

TRINITARIAN CONTROVERSIES: ETERNAL FUNCTIONAL SUBORDINATION OF THE SON?

INTRODUCTION

- Since 381 AD, God's people have recognized the Nicene Creed as the orthodox definition of the Trinity
- The Council of Nicea was convened in 325 AD in response to Arianism (a view that denies the deity of Christ; Arius believed that the second Person of the Trinity was created by the Father and was therefore neither coeternal with the Father, nor consubstantial)
- The final form of the Nicene Creed appeared in 381 AD and it described the Trinity this way:

“We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father; God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God; begotten not made, one in being with the Father... We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son, He is worshipped and glorified...”

- While most orthodox evangelicals assumed an understanding of the Trinity that was consistent with that statement, there was a theological storm that was brewing that hit in 2016
- What erupted was a war over the very nature and essence of God
- This has led to a debate which has raged over the last 6 years about the relationships within the Trinity, namely what Scripture teaches about the nature of the second Person of the Trinity, specifically the Son's relationship to the Father eternally
- At stake in the issue is the eternal interaction between the Father and the Son
- “In a nutshell, while all agree that during the incarnation the Son operated in submission to the Father and was obedient to Him, not all agree about their communication before and after the incarnation. The issue revolves around whether the submission and obedience of the Son to the Father took place in eternity past and whether it continues following the Son's ascension to the Father. In other words, has the Son always been subservient to the Father or was His submission limited to the timeframe of His incarnation?”¹
- The issue has resulted in two primary camps:
 1. Those who hold to classical theism (and deny the eternal submission of the Son to the Father) – proponents would include James Dolezal (assistant professor of theology in the School of Divinity at Cairn University), Liam Goligher (pastor of Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia), and Kevin DeYoung (Pastor of Christ Covenant Church in Matthews, NC)
 2. Those who hold to theistic mutualism (and believe in the eternal submission of the Son to the Father) also known as Eternal Functional Subordination (EFS), Eternal Subordination of the Son (ESS), and Eternal Relations of Authority and Submission (ERAS) – proponents would include Bruce Ware, Wayne Grudem, John Frame, Al Plantinga, John Feinberg, Scott Oliphant, J. I. Packer, D. A. Carson, Owen Strachan, and Cornelius Plantinga
- This debate became heated after Liam Goligher, in an article on The Mortification of Spin, accused those holding to EFS of promoting a view of God that bordered on idolatry

¹ <https://tottministries.org/the-battle-for-god-part-1>

- In response, Grudem and Ware responded and thus erupted a contentious war within evangelicalism that centered on the Trinity
- It is important to note that all of those involved in this debate are godly men who are respected theologians
- In other words, there are godly men on both sides of this intramural debate
- Why address this issue in theology class? → certainly not to dive into the debate for the purpose of theological wrangling
- But rather to help you, the beloved body of MBC, be aware of the issue and provide you with honest theological answers to the questions you might have or receive

THE NATURE OF THE DEBATE

- It is important to understand that both sides affirm that there is one God existing in three Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit
- In other words, both sides affirm the traditional, orthodox understanding of the Trinity
- However, each side understands and explains the nuances of the inter-Trinitarian relationships differently
- What is this issue really about? → “In short, this teaching [of EFS] claims that the Son is eternally subordinate to the Father such that the Father has a unique power and authority to issue commands to the Son, and the Son, in turn, has the unique obligation to submit Himself to the Father’s command. Thus, each possesses a power of will that is really distinct from the other. What makes this claim controversial is that this command-obedience arrangement is said to characterize the relations of the persons within the Godhead itself (*ad intra*) and not merely to characterize the Son’s obligation as incarnate man.”²
- In other words, proponents of EFS argue for the **eternal** subordination of the Son to the Father; whereas, the opponents of EFS argue for the **incarnational** subordination of the Son to the Father

Its Connection to Complementarianism

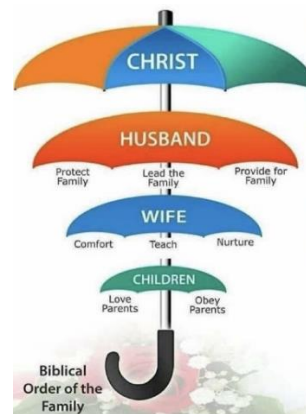
- Complementarianism is the belief that masculinity and femininity are ordained by God to complement one another in different roles in the family and the church
- It is the conviction that, though men and women are completely equal in value in God’s eyes as those made in his image, they are distinct in the responsibilities they are to fulfill
- In the home, the husband is to be the spiritual leader of the family and the wife is to be his helper
 - He is to nurture his wife and lead his family lovingly, humbly, and sacrificially
 - She is to willingly submit to her husband’s leadership and make her home a place where children are reared to know the Lord
 - When both husband and wife are complementing each other in this way, Christ is honored and the marriage serves as a living picture of Christ and the church (Eph 5:32)
- In the church, the roles of men and women are also distinct
 - The men in the church bear the responsibility to provide spiritual leadership and training by serving as elders who teach the Word and exercise oversight of the body
 - The women are to exercise their spiritual gifts in any way Scripture allows, the only prohibition being that they are not permitted to “teach or to exercise authority over a man” (1 Tim 2:12)
 - When men and women are fulfilling their God-given roles within a church, Christ is honored and the church becomes a living picture of Christ’s body (1 Cor 12:12–27)

² James E. Dolezal, *All That is in God: Evangelical Theology and the Challenge of Classical Christian Theism*, 132.

- The opposite of this view is egalitarianism which teaches that, in Christ, there are no gender distinctions anymore
- Because all believers are one in Christ, men's and women's roles are interchangeable in church leadership and in the household
- Egalitarianism sees gender distinctions as a result of the Fall and Christ's redemption as removing those distinctions, bringing unity
- This view comes from Galatians 3:28 which says that in Christ "there is neither male nor female"
- A key passage that underscores the complementarian understanding of gender roles is 1 Cor 11:3 which indicates that men have authority over women in the basic order of creation

1 Corinthians 11:3 ~ But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.

- Paul clearly states here the order of creation and applies it to marriage, proving both that men are called to loving headship and that women are called to a role of willing helper
- Paul's point is that men and women present themselves differently because they have been uniquely designed by God to fulfill complementary roles
- Because of these differences related to manhood and womanhood, there is a divinely designed order: God ----- Christ ----- Man ----- Woman



- Certainly, the incarnate Son submits to the Father, a truth frequently mentioned in Scripture

Matthew 26:39 ~ And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will."

John 4:34 ~ Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work."

John 5:30 ~ I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

John 6:38 ~ For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

- But is the submission of the Son to the Father something that extends to his eternal role/relationship as Son?
- Is the Son subordinate to the Father from all eternity?
- Is there authority and submission within the inner life of the Trinity, even before creation and redemption?
- Proponents of EFS says "yes;" opponents of EFS say "no"
- Both Wayne Grudem and Bruce Ware, complementarians who are part of the Council of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, started the initial debate over the complementarian dynamic they see in the Godhead
- "That is, they understand that the Son, while equal to the Father in every way and of the same essence, nevertheless has eternally submitted to the will of the Father. The logic is that if the Son of God can live in submission to the Father, and yet retain His deity and equality, then females can be submissive in marriage and to church leadership while maintaining their equality with males. Grudem and Ware see the EFS of the Son to the Father as a catalyst and model for their complementarian view of Christian women..."³

³ <https://tottministries.org/the-battle-for-god-part-1>

The Proponents of EFS

- Those who promote EFS do so because they view the Father as being supreme among the persons in God, possessing authority which defines the inner-trinitarian relations
- Statements by Bruce Ware
 - “The Father possesses the place of supreme authority, and the Son is the eternal Son of the eternal Father. As such, the Son submits to the Father just as the Father, as the eternal Father of the eternal Son, exercises authority over the Son. And the Spirit submits to both the Father and the Son.”⁴
 - “The Son in fact is the eternal Son of the eternal Father, and hence, the Son stands in relationship of eternal submission under the authority of his Father.”⁵
 - “And would it not make sense, then, that the authority-submission structures in marriage and in church leadership are meant to be reflections of the authority and submission in the relations of the Persons of the Godhead?”⁶
 - “The Father is, in his position and authority, supreme among the Persons of the Godhead.”⁷
 - “The Father is supreme over all, and in particular, he is supreme within the Godhead as the highest in authority and the one deserving of ultimate praise.”⁸
- Statements by Wayne Grudem
 - “...the role of commanding, directing, and sending is appropriate to the position of the Father, after whom all human fatherhood is patterned (Eph. 3:14–15). And the role of obeying, going as the Father sends, and revealing God to us is appropriate to the role of the Son, who is also called the Word of God (cf. John 1:1–5, 14, 18; 17:4; Phil. 2:5–11). These roles could not have been reversed or the Father would have ceased to be the Father and the Son would have ceased to be the Son. And by analogy from that relationship, we may conclude that the role of the Holy Spirit is similarly one that was appropriate to the relationship he had with the Father and the Son before the world was created... these relationships are eternal, not something that occurred only in time.”⁹
 - “...the different functions that we see the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit performing are simply outworkings of an eternal relationship between the three persons, one that has always existed and will exist for eternity. God has always existed as three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These distinctions are essential to the very nature of God himself, and they could not be otherwise.”¹⁰
- So, on the basis of the Son submitting to the Father in history, Grudem infers that this relationship has always likewise existed in eternity where the Father commands and the Son obeys
- He holds to the eternal authority of the Father and the eternal submission of the Son within their relationship
- Statements by Owen Strachan
 - “You may have heard that some theologians and pastor believe that the Son eternally submits to the Father. For many who read and love their Bibles, this is an uncontroversial statement. Indeed, for centuries, this was an uncontroversial statement; it occasioned no charges of heresy, no censure, no rebuke.”¹¹
- Biblical texts used to support EFS:

⁴ Bruce Ware, *Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, and Relevance*, 21.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 250.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 251.

¹¹ <https://owenstrachan.substack.com/p/the-danger-of-equating-eternal-authority>

John 3:16-17 ~ For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

John 4:34 ~ Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.

John 5:18-19 ~ For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God. 19 Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.

John 14:28 ~ You heard that I said to you, ‘I go away, and I will come to you.’ If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father, **for the Father is greater than I.**

John 14:31 ~ but so that the world may know that I love the Father, **I do exactly as the Father commanded Me.** Get up, let us go from here.

John 10:17-18 ~ For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. 18 No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. **This commandment I received from My Father.**”

Acts 1:6-7 ~ So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, “Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?” 7 He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or epochs which **the Father has fixed by His own authority;**

Acts 4:27-28 ~ For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, 28 to do whatever **Your hand and Your purpose** predestined to occur.

Acts 17:30-31 ~ Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, 31 because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness **through a Man whom He has appointed,** having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.”

1 Corinthians 15:28 ~ When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.

Revelation 2:26-27 ~ He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS; 27 AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES, as **I also have received authority from My Father**

- Proponents of EFS view these texts in support of eternal submission of the Son to the Father; however, opponents of EFS argue that all the above texts should be read only in light of the incarnate Son

The Opponents of EFS

- Opponents of EFS argue that viewing the Father as eternally supreme, not ontologically but functionally, borders on heresy (i.e. Arianism)
- They view EFS as giving supreme glory to one member of the Godhead and a lesser degree of glory to the others
- Opponents would say that those aforementioned texts refer to the Son’s subordination as the God-man, in the economy of redemption, and not His eternal relationship to the Father before the economy of redemption began
- Opponents of EFS argue that it necessarily implies ontological subordination...that is, that the Son is somehow inferior in His being/essence to the Father which is Arianism
- In other words, the concerns are that EFS implies that there is authority and submission within the inner life (*ad intra*) of the Trinity

- Statements by Liam Goligher
 - “It comes down to this; if they are right we have been worshipping an idol since the beginning of the church; and if they are wrong they are constructing a new deity – a deity in whom there are degrees of power, differences of will, and diversity of thought. Because, mark this, to have an eternally subordinate Son intrinsic to the Godhead creates the potential of three minds, wills and powers. What they have done is to take the passages referring to the economic Trinity and collapse them into the ontological Trinity.”¹²
 - “To speculate, suggest, or say that there is a real primacy of the Father or subordination of the Son within the eternal Trinity is to have moved out of Christian orthodoxy and to have moved or be moving toward idolatry.”¹³

- Statements by Mike Riccardi
 - “Opponents say submission/subordination necessarily entails two wills. To have submission, you have to have one will submitting to another. But the Triune God has only one will. Now, the incarnate Christ submits to the Father because, as the God-man, He has two wills: divine and human. However, opponents of EFS maintain that having two wills in the Godhead would then require two natures (or essences, or beings) in the Godhead. And since God is one, He is one Being with one divine nature. Therefore, they say, two wills requires two natures or beings, which would separate the two Persons (Father and Son) into two gods, which is virtually Arianism. And of course, when you add the Holy Spirit to the discussion, who would then have His own will, you get a third God: tritheism.”¹⁴
 - “To speak of the Trinity in eternity is not to speak of the Trinity “functioning” or “operating” (commonly called the “economic Trinity, i.e., the Trinity working out in the economy of redemption; or the Trinity “ad extra”), but it is to speak of who God is “in Himself” (commonly called the “immanent Trinity,” or the Trinity “ad intra”). If you’re speaking of who God is in Himself, they say, you’re speaking of His ontology, His being.”¹⁵

- Statements by JV Fesko
 - “In recent years, semi-Arian teachings have arguably made a comeback as a number of high-profile evangelical theologians have argued for the eternal subordination of the Son (ESS). Advocates of ESS project the redemptive and voluntary submission of the Son in history back into eternity and argue that the Son eternally submits to the Father and is thus eternally subordinate to Him. Such claims sound eerily similar to semi-Arian claims that the Son is of like substance with the Father but not fully divine or of the exact same substance and thus fully equal with the Father. Unlike historical semi-Arians, modern proponents of ESS affirm that the Son is of the same essence (*homoousios*) as the Father. However, by positing different levels of authority and submission in the Godhead, they undermine their affirmation. That is because divine authority is a property of the divine essence, which means that different levels of authority ultimately suggest that the Son has a different – and lesser – divine essence than the Father. While not every advocate of ESS necessarily promotes the eternal subordination of the Son in the same way, and though these advocates are not necessarily trying to deny the equality of essence between the Father and the Son, they nevertheless flirt with heresy when they say that the Son is eternally submissive to the Father.”¹⁶

- Statements by Kevin DeYoung
 - “The Father and the Son share the same essence and rank, and yet in their relationship, the Son submits to the Father while the Father never submits to the Son. No inferiority. No inequality.

¹² Quoted in Mark Woods, “Complementarianism and the Trinity: Is Wayne Grudem a Dangerous Heretic” (Christianity Today: June 28, 2016).

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ <https://thecrippleate.com/making-sense-of-the-trinity-efs-debate/>

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ <https://tabletalkmagazine.com/article/2019/12/the-new-adventures-of-old-trinitarian-heresies/#ffn3>

Yet, different roles. Granted, complementarians sometimes speak too quickly about the “eternal subordination of the Son.” It is better to say that there has always been an “order” (*taxis*) in the Trinity—an order not of rank, but of well-arranged relationships. The Father sends the Son, and the Father and the Son send the Spirit, and the relations are not reversible. Mutuality and equality exist in the Trinity alongside a divinely instituted order. Calvin writes, “For even though we admit that *in respect to order and degree the beginning of divinity is in the Father*, yet we say it is a detestable invention that essence [being] is proper to the Father alone, as if he were the deifier of the Son.” With the Trinity as our model, then, we understand that authority and God-given order in the church, or, headship and submission in marriage, are not inconsistent with equality of personhood.”¹⁷

- “I’m somewhat pleased with this paragraph, which I first wrote back in 2003 or 2004 when I was 26 or 27 years old (the book was later published in 2006). On the one hand, if we are talking about the economic Trinity – the activity of God and the work of the three Persons in creation and redemption – we can certainly say (as I did) that the Son submits to the Father, while the Father does not submit to the Son. We should not cry foul every time we see the word ‘submission.’ That point notwithstanding, I have never been comfortable with the language of eternal subordination...”¹⁸

THE VIEW OF CLASSIC TRINITARIAN ORTHODOXY¹⁹

- Although there are godly and brilliant men on both sides of this issue and we must be careful to not label brothers as heretics in this area, most likely a non-EFS position would be most consistent with the classic view of God
- This is because there is only one nature in the Godhead
- There can be no submission or subjection within the Godhead without there being a distinction in nature
- The reason the Son can submit to the Father in his incarnation is because he added a human nature to his divine nature
- Before assuming a human nature in the incarnation, there was no subjection of the Son’s will to the Father because submission within the Godhead would threaten the essential oneness of God
- Two premises lead to this understanding

The Nature of Submission

- Submission entails the subjection of one will to another
- For one person to submit to another person that individual must subject their will to the will of the other
- Thus, submission requires multiple “wills”
- Hence, if there is more than one will in the Godhead then the simplicity of God is denied
- That is, God becomes divided, for now the members of the Trinity have separate wills, resulting in the superiority of the Father over the Son (and Spirit)
- This would mean the Son has been put in a role of inferiority requiring submission and subordination
- So, the problem involves multiple wills in the Godhead

¹⁷ Kevin DeYoung, *Freedom and Boundaries*, 61.

¹⁸ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/distinguishing-among-the-three-persons-of-the-trinity-within-the-reformed-tradition/>

¹⁹ Adapted from <https://thecripplegate.com/efs-redux-aiming-for-closure-on-the-trinity-debate/>

Will is a Property of Nature, Not Person

- “The way we can discern whether will is a property of nature or person is to consider the person of the incarnate Christ. Jesus is one person in whom subsists two natures, a divine nature and a human nature. He is not two persons...nor does He have just one nature...”
- If will were a faculty of a person and not a nature, then we would expect Christ, who is one person, to have only 1 will (monothelitism)
- If, however, will were a faculty of nature and not a person, then we would expect Christ, who has two natures, to have two wills (dyothelitism)
- Clearly, Christ has two wills (a divine will and a human will) because if he had no human will he could not have truly been human, nor could he have redeemed the corrupt human will in his sacrifice
- Denying that Christ has a human will undermines the very humanity of Christ altogether, which undercuts the Gospel!
- “Now, if Christ assumed a human will—which He must have done for the sake of our salvation—then He had two wills, both divine and human. And since, as we said, Christ is one person with two natures, both divine and human, it’s fitting to conclude that will is a metaphysical faculty properly predicated of a nature and not a person. Christ’s two wills match up with His two natures, and do not match up with His being a single person. If will were a property of person and not nature, since Christ had two wills we’d have expected Christ to be two persons, which of course He is not. Christ had two faculties of willing: one divine and one human.”
- Thus, will must be a function of nature, not person
- So, since the Godhead consists of three persons but only one nature, it is necessary to conclude that there is only one will within the Godhead
- “Consubstantial persons—that is, persons who share an identical nature, and thus an identical faculty of will—cannot submit to one another. The single divine will cannot be ‘subjected’ or ‘subordinated’ to itself. If there is to be submission, there needs to be another faculty of will.
- For these reasons, before his incarnation possessed only one undivided human nature and, therefore, only one divine will
- He could not subject his will to the Father’s will because it was the very same identical will

IF NOT EFS, THEN WHAT?

- If EFS does not appropriately explain the eternal relationships within the Godhead, what does? → the doctrine of eternal generation
- The doctrine of eternal generation essentially teaches that God the Father eternally generates or begets God the Son in such a way that the divine essence of God is not divided
- It is an act performed by the First Person of the Trinity that results in the generation of the Second Person of the Trinity such that there is a communication of the whole, indivisible substance of the Godhead so that God the Son is the exact representation of God the Father
- As a result, the Second Person of the Trinity derives his deity from this generation and the terms “Father” and “Son” go to the heart of defining this eternal relationship
- To say it another way, from all eternity, the Father communicates the one, simple, undivided divine essence to the Son

- The doctrine of eternal generation does not refer to the sending of the Son in the incarnation but rather to how the Son comes to possess the same divine essence as the Father
- The term “begotten” also captures this idea of eternal generation...for the Son to be begotten from the Father means that God is begotten from God...the Son is equal to the Father in every way, from the same essence or substance as the Father, no less divine than the Father
- “This is similar to human generation (which, to note, is neither eternal nor necessary). Just as a human father ‘generates’ or ‘begets’ a human son, so the divine Father eternally and necessarily ‘begets’ the divine Son. Because of this analogy, the doctrine of eternal generation has come under attack. The idea of begetting or generation implies a creation in time; furthermore, it also implies an ontological dependence. In response to this, we should note that...all human analogies regarding the mystery of the Trinity eventually breakdown, so we don’t want to carry our analogies too far. Secondly, the qualifiers ‘eternally’ and ‘necessarily’ should be enough to remove any concerns of a temporal or subordinate relationship between the Father and the Son. The qualifier ‘eternal’ removes this relationship from the constraints of time and space; there was no beginning, nor will there be an end to the generation of the Son from the Father. The qualifier ‘necessarily’ removes any ontological dependence between the Father and the Son; the Son must be generated from the Father and the Father must generate the Son.”²⁰

John 17:21 ~ That they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me

Hebrews 1:3 ~ He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

- This understanding of eternal generation is helpful in the EFS discussion because generation alone can convey the concept of sonship and the distinction between the Son and Father (without the EFS designation)
- “When” was the Son generated? → there is no “when” because God is eternal and not bound by time
- “It’s not as if God the Son did not exist but then came into existence at a point in time, created by the Father and therefore after the Father. That may describe how generation works in our human existence, but it cannot depict the Son’s generation. He is, says Nicaea, ‘begotten not created.’ He is, we cannot forget, the *eternal* Son from the Father. If the divine essence subsists in Him, then He too shares in the attributes of deity, eternity being one of them. He is no creature, and if not a creature, then His generation cannot be temporal.”²¹
- Additionally, if He is Son because He is from the Father, then His sonship must be as eternal as the Father Himself
- This was why John MacArthur rejected incarnational sonship in favor of eternal sonship:
 1. The title "Son of God" when applied to Christ in Scripture always speaks of His essential deity and absolute equality with God, not His voluntary subordination
 2. The “begetting” (referring to Christ’s uniqueness and that he is of the very essence as the Father) spoken of in Psalm 2 and Hebrews 1 is not an event that takes place in time but is rather a reference to the Son’s eternal generation
- “Expressions like ‘eternal generation, ‘only begotten Son,’ and others pertaining to the filiation of Christ must all be understood in this sense: Scripture employs them to underscore the absolute oneness of essence between Father and Son. In other words, such expressions aren't intended to evoke the idea of procreation; they are meant to convey the truth about the essential oneness shared by the Members of the Trinity.”²²

²⁰ <https://www.gotquestions.org/eternal-generation.html>

²¹ <https://tabletalkmagazine.com/posts/what-is-eternal-generation/>

²² <https://www.gty.org/library/articles/A235/reexamining-the-eternal-sonship-of-christ>

- Does a similar reality apply to the Holy Spirit? → Yes, he is also of the same essence of the Father by way of eternal procession
- The full undiluted, undivided essence of God belongs also to the Spirit
- The chief characteristics that distinguish between the Persons of the Trinity are the Father's unbegottenness as Father, the Son's generation from the Father, and the Spirit's procession from the Father and the Son
- Or to put it in theological terms: paternity, filiation, and spiration
- The Father is the begetter, the Son is begotten, and the Spirit is spirated from both the Father and the Son

ON A PRACTICAL NOTE...

- No matter which position one takes, complementarianism is biblical
- The difference in roles between men and women is not dependent at all on whether there is eternal subordination of roles within the Trinity
- It is related to the fact that the incarnate Son is equal in essence with the Father, but occupies a functionally subordinate role with respect to the Father
- Christ's submission does not in any way imply inferiority of being
- In the same way, a wife is equal in essence and value with her husband, but she occupies a functionally subordinate role with respect to her husband
- Her submission does not in any way imply inferiority of being
- "Why can't we just look at the Son in His incarnation — fully God and fully man — and see His functional subordination...and make the very same argument? The Father and the incarnate Son are two persons of equal ontology, but submissive in differing roles. We don't need the eternal submissiveness...to make the complementarian point stick, even from 1 Corinthians 11:3. We only need to prove that functional subordination does not necessarily imply ontological inferiority. Whether the Son eternally submits or not, He definitely submits in His incarnation, and so proves the point that complementarians need to make."²³

²³ <https://thecripplegate.com/the-trinitarian-beat-goes-on/>