
The Son is not a slave to the Father

The advocacy of Christ

Gregory explains that the passage “Ever living to appeal (make petition) for us” (Heb 7:25) does not indicate that Christ is constantly making slavish petition for us, but rather refers to his mediating and advocating which he achieves by virtue of his incarnate nature.

Yes indeed - what deep significance and humanity it expresses! “Appealing” does not imply here, as it does in popular parlance, a desire for legal satisfaction - there is something humiliating in the idea. No, it means representing us in his role of mediator, in the way that the Spirit too is spoken of as “appealing” on our behalf. “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man, Jesus Christ.”¹

Even at this moment he is, as man, making representation for my salvation, until he makes me divine by the power of his incarnate manhood. “As man” I say, because he still has with him the body he assumed, though he is no longer “regarded as flesh”² - meaning the bodily experiences, which, sin aside, are ours and his.

This is the “Advocate”³ we have in Jesus - not a slave who falls prostrate before the Father on our behalf. Get rid of what is really a slavish suspicion, unworthy of the Spirit. It is not in God to make that demand nor in the Son to submit to it; the thought is unjust to God. No, it is by what he suffered as man that he persuades us, as Word and Encourager, to endure. That, for me, is the meaning of his “advocacy.”⁴

“The Son can do nothing of himself but only what he sees the Father doing” (Jn 5:19)

In what sense does he see the Father doing something and does it himself? Is it the way people draw the shapes of letters, keeping their eyes on the copy-book and guided by it because otherwise they cannot get to the real thing? How could Wisdom possibly need a teacher or be incapable of doing something without instruction? ... He cleanses lepers, releases men from demons and diseases, he restores dead men to life, walks on the sea, does all the other things he did - how or when did the Father anticipate these actions of the Son?

Clearly the Father indicates the outline, whilst the Word makes a finished product, of the same realities. He acts not like an ignorant slave but with a master’s knowledge - to put it more appropriately, like the Father. This is how I take the statement that the Son does whatever is effected by the Father, in the same way. It is not a question of similarity between their creatures, but of having equal authority over their creation.⁵

¹ 1 Tim 2:5

² 2 Cor 5:16

³ 1 Jn 2:1

⁴ Or. 30.14 (*On God and Christ*, p.105)

⁵ Or. 30.11 (*On God and Christ*, pp.101-2)