

**“The Trinity Is Not Our Social Program” and the Social Arian Temptation:
Recovering from Mortifying Spin – Contextualization
Gone Awry 4 (Christology) (Part II)¹**

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Abstract [same as Part I – ed.]

The Trinity *is* our social program, if our understanding of the Triune God is checked by biblical theology and biblical ethics developed within an international hermeneutical community. My thesis is this: “Everlasting Relationships of Following-and-Leading” (ERFL) within the immanent Trinity are founded squarely upon Scripture as read without Neoplatonic, Social Arian lenses. I establish this thesis through a survey of the interactions between the Father and Son in the economic interactions before creation in the covenant of redemption, then in the Son’s work in creation and in redemptive history until and during the incarnation, next after the resurrection and enthronement, and last after the Judgment. I then trace the pattern of Filial-following and Patri-leadership in the dyadic titles ascribed to the Father and Son. Finally, I discuss implications for social theology of a Complementarian Trinity perspective.

Key Words: [same as Part I – ed.] Trinity, Social Arianism, egalitarian Trinity, complementarian Trinity, culture transformation, social revolutionary doctrines

Introduction and Thesis [same as Part I – ed.]

The Trinity *is* our social program, if the terms “Trinity” and “social program” are checked by Scripture and then sharpened within a truly international hermeneutical community to guard against encroaching syncretism (Prv 27:17) (Volf 1998, 403-423; contra Husbands, 2009). Fundamental to my thesis is that a person or people-group inevitably *become(s) like who or what they worship*, as we shall see repeatedly (Pss 115:1-8, 135:15-18; 2 Cor 3:18). Every view of the Trinity, even for those who reject the idea that the Trinity has social relevance, will lead to culture transformation. *No neutrality exists and no escape from social relevance exists*. If the earth’s ethno-cultures are going to be transformed according to whole Bible teaching, these statements are essential because the Trinity is essential (Mt 28:17-20). If any culture is founded upon the wisdom and truth of a true Trinity (Tri-Unity), it will thrive. If not, it will collapse from the accumulated centuries of idolatry as seen by precept and example throughout Scripture.

This and subsequent articles focus especially on *Christology* gone awry. My thesis is as follows: Everlasting Relationships of Following-and-Leading (ERFL) truly exist within the immanent Trinity. The Tri-une Godhead has always consisted of three Persons who share equal value, dignity, majesty, and glory. Yet, at the same time, all three have always interacted with equal glory-yet-diverse roles within the Father’s single Being. Consequently, true equality and real diversity of authority roles are absolutely compatible, because that is what Scripture everywhere reveals our three-one divinity to be like. In the Scriptural revelation of the economy, *the Trinity is always and everywhere led by the Father* with the Son following. This is true in the pre-creational covenant of redemption all the way to after Messiah Jesus presents the universe back to his Father, who becomes “all in all.”

I maintain that it is legitimate, therefore, to carefully infer backwards from these revealed economic relationships to the everlasting divine metaphysical time (DMT) of the ontological Trinitarian relationships before the covenant of redemption. Several other indications (e.g., God-Word, Glory-Radiance relationship) also demonstrate that this has always been the internal immanent way the Godhead *is*, was, and will always be. Hence, the following of the Son and leading of the Father in the economy is not temporary.

Further, whenever an ethno-culture's worldview becomes grounded upon a view of the relationship of unity and diversity that prioritizes the equality of unity above any diversity, it will self-destruct. This worldview concept will become a Pac-Man that devours all social freedom and created diversity in an egalitarian collective. The envisioned result is a communal-collective in which everyone is supposed to be absolutely and interchangeably equal, with no social hierarchies and no social boundaries. An updated slogan of the French Revolution could well be "Equality, Liberty, and a unitary family of Humanity." Such a viewpoint encapsulates the contemporary boast that equality is absolutely morally better than maintaining created social diversities. In contrast, our Lord provides a strong indication that true social unity and real, created, social diversity can exist in harmony when he prays, "Let them be one as we are one" (Jn 17:11, 23). His ideal social model is actually modeled on the Tri-Unity of his relationship with his Father (and by implication also with the Spirit). His new creation community in vital union with him is truly diverse – bi-gender, multi-ethnic, and multi-class – yet is also truly a unified community because only the Son's new-creation diverse and unified community *reflects* the immanent-ontological Trinity. Hence, an accurate understanding of the Trinity *is* our social program.

Unfortunately, the Trinity within the classic Tradition has too often been relegated to being a mere thought puzzle with little practical relevance to social systems. This type of relegation is especially true of Latin scholastic Trinitarianism, but also definitely occurs in earlier Greek and Latin Christianity as well (Hennessy 2007). However, as several scholars demonstrate in the last half century, such as the VanTillians, Frame, Poythress, and Rushdoony in the USA, and especially Colin Gunton in the UK, only a correct Trinitarian view builds a stable social order in all spheres of life. Therefore, what I term *Social Arianism* prioritizes the intuited moral value within the ontological Trinity of a simple-egalitarian unity above any real diversity of the Godhead. Within this simplist Tradition that includes a timeless, strongly immutable, and impassive deity are hidden deadly Neoplatonic presuppositions, as occurs within Augustine (Mullins 2013, 181). Robert Jenson summarizes: "Throughout his writings," Augustine possessed an "unquestioning commitment to the axiom of his antecedent [neo]Platonic theology, that God is metaphysically 'simple,' that no sort of self-differentiation can really be true of him" (Jenson 1997, 111). The Cappadocians before and Aquinas after him held to the same presuppositional syncretism.

[Part II begins here – ed.]

The Divine Title and Role of the Son as Related to the Father

To establish the thesis further that equality of essence and being is totally compatible with following-and-leading role relationships, I will consider the following dyadic role relationships: Word-God, Father-Son, Glory-Radiance, God-Image, Radiance-Glory and Representation-Nature.

Word-God (Jn 1:1-3)

In the cultural background of John's Prologue and throughout John's Gospel, the Word-God relationship is similar to that between a King and an official emissary (ἀπόστολος, apostle) sent by that authority on mission (ἀποστέλλω, apostellō) to the King's rebel subjects. "The God" (ὁ Θεός), the King, sent forth his personal Word to proclaim his royal message (Jn 3:34; 12:49; 14:10, 24) and perform a stipulated mission-task (Jn 4:34; 5:17, 20, 36; 9:4; 10:25, 32, 37, 38; 14:11, 12) for which the King greatly rewards him on return to his throne (Jn 6:37-39; 17:2; cf. Phil 2:6-11). What we will see is that this economic relationship is the same as within the immanent relationship. John's Prologue shares the true unity with the Father, yet also unique distinction that has always existed: "The God" is not "the Word."

First, "the Word was God" means that the *Logos asarkos* (pre-incarnate Word) shares full deity with "the God" because he shares the Father's full divine Being with the Spirit (Jn 1:1; see, Tit 2:13; 1 Pet 1:1; et al). The Word and God mutually indwell one another in mutual honor as the gospel elsewhere unequivocally teaches (Jn 10:37-38, 14:10-11, 17:21, 23). Yet both maintain distinct *roles* throughout: The Father always takes the initiative as the Speaker in the creation and incarnation, and the Word, the person we now know as Jesus, is the Message/Messenger. As introduced in the Prologue, Jesus always follows, is always led by the Father's leadership because that is what a Word from someone else must do by definition.

The living Word dwelling with "the God" [ὁ Θεός] (the Father), according to John, is much more than merely existing at the creation as any true Arian would confess. Instead, John uses the aorist ἐν [ἦν] (was) four times to imply something like "everlastingly alive": "In the beginning" – referring to Genesis 1:1 – was [ἦν] the Word." "The Word was [ἦν] with God and the Word was [ἦν] God" (Jn 1:1) and "he was [ἦν] in the beginning with "the God" (Jn 1:2). Therefore, since God is everlasting, it is logical to deduce from this data that the Word was [ἦν] always-living before "the beginning" with the everlasting God, sharing equally his Father's always-existing and never-ending divinity. As the "only-begotten [Son] Himself God," Christ is always present (ὁ ὢν: present active participle) "in the bosom of the Father" (ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ Πατρὸς) as the one who explains the Father (Jn 1:18). In other words, the Father is always the speaker and the Word has always been, is, and will always be the message of Father's speech.

Son-Father (Jn 1:14, 18, 5:18; Col 1:14; Heb 1:3)

Clearly, then, the omniscient and everlasting Son (Mt 11:27) is the image of the invisible Father (God), the firstborn over all creation (Col 1:15 NIV). Here Paul substantiates John's insights in the Prologue. The Son is "first-born" heir (πρωτότοκος), a metaphorical term conceptually analogous to John's simile "like an only-begotten and unique son with a father" (ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ Πατρός) (Jn 1:14; Col 1:14). In addition, John, Paul, and the writer of Hebrews all claim that this unique heir makes the invisible Father known because Jesus both exegetes God and is the visible image of that invisible speaking Monarch, who creates and upholds all things by his divine Fiat, the Logos of John and the υἱός/Huios (Son) of Colossians and Hebrews (Jn 1:3; Col 1:15-17; Heb 1:3). God has now spoken in/by his Son, Jesus (Heb 1:1-2).

Furthermore, in the second section of John's prologue (Jn 1:14-18), he reiterates this same everlasting relationship. The Word sent by God dwelt in a tent-tabernacle of flesh, revealing the glory, grace, and truth of the Father, analogous to the Shekinah-Glory of YHWH dwelling in the Tabernacle and Temple of Israel (Jn 1:14, 17). This in-tabernacle-ed Word was the Son, himself

God, who made known (ἐξηγήσομαι, “exegeted” or explained) to humanity the invisible God/Father, who sent him. As Christ explains more completely later, “He who has seen me, has seen the [invisible] Father” (Jn 14:9b, see 5-11). Jesus states: I do not speak my words or do my works but my Father does his works and speaks his words through me (Jn 10:25,35, 37). The Jews correctly saw that Jesus claimed equality with God (Jn 5:18), yet Jesus then went out of his way to show that he was always following his Father’s lead doing what he first saw the Father do. For example, he also is giving life – Jn 5:21, 25-26; judging because the Father gave him that authority to execute judgment – Jn 5:27, 30; given works to do by the Father (Jn 5:36).

In other words, he was saying that being ranked as a follower of his Father did not in any manner constitute demeaning inequality *in the economy*: Why then would it constitute inequality in the *ontology* of the Three-One being of the Father? This is the question I am addressing throughout this article. Social Arians say that role diversity with equality is impossible. How do they know? They first presuppose 1) inequality is never compatible with real authority-role diversity, and 2) God is a simple-Oneness. Both axioms are not revealed in Scripture but derived from an extra-biblical process of apophatic negation, which is read back into Scripture – eisegesis not exegesis (Kreitzer 2016, 2019a, b).

I summarize. From John’s prologue we see that true equality of divinity and real diversity of authority-roles are compatible in eternity-past. The Word always “was” full-divinity and equal with God because he ever-is the I AM even “in the beginning” of the creation (Jn 8:58). Each of the four uses of “ἦν” is equivalent, then, to the I AM of the Name (YHWH), so there is no hint that the Word was anything else but the Word throughout everlasting DMT. This passage must mean that the everlasting relationship between the *Logos asarkos* and “the God” in the immanent Trinity made it totally befitting that this everlasting Word of God become the Word incarnate (*Logos ensarkos*). Those roles cannot be reversed in any other potentially imagined world but are *ontologically established*. Again, their true equality by which they totally and mutually share the God, the Father’s single divine Being and real everlasting role diversity are compatible, contrary to the Social Arian error. Both Word and God, Son and Father are absolutely necessary within the divine ontology. Along with the Spirit, both are mutually defining of the other and cannot exist apart from the other in the manner that is revealed in Scripture.

The ramifications of this biblical Son-Father relationship are extremely important to consider, because Social Arians and Egalitarian Trinitarians imply that this relationship is merely one of love and inheritance but never of following and leading. Wayne Grudem disagrees as he interacts with Kevin Giles and Millard Erickson (Erickson 2008; Giles 2002, 2008, see 2017). Grudem surveyed the meaning of the Son-Father dyadic relationship in the context of “the biblical world,” and concluded: “There were no commendable examples of a son not being [rank-ordered under] ... his father or not deferring to the leadership role that still belonged to the father, even when the son had grown to adulthood” (Grudem 2012, 231). He continues that because this was “everywhere true” and because the conclusion is not contradicted elsewhere in the Bible, “surely [it] should be applied to the relationship between the Father and Son in the Trinity” (Grudem 2012, 231-232, see 227). Certainly if a person or culture reads Scripture with Western culture’s underlying Neoplatonic worldview presuppositions, that person or culture can make decisions that result in “contextualization gone awry,” as has occurred here with the Social Arians as a subset group within Egalitarian Trinitarianism.

No basis exists, then, for claiming as Kevin Giles does that “we found no evidence that [Son and Father] were separated or divided by function or differentiated by asymmetrical power and authority. Rather, they are depicted as working complementarily in perfect harmony and unity, exhibiting the same power and authority” (Giles 2006, 128). Readers familiar with Giles’ other writings may detect how this claim portrays exactly his preferred egalitarian male-female roles for church offices. *A culture, including an ecclesial culture, must become like the divinity it bows down to.* Giles is perfectly expressing the Social Arian αἵρεσις (divisive sect), as he speaks in favor of the simplist Tradition’s classic syncretism.

Radiance-Glory and Representation-Nature (Heb 1:1-3)

The author of Hebrews substantiates these conclusions. The Son, the incarnate “spokenness” of the Father, is (ὦν, present participle) both the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature. He upholds the universe by the word of his power that he always speaks from the Father (Heb 1:3 ESV). In other words, the everlasting Son has always been and always will be (the implications of the present active participle) the outshining radiance (ἀπαύγασμα) of the glory (δόξα) of the single Father, God. Perhaps the closest analogy is that of the sun. We do not see the actual ball of the sun. In effect it is invisible to our eyes. What we see is the out-shining radiance of that glorious orb. In like manner is the relationship of the Father and Son. The Father and Son are one-and-distinct, just as the sun’s orb and the radiance are truly distinct but inseparably one. Yet the orb is first as is God the Father. The orb shines outward as does the Father’s glory. He is first in order, and the radiance is second, radiating out from God, but not unequal to God, following not initiating. The Son, who is also the Word, is – present participle – then the perfect radiant representative of the leading Father’s Light-Orb, so to speak (1 Jn 1:1-5; 1 Tim 6:16). Here again is a direct indication of the ontological relationship of the Father and Son in DMT.

This reading of the beginning of Hebrews is further supported by the author’s next metaphor. The Father’s true underlying essence (ὑπόστασις, hypostasis) is exactly represented by the Son, who is the true/accurate stamp of the Father’s essence (χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως). The word-picture used does not give comprehensive information, but it does give some exact data about the ontological relationship, contrary to the apophatic Tradition. The mental-image invoked is that of a letter-seal or that of a mint stamping out coins. The χαρακτήρ, charaktēr was the impress of the original die that was put upon a newly minted coin or a letter seal. Ideally, the impression exactly represented the original die behind the image impressed. The Father is the ὑπόστασις or essence, “2. ... b. the substantial quality, nature, of any person or thing: τοῦ Θεοῦ (R. V. substance), Hebrews 1:3” (Thayer’s Greek Lexicon 2011) but the incarnate one, who “has spoken” from the Father is the exact-impression.

Two Disputed Pauline Passages: 1 Corinthians 3:21-23, 11:1-15

Last, I would be remiss not to mention the two disputed Pauline passages that rank-order humans, Christ, and God. In the first (1 Cor 3:21-23), Paul reminds the Corinthians not to enslave themselves under human leaders. He uses a powerful image to show their new identity. They are not servants but owners in union with Christ, the King and Lord of the house. Paul writes: We don’t preach “ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake” (2 Cor 4:5). We are “only servants, through whom you came to believe” (1 Cor 3:6). So don’t boast in them (1 Cor 3:21) because “everything belongs to you ... and you belong to

Christ” – the Image of the God (εἰκὼν τοῦ Θεοῦ) (2 Cor 4:6) – “and Christ belongs to God” (1 Cor 3:21-23). Notice the authority order, the apostles and teachers, then the members of the community, then the Image of God, and highest, God himself. Each is under authority except God, the Father, who is sovereign over all.

Paul reminds the Corinthians that everyone must serve Christ, who in turn serves his Master, the God of the universe himself. For a Social Arian this type of ordering is absolutely repugnant, so it is relegated to the economy alone. However, the direct context does not merely mention that Jesus is the Anointed King (Christ) but that he is the veritable Image of God, the Father. As his Image, he shines out the very “glory of the God” as his Radiance, as we have seen. Believers, therefore, are able to see “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor 4:6). There seems to be more than a hint of the everlasting and abiding relationship of God to his Image-Son here. Hence, it was fitting that the everlasting Image, Radiance, Son, Word of God to become incarnate as the perfect man, the Image and Likeness of God, the second Federal-Son of God, and his true prophetic Word as the long-foreseen Prophet to come.

When we compare the second similar, role-ordering passage (1 Cor 11:1-15) to the first one, however, even stronger doubt can be cast upon the idea that following-leading roles are merely economic. Observe the following in its context: “But there is one thing I want you to know: The head of every man [male husband] is the Anointed King, the head of a wife [γυνή, not here a generic female] is her own husband [ὁ ἄνθρωπος, the definite article implies her husband and not any random male], and the head of Christ is God” (1 Cor 11:3, my trans.).

The context makes clear that Paul is not speaking about male-female relations but husband-wife relations. The husband must honor his head, the Anointed King (Christ), and a wife must honor her head, that is her own husband because even King Jesus has a head, “the God” [ὁ Θεός] himself. So far this passage could still be interpreted purely economically. Notice, however, that this husband-wife relationship seems to represent the ontological relationship between “the God” and “the [enthroned and glorified] Christ.” This King is God, the Image, in now glorified flesh (see Tit 2:14). Now contrary to Kevin Giles, the term “Christ” does not always mean the *Logos ensarkos* but can also mean the *Lord asarkos* as 2 Corinthians 8:9 states: “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he [Lord Messiah] was rich, yet for your sake he became poor.” The God-Christ relationship is the prototype of the designed husband-wife relationship.

The Trinity Is Paul’s Social Program.

If the explanation above is accurate, and all the evidence gleaned so far substantiates that it is, 1 Corinthians 11 demonstrates that Paul’s understanding of the Trinity was indeed his social program. Paul teaches that the husband (Adam), who came by direct creation, is “the image and glory of God,” but the wife (Eve), possessed a true but still-derived image through her husband (1 Cor 11:7). Adam was a type of the true Image of God who would become incarnate (Rom 5:14). Since this passage in Romans is referring to the opening creation chapters (as is 1 Timothy 2:8-12), the prototype of any husband is Adam, and Eve is the prototypical example of a wife with one Pauline caveat. Since we now as husbands and wives are not the first Adam and Eve we must *also*, “in the Lord,” be interdependent under God because every man comes through a woman’s womb (1 Cor 11:11-12).

Nevertheless, Paul claims that Adam is the representative husband and God's representative leadership-image as the first created "son of God" (e.g., Lk 3:38). Yet Adam was not the Despotēs [δεσπότης] with unrestricted authority and absolute domination over his wife: only God is and he alone is good (Mt 19:17). No person is "the Judge," "the Law-giver," or "the King." And certainly, no man is able to save (Is 33:22). Husbands (elders and magistrates) have strictly limited authority under God who delegates all authority to his Son. The first husband was only a servant, a minister of God, only an administrator (vice-gerent) and not a vice-regent. That royal role, Samuel implies, must be reserved for the Theanthropos (1 Sam 8-12), though he allowed eventually under YHWH's direction the Davidic dynasty to reflect something of that role (Pss 2, 89, 110; Is 9:6-7).

Yet, even after the Fall, Adam and his sons still faintly reflect the only-God's glory, and hence share something of his delegated administrative authority. Hence, notwithstanding the Fall, Adam and his male sons retain God's "first-born" authority over the family (1 Tim 2:13). God created all families to have male *servant* leadership. A biological male-husband is to be the head and the biological female-wife is to be the helper. Within the grace of the Kingdom, these roles with differential authority as originally designed and renewed in Christ are not oppressive and demeaning but upbuilding and soul-satisfying (read Eph 5:20-33). Consequently, until the resurrection, at least, any wife, representing Eve as *derived* image of God, ought to have the sign of being under a husband's authority upon her head (1 Cor 11:10). This design-norm is not oppressive, particularly if understood in the culture of the day and within the biblical worldview. This conclusion flows inexorably from the Christ-God model of following and leading, which is to be reflected in the wife-husband relationship in marriage (see also Eph 5:20-33) and in the communities of the King (1 Tim 2:8ff).

In addition, what does Paul mean by "hair" in this text? In the context of 1 Corinthians 11, the woman's "hair" is her beautified, female-proving hair, which shows she is under her husband's leadership (1 Cor 11:15). Men have κόμη, komē (hair) but ought not to have, for them, shameful koma-hair. Such κομῶ-hair is cosmetically beautified, female-style hair, and it demonstrates to the surrounding culture that this woman is a chaste wife, biologically female, and under her husband's authority. A female in Corinthian culture with a shaved head is either shameful and immoral (αἰσχρὸν γυναικί), a street prostitute, or perhaps a slave-girl of a temple brothel (1 Cor 11:6). No Christ-following wife wants to emulate that. On the other hand, a male could choose to have that kind of hair, but created-nature teaches that biological males who choose to have that kind of hair heap dishonor and shame (ἀτιμία, atimia) upon themselves. Paul asserts that violating this creational design-norm is a perversion of the created male-female binary (1 Cor 11:13-14, see Rom 1:23). Wives (and females in general) should demonstrate that they are female and vice versa. The details, however, of how this can be worked out should be left to believers in each culture (perhaps implied by 1 Cor 11:16).

I summarize. Christ, the now glorified King, is under the leading authority of his Father. As we have seen, this is a prototype for a husband-wife relationship. He must be a *servant* by showing it in external appearance and life-style. A wife, in turn, follows loving and just leadership and should show that she understands following as a servant in her female manner and external appearance. Yet almost paradoxically, both are to be servants, though each maintains a different servant role as Paul implies in his introduction to Spirit-filled and Spirit-led husband-wife roles: "Submit to one another." In other words, each is to be ordered under another as mutual servants (Υποτασσόμενοι). ... "out of awe-filled respect for Christ" (Eph 5:20, my

trans.). Furthermore, for a wife, κομᾶ, koma was her glory and demonstrated that she is a married woman (γυνή, gunē) under the servant leadership of her husband. But such hair is a shameful disgrace to a male. He, too, needs visibly to demonstrate to all in his culture that he is the servant husband leader of his wife and family. Paul was reacting, I believe, to the gender dysphoria, the LGBTQ, and the rebel-feminist movement of that day.

Doxological Pattern and Following-Leading Relationships

In all of the doxological passages, the Father is the first, the Son the second, and the Spirit the third in order of service. This order is normative and thus appears in the Great Commission. Both Son and Father are equal but also truly distinct in role. The Scripture always reveals the Son following and the Father leading. Accordingly, all divine action and especially also all praise, blessing, honor, and authority-power is truly Trinitarian, flowing from the Father to the Son and to the Spirit and then back from the Spirit to the Father through the Son in an everlasting pendulum-movement. Therefore, Paul can write: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every blessing of the Spirit in the heavenly places” (Eph 1:3, my trans.; see 1 Pet 1:3). Later in the same letter, he writes that the Father sends the Spirit to join believers to the Son so that they would be filled with “fullness of God,” and return blessing back to the Father: “To him be glory ... in Christ, ... for ever and ever. Amen! (Eph 3:14-21). Paul concludes his letter to the Romans with the same movement of praise and blessing: “Now to Him ... to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen” (Rom 16:25-27).

This doxological pattern is always and everywhere the same throughout Scripture, and it unequivocally demonstrates that this is the way the ontological Trinity *is* throughout all DMT, the “was,” the “is now,” and the “yet to come.” Christ shares *the Father’s* glory (Rev 5:13) and is the Mediator of the revelation of that glory. “From him [the Father] and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen” (Rom 11:34-36). Paul also echoes this cry as his charge to Timothy:

In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, ... I charge ... until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which God will bring about *in his own time*—God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen (1 Tim 6:13-16; italics added, see also Acts 1:7).

This pattern is the foundation for stating that the Son and Spirit share the one glorious Being of the Father, “the only true God” (Jn 17:3). Hence they are legitimately termed God and Lord, (2 Pet 1:1; Tit 3:3; 2 Cor 3:18). They are not eternally begotten or spirated in an atemporal act – a “no-time action” is self-contradictory and non-sensical. They are both always-reflecting throughout DMT the glory of the Father as Son and Radiance, and as executor of the Three as the Beloved, Set-Apart Spirit (Mullins 2016a; see 2013). No necessity exists to explain how this doxological pattern works based on syncretizing the biblical data with the Neoplatonic simplicity doctrine or the Social Arian presupposition. What is needed in our day is renewed international evangelical interpretative communities to begin rethinking the simplistic Tradition and its concomitants such as the SAP.

Conclusion

I maintain that all cultural systems are founded upon worldview presuppositions. Hence, and especially relevant to this article, those systems incorporating ancient and modern forms of the Social Arian presupposition (SAP) all possess a basic guiding axiom. That anti-biblical presupposition skews their idiosyncratic reading and resulting systemizing of Scriptural doctrines, and it does not provide a true guide to truth. However, all people-groups must be disciplined by continuously reforming their own “earthly, soulish, demonic” worldview presuppositions through careful Spirit-taught reading of Scripture, guided by true presuppositions, and engaged in a truly international hermeneutical community. Only such discipleship will protect against partisan “bitter jealousy” and “selfish ambition” for one’s own sectarian view, as the context implies in James’ third chapter (Jas 3:14-15). *Semper reformanda* is as relevant today as it was in the European Reformation. “To the teaching and to the testimony! If they will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn [in them]” (Is 8:20).

Furthermore, Scripture provides the only truthful description of the Father-Son relationship as it is found in the Trinitarian economy, with clear indications that this economic relationship stretches back into the everlasting past. We possess no other legitimate data from which we can deduce backwards, so as to discover *some revealed aspects* of the real personal diversity of role and function in the Father’s shared Tri-Une Being. Making such discoveries will not always be easy. For example, Ryan T. Mullins, a brilliant U.S.-American philosophical theologian at St. Andrews University in Scotland, magnificently dissects and refutes core aspects of what I have called the Social Arian heresy and its Neoplatonic presuppositional errors. Yet, surprisingly enough even he implicitly accepts its core viral presupposition. Mullins receives without analysis or question the potentiality that the three equal Persons could be re-ordered and re-imagined in other possible creations (see Mullins 2016b, 2013).

Tested and Found Deficient

Therefore, the Social Arian dogma has been tested and found both defective and syncretistic because it does not agree with the perspicuous, sole authority of Scripture. Equality and diversity are not contradictory. The apophatically derived doctrine of the simplest Tradition is actually useless for the long-term personal and social transformation that is implicit in the Great Commission’s mandate to disciple all the ethno-peoples of earth. The biblically defined Trinity *is*, then, our social program. Scripture itself mandates that we build upon a foundation of revealed truth alone (e.g., Pss 12:6, 119:160; Is 8:19-20; Jn 10:35, 17:17; 2 Tim 3:16-17) and that *every culture inevitably becomes like the divinity(ies) it worships*.

Consequently, even the presuppositions with which to read Scripture correctly must be derived from Scripture alone as taught by the Spirit. Only then can each culture discover and honor the one true God, his nature, and the nature of his creation that reveals his glory (Ps 19:1-3; Rom 1:18-21). Consequently, Jesus commands us to reject any doctrine that is built on “the commandments of men” (Mt 15:9; see 15:1-9; Isaiah 29:17). Paul states that any philosophical presupposition not built upon the true revelation of who and what our Lord Christ himself is is in fact empty and deceptive (Col 2:2, 3, 6, 8). All such philosophy “depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ” (Col 2:8 NIV). Syncretizing apophatic-Neoplatonic methods and results with Scriptural insight leads in the long-run to demon-taught apostasy, as has occurred throughout church history (1 Tim 4:1-4; 1 Jn 4:1-7).

The Bottom Line

Here is the bottom line: If we are to maintain the genuinely Spirit-taught insights found in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan symbolic order, yet also must delete the Neoplatonic substrate in order to be consistently biblical, *so be it*. The Social Arian and Egalitarian Trinitarian doctrines are founded upon that Neoplatonic substrate and thus must be wholly pulled out by the roots no matter how loud the simplest Tradition resists it. Only new international hermeneutical communities can help us reformulate the classic symbols. After all, synods, councils, popes, bishops, general assemblies, pastors – indeed all true believers – have often failed. So, it does not matter how many church fathers may agree with the simplist, neoplatonized Tradition; that is not be the issue and must not be the major discussion point.

In other words, the Greco-Latin Tradition with its Egalitarian Trinity and Social Arian presuppositions is just as syncretistic as any other Majority World dogmatic tradition. Consequently, to impose that Tradition upon the multitudes of people-groups of the earth is imperialistic, a return to the Constantinian temptation, and must be boldly rejected. The Greco-Latin Tradition of Trinitarian relationships, no matter how ancient and “sacred,” must never be revered as unchangeable and virtually on-par with Scripture. Dutch Theologian Gisbert van den Brink provides an excellent summary of the issues at stake. I highly recommend this article and especially its useful, concise refutations of those who want to escape onto a Platonic theological pillar that allows no relevant interaction for culture transformation:

The doctrine of the Trinity is not intended as an obscure piece of theological mathematics, embarrassing most people because of its sheer incomprehensibility and only offering some fun to philosophical nerds who want to break its one-three code. Rather, as a doctrine of the church it is intended to guide and inform Christian ways of viewing, experiencing and acting in relation to God, ourselves and the world. In that sense, it is a practical doctrine, entirely relevant to the Christian life, rather than a speculative one (Van den Brink 2014, 336).

Therefore supporters of the dictum, “The Trinity Is *Not* Our Social Program,” are often those who have made the Trinity irrelevant for all of life. Often, they also almost always have fallen into the trap of the Social Arian temptation and desperately need grace to turn to the truth by rejecting “mortifying spin” and to escape from the trap of the wicked one (2 Tim 2:24-26). *Scripture unequivocally teaches Complementarian Trinitarianism* (CT), which rejects Social Arianism. CT is not a heresy as leading Egalitarian Trinitarian theologian Kevin Giles and others claim: “What you are teaching in the light of the creeds and confessions,” the Tradition, “is heresy” (Giles 2017, 1).

Yet, on the other hand, Scripture *also* rejects true – not imagined – colonial oppression, gender subjugation, and ethnocentric cultural abuse. In fact it rejects, to coin a term, any human -archy (e.g., matriarchy, patriarchy, oligarchy, monarchy). There is only one -archy to which we must bow the knee, namely the theo-archy of our Triune God. Our Father sets firm, loving and just boundaries in the Decalogue, which summarizes the morality of his tôranic wisdom flowing out of his character. He then gives grace “in Christ,” his Son, to live with liberating freedom by their mutual Spirit within those boundaries in every sphere of life (Gal 5:1-18). For the social and cultural order, I call this biblical doctrine “Libertarian Complementarianism” in contrast both to the hierarchical, faux-complementarianism of ecclesial bullies, family despots, and

dictatorial civil governors and in contrast to the social revolutionary frenzy of Egalitarians holding consistently to the Social Arian heresy. *No social neutrality exists; every culture becomes like the god it serves.*

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