

## The Submission, Authority and Glory of the Son

*Est ergo fides recta, ut credamus et confiteamur: quod Dominus noster Jesus Christus Dei Filius, Deus et homo est. ... Aequalis Patri secundum divinitatem: minor Patre secundum humanitatem.* (Athanasian Creed)<sup>1</sup>

### INTRODUCTION

From the time of the early church, the relations between the members of the Trinity have been a topic of controversy. The word “Trinity” is not found in the Bible. Neither is the word “consubstantial” and other such terms which are used in the Nicene creeds and other such symbols of orthodoxy like the Athanasian Creed found in it. The Church has to wrestle with the teachings of Scripture which do not directly and explicitly teach on the theological issues they were facing, and through logical discussions and controversies find a way to reconcile the truths of Scripture, navigating the minefield of myriad heresies.<sup>2</sup>

The passage of John 5:19-30 is an important passage to consider as we dwell on such issues, especially as the high Christology in John was instrumental in shaping the Church’s doctrines.<sup>3</sup> Avoiding as we must the inappropriate application of the Creator-creature distinction in denying the knowability of God—“a reluctance to recognize that God’s revelation in human history tells us anything about who he is eternally” —especially as seen in mysticism which denies that we can positively know anything about God’s essence, we must acknowledge that we can know God

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<sup>1</sup> “The Athanasian Creed”, in Philip Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1877, 1905, 1919), 2: 68-9

<sup>2</sup> Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2004), 89-220

<sup>3</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John* (ECNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2004), 1. Also Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2011), 276

inasmuch as He reveals Himself in Scripture.<sup>4</sup> What then does this passage contribute to our understanding of the relation between the Father and the Son?

#### BREIF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Many of the Church Fathers commented on verses throughout this passage when speaking of the relations between the Trinity, and we will here focus our attention briefly and primarily on the first few verses of this pericope. The Latin father Tertullian cites John 5:19 to teach that the Son has always worked by the authority and will of God.<sup>5</sup> He further cites the entire passage of John 5:19-27 to show that the persons of the Father and the Son are distinct.<sup>6</sup> Later on in the same work *Against Praxeas*, Tertullian quoted Jn. John 5: 21 to show that the Father is the commissioner of the Son through whom we can see the works of the Father, hear His words and recognize Him “in the Son’s administration of the Father’s works and deed.”<sup>7</sup> John 5:22 was also quoted to show that from the beginning Jesus was the one who judged Man in the Noahic Flood, at Babel and who overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone.<sup>8</sup>

Ambrose in his writings comments on these verses as well. Citing John 5:19, he states that “there is no difference between the Father and the Son” but instead there is a “oneness of the same operation.”<sup>9</sup> Quoting verses 19 and 30, he further writes that there is one power displayed as the

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<sup>4</sup> Letham, 3. See also Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Vol. 2 God and Creation* (ed. John Bolt; trans. John Vriend; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2004), 129, where he wrote: “the mode of knowing should not be confused with the mode of being.” While we cannot know God univocally, we can still know something positive of God, analogically (Bavinck, 129-30)

<sup>5</sup> Tertullian, *Against Praxeas*, 15 (ANF 3: 611)

<sup>6</sup> Tertullian, 21 (ANF 3: 616)

<sup>7</sup> Tertullian, 24 (ANF 3: 620)

<sup>8</sup> Tertullian, 16 (ANF 3: 611)

<sup>9</sup> Ambrose, *Of the Holy Spirit*, 17.136 (NPNF<sup>2</sup> 10:132)

Father and the Son both do the same thing.<sup>10</sup> From verses 19 and 21, the Son is “then equal in power and free in respect of His will” to the Father, yet with unity of will.<sup>11</sup>

Probably the greatest Western theologian among the Church Fathers, Augustine, in his work on the Trinity focuses on the relation between the different persons of the Godhead. Augustine used John 5:19, 21 to show that the Father alone does not do wonderful things but that these are done by the whole Godhead including Father, Son and Holy Spirit.<sup>12</sup> Looking at the whole passage consisting of verses 19-27, Augustine wrote that the life of the Son in “as unchangeable as that of the Father,” “the working of the Father and the Son is indivisible,” yet the Son is of the Father, not the other way around.<sup>13</sup>

Lastly in our brief historical survey, Chrysostom in one of his homilies on the Gospel of John expounded on verses 23 and 24, remarking on the distinctiveness between the Father and the Son, such that one person is not the other.<sup>14</sup> Chrysostom took the language of the Son being sent and the language of the Son not being able to do anything by Himself as being an indication of God’s condescension to Man; in an earthly way.<sup>15</sup>

## FOCUS AND THESIS

The passage itself is rich in terms of its implication for the various aspects of the doctrine of God and the economy of salvation. Nevertheless, in this paper we will focus on the central theme and flow of this passage as it relates to Jesus’ portrayal of His submission, authority and glory with respects to the Father. Jesus as the Son submits to the Father who sends Him as the Father gives

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<sup>10</sup> Ambrose, *Exposition of the Christian faith*, 2.13 (NPNF<sup>2</sup> 10: 203)

<sup>11</sup> Ambrose, 1.17 (NPNF<sup>2</sup> 10: 219)

<sup>12</sup> Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 1.6.11 (NPNF<sup>1</sup> 3: 22)

<sup>13</sup> Augustine, 2.1.3 (NPNF<sup>1</sup> 3:38)

<sup>14</sup> Chrysostom, *Homily XXXIX*, 1 (NPNF<sup>1</sup> 14: 137)

<sup>15</sup> Chrysostom, 2.4 (NPNF<sup>1</sup> 14: 138-41)

authority and judgment to the Son whom He sends, for the glory and honor of the Son together with the Father.

#### CONTEXT, PERICOPE AND STRUCTURE

Our pericope John 5:19-30 takes place in the context of a challenge to Jesus' authority. In the midst of Jesus' ministry, the Jewish leaders or the Jews increased their opposition to him.<sup>16</sup> Earlier in the chapter, Jesus had healed an invalid at Bethesda on the Sabbath. The Jews were upset over what they consider as a violation of the rule not to work on the Sabbath, and Jesus' statement that he is working now just as the Father is working enraged the Jews further as they rightly perceive this to mean that Jesus was claiming equality with God (Jn. 5:17-18), which if untrue is blasphemy deserving of death.

John 5:19-30, in fact the whole of the chapter up till verse 46, therefore is situated in this hostile confrontation between Jesus and the Jews. It functions as an apologetic for the person and claims of Jesus. The first part (verses 19 to 30) deals with Jesus' relation between him, the Son, to the Father, while the second part (verses 30 to 46) deals with the witnesses to the truth of what Jesus is testifying about, which we will not look at in this paper.

The apologetic offered by Jesus was anything but conciliatory. To this hostile audience, Jesus did not attempt to soften his message but presses hard the teachings about himself. To an audience offended by his assertion about doing the same works as God, Jesus offered an even more explicit exposition of the same, with an added revelation into the relations between Jesus, the Son, with God the Father. Chrysostom's explanation for this passage as being one of condescension to soften

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<sup>16</sup> "The Jews" is the phrase used to name the antagonists in the Gospel of John. That the phrase used in this manner in John refers to the Jewish leaders and all the Jews who oppose Jesus, and not the Jewish people as an ethnic group, can be seen in the contrast of "the Jews" to the normal Jewish civilians who believed in him (*cf.* Jn. 2:23; 7:21)

the blow of the hard truth of His divinity is therefore not tenable, although certainly using any human language is condescension for God.<sup>17</sup>

The pericope can be structured as seen in Figure 1.<sup>18</sup> It starts off with the submission of the Son to the Father. Jesus differentiated himself from the Father yet at the same time identifies himself as God. As verse 19 states, whatever the Father does, that the Son likewise does. Jesus the Son submits to the Father in everything He does. Next, as the Son submits to the Father, so He is given authority from the Father. The Son has been given all judgment by the Father, and He therefore judges as if He is the ultimate authority—as the Father’s equal not as a subordinate (verse 22). This serves the glory and honor of both the Father and the Son (verse 23), which is expressed in the authority of the Son in salvation (verses 24-25). All of this culminates in the revelation of the Son’s self-existence in submission to the Father in verse 26.

The chiasm is recapitulated briefly in verses 26 to 30. Verses 27-29 continue to speak of the authority of the Son, but this time to be exercised in the final judgment, while verse 30 goes back to the theme of the Son’s submission to the Father. The Son does not do anything on His own, but rather does everything in obedience to the Father’s will.

## THE SUBMISSION OF THE SON

The theme of the submission of the Son to the Father serves as bookends of this pericope, and

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<sup>17</sup> On Chrysostom, see Chrysostom, 1 (NPNF<sup>1</sup> 14: 137). The condescension of God has to do with our knowing as being analogical (Bavinck, *Dogmatics*, 129-30)

<sup>18</sup> D.A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo claim a chiastic structure for this pericope John 5:19-30 [*An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1992, 2005), 253]. Peter F. Ellis structures the passage as follows: (a) vv. 19-23; (b) vv. 24-5; (c) vv. 26-7; (b’) vv. 28-9; (a’) v. 30 [Peter F. Ellis, “Inclusion, Chiasm, and the Division of the Fourth Gospel,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 43 no. 3-4 (Jan 1, 1999): 295]. I think my proposed structure better captures the flow of the text.

THEME:	TEXT
Submission:	So Jesus said ... For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. ... (vv. 19-20)
Authority:	For as the ... The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, (vv. 21-22)
Glory:	that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. (v. 23)
Authority:	Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word ... He does not come into judgment... the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. (vv. 24-25)
Submission:	For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. (v. 26)
Authority:	And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. ... those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment. (vv. 27-29)
Submission:	I can do nothing on my own ... because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me. (v. 30)

**Fig. 1:** Proposed structure of John 5:19-30<sup>19</sup>

its importance is illustrated by its position in the center of the pericope in verse 26. In the light of the larger context of the pericope in the Gospel of John, this theme serves as the main thrust of Jesus' apologetic. To the charge of making Himself equal to God, Jesus affirmed His deity while at the same time emphasizing that he is not setting Himself as an independent God but rather he does all things in submission to the Father.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> All verses cited are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishing, unless otherwise stated. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

<sup>20</sup> According to Wilbert Francis Howard, "the claim of Jesus to be carrying on the Father's unceasing activity was misinterpreted by the Jews as gross-self-assertion ... a claim of independence" ["Father and the Son: an exposition of John 5:19-29," *Interpretation* 4 no. 1 (Jan 1950):6]. See also George Beasley-Murray, *John* (WBC 36; Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 75 and Köstenberger, *John*, 186. One does not however have to speculate into the thoughts the Jews had back then to know that Jesus' polemic was to vindicate Himself and His claims

Verse 19 begins with Jesus answering (Ἀπεκρίνατο) the Jews and their accusation.<sup>21</sup> Using the solemn declaration “Truly, truly, I say to you,” Jesus begins his proclamation by stating that he as the Son is not independent of the Father. Rather he does whatever the Father does.<sup>22</sup> The biblical scholar C. H. Dodd suggests that there is an implied parable in this verse, where a son “...watches his father at work, and performs each operation as his father performs it. The affectionate father shows the boy all the secrets of his craft.”<sup>23</sup> Such a view however is speculative and rejected by scholars such as D.A. Carson. While the imagery “might have been formed in Jesus’ mind as he grew up learning the trade of carpentry from Joseph,” “it is doubtful that vv. 19-20a at one time constituted an independent parable.”<sup>24</sup> Rather, it is better to just say that such is a “colorful” metaphor “drawn from the world of nature.”<sup>25</sup> As Herman Ridderbos says, such a view “assumes

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regardless of whether the Jews thought that Jesus was making Himself a second God or making Himself identical with YHWH.

<sup>21</sup> Ἀπεκρίνατο is to be taken here as merely an historical aorist as this event happened in the past. On the text of verse 19 itself, a few manuscripts have the word εἶπον and others λεγει instead of the verb ἔλεγε. There is no real difference in meaning for the text here however since it only shifts the viewpoint of the narrator as to how the saying is to be construed. Since the entire event happened in the past anyway, this is insignificant, plus the variants have little textual attestations. Another variant can be seen in a few minor manuscripts which add the phrase τοῦ ἀνθρώπου after the phrase οὐ δύναται ὁ υἱός. That is probably an interpolation from other parts of the Gospel where the phrase is used (e.g. Jn.3:13). The variant adding of τι before ποιεῖν and the omission of οὐδὲν does not change the meaning of the text. At the same place, the variant of οὐδε εν for οὐδὲν has little textual evidence for it and should be rejected, while the variant of ἄν for ἐάν does not change the meaning one bit. Although it is supported by 8 and B, the earlier manuscript p<sup>66</sup> and all the other manuscripts are against the variant of ἄν.

<sup>22</sup> The far demonstrative ἐκεῖνος refers to the Father, the subject of the previous clause. This “lays stress on the separate divine Person... contrast with ὁ υἱός” [C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Philadelphia, Penn.: Westminster Press, 1978), 259]

<sup>23</sup> C. H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (London, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 386

<sup>24</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (TPNTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991), 250

<sup>25</sup> Carson and Moo, *Introduction*, 258

that the absolute reference to ‘the’ father and ‘the’ son first occurs parabolically and then, without no [*sic*] indication, passes directly to God as ‘the Father’ and Christ as ‘the Son.’”<sup>26</sup>

Using a double negative phrase (οὐ δύναται ... οὐδὲν), Jesus proclaimed emphatically that he cannot do anything unless he sees (βλέπει) the Father doing it.<sup>27</sup> Besides the emphatic double negation of Jesus not being able to do anything by himself (οὐ δύναται ὁ υἱὸς ποιεῖν ἀφ’ ἑαυτοῦ οὐδὲν), the second part of verse 19 states positively that Jesus does likewise what the Father does. Therefore, through both the double negation and the affirmation of the positive correlation, the point is clearly and very emphatically made that Jesus’s work is coterminous with that of the Father with no exceptions whatsoever.

The usage of the present tense form for the subjunctive βλέπει serves to accentuate the ever-present nature of the eternal work and submission of the Son to the Father. The working of the Son and the seeing of the Father doing it is coterminous. Since the Son is now on earth, such a seeing is better understood as referring to the eternal state whereby the works of the Son and the Father are one, indivisible and having the “oneness of the same operation” as Ambrose and Augustine wrote.<sup>28</sup> Such a “seeing” is the flip side of the “showing” in verse 20. As the Son sees, so the Father shows His works to the Son as He loves the Son.

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<sup>26</sup> Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary* (trans. John Vriend; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997), 192

<sup>27</sup> In the Greek, a double negative does not function like an English double negative where a double negative equals a positive. Rather, a double negative intensifies the negation. On this interpretation, Carson agrees, saying “It is impossible for the Son to take independent, self-determined action that would set him over against the Father as another God, *for* all the Son does is both coincident with and co-extensive with all that the Father does.” (Carson, *John*, 251)

<sup>28</sup> Ambrose, *Of the Holy Spirit*, 17.136 (NPNF<sup>2</sup> 10:132). Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 2.1.3 (NPNF<sup>1</sup> 3:38). But see discussion in the next paragraph

Agreeing that the “‘seeing’ has its counterpart in the ‘showing’ by the Father,” George Beasley-Murray nevertheless contends that the “seeing” in verse 19 “is an image of the perpetual communion of the Son with the Father in his day-by-day life (*not* in his pre-existence).”<sup>29</sup> This however is to be rejected because the activities that the Father and Son do in for example verse 21 are in the present tense. In verse 21, which we shall look at in more detail later, the Father raises (ἐγείρει—present tense) the dead and makes them alive (ζωοποιεῖ,—present tense), and thus the Son will also make alive whom he wishes (οὗς θέλει ζωοποιεῖ—both verbs are in the present tense). While certainly they can all be taken in the gnomic sense, such must refer to the eternal view of God as the raising and making alive has at least one of its reference to the final resurrection in the last days (v. 29), an event which is in the future. Taking the entire passage therefore as a revelation into the inner workings between the Father and the Son does better justice to the use of the present tense verbs in the passage, especially the ones we have seen in verse 21. Analogous to how one person emulates another through the process of the master showing and the student seeing, though in an imperfect manner, Jesus’ works emulates the Father’s work as a perfect image and representation and oneness.

Jesus is not able to do anything of himself (ἀπ’ ἑαυτοῦ). This phrase is mentioned twice in verse 19 and in verse 30 (switching to the first person as the subject changes from Jesus speaking about the Son in the third person to himself in the first person as he transitions to the next pericope), beginning and ending the pericope.<sup>30</sup> In verse 19, whatever the Father does the Son likewise does. In verse 30, the viewpoint changes from the Father to the Son. The Son hears and then He does,

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<sup>29</sup> Beasley-Murray, *John*, 76. Emphasis original

<sup>30</sup> There is a textual note for the beginning of verse 30, where οὐδε εν is a variant for οὐδὲν. It however has little textual attestation. The presence of this exact same variant being found here and in verse 19 on p<sup>66</sup> suggests that earlier scribes probably see both clauses as related and thus sought to correct one when the other was different.

seeking not His own will but that of the Father who sent Him. Such illustrates the chiasmic nature of the pericope and focuses our attention on the Son's absolute submission to the Father.

New Testament professor Roy Harrisville suggests however that the phrase ἀπ' ἑαυτοῦ teaches that “it is God who makes Jesus what he is,” and thus it is the “prophetic understanding” of “God who speaks and acts through the human subject,” “not some idolatrous claim for Jesus that would compromise its [Christianity's] radically monotheistic faith.”<sup>31</sup> Such an interpretation however totally misses the teaching of the text on this topic and perfectly eisegete the texts. The text clearly teaches that Jesus is claiming submission to the Father and thus we should therefore understand his denial of independence (ἀπ' ἑαυτοῦ) in that context, not the “post-Daly, post-Athanasius, and post-Bultmann” modern scholarship context.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, the text is very clear that the submission refers to Jesus as a person submitting to God the Father as a person, with nothing said about any so-called “prophetic understanding” of a focus on “who is God” and not “who is Jesus,” as our pericope is clearly speaking about both God the Father and Jesus.<sup>33</sup>

Verse 26 is the structural center of the pericope which can also be taken as its theological center. In this, we have Jesus' expression of the self-existence of the Son. The Father and the Son both have life in themselves.<sup>34</sup> The Son is *autotheos*—self-existent deity.<sup>35</sup> Yet we also see in this verse the submission of the Son to the Father. The Father has life in Himself, and He has given

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<sup>31</sup> Roy A. Harrisville, “John 5:19-24,” *Interpretation* 45 no. 1 (April 1991): 180

<sup>32</sup> Harrisville, “John,” 177

<sup>33</sup> Harrisville, “John,” 180

<sup>34</sup> The usage of the present tense (ἔχει) refers to the eternal reality of the self-existence of the Father and the Son, with the present tense having a gnomic sense. In the reflexive preposition ἐν ἑαυτῷ, the principle of self-existence can be seen as the life (ζωήν) is found not due to an external principle but it is self-caused or self-created. Textually, there is a variant of ὡς instead of the word ὡσπερ, which does not significantly change the meaning however and it does not have good textual backing either.

<sup>35</sup> See Horton, *The Christian Faith*, 289.

(ἔδωκεν) the Son life in Himself.<sup>36</sup> The use of the aorist here shows the logical relation between the Father and the Son's self-existence, for since both the Son and the Father are God, there is no temporal relation between them but a logical one.<sup>37</sup> Thus, using the terms of Nicene orthodoxy, the Father eternally begets the Son. Even in the order of existence, the Son submits to the Father.

All of these verses show the submission of the Son to the Father as the central theme of the pericope. But what does this submission entail, and how does it relate to the larger context?

On the one hand, we must acknowledge the reality of the Son's submission to the Father. The Son is truly in some sense subordinate to the Father, and such a submission is not an illusion or play-acting. As Carson says, "the relationship between the Father and the Son is not reciprocal."<sup>38</sup> In the immediate context, as we have seen, this submission of the Son to the Father means that Jesus' works are coterminous with that of God the Father. Again, to cite Carson, "it is impossible for the Son to take independent, self-determined action that would set him over against the Father as another God."<sup>39</sup> Whatever Jesus does is perfectly in line with God the Father's will and the Father's actions. In John's word elsewhere, Jesus is the one who has exegeted (ἐξηγήσατο) God (Jn. 1:18). Through Jesus' perfect subordination to God, he perfectly reveals God to us.<sup>40</sup>

On the other hand, such a submission cannot be seen to be that of being, as if Jesus was not truly God or that Jesus' apologetic was meant to downplay the allegations by the Jews that "he was

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<sup>36</sup> The aorist is used here in a perfective sense ("has given"). Thus, the giving of self-existence is completed in eternity past.

<sup>37</sup> As we have seen and will continue to see, Jesus did not ever disprove or dispute the charge of being God but instead confirmed it.

<sup>38</sup> Carson, *John*, 250-1. Also, "...his [Jesus'] profound subordination to the Father (see esp. 5:16-30)." (Carson and Moo, *Introduction*, 262)

<sup>39</sup> Carson, *John*, 251

<sup>40</sup> "The very obedience and dependence that characterize Jesus' utter subordination to the Father are themselves so perfect that all Jesus does is what the Father wills and does, so it is nothing less than the revelation of God." (Carson, *John*, 252)

even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God” (Jn. 5:18). Such a statement of denial is not made just because of external concerns regarding an *a priori* commitment to the doctrine of the divinity of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity. Rather, it arises from the teaching of the text itself. For in our pericope Jesus the Son through his submission does the exact same works as the Father does. Given the incomprehensibility of God, which creature can ever claim to do the exact same work that God the Father does? As we move through the text, which creature can ever be said to be given all judgment by the Father (v. 22) such that the Father does not judge, in that sense described as “abdicating” judgment to that of the Son? For “God alone is called the Judge (Gen. 18:25; Judg. 11:27)” and “He alone will exercise final judgment (Pss. 94:2; 105:7; Isa. 2:4; 26:9; Mic. 4:3),” so therefore Jesus must be God.<sup>41</sup> It is even ludicrous to imagine any creature even that of Michael the archangel claiming such prerogatives as making alive whomever he wishes (v. 21) and having the right of self-existence (v. 26), regardless whether it has been granted that right by God the Father Himself.<sup>42</sup> It is not possible for God to make a creature a God like Himself (Ps. 46:9). Therefore, in the very sentences revealing his submission to the Father, Jesus was asserting his essential deity.

This submission of the Son to the Father therefore is one of covenant or function, not of being or ontology.<sup>43</sup> Jesus the Son in his submission to the Father expresses at one time his distinctiveness, divinity, unity and oneness of operation and his joyful covenantal submission to God the Father to do the work of God. Far from being a mark of inferiority or a denial of his

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<sup>41</sup> Stephen S. Kim, “The Christology and Eschatological Significance of Jesus’ Miracle in John 5,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 165 (October-December 2008), 421

<sup>42</sup> As Köstenberger points out, although Elijah “was used by God to raise the dead, Jesus’ claim is much bolder in that he claimed not merely to be God’s instrument in raising other people, but to give life himself to *whom he is pleased to give it.*” (Köstenberger, *John*, 187. Emphasis original)

<sup>43</sup> Robert Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 228. Also, “functional subordination of Jesus to his Father” (Carson and Moo, *Introduction*, 267)

divinity, the submission of the Son paradoxically proves his essential divinity and oneness in essence and works with his Father.

This submission of the Son to the Father serves to refute any indication of independence from God. As the main theme of the pericope, it is the context within which the authority and glory of the Son is taught, thus indicating to the Jews both that Jesus is not introducing a new religion altogether (*cf.* Mt. 5:17). Jesus' teaching about himself is also just as authoritative as the previously revealed revelation from YHWH, God the Father.

#### THE AUTHORITY OF THE SON

As the Son submits to the Father, so also the Father gives authority to the Son, an authority which is not exercised apart from the Father but yet does not involve the actual judgment of the Father.

Verses 20, 21 and 22 each contain the conjunction  $\gamma\alpha\rho$ , which relates what is said to the previous parts on the submission of the Son. The Son's submission to the Father is seen in the authority of the Son from the Father (vv. 20-22). The Son submits to the Father, and therefore we read of the Father loving and showing all things to Him, in order that the Son will be able to exercise authority over all things. In this metaphor which earlier we have seen Dodd mistook for a parable, the Son is shown all things just like a master shows his apprentice the working of the trade in order that he could do likewise, for the amazement of all. In the immediate context, Jesus' healing work in John 5:1-15 is merely the beginning of the works of which greater works than these are forthcoming.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> *Cf.* Ridderbos, *John*, 196

The authority of the Son is seen in raising the dead and making them alive, and in judgment. Both as we have seen are prerogatives of God and therefore prove the deity of the Son. Verse 21 in particular, by showing that the Son makes alive whom He wishes, proves the ultimate authority of the Son over life and death. The next verse is even more explicit when it states that the Father does not judge anyway, but instead all judgment is given to the Son. This would certainly be disturbing for it would seem that God the Father has abdicated His role as a judge. Since however the Son submits to the Father and is doing the Father's work, what this translates to theologically is that the Father judges through the person of His Son.<sup>45</sup> Exegetically, such an expression accentuates the authority of the Son as one of ultimate authority, such that He does the work of the Father as one who is the ultimate judge, giving life to whomever He wishes to do so.<sup>46</sup>

Following from the authority to make alive and to judge comes the authority and judgment over the destiny of individuals. Jesus in verse 24 first ties men's destinies with their response to his word, thus manifesting his role as the one who exercises his authority over life and death based upon the fulfillment of a certain condition set by him. Such a person who believes in the one who sent Jesus will have passed over (μεταβέβηκεν) from death to life. The usage of the perfect tense here signifies that the verdict has already been made at the time when such an acceptance in Christ's word and belief in God who sent Jesus, and is not something to occur in the future. When such belief happens, Christ's verdict of salvation is delivered.

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<sup>45</sup> Tertullian, *Against Praxeas*, 16 (ANF 3: 611). Also John Calvin, *The Gospel According to St. John 1-10* (Calvin's Commentaries; Eds. David W Torrance and Thomas F Torrance; Trans. T.H.L. Parker; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1959), 127

<sup>46</sup> Such expressions of course function as fuel for the theological controversies of the early church. The Athanasian Creed here expresses the solution of the universal Church: "So likewise the Father is Almighty: the Son Almighty: and the Holy Ghost Almighty. And yet they are not three Almighties: but one Almighty." ("Athanasian", in Schaff, *Creeds*, 67)

The following verse, verse 25, continues the theme of Jesus' authority. Jesus is shown to be the one whose words currently are working and will work unto making people alive.<sup>47</sup> The time of salvation is here, and whoever hears Jesus' words and believes them are saved (*cf.* Jn. 3: 16, 36a).<sup>48</sup> Here, we see Jesus' authority once again manifested in his choice to make alive "whomever he wills" (Jn. 5: 21). In his present act of making people alive or regeneration (which is done through the agency of the Holy Spirit as other verses like Jn. 3:8 tells us), Jesus' authority extends to offering salvation to all who will receive his words and believe in him and the Father who sent him.

The fourth *γάρ* conjunction in our pericope in verse 26 links what we have seen so far of Jesus' authority back to His submission to the Father, and then sees that as the explanation for Jesus' authority. We are thus reminded again that Jesus' submission to the Father is expressed in his authority over all things.

Verse 27 starts the transition into the new section expressing Jesus' authority. In this section, Jesus is said to have the authority to proclaim judgment, but this time it is based upon him being the Son of Man.<sup>49</sup> The phrase "Son of Man" (υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου) here is unusual as it lacks the definite

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<sup>47</sup> A textual variant here replaces ἀκούσουσιν (Future Active Indicative) with ἀκούσωσιν (Aorist Active Subjunctive) or ἀκούσονται (Future Middle Indicative). The variant ἀκούσωσιν has quite good textual support including p<sup>66</sup> and  $\aleph$ . However, there is little difference in meaning between the future indicative and the subjunctive here since the event of hearing will and shall happen. The future middle has less textual support. It also will not change the meaning of the text since the object of hearing (τῆς φωνῆς τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ τῆς φωνῆς τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ) is stated. Another textual variant sees ζήσουσιν replaced by the future middle ζήσονται. This variant has inferior textual support plus it does not change the basic meaning of these people living because they have heard and received Jesus' words.

<sup>48</sup> The substantive participle οἱ ἀκούσαντες is in the aorist tense, thus it denotes the fact that only after hearing Jesus' words can one then be saved; salvation or coming to life is a consequence of hearing and receiving Jesus' words.

<sup>49</sup> A textual variant inserting the conjunction *καί* after ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ, thus the verse is translated as "He has given him even to pass judgment." The textual basis for this however is poor with  $\aleph$  and B and many early manuscripts omitting the conjunction.

articles, but such can be accounted for based upon Colwell's Canon.<sup>50</sup> More likely however is the correspondence to Daniel 7:13 which similarly lacked the definite articles in the Septuagint, and therefore such is "an allusion to the apocalyptic Son of Man."<sup>51</sup> Wilbert Howard suggests that this "points less to quality than to office."<sup>52</sup> Certainly, the main thrust of this verse is to point to Jesus' authority and role as Judge and as such the allusion to Daniel 7:13 is very likely. From the allusion to the apocalyptic Son of Man in Daniel, we are shown Jesus' authority in the last days when the Son of Man will judge the world.

Jesus finished off his exposition of his authority in verse 28 by calling his hearers to not be amazed (θαυμάζετε).<sup>53</sup> To answer their incredulity at his claims, Jesus made it explicit the last expression of his authority which will come at the last days, a concept he has just alluded to. The hour comes when in which everyone in their graves will hear (ἀκούσουσι) Jesus' voice.<sup>54</sup> This refers to the final eschatological judgment, as opposed to the earlier scene of the work of Jesus in regenerating sinners. That the eschatological judgment is in mind here can be seen in the words themselves and in the phrasing. In the words, the placing of the participles in the aorist emphasized that this judgment comes after the actions have all been done; the judgment unto life or condemnation follows consequently after the actions or works of the ones judged, and therefore

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<sup>50</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1996), 256-7

<sup>51</sup> Carson, *John*, 257. Also Barrett, *John*, 262 and Köstenberger, *John*, 189

<sup>52</sup> Howard, "Father," 9

<sup>53</sup> There does not seem to be any default for the imperative of θαυμάζω. The present tense therefore simply has a progressive present connotation.

<sup>54</sup> In verse 28, a textual variant here replaces ἀκούσουσιν (Future Active Indicative) with ἀκούσωσιν (Aorist Active Subjunctive) or ἀκούσονται (Future Middle Indicative), similar to that in verse 25, with similarly textual evidences for the various variants. It is possible that both variants are introduced together as they are close to each other and occur in phrases of similar wording.

such a judgment must be the final judgment.<sup>55</sup> The phrasing themselves indicate to us that the final judgment is in view due to the reference to the universal aspect of the resurrection and the division of all either for life or for judgment and punishment.<sup>56</sup>

This final judgment will be open in plain sight, as opposed to the previous secret work of regeneration. On that day, the Son will judge everyone who has ever lived. Those who formerly did good will be raised for the resurrection unto life, while those doing worthless things for the resurrection unto judgment and punishment. On that day, the authority of the Son will be manifested openly and prove to all that the Son has all the authority to make alive and to judge.

The final section of Jesus' authority is seen in his being sent by the Father. The Father is the one who sent Jesus to do the works he is to do. In verses 23, 24 and 30, the participle used is an aorist participle, signifying that the sending of Jesus happened in the past.<sup>57</sup> Jesus being sent therefore gives him the authority as God participated in his works, speaking by him and acting in him.<sup>58</sup>

## THE GLORY OF THE SON

The Son submits to the Father, and He thus has authority over all things to make alive whomever He wishes, and to judge all things. All of these serve to accentuate the glory of the Son and with Him the Father.

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<sup>55</sup> Both ἀνάστασιν ζωῆς and ἀνάστασιν κρίσεως parallel each other and are to be read as objective genitive, thus “resurrection unto life” and “resurrection unto death” as the context is on the raising of the dead when they hear the voice of the Son.

<sup>56</sup> Dan. 12:2. Also, “there was inward preparation for the hope of general resurrection in its eschatological form” (A. Oepke, “ἀνίστημι, ἐξάνίστημι,” *TDNT* 1: 368-372 )

<sup>57</sup> The variant at the end of verse 30 inserts πατρός at the end of the verse, thus making it explicit who the sender is. The word however is unnecessary, plus it has inferior textual attestation so it is rejected. It probably is an emendation based upon the presence of the phrase in Jn. 14:24

<sup>58</sup> Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, “ἀποστέλλω (πέμπω),” *TDNT* 1: 398-406

In verse 20, we have seen that the Father will show to the Son all things, and that such a showing will result in the amazement of all. This amazement is not to be mistaken for the command not to be amazed in verse 28 as they are found in different contexts. In verse 28, the context is the amazement of disbelief that such things can be seemingly said of what the Jews perceive as being a mortal man. In verse 20, the amazement that will happen is the amazement that comes from the revelation of the works of the Father done by the Son—an amazement of wonder. The word θαυμάζητε in verse 20 is marked as the default subjunctive form is in the aorist tense, the verb being telic in nature.<sup>59</sup> Such implies that the people are to be continually amazed as the Son works the Father's work as the Father shows them to Him.

Verse 22 as we have seen speaks of the authority of the Son in being given all judgment by the Father. Verse 23 tells us of the purpose for the giving of this authority to the Son, for the purpose that all may honor the Son as they honor the Father. The usage of the present tense forms of τιμάω in this verse suggests that this honoring is to be continuous. All men are now to honor the Son, whereas previously they have only known and honored the Father. The Son now is to receive glory as He exercise authority and do the works of the Father. The second part of the verse teaches that the one who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, the One who sent Him, and thus identifies the honor of God the Father to that of God the Son. The Son will therefore receive glory for all that He does, the exact same glory that belongs to and is given to God the Father. Such is the ultimate goal of the relations and workings between the Father and the Son; the Son's submission and authority.

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<sup>59</sup> Other subjunctives of the verb θαυμάζω in the LXX and the NT are aorist. It is no surprise that a textual variant here in verse 20 change it to the aorist subjunctive form θαυμάσητε which however has little textual attestation. The present indicative form θαυμάζετε has κ, L and 579 as textual evidence but such is insufficient. Furthermore, the phrase expects the subjunctive form after ἵνα.

## CONCLUSION

In this pericope, we have seen the submission, authority and glory of the Son. In the economy and plan of God, God the Son submits to God the Father. In return, God the Son has all authority over all things for the making alive and the judgment unto life or death, both in the work of regeneration and in the work of final judgment. In a rare glimpse into the inner workings of the Godhead provided by Jesus himself, the Covenant of Redemption or *Pactum Salutis* between the Father and the Son is wonderfully revealed to us for our wonder and marvel and awe.

In time, the working out of this covenant would culminate in the main work of Jesus on the Cross. The path of submission would lead the Holy One to shame and death. Ironically, the Jews who in John 5 rejected the message became the instruments through which Christ's authority would be established and all things resound for the glory and honor of the Father and the Son.

And being found in human form, he [Jesus] humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2:8-11)

Amen.

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