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Pannenberg W. and Grudem W.: Systematic Theology Analytical Comparison

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General Overview

Systematic theology consists of a vast realm of analytical references, topics, and principles regarding the depths of the Bible. It helps everyone interested in expanding their knowledge of faith in the Christian Bible understand a wide range of the sacred text's meanings.⁴⁹ In this particular section, two great systematic theologians have contributed a great deal to studying Scripture and maintained their prime methodology formulas stuck on their point. Wayne Grudem and Wolfhart Pannenberg represent two different approaches and, therefore, different systematic theology schools.

When you're starting up studying Pannenberg and Grudem, you have this slightest feeling that you know about, in a general point of view, their next concept or content, and that happens because they both make sufficient and clarified statements about the examined theme. However, they keep several parameters in mind while expanding their thought, introducing a new aspect and a differentiated analysis that, ultimately, is a hunch of giving up any guessing.

Suppose someone dares to characterise each one according to their contribution. In that case, he will probably say Grudem approaches the Biblical aspects of Theology dogmatically, structuring or building a tighter Protestant or Evangelical formula of Biblical Conception.⁵⁰ And on the other hand, Pannenberg depicts a more epistemological group of issues.⁵¹ Connecting them with the Biblical conception view of him in a more realistic way, without which the modern understanding and consolidation of the Bible are falling apart. Both of them are serving Christ's Church, and that is a fact. Despite their exquisite methodology norms, they are regarded as systematic theology scholars

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⁴⁹ John M. Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (P & R Publishing, 2013), p. 9

⁵⁰ Kevin Giles, "The Evangelical Theological Society and the doctrine of the Trinity," *EQ* 80, no. 4 (2008): p. 325

⁵¹ Daren R. Erisman, "Pannenberg and the Unity of God: God's Infinite Nature in Eternity and in Time," Bitly | Custom URL Shortener, Link Management & Branded Links, accessed September 15, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3hyQVdl>.

of great magnitude, simultaneously allowing further theology cultivation and criticism beyond their frames.

Methodology Approach

Since criticism and theological variation are considered useful and necessary in the Systematic theology context, in the present approach, the related analysis would be unfolded in two main steps: a. an autonomous presentation of their systematic theology thought is exposed based on certain premises of their systematic references, and b. oversight comparison tables follow next according to the foretold premises.

The Theological base of the analytical approach shall focus on ecclesiology and Christology, history conception, Biblical exegesis, their philosophy and spirituality, contemporary application of their systematic expositions and academic style as such.

Biblical exegesis⁵² It includes all the methodology approaches and primary principles that support the structure of the Theologian's Bible conception. The philosophy field includes “mannerisms” taken from philosophers or thinkers over time that have influenced their work and conception in a particular grade.⁵³ History schema reference allows the exposition of the history magnitude approach. Contemporary applications refer to a current implication of their theological principalities in a logical and soft social manner, and spirituality is being diverted into two main sections: Christology.⁵⁴ This concludes the analytical process of Christ’s personality approach concerning His humanity, Deity, and ecclesiology.⁵⁵ Which appoints the church nature thematic in the human history process.

The presented methodology's final output will be a systematic comparison steered toward the previous theological establishment.

⁵² John H. Hayes and Carl R. Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), p. 179

⁵³ “...the goal of philosophy is the analysis of the structure of thought, and that the study of thought is to be sharply distinguished from the study of the psychological process of thinking...” in Timothy Williamson, *The Philosophy of Philosophy* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2008), p. 13

⁵⁴ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Christology: A Global Introduction* (Ada: Baker Academic, 2003), p. 219

⁵⁵ Neil Ormerod, "The Structure of a Systematic Ecclesiology," *Theological Studies* 63, no. 1 (2002): p. 9

Wolfhart Pannenberg Contribution in systematic theology context

Theology is the study and research of God. It may sound like a problematic aim for someone, and it is a demanding academic endeavour or even a conception to be realised. However, God is always at the centre of systematic theologians' contemplative quest. Therefore, a seminal issue emerging is how God is understood in the context of Christian dogmatics and creeds.⁵⁶ In this case, after meeting Karl Barth and reading his conceptual Christology, Pannenberg overcame him in the sense of a diversified contribution to the analysis of the dogma. He was up to structure, not an alien Christology.⁵⁷ But another context of God and Bible comprehension, and therefore, his systematic theology took a different route. His spirituality was vigorously formed, giving an extended place to *Christology and Ecclesiology*.

How was Pannenberg's Christology formatted? The persona and nature of Christ comprise an essential issue of Pannenberg's theological schema for scrutinising and detailed accounting. Jesus came to earth and condescended to take over humanity's sinful carriage by taking human form.⁵⁸ This particular form is not just an external description or a characteristic event He adopted, *wholistic bondage*, which withheld, without any conversion or mutation, the unbreakable relation between His deity and Humanity. Pannenberg accepts those two natures of Christ but not in a dogmatic manner. He searches further, willing to explain the divine nature of Christ (?) His interest confirms his related wariness. He does not feel so convinced about the deity of Christ as an attachable or processable area of faith, but he needs to rationalise that event more than ever. In this process, he accepts *a total openness* of Christ not only as a human but, moreover, as the Second Person of the Holy Trinity.⁵⁹ An openness leading His will towards the will of His Father. In that case, openness is considered a relation between the two persons of the Trinity at that stage.⁶⁰ Christ wants what His Father wants; he hates what His Father hates and loves what His Father loves. This identification of will between the two Persons of the Trinity leads Pannenberg to accept

⁵⁶ "...That is, whereas Thomas Aquinas was fully aware that any given concept of God was necessarily analogical, he apparently did not realize that his entire scheme for the God-world relationship as expressed in the *Summa theologiae* was analogical; it represented just one human attempt to comprehend the God-world relationship..." in Joseph A. Bracken, "Images of God within Systematic Theology," *Theological Studies* 63, no. 2 (2002): p. 363

⁵⁷ Erisman, "Pannenberg and the utility of God.", p. 1

⁵⁸ *ibid*

⁵⁹ Moreover, as a Person of the Holy Trinity, He is quite connected with the soteriology as the fulfillment of all in Christoph Schwöbel, "Wolfhart Pannenberg," in *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology Since 1918*, ed. David F. Ford (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2013), p. 140

⁶⁰ *ibid*, p. 132

it as an inward openness of the Son to His Father and the Father's acceptance of the Son's openness.⁶¹ It goes far more profound since he accepts that it is a *process of acceptance* due to mutual love.⁶² This love is a one-of-a-kind cause that cannot be rationalised as the love of Humans. But before explaining this point, it is essential to mention that Pannenberg's openness does not function as an abrogate mechanism of the divinity of Christ. Openness and deity always come together, so Christ's divine nature is not swept away at all.⁶³

However, at this point, it is regarded as essential to scrutinise the function of that openness and to exemplify it even better. Christ's deity remains intact with His Humanity.⁶⁴ But his humanity disposes all the parameters of the human consciousness, and through it, Jesus of Nazareth understands deeply what His mission in the world is. He is not destined to play the part of a single human being alone but recognises instantly His identification with the Second Person of the Trinity through the acceptance of the mission that had to be carried out for the redemption of the world.⁶⁵ So, He had absolute consciousness about Who He was and for What reason he had descended from Heaven. In this point of reference, openness is not only regarded as an intimate relation of both natures, but it is unacknowledged by Pannenberg as the role of *His human consciousness*, which points out an alignment with the eternal Father. Someone could claim for a change that this kind of openness may drive Jesus to a fatal error or even blasphemy, as Judeans believed in the first place.⁶⁶ However, the foretold consideration is not conceived from a human perspective but from a Godly response.⁶⁷ The identification (of Jesus as the Christ) via openness⁶⁸ It is not profound or irrational but is an inward string that unifies Jesus with the Deity of His and Him with the Father. It is a genuine openness and not an internalising of a self-deifying idea. Before the case is directed to the issue regarding *eternity*, which happens to be a significant key for Pannenberg's consideration as a whole, the nature of the relation between the Father and the Son must be clarified.

⁶¹ *ibid*

⁶² Richard Rice, "Wolfhart Pannenberg's crowning achievement: A Review of his systematic Theology," *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, 37, no. 1 (Spring 1998): p. 60

⁶³ *ibid*

⁶⁴ Christiaan Mostert, *God, and the Future: Wolfhart Pannenberg's Eschatological Doctrine of God* (London: A&C Black, 2002)

⁶⁵ John W. de Gruchy "Theology and the Visual Arts," in *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology Since 1918*, ed. David F. Ford (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2013), p. 708

⁶⁶ (Matt 26:57-65, NRSV)

⁶⁷ (Matt 26:64, NRSV) consider it as another *openness idiom*.

⁶⁸ *ibid*

Thomas Aquinas's Theology has strongly influenced Pannenberg and consequently manifests similar effects in his analysis of the Holy Trinity and the relation of the Son with the other two Persons⁶⁹. It must be realised that his Christology is fully connected with Thomas Aquinas's *Trinitarian Theology*⁷⁰. There are three distinguished Persons in the deity: Father and Son and Holy Spirit⁷¹. Father is the absolute God, the Son is the absolute God, and the Holy Spirit is the absolute God, too⁷². There is, of course, a monarchy in the deity derived from the holy substance of that deity itself⁷³. In the context of such a concept, it must be mentioned that an analogy emerges based on the human way of living. Human beings are different, of course, and so are the Persons of the Holy Trinity; however, they are equal, and this *equality* is being established on their common deity substance. It is three Persons but one God⁷⁴. This equality is an essential point to emerge and exemplifies Trinitarian's substance dimension, but it doesn't solve the problem of the relationship of the Trinity as perhaps expected. Common substance (essence) is a part of the relationship of the members of the Trinity's dimension, but it doesn't function as the interpretation key of that relationship itself. In that case, the third Person's role in the Trinity is emphasised theologically. The Holy Spirit is a distinguished and unique Person in the Trinitarian deity, not something abstract or unidentified. Moreover, it has a specific role in the relationship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. That role is recapitalised as the maintenance and enforcement of the Trinitarian bonds. This maintenance and enforcement are applicable only through the essence of the deity with which the Holy Spirit is communing. That essence, rendered and externalised, according to human conception, as divine energy, is considered *God's Love*. The latter is regarded as an ultimate function's element, which is implicated only via the Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity, is activating God's Love and, inevitably, what God finally is, an *Eternal Love* in His entirety. So, the three persons of the Trinity communicate with each other and unite through the conjunctive presence and omnipotence of the Holy Spirit, which communicates Love eternally. Father loves the Son, and Son loves the Holy Spirit and the way around. All Mighty God is *Love* in eternity and therefore

⁶⁹ Schwöbel, "Wolfhart Pannenberg," p. 133, see also: "Especially the concept of spirit-taken in the sense of mind-served that purpose from Anselm to Thomas Aquinas and others, and all the way down to Hegel and even to Karl Barth's doctrine on the Trinity" in Wolfhart Pannenberg, "The Christian Vision of God: The New Discussion on the Trinitarian Doctrine," *The Asbury Theological Journal* 46, no. 2 (Fall 1991): p. 31

⁷⁰ Dominic Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 239

⁷¹ Jae Yang, "Pannenberg's Trinitarian Theology and the Use of Theological Sources," *The Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics* 6 (2020):

⁷² Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* (London: A&C Black, 2004)

⁷³ Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology*, p. 65

⁷⁴ *ibid*

prompts humans to act the same way with each other: “*But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you...*”⁷⁵ and “*I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.*”⁷⁶. So, when love is implicated, according to John, God activates Himself immediately into the hearts of men who know God is in them⁷⁷.

On the other hand, eternity and history are sensitive themes according to Pannenberg’s systematic view. The question “What is history?” dominates his intellectualism and introduces a diversified prospect compared to the established one by historians. The element of time and the chronicle incidents which compose the historical timeline are overcome by the essential centre used, which very explicitly is *Christ*. According to Pannenberg, history has been made by the *Word of God* because time, as a seminal component of history, was created and didn’t exist before its creation. Therefore, time as creation has no absolute character or inward divinity; thus, it is not eternal⁷⁸.

According to Pannenberg, “eternity” does not have a temporal side of the view as humans are used to counting time in their everyday living using technical means, for example, watches, selling phones, etc. Still, it lies upon the basis of a divine dimension, which is different and spiritually ascended than men’s nature.⁷⁹ It happens to be. History begins as time has, but it also has an end, which shall occur at the *Consummation of the World*. Afterwards, history has no place in that frame of concern because mankind’s cadre shall be entered into the dimension of eternity, which cannot be counted or conceived by human’s physical or intellectual abilities. Simultaneously, the Consummation of the World shall be the *Culmination of History*, and even more so, the source of the *Sanctification of All* is Christ – the Word of God. The historical incidents lead little by little to the previous World Culmination, despite the perplexity and controversies throughout the timeline. The wisdom of God flows all the mundane process to the realisation of his perpetual plan, as the human

⁷⁵ (Luke 6:27, NRSV)

⁷⁶ (John 17:26, NRSV)

⁷⁷ Artūras Lukaševičius, “Alexander Men’s view of human search for God in the world religions in the light of the Catholic magisterial teaching,” *Spoleczeństwo i rodzina*, 54, no. 1 (2018): pp. 8,14

⁷⁸ Carlos Blanco, “God, the Future, and the Fundamentum of History in Wolfhart Pannenberg,” *The Heythrop Journal* 54, no. 2 (2012): p. 302

⁷⁹ “The opposition between time and eternity is overcome by the eschaton, by the ultimate future, which is not to be replaced by a further future. Rather, it is a self-present, eternal, and free future” in Blanco, “God, the Future”, p. 303

conception, our redemption in the *eschaton regard it*.⁸⁰ On the contrary, if humankind was stuck in a materialistic view of human things, as civilisation is, perhaps then it could not conceive the plan besides the veil and might continue to meditate on a materialistic notion of time and current historical definitions given. Of course, the History discipline is essential, and the Theology major uses history as a humanity tool for a deeper understanding of ecclesiastical events. Still, Pannenberg cannot reach a complete consensus with historians if they do not accept ad hoc the Word of God as the centre of history. The latter comprises his *dogmatical formality*.

Based on the previous systematic mode, Pannenberg is very interested in the *Church's Essence*. The very much principle of the term “church” is the Greek “ἐκκλησία” (ecclesia). In a more Old Testament fashion, the term derives from קָוָה qavah (kaw-vaw')⁸¹ or קָהָל (qāhal)⁸², which is related closely to the “συναθροίζεσθαι”, which is the assembly⁸³. However his astuteness proceeds a lot more than grammatical rooting research and establishes a notion of “church” overview or a *church theory*. His church theory considers the “church” as the Body of Christ, and that Body includes many differentiated members with many peculiar functions and contributions- charismata⁸⁴. Paul's consideration of the church as the Body of Christ⁸⁵ is found in the New Testament⁸⁵.

Pannenberg claims that this Body consists not of a metaphor or a simplification of the notion but rather a perspective pointing out the future. The body of Christ pointing to the church concludes a future condition of humanity⁸⁶. This future condition does not mean a new way of living but a new way of *being*. Pannenberg knows *existentialism* and its terminology but doesn't share the same premise. To exist means “to be” in the frame of a living mechanism, utmost dictated by reality, but “to be” is different than “being”, which illustrates the essence structure of the individual; the essence is the prompted issue leading on the perspective of how the being is going to be.

⁸⁰ Stanley Grenz, "Wolfhart Pannenberg: Reason, Hope and Transcendence," *The Asbury Theological Journal* 46, no. 2 (Fall 1991): p. 73

⁸¹ James Strong, s.v. "קָוָה," (H6960) in *Strong's Hebrew Dictionary of the Bible (Strong's Dictionary)* (2012)

⁸² Strong, "קָהָל" (H6950)

⁸³ (Exod 35:1, NRSV)

⁸⁴ The following is quite interesting: “Here, properly, is consideration of the Church under her hierarchical aspect, with the understanding that “hierarchy” will not be understood as a simple armature, juxtaposed to the Body, but as its vital organization, which assures each member not only his place but his function within the whole. Under this aspect, the Church is evidently at the maximum of her present identification with Christ: as the sacrament of Christ, in which and through which Christ himself is revealed and communicated in those whom he has sent.” in Louis Bouyer, *The Church of God: Body of Christ and Temple of the Spirit*, trans. Charles U. Quinn (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011), p. 167

⁸⁵ *ibid*

⁸⁶ Blanco, *ibid*

So, it is vital to mention that “being” is very well linked with the essence of the church because, in the context of the *Second Coming of Christ* establishing the Consummation of the World, the latter shall change, not in a catastrophic or apocalyptic way but in a *revelational one*⁸⁷. All things shall change so that man will change inside and out. His essence shall communicate with the grace of God (of the whole Trinity) and, therefore, shall be purified and sanctified simultaneously. This purification and sanctification of man provide a future premise⁸⁸, a window in faith, during which the church shall live *a new baptism condition* on the edge of time. However, it is always an issue if the “church” includes humanity or the chosen remnant in faith. The basic Protestant principle has found a resolution to that problematic area by cultivating the evil overcoming theology according to which evil-hearted people shall neglect the Kingdom of God and be neglected according to their will. The Kingdom of God shall perish all fear and hesitation of the excellent faith people so they are willing to live with Christ's remnant and have a chance to do so in grace⁸⁹. As a respectful theologian of the future, Pannenberg faithfully serves this protestant overview. However, his unrest and academic anxiety reveal a further way to conceive Paul's Body as the church⁹⁰ into the prospect of the *Culmination of the Future*. And by that alone, the central presupposition remains the same: the person of Christ. In the end, Pannenberg remains not a theologian of the history of the church but rather a theologian of the philosophy of the church.

Speaking of philosophy, a seminal question is emerging: What does Pannenberg's philosophical system include? This is a crucial question to be answered because philosophical theory generally covers almost all systems of conceived ideas through history and their way of being implicated in the world.⁹¹ It must be emphasised that Pannenberg is perfectly aware of the philosophical systems of his own time and classical philosophy, but he is not a philosopher by his own choice.⁹² He is deeply theologian and cares a great deal about how theology can overcome its theory bricks and penetrate it as a whole so that the Bible shall be understood under a new prism, despite the

⁸⁷ Chulho Youn, "Wolfhart Pannenberg's Eschatological Theology: In Memoriam," De Gruyter, last modified August 1, 2015, <https://www.degruyter.com/view/journals/nzst/57/3/article-p398.xml>.

⁸⁸ *ibid*

⁸⁹ See also: Matthias Gockel, "'Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good'—an orientational approach to suffering and evil," *Modern Theology* 25, no. 1 (2009): p. 97

⁹⁰ (Rom 12:5, NRSV)

⁹¹ Thomas Davidson and James Knight Errant, "Philosophy as Teaching," in *Philosophy Americana: Making Philosophy at Home in American Culture*, ed. Douglas R. Anderson (New York City: Fordham University Press, 2018), pp. 157-8

⁹² Aleksandar S. Santrac, "Three I know not what: The influence of Greek philosophy on the doctrine of Trinity," *In die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi* 47, no. 1 (2013): p. 4

respectful creed system flowing all the Bible preaching of the clerisy. This is a new finding in the field. Pannenberg starts by working on Thomas Aquinas's Trinitarian Theology.⁹³ He goes deeply into the Roman Catholic educational realm about the quest for the *Essence of God*. He unfolds Thomas Aquinas's thesis about the Grace of God and the *role of the Holy Spirit*. He reproduces the scholastic theology similarly but under a new structure by himself.⁹⁴ He is a Protestant who uses scholastic theology in a new way, and for that, he defies all labels granted.

Moreover, it illustrates the *existentialism philosophy*⁹⁵ in the prospect of essence and relegates the existence notion to a background realm. He is also concerned about the time theory, and it is astonishing to mention that he closely observes Einstein's theory on time *General and Specific relativity*. Time in humankind's conception is linear, but it is not of the same magnitude because it is affected by the material's position and speed. When two materials have diversified speeds (one goes fast and the other goes slower), they experience time differently since the first one experiences less time. The second takes more time to reach the destination targeted. Pannenberg focuses on that but gives a humanistic rather than a scientific perspective. He does not defy Einstein's conception but follows another path, showing time as a material magnitude that seems to be inside the world's spectrum. Regardless of its elastic or inelastic nature, it follows the rules of nature because man is the protagonist in the world foreground through this timeline. Nevertheless, according to Pannenberg, there is a reality beyond the known one in which time doesn't even count because it enters another system of rules, the architecture of which is established on *eternity's ground*⁹⁶. So, human conception must focus on the destiny of time rather than on how time works or the nature of time⁹⁷.

Finally, Pannenberg deals with the thematic of Grace. He does n't feel so much enthusiasm with the usual retro cliché theological language such as "living in Grace" or "The grace of God shall come upon you" or even "you must feel the Grace of God..." etc. The point is what is *Grace* within? That is the question shall be asked. The essence of grace consists a crucial point in Pannenberg's theological system and therefore a lot of systematic efforts are made for coping the problem to its

⁹³ Gilles Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of St Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 30

⁹⁴ Meaning his Trinitarian Prospect in Emery as above.

⁹⁵ David Misselbrook, "An A–Z of medical philosophy: X is for Existentialism: Kierkegaard, Heidegger and Sartre," *British Journal of General Practice* 64, no. 629 (2014): p. 642

⁹⁶ Johann A. Meylahn, "Time: Exploring conceptions" in, *An interdisciplinary symposium* (Pretoria: Theological Studies, 2015), p. 4

⁹⁷ *ibid*

root, using the science findings to the best of the Theology benefit. Grace of God is something supernatural or metaphysical as such, since it lays extremely beyond the human mind, but at the same time embodies idioms of the divinity of God, which are giving people *redemption*. This is extraordinary to think about! But giving the fact that Grace comes from God and is also something which cannot be comprehended, therefore might be a form of *unknown energy field force*⁹⁸ which comprises a new dimensional situation. For Pannenberg Theology of Grace is a Dimensional Theology consenting in large quality with *the quantum theory*⁹⁹. This is the reason that Pannenberg was more or less categorized as a *scientific theologian*.

It is also useful to come across with Panneberg's style and didactic quality. He is, with no doubt, a great academic teacher. He feels the need of teaching, but even more he feels the need to contribute to the world. This is the main reason Pannenberg dug fearlessly through the Bible's fertile ground searching for truth to be implicated in a real time. So, his Systematic Theology is rich enough, flows with great accuracy, combines theological and scientific terminology, depicts new areas to be searched and inspires a new era in theology research of not fearing peer criticism. His writing is extremely highly leveled and is been unfolded with an enormous erudite temper, with no specification or understanding lacking. He aims a. to unify theology with the other sciences, beginning a dialogue between them in the context of achieving mutual collaboration and understanding b. to minimize the gaps between them c. to give lay people modern tools to understand the Bible message and c. to structure a new conception of the world and humanity giving an invincible prospect to its present mortality. Those three points capitalize in brief the contemporary application of Pannenberg's Theological system in regard with his whole academic contribution.

Wayne's Grudem Contribution in systematic theology context

What really is the need of a systematic theology volume(s) and what exactly does it serve? This question emerges a profoundly serious topic of debate and of course there might be a lot of stances could legitimize any possible response. Systematic Theology work is essential for the right and accurate wording of the dogma or includes an extreme analysis of the Bible main ideas or consist an accurate compendium of combination and rapprochement of Biblical Theology and

⁹⁸ Timothy Harvie, "God as a Field of Force: Personhood and Science in Wolfhart Pannenberg's Pneumatology," *The Heythrop Journal* 52, no. 2 (2011), pp. 250-59

⁹⁹ *ibid*

Science relations. Every possible assessment could be feasible and good worthy, there is only a serious lack though in this process concerning the framing and exposition of the teachings and their analysis of the *whole Bible*. If someone pays a little attention could surely imagine how great is such a task and what enormous impediments might arise during such a realization.

Despite the forth mentioned pessimistic mood of such an endeavor, a systematic theologian, graduate of Cambridge and Harvard, current Professor of Systematic Theology in Phoenix Seminary till now¹⁰⁰ and distinguished Systematic Theology Author, Wayne Grudem is very affiliated and enamored with the task. As a systematic theologian prompts the exposition and the deep analysis of the Biblical creed in its entirety and that is the main reason, he went forward to write his systematic theology volumes published by Zondervan¹⁰¹. A productive work coming to enrich the theological researching court.

*Biblical exegesis*¹⁰² comes forth and illustrates one of the greatest theological interests of Grudem· the former is being consisted by the main principle Grudem uses in order to approach in faith Bible correctly. In this point, he introduces a hermeneutical schema, which builds pro rata his theoretic establishment, which is *Eternal Functional Subordination (EFS)*¹⁰³. This term is been used to describe the relation of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in the context of their Trinitarian relations as far as Trinitarian relationships are deeply determinant for the effective Old and New Testament approach¹⁰⁴. What really is EFS? it concerns the stance of the Three Persons in the Trinity. Stance, which in this particular schema defines actually the role of each person in the Trinity. Father is higher posed than the Son and Holy Spirit is lower posed than the Son¹⁰⁵. Grudem in this particular section induces a *subordinationism*, which by first glance, determines the place of each member in the deity. It seems like it, but it doesn't actually work like this in praxis. Grudem is well aware of the heresy of subordination and by no means is willing to fall into its void¹⁰⁶. On the

¹⁰⁰ Wayne Grudem - Professor of Theology and Biblical Studies, accessed September 19, 2020, <https://www.waynegrudem.com>.

¹⁰¹ *ibid*

¹⁰² W. Grudem, *The John Wenham Lecture* (Phoenix: Phoenix Seminary, Phoenix, Arizona, U.S.A., 2019), p. 4

¹⁰³ Iriann M. Hausted, "Eternal Functional Subordination in The Work of Wayne Grudem and its Relationship to Contemporary Adventism," *Andrews University Seminary Student Journal* 3, no. 4 (Fall 2017): p. 11

¹⁰⁴ *ibid*

¹⁰⁵ *ibid*

¹⁰⁶ "ontological equality but economic subordination" in Stephen D. Kovach and Peter R. Schemm, JR., "A Defense of the Doctrine of the Eternal Subordination of the Son" (presentation, ETS presentation in Philadelphia, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forrest, U.S.A., September 1999)

contrary, he explains his theory by saying that Each member incorporates divinity as a whole and is actually *God in essence*¹⁰⁷. On this one it doesn't imply three Gods (tritheism) but one and only God according to the essence. There must be an *analogy*¹⁰⁸ here with the human interconnections. Every human is different from the other, but the sum of the people is characterised by the human essence, which is common ground and interconnects the whole system of human nature. The latter introduces an analogical paradigm so as to be able to implicate a similar mechanism into the deity relations. Subordinationism doesn't occur when the essence of God is at stake; on the other hand, it matters a lot when the academic debate goes around *the role* of each member¹⁰⁹.

God as the Father supervises the whole creation and is the Protagonist all the way in Old Testament· the Son has taken over the task to redeem humanity with His own contribution, His incarnation actually, and in this way *to recapitalise*, using the terminology of Irenaeus of Lyon, the world by His Crucifixion and Resurrection and finally His Ascension. The Holy Spirit is the member who oversees, cares, loves and enlightens the body of Christ – the Church. Those roles are extremely essential; they have some hierarchy concerning priorities regarding the Person in charge. By this logical form, the Father is superior to the Son, the Son is superior to the Holy Spirit, and the latter is inferior to the other two divine Persons. Subordinationism occurs *in function and not in essence*¹¹⁰, because all the three persons are equal concerning the essence. Grudem's EFS theory is a common ground for many liberty theologians and, in general, in the Protestant theological realm, but it has provoked intense debates among those who opposed.¹¹¹ it

In addition, the person of Christ is seminal, not only because of his entire deity but also because of His general accomplishment. His role occurred in the world frame and therefore in the history foreground during it's timeline. His personality was that of *Jesus*. He was born and raised as an Israelite according to the local customs. So, He was a real human in that case, but He was prayerful and pious at the same time. His dignity and integrity, his faith in God (The Father) and his devotion to the wick by performing good deeds were decisive to develop a unique religious intimacy with God (the Father), whom, by the way, acknowledged as His own¹¹². The latter conclusively

¹⁰⁷ *ibid*

¹⁰⁸ Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Michigan: Zondervan Academic, 2009), p. 42

¹⁰⁹ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p. 68

¹¹⁰ Hausted, "Eternal Functional Subordination", *ibid*

¹¹¹ *ibid*

¹¹² (John 10:30, NRSV)

drives a lot of Liberal theologians to focus on his human nature and keep aside his deity in the name of an actual and *realised historicity* of the Person of Jesus, excluding His supernatural nature¹¹³. The piety approach greatly impacted the formation of a theology of Jesus concerning His humanity alone and caused significant controversies in the Protestant academic frame. Grudem observed that situation, and, despite his Harvard study (the university since 1970 grasped a great liberal profile in the theology department),¹¹⁴ rings the bell of alert to all the academic evangelic society. He firmly denotes that evangelical theology must take a step not only formatting a severe effort to advocate Christ's theological background on the stage of a dialogue manner, but academics have to enrich the church with their own written contributions to the Bible Hermeneutics as a whole¹¹⁵.

The next theme in the cadre of Bible analysis is Grudem's *ecclesiology* and, therefore, the essence of the church. As depicted in Pannenberg's reference place, the term "church" has the significant meaning of assembly, but in this account, it has been scholastically penetrated. Ecclesiology is not only a matter of theoretical dogmatic debate, but also a practical and logical issue that must be used in everyday life, and that is the way it must be faced at¹¹⁶. The practical issue is very much affiliated with the Bible, since in almost all the Evangelists, there is always an essential assembly of people either during Jesus' miracles performance or teaching, either during his clashes with the elders of the Jerusalem priesthood. On the other hand, it is remarkable how the Israelites were all united under Moses' leadership and also how they reacted under harsh circumstances, as one, during their disobedience and faithless stand by, when Moses was climbing on the Sinai Mountain¹¹⁷. In all those Biblical cases and in many more as well, the sense of *the gathering* is always there¹¹⁸. And the question has been risen is if this assembly consist a church or not¹¹⁹. According to Grudem the matter of the number or gathering must be distinguished from the essence of the church. A single number of people cannot be a church but remains just an assembly. Church concludes much more than that. The number of people is just the first step of it. So, the

¹¹³ Stephen J. Patterson, *The God of Jesus: The Historical Jesus and the Search for Meaning* (London: A&C Black, 1998), p. 31

¹¹⁴ W. Grudem, "Do we act as if we really believe that "the bible alone, and the bible in its entirety, is the word of God written"?" (Conference session presented at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Illinois, November 17, 1999).

¹¹⁵ *ibid*

¹¹⁶ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 1246-8

¹¹⁷ (Exod 19:20, NRSV)

¹¹⁸ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, *ibid*

¹¹⁹ *ibid*

presuppositions under which a church is formulated are: a. the existence of an assembly of people, b. the existence of a religious scope those people serve, c. the existence and practice of rituals those people perform or attend or both and d. the religious consciousness of being a church those people have to dispose from the very start¹²⁰.

It is very difficult or impracticable for someone to expect that they could be in a position to examine or evaluate the spiritual condition of his/her fellow citizens since spirituality consists of an invisible magnitude which only God is able to recognize. God Knows the spiritual condition of every person and future development by his birth and before that. However, the church remains an assembly of people who may have spiritual presuppositions. The final judgment is only to God. It is enough that every person can proceed to God's temple in good faith, and their attitude could be the instrument for their gradual improvement. Church, in that sense, is the place *of mental and spiritual cleansing and redemption*¹²¹ And every person has to undertake the burden of humility and the reckoning of imperfection to upgrade themselves in Christ and be a true member of the church. Of course, there are several conditions that should be considered for the definition of a true church membership.

As a Systematic Theologian, Grudem prompts a dogmatical overview of the Bible instead regarding other philosophical considerations. This does not mean that it disapproves all alien intellectual processes in the frame of the Bible exegesis or even out of it. But, indeed, he considers the Bible as the unique and true instrument of God's word written.¹²² One of his arguments is that a lot of Theology scholars, professors, or Ph D. holders or even academicians from other academic disciplines have accomplished to write, and make it done, a lot of studies about the Bible or on the Bible. This surely must not be a coincidence, and Grudem is well aware of it. Moreover, he feels disappointed about theology liberalism, which is gaining ground in a large extent in the academic foreground.¹²³ Antiracism, pluralism, sexual identity recognition and acceptance, anti-dogmatism, Bible – phobia or even religious–phobia are in the everyday agenda of the student's affairs for debate. Of course, in that case, simultaneously, there is always the parameter of a well - do practice and good faith intension of those claims, though the fallibility of such attempts should be

¹²⁰ *ibid*

¹²¹ Graig V. Gelder, "The Essence of the Church: A Community Created by the Spirit," *Trinity Journal* 22, no. 1 (2001): p. 36 (besides the functional nature of the Church, the redemptive one is implied).

¹²² Grudem, "Do we act", *ibid*

¹²³ *ibid*

recognized to be corrected immediately. According to Grudem, Harvard University for example is the leader of the *Theology Liberalism*, in fact it starts over from its Divinity department and that is the awkward of the case. So, his philosophical ground is based on the acknowledgement of a Bible centered debate, characterized by a standard but in most cases healthy protestant conservatism (*the Bible authenticity*) and he is very much focused on the attempt in extracting the true message of the Bible using most of the times the method of analogy (*analogia entis*)¹²⁴.

During his effort of studying, teaching, and writing his systematic theology and been focused in truthfulness on the whole Bible essential meaning, he copes with the combination of other theology discipline practices as well as philosophy. Other disciplines such as History of the Church, Introduction in the Religions, Philosophy etc. are also especially useful in Theology research field but also may be indirectly competitive. This one points out to a seminal dogmatical jeopardy, that Bible copes, it is about a kind of *historicity merging danger*, since the center point of the Bible is been removed from its standard place and Jesus Christ finally becomes an ultimate mortal, wise, historical figure for the shake of the quest of the historical truth about his personality and work.

In that case Grudem follows a systematic way of contradicting this tense and contributing serious argumentation for the dogmatical restoration of Jesus persona. He uses Biblical arguments on the row and illustrates a vigorous Biblical method (Biblical citing) which has been stepped aside according to his research intuition¹²⁵. He always opposes through Biblical argumentation and he never quits of it. That is exactly his material organization methodology followed.

Finally, Grudem poses a significant and just question: Is there any practical everyday usage by the studying of the Bible? Lay people, even Old and New Testament Specialists have totally forgotten through their erudition and research obligations and interests that Bible is not only the research center but the center of the world. That means that the *Word of God* is present and powerful, and His word must be decoded accurately, so as to be correctly implicated to our current style of living. There are a lot of topics Bible has taken over through its narrations and besides its historical background the living timeless messages are being unfolding in a secret way. Do not forget the one Christ have said among many:

'You will indeed listen, but never understand,

¹²⁴ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1996), p. 12

¹²⁵ See: for example: Gelder, "The essence of the Church", *ibid*

and you will indeed look, but never perceive.

For this people's heart has grown dull,

and their ears are hard of hearing,

and they have shut their eyes.

so that they might not look with their eyes,

and listen with their ears,

and understand with their heart and turn—

and I would heal them.¹²⁶

So, the duty of a true Biblical student and listener is to perceive and penetrate the shadows and the form and dive into the heart of the Bible, which is the message of it¹²⁷. And many modern topics are available and promising and essential fishing output such as marriage, divorce, obedience to God, the using of faith, adultery, wealth and salvation and many more which are being affiliated with our modern lives. If the message is penetrated and been restored in the current life, then Bible shall be exalted in the hearts of the people. And the last is a duty mostly of Academics according to Grudem¹²⁸.

The practical contemporary usage of the Bible's message also consists a didactic methodology Grudem follows very precisely. He is an academic teacher of nowadays and he surely disposes a great audience. He must be precise and convincing especially to his students, who are practically the next theologian generation holding the power of social formation and church ministry. However, he does not forget his obligation to the social ground, that's why he writes simply, finds Biblical examples, he always argues with the other side fruitfully and the most important he uses the strong and demanding method of analogy¹²⁹ illustrating his vigorous point. This is the way, through which Grudem tries to be in the front line of every debate.

¹²⁶ (Matt 13:14-15, NRSV)

¹²⁷ Stanko Jambrek and Ljubinka Jambrek, "The Role of the Bible in Daily Life," *KAIROS - Evangelical Journal of Theology* 4, no. 2 (October 2010): p. 177

¹²⁸ Grudem, "Do we act", *ibid*

¹²⁹ Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, *ibid*

Pannenberg W. and Grudem W. Comparison points

Unambiguously, there are significant points of diversities between the two theologians that could be highlighted. Of course, there are common grounds as well that could be handily discussed. In the present analysis, it has been considered necessary and methodologically flexible the listing table exposition concerning the differences and the similarities of both Systematic Theologians. The criteria considered seminal have been extracted from the catholic study of their conceptions and are used in a compiling frame, are the following: a. Characterization and Academic identity b. their Philosophy structure c. Methodology followed d. Theory of the church adopted e. Theory of History adopted f. Theory of Time adopted and g. Denominational description. The tables are following below:

DIFFERENCES		
Criteria	Pannenberg	Grudem
Characterization – academic identity	He is the kind of theologian steering on the usage of scientific finds (Scientific Theologian)	He is the kind of theologian steering on the Bible as the Word of God written (dogmatic theologian)
Philosophy	He uses Theory of science and Philosophy posing Christ in the center of his theoretical schema.	He is very well aware of the philosophy evolution, but he poses the written word of God in the center of his logic.
Methodology	He takes a great deal of advantage of scholastic theology of Thomas Aquinas. Moreover, he evolves his logic mode on current scientific structures.	He uses a lot the analogia entis establishment (method of analogy) and the current needs of the people.
Theory of church	He ponders a great deal that church in its entirety reaches its fulfillment towards the future.	He actually bases the essence of the church in accurate function principles through the timeline.
Theory of History	He conceives the history as imperfect, mortal and temporal magnitude, which can be perceptualized when heads towards the future given by Christ.	He conceives history in regard with the Person of Christ arguing that historical phenomenon may be a dismay potential of historized His personality and work all over the Bible.
Theory of Time	Time is a scientific magnitude, but the true concern must be an over time step, an exceeding of time, because God is timeless and eternal. Time is the body, eternity is the soul in a temporal consideration.	Time works alternatively as a mode of history.
Denomination Critique	He is more open to other creeds in finding consensus fields.	He is Evangelical in depth and he is overly sensitive in opposing to

Table 1

SIMILARITIES
They both concern about the Bible
They both concern about the Christ persona
They both care about the future of the church and its prospect
They both care about instrumentalization of the Bible.

Table 2

Giving a prospecting glance on the previous tables, a final conclusion could be made as a re-sume of the whole analytical condition· their work is extremely essential and important in the context of the church, but a danger unfolds its deceitful tentacles, which could be on one hand the danger of Theology to fall into a breach of scientific disrepute and on the other hand to be fenced in a dogmatical territory flirting with theological isolation. In every case, research future and continuous self and honest revaluation shall determine how close can human be with the truth of God.

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