

It seems clear that Maurice's idea of the trinity depends on a nonanalogical use of terms such as "exercising authority" (on the part of the Father) and "rendering obedience" (on the part of the Son). The Father eternally exercises authority and the Son eternally renders obedience, the first being distinguished from capricious despotism and the second from blind servility because both occur in love—the mutual love of the Father for the Son and of the Son for the Father in the unity of the Spirit.

But the subordinationism necessarily implied by this use of terms cannot be overcome except by using the terms analogically—the "obedience" rendered by the Son lying in the Son's perfectly imaging the Father, or, more abstractly, in the Son's being or representing the meaning of the Father for us. In other words, to say that the Son eternally renders obedience to the Father is simply a symbolic way of saying that the meaning of the Father for us eternally is the meaning represented by the Son.

The crucial point, however, is that the real archetype of "self-sacrificing love" is provided, not only or primarily by God's love for Godself, i.e., the Father for the Son and the Son for the Father through the Spirit, but by God's love for the world

25 September 1998