and John 3:35
24 are said to demonstrate that the humanity of Jesus is omnipo-
25 tent. These read, “All things have been handed over to Me by
26 My Father. The Father loves the Son and has placed all things
27 under His authority.” And while I personally agree these verses

likely apply to the humanity of Christ, having authority over all
need not be taken as having omnipotent power.

The Scripture is the theological norm for our Christology.
But a secondary authority for many Evangelicals is the doctrine found in the Chalcedonian Creed of 451. So, a comparison of the Lutheran teaching on the communication of attributes from the divine nature to the human nature of our Jesus is a base which should be touched before ending this chapter.

Remembering Lutheranism attributes omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence to the manhood of Jesus as a result of the hypostatic union, can such affirmatives fit the words of Chalcedon as: “Perfect in manhood ... truly man ... in all things like unto us ... in two natures inconfusedly ... the property of each nature being preserved”?

ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Be able to explain and defend your answers.

1. How would you evaluate Pieper’s teaching on the three ways that Jesus’ body subsists?
2. Read Article VIII (of the Person of Christ) of the Formula of Concord and note any disagreements you have with part XI in it.
3. How is the Lutheran understanding of the communication of the attributes related to their view on the Lord’s Supper?
4. Do the miracles of Christ prove His humanity is omnipotent?

- 1 5. Look at two commentaries on Ephesians 4:10 and com-
2 pare them with the Lutheran view that Jesus' humanity
3 fills all things.
- 4 6. Do you agree with Berkhof's doctrine of a communica-
5 tion of charismatum?
- 6 7. Do you agree with Pieper on Mark 13:32?
- 7 8. If the body of Jesus does not have divine powers, how
8 can Jesus' blood cleanse us from sin?
- 9 9. Do you agree with Chemnitz's interpretation of Hebrews
10 1:3?
- 11 10. Write your understanding of the communication of at-
12 tributes in a paragraph.



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10 to divine favor, i.e. salvation, is only accomplished by faith in
11 Jesus as Savior and Lord; and that Jesus will personally return
12 to reign over the earth before the millennium. I believe that
13 Scripture requires us to be vigorous in using our intellects to
14 attempt to understand correctly the theological teachings of
15 the Bible, and especially, the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ.
16 This book is written in the hopes that it will facilitate that ob-
17 jective. Obviously, knowledge about Jesus is incomplete with-
18 out having devotion to and surrender to Jesus. Let's all strive to
19 experience that.



Abbreviations

ANF Ante-Nicene Fathers	4
BAG Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich Greek Lexicon of the New Testament	5 6
EBCExpositor's Bible Commentary	7
EDTEvangelical Dictionary of Theology	8
GTJGrace Theological Journal	9
ICCInternational Critical Commentary	10
JETSJournal of the Evangelical Theological Society	11
LXX Third century BC translation of Old Testament into Greek	12
TDNTTheological Dictionary of the New Testament	13
MSJMasters Seminary Journal	14
NETNew English Translation	15
NICNTNew International Commentary on the New Testament	16
NIDNTTNew International Dictionary of New Testament Theology	17 18
NIDOTT&ENew International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis	19 20

- 1 NIGTCNew International Greek Testament
- 2 NPNFNicene and Post-Nicene Fathers
- 3 NTSNew Testament studies
- 4 SBTJSouthern Baptist Theological Journal
- 5 WBCWord Biblical Commentary
- 6 WTSWestminster Theological Journal



Glossary

Apollinarianism: That the Logos acts as the human spirit or intellect (<i>nous</i>) of Christ	4
Attributes: Essential qualities of a being	5
Attributes: Essential qualities of a being	6
Communion of Attributes (Lutheran view): The divine nature in Christ gives divine attributes as omniscience and omnipresence to the human nature of Christ	7
Communion of Attributes (Lutheran view): The divine nature in Christ gives divine attributes as omniscience and omnipresence to the human nature of Christ	8
Communion of Attributes (Lutheran view): The divine nature in Christ gives divine attributes as omniscience and omnipresence to the human nature of Christ	9
Covenant of Redemption: The doctrine that the Triunal Persons made an agreement to perform individual functions in the plan of salvation	10
Covenant of Redemption: The doctrine that the Triunal Persons made an agreement to perform individual functions in the plan of salvation	11
Covenant of Redemption: The doctrine that the Triunal Persons made an agreement to perform individual functions in the plan of salvation	12
Cyrillian Christology: Cyril's emphasis on the unity of the natures in Christ and his deemphasis of the integrity of Christ's humanity	13
Cyrillian Christology: Cyril's emphasis on the unity of the natures in Christ and his deemphasis of the integrity of Christ's humanity	14
Cyrillian Christology: Cyril's emphasis on the unity of the natures in Christ and his deemphasis of the integrity of Christ's humanity	15
Dyothelitism: The belief that Christ has both a divine and a human will	16
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Dyophysiticism: That Christ has both a divine and a human nature	18
Dyophysiticism: That Christ has both a divine and a human nature	19

- 1 Economic Trinity: The Triunal Persons in their relations to
2 creation
- 3 Enhypostasia: That the Logos supplies the personhood of the
4 humanity of Christ
- 5 Eternal generation: That God the Son is eternally generated or
6 begotten by God the Father
- 7 Eternal relational (or role) subordinationism: That God the
8 Son is eternally role subordinate to God the Father.
- 9 Nestorianism: That Christ is two Persons; wrongly said to be
10 Nestorius view
- 11 Eternal procession: That the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds
12 from the Father and the Son
- 13 Kenoticism: That when incarnating the Son gave up His divine
14 attributes
- 15 Functional (modified) kenoticism: That when incarnating the
16 Son gave up the use of some divine attributes
- 17 *Homoousion (s)*: That the Son is of one nature with the Father
- 18 Immanent Trinity: The Trinal Persons in relationships to
19 themselves
- 20 Miaphysitism: That the two natures in Christ have become one
21 without losing their respective attributes
- 22 Monophysitism: That Christ has only one nature
- 23 Omni-attributes: As omniscience, omnipotence, and
24 omnipresence
- 25 Properties: The individual characteristics of each Person in
26 God
- 27 Prosōpon: Widely varied understandings; to Nestorius “the ap-
28 pearance of a nature” or “personality.”

Subordinationism: The heretical form is as Arianism which re-	1
fers to the Son and the Spirit being of a different nature than	2
the Father	3
Simplicity: That God's nature is not divided into parts	4
Word-flesh (Alexandrian) Christology: A deemphasis of the in-	5
tegrity of the human nature of Christ	6
Word-Man (Antiochene) Christology: That Christ's human na-	7
ture includes a human mind and will.	8