

Scriptures and Doctrine :: The Trinity: A Picture of Submission**The Trinity: A Picture of Submission - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2008/8/24 0:37**

Recently I was reading a book that reminded me of an ancient theological picture of how each member of the Trinity relates to one another. Within the Trinity, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit share a deep and abiding relationship to one another. Each member of the Godhead being God, they exist co-eternally with one another. By virtue of their being co-eternal with one another, they are also co-equal. Contrary to many heresies over the centuries that have attempted to say otherwise, no member of the Trinity is subordinate to any other member. That is, within the Trinity, there are no hierarchies. The Father is not greater than the Son, and the Son is not greater than the Spirit. Each member of the Godhead is co-equal to the others, for God cannot be lesser or greater than God.

However, the doctrine of the Trinity is clear, that while each member is co-eternal and co-equal, each member has its unique function. For example, one could say that the Father speaks the Word, whose actions are applied in power by the Spirit. In this example, no member of the Godhead is any greater than the other. The Father could not create without the Word, and that Word would mean nothing unless the Spirit carried out that Word. The "differences" in the Godhead then, have nothing to do with rank and file, but simply have to do with the relationship of one to the other.

Instead of thinking of the Trinity in "hierarchical" terms, where submission is a "top-down/ superior-to-subordinate" issue, theologians have offered a very vivid yet simple picture of what the Trinity looks like: that of a three-person dance, in which each person locks arms with the other and spins joyously about in a circle. Their "submission" to one another is in their mutual yielding to the dance steps of the other. No one person leads, they simply all follow. The general consensus of the church on this matter is, historically speaking, to say otherwise is heresy.

Yet I find it terribly interesting that our churches as institutions have not followed in this Trinitarian example. Instead, when we talk about "submission" to "authority," and "obeying those over you in the Lord," we don't have in mind how each member of the Trinity relates to one another. Instead, we see a hierarchy, where the "laity" submit to the pastors, and the pastors submit to the territorial bishops. Such is a clear violation of the doctrine of the Trinitarian doctrine of submission. Therefore, should we not be as zealous to condemn such patterns of church government as heresy in the same way we condemn hierarchical subordination views on the Trinity? For, how can we believe that the church, which is the very body of Christ, be composed in such a way that violates the nature of relationship of one member of the Godhead to the other?

Instead of submitting to one another in the way the world patterns its governing structures, we should submit to one another as fellow members of the body of Christ. My submission to other believers, including those precious saints who are "over me" in the Lord, is not to be patterned after the world. Rather, it is to be patterned after the Trinity. For the world's way sees individuals as superiors and subordinates. But there are no superiors and subordinates in the Trinity, nor are there to be in the body of Christ.

As Jesus said, "you are all brothers." (Matthew 23:8) Our submission to one another is to be based on a relationship of brotherhood, not a relationship of rank and file. There may indeed be "elder brothers" within that relationship, but such eldership does not change the equality we are to have with one another as brothers. Like within the Trinity, I am to yield to you, but you are also to yield to me. In doing such, we do not create superior/subordinate relations, but instead, we come to recognize the unique and special function each one carries out. One may have a song, another a word, another a tongue. And it is from there that we are to learn to relate to one another, and to submit to one another. For such is the case within the Trinity, and such should be the case within the church.

Re: The Trinity: A Picture of Submission - posted by rowdy2 (), on: 2008/8/24 11:59

Reply to KingJimmy

One royal house with His eternal life flowing through our body and an endless fountain of His love flowing from our heart

Eddie

Re: - posted by roaringlamb (), on: 2008/8/24 17:42

Jimmy,

I think I get what you're saying, but it seems very close to Modalism, which is clearly an incorrect view of the Trinity.

There is a submission within the Trinity that is clearly laid out in Scripture. Christ says that He only does those things which please the Father. Yet Christ, being God, could do whatever He pleased.

The Holy Spirit does not testify of Himself, but of Christ. Again, the Holy Spirit as God could do whatever He wanted to, but is in submission to the will of the Father who has set this ordering of things.

Maybe this what you were getting at, and if so, Amen.

Re: The Trinity: A Picture of Submission - posted by sojourner7 (), on: 2008/8/24 18:00

Yes, there is accord, harmony, and unity within the Trinity. The Father, Son, and Spirit are of one accord, in perfect harmony, and unified in purpose.

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2008/8/24 22:34

Maybe this what you were getting at, and if so, Amen.

Yes, indeed, amen.