

The “Jesus Only” Doctrine of God Examined: Is Jesus Christ the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

Modalism, otherwise known as Sabellianism or “Jesus Only” Christology, teaches that Jesus Christ is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and that the Trinity is false. Its most prominent modern proponents are found in the movement known as Oneness Pentecostalism or Apostolic Pentecostals. Their doctrine of God, in the words of a prominent advocate, David Bernard, is as follows:

Trinitarianism contradicts and detracts from important biblical teachings. It detracts from the Bible’s emphasis on God’s absolute oneness, and it detracts from Jesus Christ’s full deity. . . . The Bible does not speak of an eternally existing “God the Son;” for the Son refers only to the Incarnation. (2) The phrase “three persons in one God” is inaccurate because there is no distinction of persons in God. . . . (3) The term “three persons” is incorrect because there is no essential threeness about God. The only number relevant to God is one. He has many different roles, titles, manifestations, or attributes, and we cannot limit them to three. (4) Jesus is the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost[.] . . . (5) Jesus is the incarnation of the fulness of God. He is the incarnation of the Father (the Word, the Spirit, Jehovah) not just the incarnation of a person called “God the Son.”

What is the essence of the doctrine of God as taught by the Bible - the doctrine we have labelled Oneness? First, there is one indivisible God with no distinction of persons. Second, Jesus Christ is the fulness of the Godhead incarnate. He is God the Father - the Jehovah of the Old Testament - robed in flesh.¹

However, contrary to Oneness Pentecostalism, Trinitarianism is taught in Scripture. Indeed, the Oneness Pentecostal doctrine of God is idolatry. Oneness Pentecostalism also teaches a false gospel of salvation by works, water baptism, and Spirit baptism, contradicting the Biblical truth that salvation is by faith alone apart from works: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). “[A] man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (Romans 3:28).²

The Trinitarian doctrine of God has been carefully explained above—that explanation will not be repeated here. The outline of the study below is as follows:

- 1.) The Distinctions Between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit
- 2.) The Eternity of the Son
- 3.) Objections to Personal Distinctions by Modalists Answered
 - i.) Since there is only one God, and Jesus Christ is God, Jesus Christ is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
 - ii.) Jesus Christ is God the Father (Isaiah 9:6), for believers are Christ’s children or sons (John 14:18; Revelation 21:7).

¹ Chapter 13, *The Oneness of God*, David Bernard.

² The truth of salvation by faith alone apart from water baptism is extensively defended in the work *Heaven Only for the Baptized? The Gospel of Christ vs. Baptismal Regeneration*, available at <http://sites.google.com/site/faithalonesaves/salvation>. The Biblical doctrine of Spirit baptism—along with resources demonstrating that the sign gifts have ceased and Pentecostalism, whether classical or Oneness, is a false doctrine—are extensively documented in the Pneumatology section at <http://sites.google.com/site/thross7>.

- iii.) To see Jesus Christ is to see the Father, John 14:9, so Jesus is the Father.
 - iv.) Since Christ said, “I and *my* Father are one” (John 10:30), Jesus Christ is the Father.
 - v.) 1 John 3:1-5 teaches that Jesus Christ is the Father.
 - vi.) When believers get to heaven, they will only see one throne, and one God seated on the throne, not three thrones and three gods, as the Trinity teaches. Therefore Jesus Christ must be the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
 - vii.) The Father is the Holy Spirit, because the Father is a Spirit, and He is holy.
 - viii.) Jesus Christ is the Holy Spirit, 2 Corinthians 3:17; Romans 8:9-11.
 - ix.) Since the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit have the same functions, they are the same Person.³
 - x.) Texts that mention the Father and the Son often do not mention the Holy Spirit, so He is not a separate Person.⁴
 - xi.) Since the fulness of the Godhead is in Christ, Colossians 2:9, Jesus Christ is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—if Jesus Christ is only the Son, only part of the Godhead is in Him.
 - xii.) If the Father and Son are distinct Persons, the Jesus Christ had two Fathers—the Father (1 John 1:3) and the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35).
 - xiii.) There is only one Spirit, Ephesians 4:4, but if the Trinity were true, then there would be three Spirits (John 4:24; 2 Corinthians 3:17).
 - xiv.) If the Son is truly God rather than simply being the human part of God, he could not be limited in knowledge (Mark 13:32), be less than the Father (John 14:28), die (Matthew 27:50), or have His kingdom truly end (1 Corinthians 15:24-28).
 - xv.) Since baptism is performed in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19), but baptism is performed in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38), Jesus Christ is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- 4.) Conclusion

1.) The Distinctions Between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit

There are vast numbers of passages which distinguish between Jesus Christ and the Father, and between Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, and many where Jesus Christ is identified as the Son, but no passages where Christ is identified as the Father or as the Holy Spirit.

Many passages distinguish between the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. For example:

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:4)

That ye may with one mind *and* one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 15:6)

But to us *there is but* one God, the Father, of whom *are* all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom *are* all things, and we by him. (1 Corinthians 8:6)

Blessed *be* God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; (2 Corinthians 1:3)

The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not. (2 Corinthians 11:31)

³ For example: Father & Christ: Galatians 1:1 & John 2:19-22; John 15:16 & 14:14; 6:44 & 12:32; Christ and the Spirit, John 2:19-21 & Romans 8:9-11; John 6:40 & Romans 8:9-11; John 14:16 & 2 Corinthians 13:5 & Colossians 1:26; John 14:26 & 1 John 2:1; Romans 8:26 & Hebrews 7:25; Mark 13:11 & Luke 21:15.

⁴ Compare 1 John 1:3; Matthew 11:26; Revelation 21:22-23; 1 Corinthians 1:3 & 2 Corinthians 1:2 & Galatians 1:3 (and all other epistolary salutations).

Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;) (Galatians 1:1)

Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: (Ephesians 1:3)

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: (Ephesians 1:17)

For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, (Ephesians 3:14)

Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; (Ephesians 5:20)

Peace *be* to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 6:23)

And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:11)

We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, (Colossians 1:3)

That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; (Colossians 2:2)

Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; (1 Thessalonians 1:3)

Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you. (1 Thessalonians 3:11)

To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints. (1 Thessalonians 3:13)

Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: (2 Thessalonians 1:1)

Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given *us* everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, (2 Thessalonians 2:16)

Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied. (1 Peter 1:2)

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. (1 John 1:3)

My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: (1 John 2:1)

Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. (1 John 2:22)

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. (2 John 9)

These texts are impossible to explain on the Oneness view. If Jesus Christ is the Father, why does Scripture speak of the Father “of” Christ, of the Father “and” Christ, of fellowship both “with” the Father, and “with his Son Jesus Christ,” of Christ being an “advocate with the Father,” and so on? Nor is it possible to affirm that the “Father” is simply the Divine nature of Jesus, while the “Son” is His human nature, for these texts that distinguish between Father and Son ascribe attributes of Deity to He who is distinguished from the Father. Believers can only be blessed by the Father of Christ through being “in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3); Christ is the Omnipresent Deity who is able to have all believers “in” Him, while also being distinct from the Father. Not the Father only, but Christ as distinct from Him, gives believers “everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort[s] [their] hearts, and stablish[es] [them] in every good word

and work” (2 Thessalonians 2:16-17), but only if Jesus Christ is God can He bestow Divine grace, comfort the hearts of, and inwardly sanctify and establish all believers just as the Father does. Only if the Father and His Son Jesus Christ are both Deity can believers worldwide fellowship with them both (1 John 1:3). Scripture clearly distinguishes the Father from Jesus Christ in the same passages that ascribe Divine qualities to both the Father and the Lord Jesus—it is impossible to affirm that texts such as these speak only of an impersonal human nature that is set in contrast to God.

Texts that distinguish “God” from “the Lord Jesus Christ” are most suitable for a Trinitarian distinction between two Persons in the Godhead. They do not, by contrast, support the Oneness idea that a distinction between Divine and human natures in Jesus Christ is all that is in view, a position allegedly supported by the fact that only the Father is called “God” in such instances. 1 Corinthians 8:6 may serve as an example: “But to us *there is but* one God, the Father, of whom *are* all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom *are* all things, and we by him.” Oneness advocates are very unlikely to affirm that God the Father is not “Lord” because in this verse, and in similar passages, only Christ is called “Lord.” If 1 Corinthians 8:6 proves that only the Father is “God” and “Jesus Christ” must be an impersonal human nature since Christ is not termed “God,” then the fact that the same verse only calls Jesus Christ “Lord” means that the Father is not “Lord,” even apart from the nonsensical idea that all things can be created and sustained by an impersonal human nature.

The epistolary salutations also very clearly distinguish between the Divine Persons of the Father and Jesus Christ:

To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called *to be* saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 1:3)

Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 1:3)

Grace *be* to you and peace from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 1:2)

Grace *be* to you and peace from God the Father, and *from* our Lord Jesus Christ, (Galatians 1:3)

Grace *be* to you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 1:2)

Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ. (Philippians 1:2)

To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Colossians 1:2)

Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians *which is* in God the Father and *in* the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thessalonians 1:1)

Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thessalonians 1:2)

Unto Timothy, *my* own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, *and* peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord. (1 Timothy 1:2)

To Timothy, *my* dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, *and* peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. (2 Timothy 1:2)

To Titus, *mine* own son after the common faith: Grace, mercy, *and* peace, from God the Father

and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour. (Titus 1:4)

Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Philemon 3)

Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (1 Peter 1:3)

Grace be with you, mercy, *and* peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. (2 John 3)

Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, *and* called: (Jude 1)

Over and over again, the human penmen of Scripture wish for the Divine blessings of grace, mercy, and peace to come upon those to whom they write, not from the Father only, but also and equally from the Lord Jesus Christ. Neither the Arian Christ, a mere creature, nor the Oneness “Son,” an impersonal human nature, have the ability to bestow the Divine blessings of grace, mercy, and peace, much less to do so just as God the Father bestows them. Furthermore, the fact that such benedictions are implicit prayers, seeking such blessings from the Father and the Lord Jesus, demonstrate the equal Deity of both Persons. Nor can the church be “in” God the Father and Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 1:1) if Jesus Christ, as distinct from the Father, is not a Divine Person, but is an impersonal human nature that is not omnipresent, but bound by space and time.

To avoid such severe problems, Oneness advocates often note that the word “and” (*kai*) can on occasion be translated “even,” and claim that the texts above are all mistranslated. Therefore, a modalist argues, a text such as 1 Corinthians 1:3 should not be translated “Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, *and* from the Lord Jesus Christ,” but rather “Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, *even* from the Lord Jesus Christ.” However, such an affirmation does not eliminate the problems for modalism. First, in the New Testament *kai* is translated “and” c. 8,173 times, “also” 514 times, and “even” only 108 times. Only in rare syntactical circumstances is *kai* translated “even.” Since “even” is the translation for *kai* only about 1% of the time, while the two most common translations, which make up c. 99% of uses, both obliterate modalism if employed in the benedictions to the epistles, the modalist reply to the Trinitarian case from the epistolary benedictions is very weak.

Second, the benedictions do not stand as isolated passages, but have other indications of distinctions between the Father and the Son in their immediate context. For example, in 1 Corinthians 1:1-3, Paul not only wishes the Corinthians grace and peace “from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ,” but also affirms that he is “an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God” and declares, “Blessed *be* God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Corinthians 1:2 is so far from demanding the translation “even,” rather than “and,” for *kai*, that the immediate context demonstrates the necessity of the meaning “and” and the personal distinction between the Father and the

Lord Jesus.

Third, the translation “even” cannot be employed to eliminate the personal distinctions between the Trinitarian Persons in the benedictions, even apart from considerations of context. Consider 2 John 3: “Grace be with you, mercy, *and* peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.” The Lord Jesus Christ is specifically called “the Son of the Father,” and as Son of the Father He is the Divine source of grace, mercy, and peace with His Father. No rarified rendering of *kai* can avoid the affirmation of personal distinctions between two Divine Persons, the Father and the Son, in this passage.

Indeed, the Father and Christ are not only distinct Persons who give grace, mercy, and peace, but are two distinct witnesses:

There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true. . . . And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. . . . [I]f I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me. It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me. (John 8:16-18, 5:32, 37)

Christ, referring to the Old Testament statute that judicial judgment required at least two witnesses (Numbers 35:30; Deuteronomy 17:6), specifies that the Father is “another” than He, a different witness to Himself. Were Christ the same Person as the Father, their testimony would not be of two, but of one.

A modalist might reply that the distinction mentioned is not one between two Persons, the Father and Christ, but between the two natures of Christ. However, the Old Testament judicial procedure Christ referred to required two persons for a verdict, not one person with two roles. Nobody could be condemned in the Old Testament if one person said, “My emotions testify that this man is guilty, and my body also testifies that this man is guilty; thus, I am two witnesses.” Furthermore, an impersonal human nature cannot testify to anything. Only real Persons, such as God the Father and God the Son, can be two distinct witnesses that both validated Christ as the Messiah.

In contrast to this abundant testimony to distinction between the Father and Christ, not a single passage of Scripture states anything such as: “Grace, mercy, and peace to you from Jesus Christ, who is the Father of the Son,” or “Blessed be Jesus Christ, the Father and the Son,” or “peace be to the brethren from Jesus Christ the Father and Jesus Christ the Son.” While “Jesus is explicitly referred to as ‘the Son’ over two hundred times in the New Testament . . . never once is he called ‘Father.’ By contrast, over two hundred times ‘the Father’ is referred to by Jesus or someone else as being clearly distinct from Jesus. In fact, over fifty times this juxtapositioning of the Father and

Jesus the Son is rendered explicit within the very same verse.”⁵ Indeed, the Lord Jesus speaks in dozens of texts of “my Father,”⁶ but Christ never even once spoke of “my Son.” Many times the Lord Jesus said He was sent by the Father,⁷ but never once does Christ say He was the Father who begat the Son, sent the Son, loved the Son, or anything else of the kind. He never said that He was His own Father. These facts explain why anyone who simply read the New Testament would conclude that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, but one would require extra-biblical revelations or modalist teachers before one could overcome the plain meaning of the Bible and declare that Jesus Christ is the Father.

Many passages also distinguish Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, while none identify Christ as the Holy Spirit. For example:

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. (Matthew 4:1)

And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, (Luke 4:1)

And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about. (Luke 4:14)

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (Romans 8:1)

And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Corinthians 6:11)

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, *be* with you all. Amen. (2 Corinthians 13:14)

For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, (Philippians 1:19)

How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (Hebrews 9:14)

Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. (1 Peter 1:11)

If the Lord Jesus Christ is the Holy Spirit, such distinctions between the two would be entirely unexpected. While Scripture speaks of the Spirit “of” Christ, of Christ being led by the Spirit, and so on, the Bible never affirms that the Lord Jesus Christ is Himself the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, John 14-16 makes very clear the distinct Personhood of the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit:

I [Jesus Christ] will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; *even* the Spirit of truth[.] . . . These things have I spoken unto you, being *yet* present with you. But the Comforter, *which is* the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. . . . But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, *even* the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me[.] . .

⁵ Pg. 68, *Oneness Pentecostals and the Trinity*, Boyd. Boyd’s book has valuable material against modalism, but he has adopted the heresy of open theism.

⁶ Compare Matthew 7:21; 10:32; 11:27; 12:50; 15:13; 16:17; 18:10, 19, 35; 20:23; 24:36; 25:34; 26:29, 39, 42, 53; Luke 2:49; 10:22; 22:29; 24:49; John 2:16; 5:17, 43; 6:32, 65; 8:19, 28, 38, 49, 54; 10:17–18, 25, 29, 32, 37; 14:2, 7, 12–13, 20–21, 23, 28; 15:1, 8, 10, 15, 23–24; 16:10; 18:11; 20:17, 21.

⁷ See John 5:23, 30, 36–37; 6:39, 44, 57; 8:16, 18, 29, 42; 10:36; 12:49; 14:24, 26; 17:21, 25; 20:21.

. Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment . . . I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew *it* unto you. 15 All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew *it* unto you.” (John 14:16-17, 25-26; 15:26; 16:7-8, 12-15)

If such language did not teach the distinct Personhood of the Father, Son, and Spirit, Christ’s discourse in John 14-16 would not be revelation, but utter confusion. Jesus Christ did not pray to Himself, and then have this second Himself give “another” Comforter who is not really another but is really Himself, so that He Himself sent Himself in the name of another Himself. He did not say that when He Himself, although another Comforter, would come, who He Himself would send as Himself from Himself, as Himself proceeding from Himself, He Himself would testify of Himself. He did not say that it was expedient that He would go away so that He could send Himself back again as someone else who was not someone else. He did not say that He Himself would not speak of Himself, but would speak of Himself, when He heard from Himself what He Himself taught about Himself, so that He took the things of Himself from another Himself who was really not another Himself and showed it to the disciples. A Oneness Pentecostal view of this discourse makes as much sense as the gibber-gabber of their allegedly restored gift of tongues.

Paul similarly teaches the distinct Personhood of the Father, Son, and Spirit in vast numbers of passages:

And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what *is* the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to *the will of* God. (Romans 8:27)

That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost. (Romans 15:16)

Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in *your* prayers to God for me; (Romans 15:30)

But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. (1 Corinthians 2:10)

For the Son of God, Jesus Christ . . . was preached among you by us . . . all the promises of God in him *are* yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us. Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, *is* God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. (2 Corinthians 1:19-22)

Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. (2 Corinthians 3:3)

I But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, *it is* evident: for, The just shall live by faith. . . . Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us . . . that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. (Galatians 3:11-14)

And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. (Galatians 4:6)

For through him [Jesus Christ] we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore

ye are . . . of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:18-22)

For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith[.] (Ephesians 3:14-17)

There is one Spirit . . . one Lord . . . one God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all. (Ephesians 4:4-6)

Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord *is*. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ[.] (Ephesians 5:17-20)

[T]he gospel . . . is come unto you, as *it is* in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as *it doth* also in you, since the day ye heard *of it*, and knew the grace of God in truth: as ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit. (Colossians 1:5-8)

But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14)

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he [God, v. 4] saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour. (Titus 3:5-6)

How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard *him*; 4 God also bearing *them* witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will? (Hebrews 2:3-4)

Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? (Hebrews 10:29)

The personal distinctions between the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit are very clear in these illustrative texts. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is never said to be the Father or the Holy Spirit, but is regularly distinguished from them. The Holy Spirit is regularly distinguished from the Father and Christ.

Just as the writings of John and Paul clearly distinguish the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, so the rest of the New Testament does so also. For example, all four Gospels record the narrative of Christ's baptism:

And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. (Matthew 3:16-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:31-34)

If Jesus Christ is really the Father and the Holy Spirit, this event is rather an illusion and deception than revelation of the character of God. Nobody who simply took the passage at face value would think that Jesus was not only being baptized but that Jesus was also the Spirit of God that descended upon Jesus, and Jesus was His own Father in heaven who said that Jesus was His beloved Son in whom He, Jesus, was well pleased. Matthew

28:19 also very clearly distinguishes the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 28:19).⁸ Peter wrote: “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied” (1 Peter 1:2). Similarly, Jude stated: “But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life” (Jude 20-21). Modalism must change the Scripture from a revelation of God’s nature to utter confusion and illusion to escape the meaning of all these texts.

While Scripture never identifies the Lord Jesus Christ as the Father or as the Holy Spirit, it regularly identifies Him as the Son:

And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. (Matthew 16:16)

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; (Mark 1:1)

But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? (Mark 14:61)

And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God. (John 6:69)

She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world. (John 11:27)

But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name. (John 20:31)

The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let *him* go. (Acts 3:13)

Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.⁹ (Acts 3:26)

And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. (Acts 8:37)

And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. (Acts 9:20)

God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. (Acts 13:33)

Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; (Romans 1:3)

God *is* faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. (1 Corinthians 1:9)

For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, *even* by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea. (2 Corinthians 1:19)

And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, *even* Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come. (1 Thessalonians 1:10)

So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee. (Hebrews 5:5)

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. (1 John 1:3)

⁸ Note the exposition of this passage above.

⁹ Acts 3:13, 26 employ *παῖς* instead of *υἱός*.

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. (1 John 1:7)

And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. (1 John 3:23)

And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, *even* in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. (1 John 5:20)

Grace be with you, mercy, *and* peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. (2 John 3)

It is a central theme of the Gospels that Jesus Christ is the Son of God the Father. Indeed, believing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God is essential to the receipt of eternal life (John 20:31). The title “Son of God” explicitly distinguishes the Son from the Father, a distinction often demonstrated yet the more clearly by the context, while, even as distinguished particularly from the Father, the Son is ascribed characteristics of Deity. The Son of God, as distinguished from the Father, is the omniscient and omnipresent Deity with whom believers have fellowship (1 Corinthians 1:9; 1 John 1:3), not an impersonal human nature. The Son, who was raised from the dead by the Father, has the incommunicably Divine power to forgive sin and perfectly deliver from God’s wrath (1 Thessalonians 1:10). An impersonal human nature cannot deliver from God’s wrath. The Son is the omnipresent One whom believers are “in,” in the same sense that they are “in” the omnipresent Father—indeed, the Son is “the true God and eternal life” (1 John 5:20). Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and as Son He possesses the Divine essence and absolute equality with His Father, who is distinct from Him. The term “Son of God” cannot possibly refer merely to an impersonal human nature.

Modalism affirms that Jesus Christ is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Scripture, on the other hand, never refers to Jesus Christ as the Father, and never refers to Jesus Christ as the Holy Spirit, but continually distinguishes Christ from the Father and the Holy Ghost. Scripture does, however, make the truth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God central to the entire New Testament revelation. It never distinguishes Jesus Christ from the Son of God in the way that it distinguishes the Lord Jesus from the Father and the Holy Ghost. Therefore, the Bible clearly supports the Trinitarian doctrine that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, but He is not the Father and not the Holy Spirit, while it demolishes the modalist doctrine that the Lord Jesus is the Father, Son, and Spirit.

2.) The Eternity of the Son

Oneness Pentecostals limit the designation *Son* to the human nature of Christ. In so doing, they must affirm that the Son of God did not exist before His birth in Bethlehem. Any texts that appear to indicate otherwise, these modalists affirm, simply

speak of Christ's preexistence as the Father, or to Christ's preexistence in God's foreknowledge (cf. Revelation 13:8), in a manner comparable to the foreknowledge God had of His elect before their creation and redemption (Ephesians 1:4).¹⁰

Oneness advocates set forth a number of arguments for their view that "Son" only refers to the human nature of Christ and so the "Son" only came into existence in the womb of Mary. First, Luke 1:35 is employed: "And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." However, the text simply teaches that Christ's virgin birth was evidence that He is the eternal God manifest in the flesh, as predicted by Isaiah 7:14. Luke 1:35 by no means proves that Jesus Christ is the Son of God because the Father literally "sired" or "fathered" Him. Furthermore, the Holy Ghost, not the Father, is the One through whom Jesus Christ was conceived in Luke 1:35, so Oneness Pentecostalism is only furthered if modalism is already assumed, and the Father and the Holy Ghost are confounded in the passage. In any case, even if one gave the modalist the most he could possibly with any shadow of legitimacy take from the passage, the verse would only give one reason Jesus was called the Son of God. It is not legitimate to conclude that if Luke 1:35 sets forth one reason Christ is called the Son of God, that there are no other reasons—such as, say, His eternal preexistence as Son—whereby He is also worthy the designation, nor is it legitimate to conclude that one reason for His possessing the designation of "Son" indicates that He only began to be the "Son" at that time.

Second, Oneness Pentecostals affirm that the references to Christ as the "begotten" Son, and Hebrews 1:5-6, where Christ is said to be begotten "today," show that He only became Son at the incarnation. "Beget" and "create" are made equivalent, and the "today" is made the day of the incarnation, so that the Son was allegedly created at the time of the incarnation. However, the Son is eternally begotten of the Father, and the "today" is true for any day and every day, for the Son's being eternally begotten is His identifying particularity that distinguishes Him from His Father from eternity past to eternity future. Since the eternal generation of the Son has been explicated above, it will not be examined further here.

While none of the modalist arguments that Jesus Christ only became God's Son at the incarnation are valid, the evidence for the Trinitarian doctrine that the Son is eternal is overwhelming. First, the Old Testament plainly teaches the preexistence of Jesus Christ

¹⁰ Pgs. 39-40, *Oneness Pentecostals and the Trinity*, Boyd, deals with another way a small minority of modalists explain such texts; the "Son" is an eternal attribute, dimension, or aspect of God, but not a distinct Person.

as the Son of God. The book of Proverbs asks: “Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what *is* his name, and what *is* his son’s name, if thou canst tell?” (Proverbs 30:4). Daniel walked with the Son of God in the midst of the fiery furnace, to the astonishment of Nebuchadnezzar: “He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God” (Daniel 3:25).¹¹ In Psalm 2:7-12, king

¹¹ The phrase בְּרֵאשִׁית אֱלֹהִים in Daniel 3:25 is properly translated “the Son of God,” not “a son of the gods.” First, the definiteness of the absolute noun אֱלֹהִים, although nonarticular, makes the construct noun בְּרֵאשִׁית definite likewise—it is “the Son,” not “a son,” as in Daniel 4:9, 15; 5:11, 14 the nonarticular רִיחַ אֱלֹהִים “the spirit,” not “a spirit,” of the gods/God, and in Daniel 5:11 חֵכְמַת אֱלֹהִים is “the wisdom of the gods,” not “a wisdom of gods.”

Second, in Daniel 3:25 the translation “God” for אֱלֹהִים, rather than “gods,” is superior. It is true that אֱלֹהִים is a plural form, and it is likewise true that, unless one renders רִיחַ אֱלֹהִים (Daniel 4:9, 15; 5:11, 14) as “the Spirit of God” rather than “the spirit of the gods,” in the other instances where the plural אֱלֹהִים is found in the Old Testament (Jeremiah 10:11; Daniel 2:11, 47; 3:12, 14, 18; 4:5–6, 15; 5:4, 11, 14, 23), the translation “gods” is proper, while the singular אֱלֹהִים is employed of the true God of Israel or of a particular but singular false god (Daniel 2:18–20, 23, 28, 37, 44–45, 47; 3:12, 15, 17, 26, 28–29, 32; 4:5; 5:3, 18, 21, 23, 26; 6:6, 8, 11–13, 17, 21, 23–24, 27; Ezra 4:24–5:2; 5:5, 8, 11–17; 6:3, 5, 7–10, 12, 14, 16–18; 7:12, 14–21, 23–26). While these facts certainly merit consideration, they do not prove that Daniel 3:25 refers to “gods” for the following reasons. First, the equivalent Hebrew plural to the Aramaic אֱלֹהִים of Daniel 3:25 is אֱלֹהִים, the plural noun regularly and overwhelmingly used for the singular true God, Jehovah. If the Hebrew plural אֱלֹהִים, the overwhelming majority of the time, “God” rather than “gods,” one must at least allow for the possibility that the Aramaic plural אֱלֹהִים refers to “God,” rather than “gods,” in Daniel 3:25, when spoken of with reference to the true Deity revealed in Scripture. Second, while the other instances of the Aramaic plural אֱלֹהִים in the Old Testament refer to “gods,” rather than to “God” (again, on the assumption that רִיחַ אֱלֹהִים is “the spirit of the gods” rather than “the Spirit of God,”—yet see Genesis 41:38—the רִיחַ אֱלֹהִים is the πνεῦμα θεοῦ of the LXX, “the Spirit of God” mentioned on the lips of a pagan) in every other case the plural אֱלֹהִים refers, at least in the mind of the speaker, to false gods, rather than the true God. When the Hebrew plural אֱלֹהִים refers to false gods, it is also properly rendered in the plural as “gods,” but such a fact does not alter the use of the plural אֱלֹהִים for the single true God also. As the use of the Hebrew plural אֱלֹהִים for a plurality of false gods does not eliminate its use for the singular true God also, the use of the plural אֱלֹהִים for a plurality of false gods does not mean that the Aramaic plural cannot also refer to the singular true God. Third, Aramaic usage of the plural of forms of words for “God” in reference to solely the one true God of the Bible is abundant. The plural of אֱלֹהִים is employed 17 times in the Targums of Onkelos, Jonathan, and the Writings of the one true God, and only twice employed of “gods” (Genesis 31:53; Jeremiah 5:14; 15:16; 35:17; 38:17; 44:7; Hosea 12:6; Amos 3:13; 4:13; 5:14–16, 27; 6:8, 14; Psa 51:16; 147:12, the true God; Psalm 135:5; 136:2, to “gods.”) The Targum Neofeti twice employs the same plural for the one true God (Exodus 18:11; Deuteronomy 1:11). The Targum Pseudo-Jonathan does the same in Exodus 18:11. Thus, the phenomenon of employing a plural form for the one true God of Israel is not restricted to Hebrew, but appears in Aramaic also. Fourth, the standard Koehler/Baumgartner Hebrew lexicon states that the word אֱלֹהִים, “God/gods” in Daniel 3:25, can be used in the plural of the one God of Israel (אֱלֹהִים, 2bδ). Fifth, ancient translational evidence supports the rendering “the Son of God.” The LXX translated Daniel 3:25 with the singular ἀγγέλου θεοῦ, understanding the reference to be to “God” with the genitive singular, rather than the genitive plural, form of θεός—the LXX supports a reference to “God,” not to the “gods.” Theodotian and Aquila likewise read υἱὸς θεοῦ, “the Son of God,” not a reference to “gods.” The Vulgate similarly supports a reference in Daniel 3:25 to the singular “Son of God,” rather than “the son of the gods,” through its rendering with the singular *filio Dei*.

David sets forth the Son of God, who would in the future be “given” to the world as its redeemer (Isaiah 9:6), as the object of faith for the world—all who would receive eternal blessing must submit to and trust in Him:

7 I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou *art* my Son; this day have I begotten thee. 8 Ask of me, and I shall give *thee* the heathen *for* thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth *for* thy possession. 9 Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel. 10 Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. 11 Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. 12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish *from* the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed *are* all they that put their trust in him.

It is very clear that this Son is not simply king David himself, or any other mere mortal who would sit on the throne of Israel. None of them would possess the uttermost parts of the earth and rule them with a rod of iron—but Jesus Christ will in His millennial kingdom (Revelation 2:27; 12:5; 19:15). In light of the coming rule of God’s Son, the Messiah, the “kings” and “judges of the earth” are exhorted “now” to “Kiss the Son,” submit to Him, and also “trust in him,” lest they perish in His anger—the Son is the object of faith in the Old Testament for those who would escape eternal damnation. King David is very clear that Christ existed as the Son of God far before His incarnation.

As the Old Testament plainly teaches the preexistence of the Son of God, so the New Testament evidence is exceedingly clear. The prologue to John’s gospel, John 1:1-18, clearly teaches that Jesus Christ is the Son who existed eternally with His Father:

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name *was* John. 7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all *men* through him might believe. 8 He was not that Light, but *was sent* to bear witness of that Light. 9 *That* was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. 11 He came unto his

Furthermore, “in Akkadian the equivalent plural [to the Aramaic אֱלֹהִים] is used for a single deity” (*Word Biblical Commentary* on Daniel 5:5). The Authorized Version follows very strong evidence in ancient translations in its reference to “the Son of God” in Daniel 3:25. Sixth, the context supports a reference to “the Son of God” rather than “a/the son of the gods.” First, the heathen gods had many sons, so Nebuchadnezzar would not speak of “the son of the gods,” but the translation “a son of the gods” has been shown to be inferior above. Second, Nebuchadnezzar immediately refers to “the most high God” (אֱלֹהֵי שָׁמַיִם) after his statement of v. 25. After seeing “the Son of God,” Nebuchadnezzar would naturally conclude that the three Hebrew children were “servants of the most high God,” but seeing “a son of the gods” would have no obvious connection to “the most high God.” Nebuchadnezzar would have known of the Son of God from Daniel and the other believing Jews, as the Son of God had been proclaimed the Object of faith for the heathen nations for hundreds of years (cf. Psalm 2:12, where the heathen are exhorted to trust in God’s “Son,” the Aramaic word בֶּרֶךְ being employed by David, as it is in Daniel 3:25). Seventh, “the Son of God” is identified with the Angel of the LORD in Daniel 3:28; 6:22, the preincarnate Second Person of the Trinity, who promised, “when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned” (Isaiah 43:2). For all of these reasons, Daniel 3:25 is properly referred to “the Son of God,” not “a/the son of the gods.” Daniel 3:25, 28 consequently makes a connection between the Son of God and the Angel of Jehovah, the preincarnate Christ.

own, and his own received him not. 12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name: 13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. 14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. 15 John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me. 16 And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. 17 For the law was given by Moses, *but* grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. 18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*.¹²

The preincarnate Word is God while also being a distinct Person “with” the Father (v. 1). He is a distinct Person who is eternal (v. 2), the Creator (v. 3), possessor of life (v. 4), He who lights every man that comes into the world (v. 9), the One who came to the Jews although they did not receive Him (v. 11), the Giver of eternal life to those who believe on Him (v. 12), the only begotten of the Father who became flesh (v.14) and the only begotten Son who has an eternal intimate relationship with His Father and is the only Revealer of the Father (v. 18).

Modalists attempt to avoid the clear teaching of this text by affirming that the “Word” is only a thought in the Father’s mind. However, such an idea is totally obliterated by the passage itself. The Word was “with” God, in an intimate personal relationship¹³ such as that described in v. 18 as being the “Son . . . in the bosom of the

¹² Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν Θεόν, καὶ Θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος. 2 οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν Θεόν. 3 πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν ὃ γέγονεν. 4 ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν, καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων, 5 καὶ τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ φαίνει, καὶ ἡ σκοτία αὐτὸ οὐ κατέλαβεν. 6 ἐγένετο ἄνθρωπος ἀπεσταλμένος παρὰ Θεοῦ, ὄνομα αὐτῷ Ἰωάννης. 7 οὗτος ἦλθεν εἰς μαρτυρίαν, ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός, ἵνα πάντες πιστεύσωσι δι’ αὐτοῦ. 8 οὐκ ἦν ἐκεῖνος τὸ φῶς, ἀλλ’ ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός. 9 ἦν τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν, ὃ φωτίζει πάντα ἄνθρωπον ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον. 10 ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἦν, καὶ ὁ κόσμος δι’ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ ὁ κόσμος αὐτὸν οὐκ ἔγνω. 11 εἰς τὰ ἴδια ἦλθε, καὶ οἱ ἴδιοι αὐτὸν οὐ παρέλαβον. 12 ὅσοι δὲ ἔλαβον αὐτόν, ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ἐξουσίαν τέκνα Θεοῦ γενέσθαι, τοῖς πιστεύουσιν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ. 13 οἱ οὐκ ἐξ αἱμάτων, οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος σαρκός, οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος ἀνδρός, ἀλλ’ ἐκ Θεοῦ ἐγεννήθησαν. 14 καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο, καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν (καὶ ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός), πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας. 15 Ἰωάννης μαρτυρεῖ περὶ αὐτοῦ, καὶ κέκραγεν λέγων, Οὗτος ἦν ὃν εἶπον, Ὁ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος ἔμπροσθεν μου γέγονεν ὅτι πρῶτός μου ἦν. 16 καὶ ἐκ τοῦ πληρώματος αὐτοῦ ἡμεῖς πάντες ἐλάβομεν, καὶ χάριν ἀντὶ χάριτος. 17 ὅτι ὁ νόμος διὰ Μωσέως ἐδόθη, ἡ χάρις καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐγένετο. 18 Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἐώρακε πώποτε· ὁ μονογενὴς υἱός, ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς, ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο.

¹³ Consider the only construction in John’s Gospel, other than John 1:1-2, containing the “with God” construction: “Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God”; εἰδὼς ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὅτι πάντα δέδωκεν αὐτῷ ὁ πατήρ εἰς τὰς χεῖρας, καὶ ὅτι ἀπὸ Θεοῦ ἐξῆλθε καὶ πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν ὑπάγει (John 13:3; cf. 13:1). When Christ, after His incarnation, returns “to God,” He certainly has personal fellowship with God, rather than being merely an incarnated idea, whatever that could possibly be. If, as the God-Man, He has fellowship with God [*pros ton Theon*] after the Ascension (John 13:3), He also had fellowship with God [*pros ton Theon*] as the Person of the Son before the incarnation (John 1:1-3). Thus, while the simple use of πρὸς is not conclusive of itself, the context of John 1 and the parallelism of John 13 support the idea of personal fellowship in the πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν clause of John 1:1, 2. A. T. Robertson notes: “In ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν (Jo. 1:1)

Father.” A mere idea cannot be “God” (John 1:1c), cannot create the universe, possess life in itself, light every man that comes into the world, give eternal life to those who believe in it, become flesh, reveal the Father, or have an intimate relationship with the Father as His Son who is eternally in His bosom. A mere idea cannot bestow out of its fulness and give ever more abundant grace (1:16), but Jesus Christ, the preexistent Son, can do so (1:16-18). Nor does John the Baptist testify that a mere idea preexisted himself (for the all-knowing God also foreknew the Baptist, as the whole number of His elect, from eternity) and was exalted above himself (1:15). Rather, the person of “Jesus Christ,” the “Lamb of God” and “the Son of God” (1:26-36), is the One who preexisted John the Baptist and was exalted above the Baptist. It is utterly impossible for a mere idea to fit the description of Christ as the Word and Son in John 1. Nor can the Father be “with” Himself and somehow be the Son in His own bosom (v. 1-2, 18).

The rest of John’s Gospel is equally clear about the preexistence of Jesus Christ as the eternal Son with His Father, infinite ages before the incarnation in Bethlehem. The Lord Jesus declares, “And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, *even* the Son of man which is in heaven” (John 3:13). John explains, “He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all” (John 3:31). The One who is the “Son of Man,” and thus patently not the Father, or a mere idea, is the Person who “came down from heaven,” and yet remains the omnipresent Son, able to still be “in heaven” even after the incarnation, as God who is “above all.” In John 6, Christ expounds His preexistence still further:

For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. . . . For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. . . . I am the bread which came down from heaven. . . . I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. . . . I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. (John 6:33, 38, 41, 51, 57-58)

The One who is distinct from the Father who sent Him, “the Son” who was sent by the “Father” to redeem those that the Father gave Him from eternity and raise them up at the last day (6:37-40), “came down from heaven” to redeem the world. It is utterly impossible, if language has any objective meaning and the Bible truly is God’s revelation to mankind in comprehensible language, to make affirmations of this sort refer to the Father sending Himself, or to a mere idea in the Father’s mind that somehow is a

the literal idea comes out well, ‘face to face with God.’ . . . face-to-face converse . . . [is how] John . . . conceives the fellowship between the Logos and God. . . . it is . . . natural . . . to find πρὸς employed for living relationship, intimate converse” (pgs. 623, 625, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*).

personal Redeemer and Savior of the elect.

Similarly, in John 8 Christ declares:

I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go. . . . I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me. . . . I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me. . . . [I]f ye believe not that I am *he*, ye shall die in your sins. . . . [H]e that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him . . . the Father. . . . And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him. . . . the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. . . . I speak that which I have seen with my Father . . . If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. . . . it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God . . . I know him, and keep his saying. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw *it*, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by. (John 8:14, 16, 18, 24, 29, 35-36, 38, 42, 55-59).

When the Lord Jesus declares His Deity in affirming that He is the I AM, Jehovah, and that the Jews would die in their sins if they did not believe this truth, He expressed truth about Himself as the “Son” who has the Divine power to make men “free indeed.” Before the incarnation, He was Son and the Father was Father, for the Son proceeded forth and came from the Father, being sent by the Father. In the same sense in which He would ascend to the Father as a distinct Person, so He came from the Father as a distinct Person (8:14): “Jesus kn[ew] that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God[.] . . . For the Father himself loveth you [disciples, said Christ], because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. . . . I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.” (John 13:3; 16:27-28). The Person who ascends is as real and as distinct from the Father as the Person who descends.¹⁴ Consequently, the Son

¹⁴ Some modalists affirm that the “sending” language merely speaks of Christ’s heavenly commission, rather than His real preexistence. Christ, as a Prophet, received a heavenly calling; Christ came from heaven in the sense that “every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights” (James 1:27). He was from above only in the sense that Isaiah, Jeremiah, or Elijah was from above. However, such an explanation cannot be maintained, because of the parallel between Christ’s descent and His ascent. If His ascent is not merely metaphorical, His descent cannot be metaphorical, either. In the same sense that He “went to God” in the ascension, so He “came from God” (John 13:3); in the same sense that He stated, “I leave the world, and go to the Father,” in the same sense He stated: “I came out from God. . . . I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world” (John 16:27-28). He “ascend[ed] up” to “where he was before” (6:62; 17:5). It is good that Christ’s ascent is literal, for His second coming is only as literal as His ascent: “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11). Thankfully, the descent of the Son of God was literal, His ascent was literal, and His second coming will likewise be literal.

Furthermore, as modalists are inconsistent when they dissolve the descent of the Son into a metaphor while leaving His ascension as a genuine reality, they are likewise inconsistent when they reduce Christ’s descent to a metaphor but believe that the descent of the Spirit was the coming of One who was genuinely preexistent. In John 16:5-7, Christ declares: “But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath

and the Father can be two different witnesses to the truth (8:16-18). The Son did not come of Himself, but He was sent by the Father (8:42). It is exceedingly clear in the text that the Father and the Son are two distinct preexistent Persons. Christ existed as the eternal “I AM” with the Father “before the world was” (17:5). Language could not be clearer.

Christ’s High Priestly prayer in John 17 also testifies to His personal preexistence with the Father as a distinct Trinitarian Person:

1 These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: 2 As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. 3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. 4 I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. 5 And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. 6 I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. 7 Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. 8 For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. 9 I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. 10 And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. 11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we *are*. 12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. 13 And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. 14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. 18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. 19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. 20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; 21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. 22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: 23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. 24 Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. 25 O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. 26 And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare *it*: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.¹⁵

filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.” If the sending of the Spirit was literal, rather than a metaphorical sending or a commissioning, then the descent of Christ and His ascent are literal also. “I go my way to him that sent me . . . I go away . . . I will send [the Comforter]” are all equally literal statements. If the Holy Spirit was not “sent” in the sense of being commissioned as a prophet the way Elijah or Isaiah was, then Christ was not “sent” merely in this sense either.

¹⁵ 1 Ταῦτα ἐλάλησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς, καὶ ἐπήρε τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν, καὶ εἶπε, Πάτερ, ἐλήλυθεν ἡ ὥρα· δόξασόν σου τὸν υἱόν, ἵνα καὶ ὁ υἱός σου δοξάσῃ σε· 2 καθὼς ἔδωκας αὐτῷ ἐξουσίαν πάσης σαρκός, ἵνα πᾶν ὃ δέδωκας αὐτῷ, δώσῃ αὐτοῖς ζωὴν αἰώνιον. 3 αὕτη δὲ ἐστὶν ἡ αἰώνιος ζωὴ, ἵνα γινώσκωσί σε τὸν μόνον ἀληθινὸν Θεόν, καὶ

Jesus Christ, the “Son,” has power to give eternal life to all those given Him by the Father (v. 1-2), something only God, not an impersonal human nature can do. Eternal life is knowing both the Father and Jesus Christ, who the Father sent from His preincarnate state into the world (v. 3). In His preincarnate state, the Son was given a work to accomplish by the Father (v. 4). Upon His ascension, Christ receives again the full manifestation of the Divine glory that He had with the Father before the creation of the world—His glory was hidden in His incarnate state of humiliation (v. 5). The Son was given the elect in the covenant of redemption in the preincarnate state before the Father sent the Son (v. 6-9). Christ guarantees the eternal security of every believer the Father gave Him from eternity, keeping all of them, so that none are lost (v. 12). The Son gives the saints the Word from the Father, an impossible task for an impersonal human nature (v. 14). All believers have a unity “in us,” the Father and Son, requiring both Persons to be omnipresent Deity, a truth also made clear from the fact that the Son is “in” each saved person (v. 21-23). The Father loved His Son even “before the foundation of the world” (v. 24). The Son reveals the Father to each one of the saints of God, so that they may grow in love and have more of His indwelling presence; such a revelation is only

ὄν ἀπέστειλας Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν. 4 ἐγὼ σε ἐδόξασα ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς· τὸ ἔργον ἐτελείωσα ὃ δέδωκάς μοι ἵνα ποιήσω. 5 καὶ νῦν δόξασόν με σύ, πάτερ, παρὰ σεαυτῷ τῇ δόξῃ ἣ εἶχον πρὸ τοῦ τὸν κόσμον εἶναι παρὰ σοί. 6 ἐφανέρωσά σου τὸ ὄνομα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις οὓς δέδωκάς μοι ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου· σοὶ ἦσαν, καὶ ἐμοὶ αὐτοὺς δέδωκας· καὶ τὸν λόγον σου τηρήκασι. 7 νῦν ἔγνωκαν ὅτι πάντα ὅσα δέδωκάς μοι, παρὰ σοῦ ἐστίν· 8 ὅτι τὰ ῥήματα ἃ δέδωκάς μοι, δέδωκα αὐτοῖς· καὶ αὐτοὶ ἔλαβον, καὶ ἔγνωσαν ἀληθῶς ὅτι παρὰ σοῦ ἐξήλθον, καὶ ἐπίστευσαν ὅτι σύ με ἀπέστειλας. 9 ἐγὼ περὶ αὐτῶν ἐρωτῶ· οὐ περὶ τοῦ κόσμου ἐρωτῶ, ἀλλὰ περὶ ὧν δέδωκάς μοι ὅτι σοὶ εἰσίν· 10 καὶ τὰ ἐμὰ πάντα σὰ ἐστί, καὶ τὰ σὰ ἐμὰ· καὶ δεδόξασμαι ἐν αὐτοῖς. 11 καὶ οὐκέτι εἰμι ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, καὶ οὗτοι ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ εἰσίν, καὶ ἐγὼ πρὸς σε ἔρχομαι. πάτερ ἅγιε, τήρησον αὐτοὺς ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου, οὓς δέδωκας μοι, ἵνα ὦσιν ἓν, καθὼς ἡμεῖς. 12 ὅτε ἤμην μετ’ αὐτῶν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, ἐγὼ ἐτήρουν αὐτοὺς ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου· οὓς δέδωκάς μοι ἐφύλαξα. καὶ οὐδεὶς ἐξ αὐτῶν ἀπώλετο, εἰ μὴ ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας, ἵνα ἡ γραφὴ πληρωθῇ. 13 νῦν δὲ πρὸς σε ἔρχομαι, καὶ ταῦτα λαλῶ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, ἵνα ἔχωσιν τὴν χαρὰν τὴν ἐμὴν πεπληρωμένην ἐν αὐτοῖς. 14 ἐγὼ δέδωκα αὐτοῖς τὸν λόγον σου, καὶ ὁ κόσμος ἐμίσησεν αὐτούς, ὅτι οὐκ εἰσίν ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου, καθὼς ἐγὼ οὐκ εἰμι ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου. 15 οὐκ ἐρωτῶ ἵνα ἄρῃς αὐτοὺς ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου, ἀλλ’ ἵνα τηρήσῃς αὐτοὺς ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ. 16 ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου οὐκ εἰσίν, καθὼς ἐγὼ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου οὐκ εἰμί. 17 ἀγίασον αὐτοὺς ἐν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ σου· ὁ λόγος ὁ σὸς ἀλήθεια ἐστί. 18 καθὼς ἐμὲ ἀπέστειλας εἰς τὸν κόσμον, καὶ γὰρ ἀπέστειλα αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸν κόσμον. 19 καὶ ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν ἐγὼ ἀγιάζω ἑμαυτόν, ἵνα καὶ αὐτοὶ ὦσιν ἡγιασμένοι ἐν ἀληθείᾳ. 20 οὐ περὶ τούτων δὲ ἐρωτῶ μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ τῶν πιστευσόντων διὰ τοῦ λόγου αὐτῶν εἰς ἐμέ· 21 ἵνα πάντες ἐν ὧσι καθὼς σύ, πάτερ, ἐν ἐμοί, καὶ γὰρ ἐν σοί, ἵνα καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἡμῖν ἐν ὧσι· ἵνα ὁ κόσμος πιστεύσῃ ὅτι σύ με ἀπέστειλας. 22 καὶ ἐγὼ τὴν δόξαν ἣν δέδωκάς μοι, δέδωκα αὐτοῖς, ἵνα ὦσιν ἓν, καθὼς ἡμεῖς ἓν ἐσμεν. 23 ἐγὼ ἐν αὐτοῖς, καὶ σὺ ἐν ἐμοί, ἵνα ὧσι τετελειωμένοι εἰς ἐν, καὶ ἵνα γινώσκῃ ὁ κόσμος ὅτι σύ με ἀπέστειλας, καὶ ἡγάπησας αὐτούς, καθὼς ἐμὲ ἡγάπησας. 24 πάτερ, οὓς δέδωκάς μοι, θέλω ἵνα ὅπου εἰμι ἐγὼ, κάκεινοι ὦσι μετ’ ἐμοῦ· ἵνα θεωρῶσι τὴν δόξαν τὴν ἐμὴν, ἣν ἔδωκάς μοι, ὅτι ἡγάπησάς με πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου. 25 πάτερ δίκαιε, καὶ ὁ κόσμος σε οὐκ ἔγνω, ἐγὼ δὲ σε ἔγνω, καὶ οὗτοι ἔγνωσαν ὅτι σύ με ἀπέστειλας· 26 καὶ ἐγνώρισά αὐτοῖς τὸ ὄνομά σου, καὶ γνωρίσω ἵνα ἡ ἀγάπη, ἣν ἡγάπησας με, ἐν αὐτοῖς ἦ, καὶ γὰρ ἐν αὐτοῖς.

possible since the Son is personally distinct from the Father, yet also God by nature—only so can the omniscient Son truly and fully know the infinite Father and reveal Him (v. 25-26). John 17 very clearly teaches that the Father and the Son existed before Christ’s incarnation as distinct Persons in the Trinity.

John’s Gospel is exceedingly clear—the Son of God is an eternal Person in the Trinity. The term “Son” does not merely refer to the human nature Christ assumed in the incarnation. On the contrary, the term speaks of a distinct Person in the Triune Godhead—the eternal Son of the eternal Father.

The Apostle Paul is as clear as the Apostle John about the Son of God’s eternal preexistence as a distinct Person from the Father in the Godhead. Colossians 1:12-17 reads:

12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: 13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: 14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins: 15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: 16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: 17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.¹⁶

The passage is clear the the “dear Son” of “the Father” is “the image of the invisible God” and one who has the position of Firstborn over every creature because (“for”) He is the Creator Himself: by the Son “were all things created . . . all things were created by him and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.” Modalists cannot affirm that the solely Divine work of creation is really specified of the Father, for the “by him” and the other masculine singular pronouns of v. 16-17 refer specifically to the “Son” of v. 13. Nor can the Son be reduced to an idea in the Father’s mind of Christ’s coming human nature, for an idea cannot create a universe (v. 16) or hold it together (v. 17)—only God can do that. Nor can an idea hold the Messianic position of firstborn over the creation (v. 15). Furthermore, if the “Son” were only Christ’s foreknown human nature, it would be very difficult to affirm that such an idea was “before all things,” for God has had the idea of the world He intended to create in His mind from eternity—there would be no temporal priority of the created human nature of Christ to the created universe, but the text affirms that the Son had exactly such a

¹⁶ 12 εὐχαριστοῦντες τῷ πατρὶ τῷ ἱκανώσαντι ἡμᾶς εἰς τὴν μερίδα τοῦ κλήρου τῶν ἁγίων ἐν τῷ φωτί. 13 ὃς ἐρρύσατο ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ σκοτός, καὶ μετέστησεν εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ. 14 ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν. 15 ὃς ἐστὶν εἰκὼν τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου, πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως. 16 ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα, τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, τὰ ὀρατὰ καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα, εἴτε θρόνοι, εἴτε κυριότητες, εἴτε ἀρχαί, εἴτε ἐξουσίαι· τὰ πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται. 17 καὶ αὐτός ἐστι πρὸ πάντων, καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκε.

temporal priority. Nor does it make any sense to say that God created a whole universe for the sake of an impersonal human nature; on the contrary, the Father through His personally distinct Son created the entire universe for His Son's sake; there is "one God, the Father, of whom *are* all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom *are* all things, and we by him" (1 Corinthians 8:6).¹⁷

Similarly, Philippians 2:5-11 is very clear on the distinct and eternal preexistence of the Son of God with His Father:

5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. 9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: 10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth; 11 And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.¹⁸

Christ Jesus, who eternally existed in the form of God, did not think it was robbery to have the position of being equal with God, since He was and is always equal to God the Father in nature (v. 5-6). Despite His status as the eternally preexistent God, Christ humbled Himself, and added to the form or nature of God that He had by virtue of His Divine nature the form or nature of a servant, a true human nature, and even humbled Himself to the extent of suffering the death of the cross (v. 7-8).¹⁹ Consequently, the

¹⁷ Some modalists affirm that the various prepositions in Colossians 1:16-17 indicate merely that "God used His foreknowledge of the Son when He created the world" (pg. 116, *Oneness of God*, David Bernard). However, the text actually states that the Son is the preexistent agent of the creation and sustenance of the universe—the passage does not say that the Father created the world while thinking about an idea of a human nature that was going to come into existence, but "by him," the Son, the whole creation came into existence and is sustained. (The Oneness counterargument is not sustained by taking ἐν αὐτῷ as locative rather than instrumental, for an idea is not the omnipresent sphere within which the creation came into existence and within which it is sustained—such a description only matches the omnipresent Person of the Son).

¹⁸ 5 τοῦτο γὰρ φρονεῖσθω ἐν ὑμῖν ὃ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ· 6 ὃς ἐν μορφῇ Θεοῦ ὑπάρχων, οὐχ ἄρπαγμὸν ἠγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα Θεῷ, 7 ἀλλ' ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσε, μορφὴν δούλου λαβὼν, ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος· 8 καὶ σχήματι εὐρεθεὶς ὡς ἄνθρωπος, ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτὸν, γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου, θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ. 9 διὸ καὶ ὁ Θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερύψωσε, καὶ ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶν ὄνομα· 10 ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ πᾶν γόνυ κάμψη ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθονίων, 11 καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσεται ὅτι Κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, εἰς δόξαν Θεοῦ πατρὸς.

¹⁹ The participle ὑπάρχων indicates concession and contemporaneous time, depending on the verb ἠγήσατο; "although He was in nature God, He did not think it robbery to be equal with God, but emptied Himself." The participles λαβὼν and γενόμενος are dependent on ἐκένωσε and specify contemporaneous time and means—He, already existing in the form of God eternally, emptied Himself by means of taking the form of a servant and being made in the likeness of men. The participles εὐρεθεὶς and γενόμενος likewise indicates contemporaneous time to ἐταπείνωσεν, with γενόμενος also specifying means; while being found in human nature, He humbled Himself by means of submitting to the death of the cross.

Father highly exalted the God-Man, publicly and openly giving Him the name above all names, *Lord* or *Jehovah*. At this “name of Jesus,” this name possessed by Jesus, *Jehovah*, every knee will bow to Him, to the glory of God the Father (v. 9-11, quoting the speech of *Jehovah* in Isaiah 45:23, “I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth *in* righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.”). Philippians 2:5-11 teaches with tremendous clarity that Jesus Christ is a distinct Divine Person from God the Father.

Most modalists²⁰ seek to avoid the plain meaning of this passage by ascribing all that is said about Jesus Christ in His Deity to the Father. However, if Christ is “equal with God” the Father, He must be personally distinct from Him, although equal in nature. “Equal with” affirms plurality; it does not mean “identical with and the same Person as.”²¹ Nor can the exaltation described in v. 9-11 be referred to Christ’s human nature—rather, Jesus Christ’s nature as *Jehovah* is affirmed as every knee bows to Him, glorifying the distinct Person of God the Father (v. 9-11).

Hebrews 1 also plainly teaches that the Son preexisted the incarnation eternally as *Jehovah* and as God, and that the Son is the Creator:

1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, 2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; 3 Who being the brightness of *his* glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; 4 Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. 5 For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? 6 And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. 7 And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. 8 But unto the Son *he saith*, Thy throne, O God, *is* for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness *is* the sceptre of thy kingdom. 9 Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, *even* thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. 10 And, Thou, Lord, in the

Thus, it is clear that Christ already existed, indeed, existed eternally in the form of God at the time He emptied Himself by means of becoming incarnate as Man. The Son’s preexistence is unavoidable in the passage.

²⁰ Some modalists affirm that all of Philippians 2:5ff. refers to Christ’s incarnate state, and nothing about a preincarnate state is mentioned at all. Rather, all that is in view was a time in Christ’s incarnate state when He forsook the equality with God that was properly His. The extreme problems with this interpretation include the question of how the Lord Jesus could be “in the likeness of men” and be “found in fashion as a man” only after some point in His earthly life, rather than being truly human the entire time, and how Christ could be equal with God before this alleged point of alteration and then not be equal after that time. Furthermore, even on this interpretation, modalism is still eliminated, among other reasons, by the terms “equal with” God, and the fact that this human Person is *Jehovah*, yet is exalted by another who is also *Jehovah* (v. 9-11).

²¹ Unsurprisingly, the modalist idea that “equal with” in Philippians 2 really means “the same Person as” receives no support from Greek lexicography, nor is it clearly taught in any of the texts with ἴσος in the New Testament (Matthew 20:12; Mark 14:56, 59; Luke 6:34; John 5:18; Acts 11:17; Philippians 2:6; Revelation 21:16).

beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: 11 They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; 12 And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail. 13 But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? 14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?²²

In Hebrews 1:1-4, “God” the Father is distinguished from His “Son,” but this Son is not merely a human nature that came into existence thousands of years after the creation of the world, but is the One by whom²³ the Father “made the worlds.” The Son is the Agent of the creation itself. Nor is the human nature of Jesus Christ “the brightness of [the Father’s] glory,” or “the express image of his person,” nor can a human nature or a

²² 1 Πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως πάλαι ὁ Θεὸς λαλήσας τοῖς πατράσιν ἐν τοῖς προφήταις, 2 ἐπ’ ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων ἐλάλησεν ἡμῖν ἐν υἱῷ, ὃν ἔθηκε κληρονόμον πάντων, δι’ οὗ καὶ τοὺς αἰῶνας ἐποίησεν, 3 ὃς ὢν ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης καὶ χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ, φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ, δι’ ἑαυτοῦ καθαρισμόν ποιησάμενος τῶν ἀμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν, ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ τῆς μεγαλωσύνης ἐν ὑψηλοῖς, 4 τοσοῦτῳ κρείττων γενόμενος τῶν ἀγγέλων, ὅσῳ διαφορώτερον παρ’ αὐτοὺς κεκληρονόμηκεν ὄνομα. 5 τίτι γὰρ εἶπέ ποτε τῶν ἀγγέλων, Υἱὸς μου εἶ σύ, ἐγὼ σήμερον γεγέννηκά σε; καὶ πάλιν, Ἐγὼ ἔσομαι αὐτῷ εἰς πατέρα, καὶ αὐτὸς ἔσται μοι εἰς υἱόν; 6 ὅταν δὲ πάλιν εἰσαγάγῃ τὸν πρωτότοκον εἰς τὴν οἰκουμένην λέγει, Καὶ προσκυνησάτωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες ἄγγελοι Θεοῦ. 7 καὶ πρὸς μὲν τοὺς ἀγγέλους λέγει, Ὁ ποιῶν τοὺς ἀγγέλους αὐτοῦ πνεύματα, καὶ τοὺς λειτουργοὺς αὐτοῦ πυρὸς φλόγα· 8 πρὸς δὲ τὸν υἱόν, Ὁ θρόνος σου, ὁ Θεός, εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος· ῥάβδος εὐθύτητος ἢ ῥάβδος τῆς βασιλείας σου. 9 ἠγάπησας δικαιοσύνην, καὶ ἐμίσησας ἀνομίαν· διὰ τοῦτο ἔχρισέ σε ὁ Θεός, ὁ Θεός σου, ἔλαιον ἀγαλλιᾶσεως παρὰ τοὺς μετόχους σου. 10 καί, Σὺ κατ’ ἀρχάς, Κύριε, τὴν γῆν ἐθεμελίωσας, καὶ ἔργα τῶν χειρῶν σου εἰσιν οἱ οὐρανοί· 11 αὐτοὶ ἀπολοῦνται, σὺ δὲ διαμένεις· καὶ πάντες ὡς ἱμάτιον παλαιωθήσονται, 12 καὶ ὡσεὶ περιβόλαιον ἐλίξεις αὐτοὺς καὶ ἀλλαγῆσονται· σὺ δὲ ὁ αὐτὸς εἶ, καὶ τὰ ἔτη σου οὐκ ἐκλείψουσι. 13 πρὸς τίνα δὲ τῶν ἀγγέλων εἶρηκέ ποτε, Κάθου ἐκ δεξιῶν μου, ἕως ἂν θῶ τοὺς ἐχθρούς σου ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου; 14 οὐχὶ πάντες εἰσὶ λειτουργικὰ πνεύματα, εἰς διακονίαν ἀποστελλόμενα διὰ τοὺς μέλλοντας κληρονομεῖν σωτηρίαν;

²³ It is not possible to reduce the δι’ οὗ καὶ τοὺς αἰῶνας ἐποίησεν to something such as “with a view towards” the Son or “for the sake of” the Son, as many modalists would desire, so that the Son could be reduced to Christ’s human nature, and the text made to affirm that God made the world while thinking about the coming humanity of Christ. The Greek grammar simply does not say that the Father made the world “with a view towards” a yet non-extant Son, but that the Father made the world by or through the instrumentality of the already extant and eternal Son. The standard Greek lexicon indicates that the preposition διὰ + the genitive is clearly employed as a “marker of personal agency, *through, by* . . . [of] Christ as intermediary in the creation of the world J 1:3, 10; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16” (BDAG), but the lexicon contains no definition of the preposition with the genitive comparable to “with a view towards” or “for the sake of.” Consequently, it is not at all surprising that in every one of the twenty-one verses containing δι’ οὗ in the New Testament an already extant instrumentality is referred to (Matthew 18:7; 26:24; Mark 14:21; Luke 17:1; 22:22; Romans 1:5; 5:2, 11; 1 Corinthians 1:9; 3:5; 8:6; 15:2; Galatians 6:14; Hebrews 1:2; 2:10; 7:19; 11:4, 7; 12:28; 2 Peter 1:4; 3:6)—“by or through whom” is the idea involved, never “with a view towards” or “for the sake of” a non-extant but future person or thing. On the contrary, the “for the sake of” idea is plainly and clearly διὰ + the accusative, not διὰ + the genitive, as is seen within Hebrews itself (δι’ ἣν αἰτίαν, “for which cause,” 2:11); “through whom” and “for the sake of” are even clearly set forth as distinct within the book of Hebrews in successive phrases (δι’ ὃν τὰ πάντα, καὶ δι’ οὗ τὰ πάντα, “for whom *are* all things, and by whom *are* all things,” 2:10). Hebrews 1:2 plainly teaches that the Son was the personal, Almighty, extant, and personally distinct Agent through whom the Father created all things. The modalist would require that the text of Hebrews 1:2 read δι’ ὃν rather than δι’ οὗ.

human person “uphol[d] all things by the word of his power.” On the contrary, only if the Son is a Divine Person are these descriptions at all appropriate. The Divine Person of the Son, the Agent of Creation, is the Object of angelic worship at the time when the Father brings the Son into the world in the incarnation (v. 6), and the Father testifies by His own speech that His Son is “God . . . for ever and ever,” and the Lord Jehovah (v. 10-12; Psalm 102:12, 25-27), although distinguished from the Father, who is called “God, thy God” (v. 9), and who anointed the Son with the oil of gladness. Two distinct and eternal Divine Persons are very evident in Hebrews 1, as they are in the rest of Hebrews—the “Son of God” is “without . . . beginning of days, [or] end of life” (Hebrews 7:3), so “Son” is a designation of the second eternal Person in the Trinity, rather than only a designation of a human nature that had a very clear beginning of days in the womb of Mary. Hebrews 10:5-7 record the speech of this same Son, in His preexistent state, to His Father: “Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.” The Son existed before a body was prepared for Him, and at His Father’s will He entered into the world and became Man. His existence before the incarnation is very clear.

3.) Objections to Personal Distinctions by Modalists Answered

- i.) Since there is only one God, and Jesus Christ is God,
Jesus Christ is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Trinitarians are passionately committed to the doctrine that there is only one God. They are also passionately committed to the truth that Jesus Christ is God. However, Scripture teaches that within the undivided Divine essence three distinct Persons subsist, and Jesus Christ is one of those three Persons, not all three of those Persons. Trinitarianism is confirmed, not refuted, by arguments for monotheism and by arguments for the Deity of Christ.

- ii.) Jesus Christ is God the Father (Isaiah 9:6),
for believers are Christ’s children or sons (John 14:18; Revelation 21:7).

Isaiah 9:6 teaches that Jesus Christ has a fatherly role towards His people, not that He is the Person of the Father. In Hebrews 2:13, believers are called Christ’s “children,”

quoting Isaiah 8:18 (only a few verses before Isaiah 9:6; cf. John 13:33). The Lord Jesus exercises fatherly care over His people, but that is an entirely different matter from saying that He is the Person of the Father. Indeed, Isaiah 9:6 specifically calls Christ the “son” that was “given,” distinguishing Him as Son from the Father.

John 14:18 employs the word *orphanos*,²⁴ translated in the KJV as “comfortless,” and the use of *orphanos* is also used by modalists to argue that Jesus Christ is the Father. If Christ speaks about leaving His people “fatherless” (cf. the use of *orphanos* in James 1:27), He must be God the Father, it is argued. However, the fact that Christ exercises a fatherly care for His people no more proves that He is God the Father than the fact that Paul says he is a father to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 4:15) proves that the Apostle Paul is God the Father, or the Apostle John’s references to believers as “little children” proves that John is God the Father (1 John 2:1). The tender paternal care of the Lord Jesus for His needy people mentioned in John 14:18 by no means proves that He is the Person of God the Father—on the contrary, in the immediate context of the verse Christ is distinguished regularly and repeatedly from the Father (cf. John 14:2, 6-7, 9-13, 16, 20, 21, 23, 26, 28, 31). Besides, the word *orphanos* was used in the first century, as it had been used for centuries, to mean “pertaining to being without the aid and comfort of one who serves as associate and friend,” rather than solely to being literally fatherless; thus, e. g., the friends of Socrates are described, thinking of his absence from them, as “thinking that [they] would have to spend the rest of our lives just like children deprived of their father [*orphanos*].”²⁵ In John 14:18, the disciples feared that they would be left without the aid and comfort of Christ as their associate and friend.

Similarly, at best one could prove from Revelation 21:7—if Christ, rather than the Father, is the speaker—that Christ bears a fatherly and tender care for believers. The idea that Christ is God the Father simply is not stated. Revelation 21:7 proves that God will enter into tender communion for all eternity with those who overcome despite the trials of this life (21:1-7), in contrast with the unregenerate, who are cast into the lake of fire (21:8). Nothing in the context states or hints that the point of 21:7 is to identify Jesus Christ as God the Father. On the contrary, the book of Revelation constantly distinguishes the Father from the Lord Jesus (cf. Revelation 1:5-6; 3:5, 12; 12:10; 14:1, 4, 12, etc.). Revelation identifies Christ as “the Son of God” who is distinguished from His Father (2:18, 27), but never makes a statement such as, “Jesus Christ, who is the Father.”

²⁴ ὀρφανός.

²⁵ BDAG, ὀρφανός.

iii.) To see Jesus Christ is to see the Father, John 14:9, so Jesus is the Father.

John 14:1-11 reads:

1 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if *it were* not *so*, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also. 4 And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. 5 Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? 6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. 7 If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. 8 Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. 9 Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou *then*, Shew us the Father? 10 Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. 11 Believe me that I *am* in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.

While Christ's assertion that to see Him is to see the Father demonstrates Christ's Deity and His union of essence with the Father, and that Christ is the One who reveals the Father, it does not demonstrate that He is the Person of the Father. On the contrary, both Christ and the Father are set forth as distinct personal objects of faith (14:1). Christ further distinguishes Himself from the Father with the pronoun "my" (14:2), and states that the way "unto the Father" is "by me" (14:6), again distinguishing Himself from the Father—and, furthermore, demonstrating that Christ is both God and Man in His one Person, for as both He is Mediator to the Father. Christ says that to know Him is to know the Father "also" (14:7), Philip asks Christ to show him a different Person, the Father (14:8), and in explaining the statement that to see Christ is to see the Father (14:9), the Lord Jesus does not say, "I am the Father," but "I am in the Father, and the Father in me . . . the Father dwelleth in me" and distinguishes Himself from the Father who "doeth the works" (14:9-11). The Trinitarian doctrine of *perichoresis*, that the Father and the Son are "in" one another,²⁶ is affirmed in John 14:9-11, but modalism is not. One sees the Father when he sees Christ, not because they are the same Person, but because the Lord Jesus is one in essence with His Father, and is the express image of the Father's distinct Person (Hebrews 1:3). It is entirely plain in John 14:1-11 both that Christ is true God (14:9) and that He is distinguished from the Father.

iv.) Since Christ said, "I and *my* Father are one" (John 10:30), Jesus Christ is the Father.

John 10:30, while it demonstrates the unity of essence between the Father and the Son in the Trinity, does not by any means prove that Jesus Christ is the Person of the

²⁶ This teaching has been explained above.

Father. First, in the immediate context Jesus Christ repeatedly and clearly distinguishes Himself from the Father, who is called “my Father” (10:25, 29, 32, 36, 38). Second, John 10:30 itself actually demonstrates that the Father and Christ are distinct Persons. In the verse, the Lord Jesus certainly does not say, “I am the Father.” Rather, a plural verb is used for the Father and Christ. The Lord Jesus does not say, “I and the Father *am* one,” but “I and the Father *are* one.” What is more, Christ employed the Greek neuter gender²⁷ in His affirmation of unity with the Father, rather than the masculine—the text teaches that the Father and Christ are one thing, one essence, but not that the Lord Jesus and the Father are one Person.

v.) 1 John 3:1-5 teaches that Jesus Christ is the Father.

Modalists argue that in 1 John 3:1-5, only the Father is mentioned. Therefore, the statements “he shall appear . . . we shall see him as he is . . . he was manifested to take away our sins” (3:3, 5) refer to the Father returning in the Second Coming. Since Jesus Christ returns in the Second Coming, Jesus is the Father.

However, 1 John consistently distinguishes “the Father . . . and his Son Jesus Christ” (1:3, 7; 2:1, 23-24; 3:23; 4:2-3, 9-11, 14-15; 5:1, 5:1-13; 20). Neither in 1 John, nor anywhere else in Scripture, does the Bible speak of the second coming of the Father—rather, Scripture always speaks of the second coming of Christ, who is specifically distinguished from the Father (Matthew 16:27; Acts 1:7-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 19:11-15). Nobody who simply read the book of 1 John would conclude from 3:1-5 that Jesus Christ is the Father. On the contrary, 1 John is very clear that the one who will “appear” is Jesus Christ, who is distinct from the Father.²⁸ Furthermore, while the Apostle John did not need to remind his audience that the One who would “appear” was the Son of God, Jesus Christ, in light of the very clear statements in the rest of his epistle, the nearest antecedent to the “he” of “he shall appear” is actually “God” (3:1, 2), not “the Father.” John has no reticence in calling Jesus Christ God (John 1:1; 20:28; 1 John 3:16; 5:20) while at the same time distinguishing Him from

²⁷ That is, the text reads ἐγὼ καὶ ὁ πατήρ ἓν ἔσμεν, not ἐγὼ καὶ ὁ πατήρ εἰς ἔσμεν.

²⁸ In 1 John 3:2, “appear” is φανερόω. Compare the uses of the verb in 1 John 1:2 (Christ, who was “with” the Father, was *manifest/appeared* at His first coming); 2:28 (the immediate precontext of 1 John 3:1-5ff.; “abide in Christ (cf. John 15) so that when Christ *appears* you will not be ashamed before Him”); 3:2, 5 (the texts in question); 3:8 (“the Son of God *was manifested/appeared*, the immediate postcontext of 3:1-5). The only Person who *appears* or *is manifested* in 1 John is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The Father’s love appears or is manifested, but not by His own appearance, but “because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world” (4:9).

the Father (John 1:1-3; John 20:28-31; 5:20, cf. 5:6-9), and Christ's Divine glory will be very apparent at the time of His second coming—His return is the “glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13), who is “God manifest in the flesh” (1 Timothy 3:16). Besides, since God is one, to see Christ's Divine glory is to see the Father's glory in any case (cf. John 14:9). While an argument for Christ's Deity might be made from 1 John 3:1-5, nothing in the passage affirms in any way that Jesus Christ is the Father, and the word “Father” is not the nearest stated antecedent to the “he shall appear” of 3:3, 5 in any case, even if a specifically stated antecedent were necessary, which is not so.

v.) When believers get to heaven, they will only see one throne, and one God seated on the throne, not three thrones and three gods, as the Trinity teaches. Therefore Jesus Christ must be the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

First, Trinitarians reject with abhorrence the idea that there are three gods. Anyone who believes in three gods is not a Trinitarian, and Trinitarians denounce tritheism as a damnable heresy. Second, Trinitarians believe that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son and the only One in the Trinity who ever became incarnate, will always be the only One who believers will see in the eternal state, because only He has a visible body (cf. John 1:18; 1 Timothy 6:16). Third, in the forty-two verses where the word “throne”²⁹ is employed in relation to the Father or Jesus Christ in the New Testament, not one text teaches that the Father is Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, many texts speaking of a *throne* distinguish the Father and the Lord Jesus:

He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: (Luke 1:32)

Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; (Acts 2:30)

8 But unto the Son *he* [God the Father, v. 1, 5] *saith*, Thy throne, O God, *is* for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness *is* the sceptre of thy kingdom. 9 Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, *even* thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. (Hebrews 1:8-9)

Now of the things which we have spoken *this is* the sum: We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; (Hebrews 8:1)

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:2)

4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; 5

²⁹ θρόνος, Matthew 5:34; 19:28; 23:22; 25:31; Luke 1:32; Acts 2:30; 7:49; Hebrews 1:8; 4:16; 8:1; 12:2; Revelation 1:4; 3:21; 4:2–6, 9–10; 5:1, 6–7, 11, 13; 6:16; 7:9–11, 15, 17; 8:3; 11:16; 12:5; 14:3, 5; 16:17; 19:4–5; 20:11; 21:5; 22:1, 3.

And from Jesus Christ, *who is* the faithful witness, *and* the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, 6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him *be* glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. (Revelation 1:4-6)

To him that overcometh will I [Christ] grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. (Revelation 3:21)

6 And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. 7 And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. 8 And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four *and* twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. 9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; 10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. 11 And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; 12 Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. 13 And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, *be* unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. 14 And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four *and* twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever. (Revelation 5:6-14)

And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: (Revelation 6:16)

9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; 10 And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. (Revelation 7:9-10)

14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15 Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. 16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. 17 For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. (Revelation 7:14-17)

And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and *to* his throne. (Revelation 12:5)

And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. (Revelation 22:1)

And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: (Revelation 22:3)

Summarizing the evidence above, Scripture teaches that only Jesus Christ, “the Son of the Highest,” not the Father, is ever said to sit on David’s throne (Luke 1:32; Acts 2:30). The Father says to His Son, “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever,” plainly indicating both the Deity of the Son and that He is distinct from the Father (hence “God, thy God,” v. 9). Christ is pictured at the right hand of the Father’s throne (Hebrews 8:1; 12:2). Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are distinguished from the Father who sits on the throne (Revelation 1:4-6). Christ, while speaking, distinguishes “my throne” from “my Father [and] his throne” (Revelation 3:21). Jesus Christ, “the Lamb,” is “in the midst of the throne” of the Father, and takes a book “out of the right hand of him that sat upon the

throne,” with the result that every creature says, “Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, *be* unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever,” ascribing Divine worship equally to the Father and Christ while distinguishing them (Revelation 5:6-14). The Father on the throne is distinguished from the Lamb (Revelation 6:16; 7:9-10, 15-17). Christ is caught up to the Father’s throne (Revelation 12:5). In the New Jerusalem, the Apostle John speaks of “the throne of God and of the Lamb,” showing the unity between them in here speaking of a single throne while still distinguishing the Father and Christ (Revelation 22:1, 3).

Without having actually entered glory yet, it is difficult for the believer to know exactly how literally to take all the imagery of heaven in the book of Revelation or what exactly the Christian will see when he gets there. Jehovah also declares: “The heaven *is* my throne, and the earth *is* my footstool” (Isaiah 66:1), but He does not somehow wrap the heavens around some body that He supposedly has and then makes the globe into a rest for His feet. Since the Father is invisible, has no body, and is omnipresent, He does not literally sit on a throne, although He indubitably rules as the Sovereign King from eternity to eternity. In any case, none of the texts in Scripture speaking of God’s “throne” affirm that Jesus Christ is the Father or the Holy Spirit, while the Divine Persons of the Father and Christ³⁰ are regularly and repeatedly distinguished in “throne” passages.

vii.) The Father is the Holy Spirit, because the Father is a Spirit, and He is holy.

This modalist objection confuses the personal names of the first and third Person, “Father” and “Holy Spirit,” with the attributes that pertain to the Divine essence and are consequently the possession of all three Persons in common, namely, spirituality and holiness.

viii.) Jesus Christ is the Holy Spirit, 2 Corinthians 3:17; Romans 8:9-11.

2 Corinthians 3:17 teaches that the Holy Spirit is Lord, but it does not teach that the Holy Spirit is Jesus Christ. Nothing in the context indicates that “the Lord” in 2

³⁰ It is impossible to explain the distinctions made in Scripture in the throne texts between the Father and Christ by simply appealing to the Lord Jesus’ Divine and human natures. Distinct from the Father as God the Son, Christ has His own throne (Hebrews 1:8-9). He gives the Divine blessings of grace and peace equally with the Father and the Holy Spirit, but is distinct from them (Revelation 1:4-6). As distinct from the Father, Christ receives equal Divine worship (Revelation 5:6-14). As distinct from the Father, Christ’s wrath is equally Divinely all-searching (Revelation 6:16), He equally but distinctly can give Divine salvation (Revelation 7:9-10), etc.

Corinthians 3:17a is Jesus Christ. Paul could easily have said, “Jesus Christ is the Holy Spirit,” but neither he, nor any other writer in the Bible, made such a statement. 2 Corinthians 3:17 consequently evidences the Deity of the Holy Spirit, but it does not make Him the same Person as Jesus Christ—indeed, 2 Corinthians 3:17b explicitly distinguishes the Spirit from Christ by speaking of “the Spirit of the Lord.” 2 Corinthians 3:17 is so far from proving modalism that it affirms Trinitarianism and is another of the many, many texts that demolish modalism. Nor does Romans 8:9-11 teach that Jesus Christ is the Holy Spirit. Rather, the passage demonstrates that both the Holy Spirit and the Son indwell all believers. Indeed, not the Son and Spirit only, but the Father also, and thus all three Persons of the Godhead are in the believer, for the Divine essence is undivided: “Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him”

(John 14:23).³¹ Romans 8:9-11 actually distinguishes the Persons of the Godhead:

9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. 10 And if Christ *be* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin; but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness. 11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

Verse nine distinguishes the Spirit from the Father and the Son; the Holy Spirit is “the Spirit of God” and “the Spirit of Christ.” Verse 11 also distinguishes “the Spirit” from “him that raised up Jesus,” that is, the Father, and also from “Jesus,” the One who was raised up. The Father who raised up Christ will also make the mortal bodies of dead believers alive “by his Spirit.” There is not a shred of modalism in Romans 8:9-11.

ix.) Since the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit have the same functions, they are the same Person.³²

One could as well affirm that because Paul preached the gospel, and Timothy preached the gospel, that Paul was Timothy; or that because Isaiah prophesied, and Jeremiah prophesied, that Isaiah was Jeremiah; or because David was king of Israel, and Solomon was king of Israel, that David was Solomon; or because the Father sent Jesus Christ, and the Father sent John the Baptist, that Jesus Christ was John the Baptist. The fact is that

³¹ Notice how impossible it is to reduce John 14:23 to the “we” of the Father as a Divine Person and a human nature. The Lord Jesus’ human nature is not omnipresent and does not come to abide with those that love it; rather, the Persons of the Father and the Son come to abide with those that love them.

³² For example: Father & Christ: Galatians 1:1 & John 2:19-22; John 15:16 & 14:14; 6:44 & 12:32; Christ and the Spirit, John 2:19-21 & Romans 8:9-11; John 6:40 & Romans 8:9-11; John 14:16 & 2 Corinthians 13:5 & Colossians 1:26; John 14:26 & 1 John 2:1; Romans 8:26 & Hebrews 7:25; Mark 13:11 & Luke 21:15.

Trinitarians believe that the the external Trinitarian works, the works *ad extra*, are undivided, so it is not surprising at all that, for example, the Father is said to raise Christ from the dead, Christ is said to raise Himself from the dead, and the Holy Spirit is said to raise Christ (Galatians 1:1; John 2:19-22; 1 Peter 3:18). If the works of the Triune God towards mankind are from the Father, through the Son, and by the Spirit, it is not surprising that all such works can be attributed to any one of the three Persons, as the entire Godhead performs such works in accordance with the roles they assumed in the economic Trinity. The ascription of solely Divine works, from creation to resurrection, to the Father, Son, and Spirit show that all three are God, but they do not show that they are the same Person.

x.) Texts that mention the Father and the Son often do not mention the Holy Spirit, so He is not a separate Person.³³

This is simply an argument from silence that proves nothing. One could, with just as much consistency, argue that because there are passages where the Father is mentioned alone, He does not have a Son. Furthermore, the different roles assumed in the economy of salvation by the three Persons often explains the presence or absence of their names in various situations. For example, in 1 John 1:3, the Holy Spirit is not specifically mentioned because He is the One through whom believers enjoy communion with the Father and with the Son—and, note, the Father and the Son are both the distinct objects of the Christian’s communion. The immediate working of the Spirit also explains why He is not mentioned in epistolary salutations—He is the one who applies the grace and peace given by the Father through the Son, rather than working as the originator of grace and peace. In Revelation 21:22-23, “the Lord God Almighty” is the entire Triune God, not the Father only, and “the Lamb” is the incarnate Mediator. Furthermore, why does not the mention of Father and Son prove that they two are distinct Persons, rather than the absence of the mention of the Holy Spirit in some texts prove that He is not a distinct Person? This argument is very weak.

Besides, there are many texts where the Father, Son, and Spirit are mentioned together. For example:

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (Matthew 28:19)

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, *be* with you all. (2 Corinthians 13:14)

³³ Compare 1 John 1:3; Matthew 11:26; Revelation 21:22-23; 1 Corinthians 1:3 & 2 Corinthians 1:2 & Galatians 1:3 (and all other epistolary salutations).

For through him [Christ] we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. (Ephesians 2:18)
For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. (1 John 5:7)

References to the Father, Son, and Spirit are woven into the woof of the Biblical text—for example, Ephesians 1:3-14 is one sentence in Greek divided between the Father (1:3-6), the Son (1:7-12), and the Holy Spirit (1:13-14). If “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” are just three attributes or functions, why don’t we see comparable lists of references in the Bible such as, say, “Father, omnipresence, and holiness,” or “justice, Son, and love,” or “kindness, sovereignty, and the Holy Spirit,” etc.? Why does nothing of this sort appear in Scripture with a frequency comparable to the frequency with which the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are mentioned—only references to those whom Trinitarians recognize as the three Divine Persons? Why do the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have all the attributes of personality, manifesting thought, will, and affections, while Divine attributes, such as “justice,” “mercy,” or “goodness” are not at all comparably personified?

Finally, since it is the work of the Spirit to point to the Father and the Son (John 16:13-14), rather than to Himself, it is not surprising that at times the Holy Spirit is absent in certain references where the Father and the Son appear.

xi.) Since the fulness of the Godhead is in Christ, Colossians 2:9, Jesus Christ is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—if Jesus Christ is simply the Son, only part of the Godhead is in Him.

This argument neglects the fact that Trinitarians recognize that the Divine essence is undivided. They do not believe that the Father, Son, and Spirit each have 1/3 of the essence. The fulness of the Godhead is in the Son, and it is also in the Father and in the Holy Spirit.

xii.) If the Father and Son are distinct Persons, then Jesus Christ had two Fathers—the Father (1 John 1:3) and the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35).

This modalist argument, either in deliberate rebellion or culpable ignorance, ignores the fact that Trinitarians believe that God is the Father of the Son from eternity, not simply because of the incarnation. The incarnation is not what made Jesus Christ the Son of God. The fact that the Holy Spirit came upon Mary in conjunction with the incarnation does not prove that the Holy Ghost is the Person of the Father.

xiii.) There is only one Spirit, Ephesians 4:4, but if the Trinity were true, then there would be three Spirits (John 4:24; 2 Corinthians 3:17).

Ephesians 4:3-6 reads:

Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. *There is* one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.

It is perfectly clear that the “one Spirit” of Ephesians 4:4 is the Person of the Holy Spirit, who is actually distinguished in context from the “one Lord” Jesus Christ of 4:5 and the “one God and Father” of 4:6. It is true that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all possess the characteristic of being spirit. Trinitarians recognize that the undivided Divine essence has the attribute of spirituality, and therefore that the Father, Son, and Spirit possess this characteristic of the essence, as they do all other characteristics of the essence. Trinitarians also recognize that the name of the third Person of the Godhead is the Holy Spirit. There is no reason whatsoever to conclude that because the divine essence possesses the attribute of spirituality, and the third Person is called the Holy Spirit, that therefore the third Person is the first and second Person, but such categorial confusion is what this modalistic argument comes down to.

xiv.) If the Son is truly God rather than simply being the human part of God, he could not be limited in knowledge (Mark 13:32), be less than the Father (John 14:28), die (Matthew 27:50), or have His kingdom truly end (1 Corinthians 15:24-28).

This objection is based on a misunderstanding of orthodox Trinitarianism and Christology. The Christian believes that the Son of God united a human nature to Himself so that He became the God-Man. He did not have limited knowledge, die, subordinate His kingdom to the Father, etc. as God, but as Man. The Athanasian Creed even affirms that Christ is “equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead: and inferior to the Father, as touching his manhood.” Trinitarians fully expect texts such as John 14:28 to be in the Bible, and their doctrine is by no means contradicted by them.

xv.) Since baptism is performed in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19), but baptism is performed in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38), Jesus Christ is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

There are numerous problems with this modalist argument. First, the texts in Acts do not speak of a formula, but indicate that baptism was performed with the authority of

Christ; that is what “in the name of” means. Second, the texts in Acts do not even always refer to “Jesus Christ,” but sometimes to simply “the Lord” (Acts 10:48). Third, baptism performed using the Trinitarian formula of Matthew 28:19 actually is performed in the name of Jesus Christ, for Jesus Christ is the One who authorized the formula by commanding His church, after His resurrection, to practice Matthew 28:19 in His post-resurrection appearance. Fourth, Matthew 28:19 actually affirms Trinitarianism and rejects modalism with the successive articles “the” before “Father . . . Son . . . and . . . Holy Spirit.” If the Father is the Son and the Holy Spirit, the verse could also be stated: “in the name of the Father, and of the Father, and of the Father.” On the other hand, if “Son” refers merely to the human nature of Christ, how can an impersonal human nature authorize anything, much less have authority equal to that of the Father?

Since Acts 2:38 is probably the single most important text for Oneness Pentecostalism, the excerpt below concerning the verse from *Heaven Only for the Baptized? The Gospel of Christ vs. Baptismal Regeneration* has been reproduced:

Acts 2:38 reads, “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” This verse is the favorite proof-text for many who defend salvation by baptism. It is usually argued that Peter affirms that one must repent, and then be baptized, in order to receive (“for”) the remission of sins, after which one receives the Holy Spirit.³⁴ The dogmatic crux on which the argument turns is the assertion that baptism is “for” the remission of sins in the sense that it is administered “in order to receive” forgiveness.³⁵ Careful study will demonstrate that Peter does not assert baptism

³⁴ Some baptismal regenerationists affirm that the Holy Spirit is received immediately after baptism. Others add requirements not found in Acts 2:38 by any stretch of the imagination; for example, Oneness Pentecostalism makes speaking in tongues after baptism a necessary sign of the receipt of the Spirit (see “Salvation, the Spirit, and Tongues,” pgs. 197-213, *Oneness Pentecostals & The Trinity*, Gregory A. Boyd, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1992). Roman Catholicism teaches that “the effect of the sacrament of Confirmation [which generally takes place years after infant baptism] is the full outpouring of the Holy Spirit as once granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost,” so that what Peter preached in Acts 2:38 is received only after a bishop “anoint[s] the forehead of the baptized with sacred chrism . . . together with the laying on of the minister’s hand and the words . . . ‘Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit’” (sections #1302, 1320, pgs. 330, 333, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Mahweh, NJ: Paulist Press, 1994). Apparently Peter’s promise “ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” to his audience upon complying with Acts 2:38 would have been better stated as “ye shall only receive the gift of the Holy Ghost if, continuing faithful for some time after baptism, ye speak in tongues/get oil put on your forehead by a properly ordained bishop [or priest if it is an extreme emergency and you may die without the seal of the Holy Spirit] and submit to other ritualistic requirements.”

³⁵ It is noteworthy that most baptismal regenerationists believe that baptism only forgives past sins, not all sin, but Peter never makes this qualification in Acts 2:38. Would not “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ in order to receive the forgiveness of past sins,” or “in order to receive the forgiveness of some sins,” have been more appropriate?

is administered in order to receive forgiveness in Acts 2:38, nor is such a view of the verse consistent with the apostle's teaching elsewhere in the book of Acts.

While the baptismal regenerationist insists that “for” in Acts 2:38 means “in order to” receive remission of sins, those who give credence to the overwhelming testimony of Scripture in general to justification by faith alone usually³⁶ contend that the “for” signifies “with respect to” or “on account of” remission of sins already received. A poster with a picture of a criminal affirming that he is “wanted for robbery” asserts that he is wanted “on account of” a robbery already committed, not (hopefully!) “in order to” commit another robbery. The English of Acts 2:38 is consistent with the view that Peter affirmed that the crowds at Jerusalem needed to repent, and then be baptized “on account of” the remission of sins that they received when they repented, rather than repenting, and then being baptized “in order to obtain” the remission of sins.

An examination of the Greek text underlying Acts 2:38 similarly harmonizes with justification by faith. The word translated “for” is the Greek preposition *eis*. The second most common preposition in the New Testament, it appears 1,767³⁷ times. As one might expect with a word this common, *eis* has a great variety of meanings in different contexts—as does the English word “for.”³⁸ The preposition *eis* can signify “on account of” or “with respect to,” as it does, for example, in Matthew 12:41 and 10:41-42 (3 times):

The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas [Greek, *eis*, “on account of” the preaching of Jonah, not “in order to obtain” the preaching of Jonah]; and, behold, a greater than Jonas *is* here. (Matthew 12:41)

41 He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet [Greek *eis*, “on account of” or “with respect to” the name (or character) of a prophet—hardly “in order to obtain” the name of a prophet] shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in [Greek *eis*, “on account of” or “with respect to”] the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. 42 And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold *water* only in [Greek *eis*, “on account of” or “with respect to”] the

³⁶ Some who reject baptismal regeneration hold other views on the verse. For Acts 2:38 to function as a proof-text for advocates of forgiveness by baptism, they must prove the text teaches the ordinance is administered “in order to receive” remission of sins. Opponents of baptismal salvation do not need to prove anything from Acts 2:38. They simply must show that it can reasonably mean something other than that baptism is a prerequisite to forgiveness. Having accomplished this, the verse can no longer be used as a proof-text to (attempt) to negate the immense numbers of verses that clearly promise eternal life to all believers.

³⁷ This statistic was obtained by a search of the Greek *Textus Receptus* using *Accordance* Bible software. The same figure is given on pg. 357 of *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, Daniel Wallace (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996).

³⁸ In the best (and the standard) New Testament lexicon, BDAG, (*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, (BDAG), 3rd ed., rev. & ed. Frederick William Danker, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), the preposition *eis* has ten listed main definitions, with twenty-nine subheadings classifying different senses under the main headings.

name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward. (Matthew 10:41-42)

Among the many uses of the word *eis*, the meaning “on account of”³⁹ or “with respect to” is clearly found in Scripture. This sense of *eis* represents Acts 2:38 as “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ on account of the remission of sins [received at the time of repentance].” The baptismal regenerationist concludes too much when he affirms that Acts 2:38 proves his doctrine that baptism is administered “in order to obtain”⁴⁰ forgiveness. The verse can easily convey a meaning perfectly harmonious with justification by faith before baptism.⁴¹

³⁹ “*Eis* . . . [can be] use[d] . . . causally [as] ‘on account of,’ . . . Matthew 12:41. . . . [In] Matthew 10:41 . . . the sense here called for is a causal one, for which the preposition *eis* is suitable, just as the Semitic equivalent *le* admits not only a final but also a causal sense” (para. 98, 106, *Biblical Greek Illustrated by Examples*, Maximilian Zerwick. Eng. ed. Joseph Smith. Rome: Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblici, 1963). *Eis* can mean “because of” (pg. 103, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1957). Concerning “*eis* . . . some contexts would certainly suit a causal sense: Matthew 3:11, *because of repentance* . . . 10:41; 12:41=Luke 11:32 *metenoesan eis to kerugma Iona*: they repented *because of* the preaching of Jonah . . . Acts 2:38 *be baptized eis aphesin ton hamartion, on the basis of* . . . Acts 7:53; Romans 4:20, *on account of* the promises of God, Abraham did not waver . . . Romans 11:32 God has imprisoned all *because of disobedience* . . . Titus 3:14, to maintain good works, *because of the compelling need of them*; Hebrews 12:7 [v. l.], you are enduring *because of discipline* . . . 1 John 5:10” (pgs. 266-267, 18:4:1c, Moulton, J. H. *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*. 4 vols. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1908-76. Vol. 3 (1963): *Syntax*, by Nigel Turner). See J. R. Mantey, “The Causal Use of *Eis* in the New Testament,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 70 (1951) pgs. 45-48, and “On Causal *Eis* Again,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 70 (1951) pgs. 309-311. In addition to quoting Matthew 3:11; 12:41; Acts 2:38, and other inspired texts as examples of a causal (“because of”) use of *eis* in the New Testament, Mantey provides evidence from uninspired Greek, such as Genesis 4:23 (LXX): *Andra apekteina eis trauma emoi kai neaniskon eis molopa emoi*, “I killed a man *for* [on account of] wounding me, and a young man *for* [on account of] striking me.” Mantey also mentions contemporary secular Greek examples such as Lucian, *The Dead Come to Life*, Vol. III, 12: *ta hremata panu hetairika, kai epainoumene hupo ton heraston eis kallos echaire*, “Her words are always those of a courtesan, and she delighted in being praised by her lovers *for* [because of] her beauty.” B. H. Carroll provides evidence “from Aristophanes: ‘To jeer at a man *eis* his rags’ . . . [f]rom Plato . . . ‘To differ from one *eis* virtue.’ . . . [He concludes,] the meaning of *eis* in Acts 2:38 is . . . with reference to remission of sins. I am willing to risk my scholarship on that” (pgs. 81-82, *An Interpretation of the English Bible*, sec. 8, “The Theory of Baptismal Regeneration (concluded): Acts 2:38,” elec. acc. AGES Digital Software Library vol. 11, B. H. Carroll Collection. Rio, WI: 2006). Indeed, the “illustrations of . . . [the usage of *eis* as] because of . . . are numerous in the N. T. and the *Koiné* [Greek outside of the Bible] generally” (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*, A. T. Robertson, Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1960, note on Acts 2:38).

⁴⁰ The preposition *eis* can signify “to” and convey a meaning of “in order to” (e. g., Colossians 1:29), although this usage is hardly the predominant or majority one. However, it is not enough for the baptismal regenerationist to show that the word may signify “in order to” in a few of its 1,767 appearances. He must prove that it can signify nothing other than “in order to” in Acts 2:38. If he does not prove this sense is required in the verse, it does not establish his position.

⁴¹ Some baptismal regenerationists attempt to support their view that *eis aphesin hamartion* in Acts 2:38 (“for/on account of the remission of sins”) means “in order to obtain” the remission of sins by cross-referencing Matthew 26:28, which states that Christ shed His blood *eis aphesin hamartion*. However, this comparison of texts overlooks a number of facts. The shedding of blood by Christ, not our baptism, is in view in Matthew’s gospel. There are two other instances (aside from Acts 2:38 and Matthew 26:28) where the *eis aphesin hamartion* construction appears in the New Testament—Mark 1:4 and Luke 3:3. In both of

To determine more exactly the significance of *eis* in Acts 2:38 requires consideration of the verses where the preposition appears in connection with baptism. While the word can signify “on account of” and “with respect to” in reference to other objects, if, in verses that associate *eis* and baptism, the sense is clearly “in order to” obtain, the baptismal regenerationist argument in Acts 2:38 might carry some weight. However, no such connection is found in the sixteen verses that associate baptism and *eis* in the New Testament.⁴² The clear sense of the word in many of these verses is “on account of” or “with respect to.” Not one of the uses must signify “in order to” obtain; indeed, such an idea is impossible in a number of passages.⁴³ For example, John the Baptist preached, “I indeed baptize you with water unto [*eis*] repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and *with* fire” (Matthew 3:11). Here it is obvious that John baptized people “on account of” their prior repentance; he certainly did not wrestle unrepentant sinners into the water “in order to” get them to repent!⁴⁴ The affirmation that

these instances, the phrase is used in connection with baptism (unlike in Matthew 26:28) and signifies “on account of the remission of sins.” To use Matthew 26:28’s *eis apheresin hamartion* to support the idea of baptism “in order to” obtain remission of sins in Acts 2:38, while ignoring the sense of Mark 1:4 and Luke 3:3, where the word *baptism* is actually used with the phrase, is faulty exegesis. Furthermore, “remission of sins,” *aphesin hamartion*, is promised elsewhere in Scripture to all who believe. Acts 10:43 states, “To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins (*aphesin hamartion*).” Acts 26:18 likewise reads, “[T]hey may receive forgiveness of sins (*aphesin hamartion*) and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.”

⁴² It is worth mentioning that, although the KJV translates *eis* forty-eight different ways, it never renders the preposition as “in order to.” Indeed, even Alexander Campbell’s own Bible version, the *Living Oracles*, only manages to render *eis* as “in order to” in eleven out of its 1,767 appearances—and this eleven includes a number of verses with an *eis* + *to* + infinitive construction entirely unlike Acts 2:38. Nevertheless, Campbell did remember to make Acts 2:38 one of the 0.6% of references in his own Bible version where *eis* is rendered “in order to.”

⁴³ In addition to the very obvious Matthew 3:11, it is hard to see how “in order to” can fit many other Biblical texts. Is Matthew 28:19 “in order to” obtain the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost? (Compare *eis* used with baptism and “name” in Acts 8:16; 19:5.) Is Mark 1:9 “in order to” obtain the Jordan river? Is Acts 19:3 “in order to” obtain John’s baptism? Is 1 Corinthians 1:13 (also 1:15) “in order to” obtain the name of Paul? Is 1 Corinthians 10:2 “in order to obtain” Moses? The only remaining verses containing *eis* and baptism can at least as easily signify “with respect to,” “on account of,” or one of the other senses of *eis*. Not one verse must signify “in order to” obtain (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3, 4; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:27).

⁴⁴ Further evidence that John’s baptism was not “in order to” the forgiveness of sins comes from the lack of Pharisaical challenge to his ministry on that account (cf. Matthew 3:7). Christ did claim the power to forgive sin (although He did not baptize, John 4:2—note that the Lord Jesus did “make” disciples before having them baptized, evidencing that one is not made a disciple by baptism, but is one previous to it), and the Jewish religious leaders contended with Him on that ground (Matthew 9:3; Mark 2:7; Luke 5:21; 7:49). They did not make a similar challenge to John because his baptism was not a means for the receipt of forgiveness. It was an evidence that pardon had already been received.

Josephus, the first century Jewish historian, when describing John’s baptism, stated that it was performed on account of already forgiven sin, not in order to obtain forgiveness. “John, who was called the

Acts 2:38 proves that baptism is “in order to” obtain the remission of sins does not take into account the use of *eis* in connection with baptism in the rest of the New Testament.

Indeed, John’s preaching of a baptism on account of (*eis*) repentance (Matthew 3:11), a baptism that is the result of repentance (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3; Acts 13:24; 19:4),⁴⁵ controls a proper understanding of Acts 2:38. John had “preached . . . the baptism of repentance [the baptism that is the result of repentance] to all the people of Israel” (Acts 13:24), and his message of baptism on account of repentance had filled “all the land of Judea . . . of Jerusalem . . . [and] all the country about Jordan . . . [so that] all men [came] to him” (Matthew 3:5; Mark 1:5; Luke 3:3; John 3:26). Peter and the other apostles had been baptized by John (Acts 1:22). When Peter preached, “[Y]e men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem . . . [r]epent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for/on account of (*eis*) the remission of sins” (Acts 2:14, 38), his Pentecostal

Baptist . . . was a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness towards one another, and piety towards God, and so to come to baptism; for that the washing [with water] would be acceptable to him, if they made use of it, not in order to the putting away of some sins, but for the purification of the body; supposing still that the soul was thoroughly purified beforehand by righteousness” (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 18:5:2:117). Similarly Eusebius, the first known writer in Christendom to compose a church history, slightly altered the statements of Josephus but agreed with his conclusions, writing: “John who was called the Baptist . . . said that baptism would prove acceptable . . . only in those who used it not to escape from any sins but for bodily purity, on condition that the soul also had been previously cleansed thoroughly by righteousness” (*Ecclesiastical History*, I. XI:5, cited in Loeb Classical Library ed., trans. Kirsopp Lake, pg. 81). While neither the writings of Josephus nor of Eusebius are inspired Scripture, of course, if John publicly proclaimed that his baptism was a prerequisite to forgiveness, would not the ancient historical record have indicated, rather than contradicted, this view?

⁴⁵ John’s “baptism of repentance for (*eis*) the remission of sins” (Mark 1:4, Luke 3:3) was not one administered “in order to” obtain remission by baptism but “on account of” remission already received by repentance and faith in the Savior (Acts 19:4-5). The genitive construction “baptism of repentance” (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3; Acts 13:24; 19:4) is a result/reason construction, meaning “baptism [result] on account of repentance [reason],” similar to the phrases “work [result] of faith [reason], labour [result] of love [reason], and patience [result] of hope [reason]” (1 Thessalonians 1:3; cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:11; Hebrews 6:10) or “obedience [result] of faith [reason]” (Romans 16:26). (Compare the discussion of the genitive of production/producer on pgs. 104-106 of Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, and the genitive of source or origin analyzed on pgs. 109-110, which Wallace says “stresses cause,” that is, reason. The connection between production/producer and reason/result can be seen, not only in the texts above, but in verses such as 1 Peter 1:3, “sanctification of the Spirit” or Galatians 3:13, “curse of the law”; cf. also Galatians 5:22; 2 Corinthians 11:26. Note, outside the NT, texts such as 1 Clement 50:5, “harmony of love,” or Amos 6:12; Sirach 45:11 (LXX); or Philo, *Allegorical Interpretation* 2:68.) Baptism is one of the “works meet for repentance” (Matthew 3:8; Acts 26:20) that follows receiving the gospel. The record of John preaching “I indeed baptize you with water unto (*eis*) repentance” (Matthew 3:11) is simply a statement explaining the summary phrase that John preached a “baptism of repentance for (*eis*, on account of) the remission of sins” (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3). Since the phrase “a baptism of repentance” is a result/reason genitive construction indicating that baptism is a result of repentance, Matthew 3:11 means that John baptized with water “on account of” or “as a result of” repentance, defining *eis* in the text as “on account of/because of” repentance. One notes further that even apart from this strong syntactical evidence from related passages, the natural and obvious sense of Matthew 3:11 is *eis* in the sense of “on account of” in any case.

message of baptism on account of the remission of sins was one with which both the apostle and his audience were familiar from the preaching of John the Baptist. The message of John, baptism on account of repentance (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:4), was what Peter preached in Acts 2:38. Peter’s Pentecostal sermon was no more “Repent, and be baptized in order to obtain the remission of sins” than John’s message was “I indeed baptize you with water in order to get you to repent.” The context and historical setting of Acts 2:38 within the framework of the baptism of John do not merely make it possible that Peter’s message was baptism on account of the remission of sins, but clearly establish this sense of the command.

The grammatical structure of Acts 2:38 connects the receipt of the Holy Spirit (and thus the new birth “of the Spirit” (John 3:5-8) and its associated receipt of eternal life) with repentance, not baptism. The section of the verse in question could be diagrammed as follows:

Repent (2nd person plural aorist imperative)
 be baptized (3rd person singular aorist imperative)
 every one (nominative singular adjective)
 in (*epi*) the name of Jesus Christ
 for (*eis*) the remission of sins
 ye shall receive (2nd person future indicative) . . . the Holy Ghost

Both the command to repent and the promised receipt of the Holy Spirit are in the second person (i. e., “Repent [ye]” and “ye shall receive”). The command to be baptized is in the third person singular, as is the adjective “every one” (*hekastos*). Peter commands the whole crowd to repent and promises those who do the gift of the Holy Ghost (cf. Acts 10:47; 15:8).⁴⁶ The call to baptism was only for the “every one of you”⁴⁷ that had already repented. The “be baptized every one of you” section of the verse is parenthetical to the command to repent and its associated promise of the Spirit. Parenthetical statements, including those parallel in structure to Acts 2:38, are found throughout Scripture.⁴⁸ The connection in Acts 2:38 between the receipt of the Holy Spirit and

⁴⁶ Peter’s use of *kathos kai*, “even as,” in Acts 10:47; 15:8 provides further support for the fact that the Holy Spirit was received before baptism in Acts 2:38. Peter explains that in the same way that the Holy Spirit was given before baptism in the account of Acts 10:43-48, the Jews who responded to the gospel in Acts 2:38 likewise received the Spirit before baptism. Compare the other uses of *kathos kai* in the New Testament (Luke 6:36; 11:1; 24:24; Acts 2:22; 10:47; 15:8; Romans 1:13; 15:7; 1 Corinthians 10:6, 9–10, 33–11:1; 13:12; 14:34; 2 Corinthians 1:14; 11:12; Galatians 5:21; Ephesians 4:4, 17, 32; 5:2, 25, 29; Colossians 1:6–7; 3:13; 1 Thessalonians 2:14; 3:4; 4:6, 13; 5:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:1; Hebrews 5:6; 2 Peter 1:14; 3:15).

⁴⁷ “of you” (*homon*), is a second person pronoun in the genitive case. It is a partitive genitive (see pgs. 84-86, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, Wallace) indicating the group from which each person was derived.

⁴⁸ Ephesians 4:26-27 is an example:
 Be ye angry (2nd person plural imperative)

repentance, rather than baptism, overthrows the assertions of baptismal regenerations on the verse.

Peter also clearly affirmed elsewhere in Acts that at the moment of repentant faith one receives the Spirit and eternal life. As taught in all the rest of the New Testament, Peter believed that one “receive[s] the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Galatians 3:14), not by baptism. In Acts 10:34-48, just as on the day of Pentecost (11:15, 17), eternal life, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, was received at the moment of repentant faith (11:18; 10:43-48) and before baptism. Peter explicitly stated that God “purif[ied] [the] hearts by faith” (Acts 15:9) of those given eternal life in Acts 2 and 10, when they “heard the word of the gospel, and believe[d]” (15:7, cf. v. 11), at which time they received the Holy Spirit (15:7-9). Furthermore, in the rest of the book of Acts, Peter proclaimed justification by repentant faith alone. He preached, “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out” (Acts 3:19). He associated “repentance . . . and forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5:31). He commanded men to “repent . . . and . . . be forgiven” (Acts 8:22). In Acts 10:43, he preached that “through [Christ’s] name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.” If Peter taught forgiveness by baptism in Acts 2:38, why did he teach justification by repentant faith, as the other apostles did (Acts 13:39; 16:31), in all the rest of Acts? Did he change his mind in Acts 10-11 and 15, and, twice, inform the very church at Jerusalem that included numerous converts from his sermon in Acts 2 that they were saved by faith, not by baptism? Did the entire Jerusalem church agree with Peter’s new teaching and “glorify God” (11:18) for it, including those that were supposedly baptized in order to receive the remission of sins on that first Pentecost? The allegation that Acts 2:38 conditions forgiveness of sins on baptism ignores the clear statements of Peter about what happened on that day, his preaching of the gospel everywhere else in the book, and the numerous affirmations of salvation by repentant faith alone by others in Acts.

and sin not (2nd person plural imperative)
[do] not . . . let go down (3rd person singular imperative)
the sun (nominative singular noun)
upon your wrath
neither give place (2nd person plural imperative)
to the devil.
Compare Joshua 6:10 (LXX, trans. Brenton):
And Joshua commanded the people, saying,
Cry not out (2nd person plural imperative)
nor let any one hear (3rd person singular imperative)
your voice, until . . . the time to cry out, and then
ye shall cry out (2nd person plural future indicative).

While the fact that Peter preached the receipt of the Spirit upon repentance, and before baptism, in Acts 2:38; 10:47 & 15:8 refutes all versions of baptismal regeneration, it is especially worthy of note as a response to the Oneness Pentecostal doctrine that people do not receive the Holy Spirit until after they have received anti-Trinitarian Oneness baptism and spoken in tongues. Acts 2:38 promises the Spirit before baptism, and far before the time advocated by Oneness doctrine. The Bible also teaches the doctrine of the Trinity, that the one and only God has existed from eternity in three distinct Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.⁴⁹ Furthermore, even before the gift of tongues, the miraculous ability to speak in known foreign languages, ceased,⁵⁰ it was never for all believers (1 Corinthians 12:30), and certainly was not a prerequisite to justification. Additionally, in Acts 19:2 the aorist participle “believed”⁵¹ is dependent upon the aorist verb “received,”⁵² and the verse indicates that Paul assumed⁵³ that the Holy Spirit was received instantaneously upon believing (that is, with temporal simultaneity but logical subsequence to faith), not at some later period when some sort of second blessing took place. “[W]hen the aorist participle is related to an aorist main verb, the participle will often be contemporaneous (or simultaneous) to the action of the main verb.”⁵⁴ Paul’s question to these professed disciples assumed the reality of an immediate receipt of the Spirit at the moment of faith. “[In Acts 19:2] there is no question about what happened *after* believing; but the question rightly relates to what occurred *when* they believed. . . . [The verse could be rendered] rightly, ‘Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?’”⁵⁵ The post-believing coming of the Spirit in miraculous power recorded in Acts 19:6 employs a different Greek word⁵⁶ than that generally used for the simple receipt of the Spirit as in verse 2.⁵⁷ The word in verse 2, when employed after the historical event of Spirit baptism ceased by Acts 19, always refers to the receipt of the Spirit at the moment of faith. This use is universal in the

⁴⁹ E. g., 1 John 5:7; Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; John 1:1-18.

⁵⁰ 1 Corinthians 13:8; cf. “1 Corinthians 13:8-13 and the Cessation of Miraculous Gifts,” R. Bruce Compton. *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 9 (2004) 97-144.

⁵¹ *pisteusantes*.

⁵² *elabete*.

⁵³ Consider also the use of *ei* in the question.

⁵⁴ Pg. 624, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, Daniel Wallace.

⁵⁵ *Word Studies in the New Testament*, Marvin Vincent, vol. 1, note on Acts 19:2, elec. acc. in AGES Digital Software Library, Classic Commentary collection.

⁵⁶ *erchomai*.

⁵⁷ *lambano*.

epistles.⁵⁸ In contrast, the word in Acts 19:6 is never used in the New Testament of the believer's receipt of the Spirit at the moment of faith and regeneration.

The Oneness Pentecostal idea that “the one name of Matthew 28:19 is Jesus, for Jesus is the name of the Father . . . the Son . . . and the Holy Ghost . . . the name of Jesus was orally uttered as part of the baptismal formula . . . the name Jesus was orally invoked at baptism”⁵⁹ is entirely erroneous and heretical, and it cannot be sustained Scripturally. If one must, as Oneness Pentecostalism affirms, employ the correct words at the time of baptism or salvation is impossible, which words should be employed? Those of Acts 2:38, “in [*epi*] the name of Jesus Christ”; those of Acts 8:16 and 19:5, “in [*eis*] the name of the Lord Jesus”; or those of Acts 10:48, “in [*en*] the name of the Lord”? Since there are three different groups of words, with three different prepositions employed (*epi*, *eis*, and *en*), and three different endings (“Jesus Christ,” “Lord Jesus,” “Lord,”—note that the last does not even have the name “Jesus” at all), which set constitutes the magic words without which salvation is impossible? Would it also not be very unfortunate that, whichever of the three sets of words one determines is the true one, every person the apostles and first century Christians baptized employing the two “wrong” sets of words was eternally damned? How many of the first century Christians must have missed heaven because they did not know which of the various sets of words were the magic keys to heaven! How unfortunate, indeed, how misleading it is that Luke, writing under inspiration, does not give the slightest hint that either Acts 2:38, or 8:16, or 19:5, or any other verbal formulation whatsoever, is essential to salvation! What errors the apostles made as well in allowing all those baptized in Acts into church membership, whichever set of words are recorded in connection with their baptism, although the two-thirds with the wrong formula were not truly saved! Or is it not rather obvious that the Oneness Pentecostal notion that a certain set of words is essential to salvation cannot be sustained in the book of Acts or elsewhere in Scripture? Since there is no consistent set of words recorded in Acts in connection with baptism “in the name of” the Lord, and so Acts is not giving a specific set of words that must be employed without sinning and facing eternal damnation, what does the “name” terminology really mean?

Baptism is “in the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 2:38), not because Jesus is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, nor because the words “in the name of Jesus” or some similar non-Trinitarian formula was uttered when the ceremony was performed,

⁵⁸ Romans 8:15; 1 Corinthians 2:12; 2 Corinthians 11:4; Galatians 3:2, 14, cf. the prediction in John 7:39.

⁵⁹ Chapter 6, “Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,” *The Oneness of God*, David K. Bernard. Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 1995.

but because baptism is performed with Christ's authority. The Lord Jesus, who has all authority or power (Matthew 28:18), commanded that baptism be performed with the Trinitarian formula of Matthew 28:19. When this is done (and other requirements for baptism are met, such as that the person being baptized is a believer, not an infant), the baptism is performed with Christ's authority, that is, in His name. When Baptist churches employ the Trinitarian formula the Lord Jesus commanded for use until the end of the world (Matthew 28:20), they are baptizing in Jesus' name.

The fact that "in the name of" means "with the authority of" is evident in Scripture. Several examples, out of many, will be given. In Deuteronomy 18:5-7, the Levites were "to minister in the name of the LORD." Unlike the other tribes, they had Jehovah's authority to do their Levitical work. They did not go around all day long repeating His name in a sort of mantra. Their ministrations in the tabernacle and temple, teaching the Law to God's people and completing other work, was done with Divine authority, hence "in His name." In 1 Samuel 25:9, "when David's young men came, they spake to Nabal according to all those words in the name of David, and ceased." David's young men came to Nabal with David's authority and gave Nabal a message from David. They did not come to Nabal and say, "David, David, David, David." In 1 Kings 18:32, Elijah "built an altar in the name of the LORD: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed." Elijah built the altar with Jehovah's authority (1 Kings 18:36). The point was not that he repeated the Tetragrammaton over and over again. In Esther 3:12, "the king's scribes called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and there was written according to all that Haman had commanded unto the king's lieutenants, and to the governors that *were* over every province, and to the rulers of every people of every province according to the writing thereof, and *to* every people after their language; in the name of king Ahasuerus was it written, and sealed with the king's ring." The letter had the authority of king Ahasuerus, so all men in his empire needed to pay attention. The words of the letter were not "Ahasuerus, Ahasuerus, Ahasuerus." In 2 Thessalonians 3:6, Paul wrote, "[B]rethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us." The apostle commanded the church at Thessalonica with Christ's authority. Paul wrote under inspiration, and the command to practice church discipline was given by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 18:15-20. In Acts 4:7, the elders of Israel asked Peter what authority the apostle had for his message. Their question was, "By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?" In Luke 24:47—which sets the background for the use of "in the name of" formulae in Acts, since Luke wrote Acts as the continuation of his gospel (Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-4) and the preaching in

Acts was in fulfillment of the command given in Luke 24 (cf. Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15)—“repentance and remission of sins should be preached in [Christ’s] name among all nations.” That is, the Lord Jesus gave authority to the church to preach repentance and remission of sins, and so this preaching was done as recorded in the book of Acts. “In the name of” means “with the authority of” in Scripture.

Acts 19:1-7 demonstrates that the formula given in Matthew 28:19 was employed by the apostolic churches, corroborating that Trinitarian baptism is actually baptism with Christ’s authority (Acts 19:5). When Paul found people who claimed to be “disciples” (v. 1) who had “not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost” (v. 2), the apostle, in shock, asked “Unto what then were ye baptized?” Since the churches were “baptizing . . . in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 28:19), employing the Trinitarian formula in their baptismal ceremony, Paul asks these alleged “disciples” how they could have been baptized and never have heard of the Holy Ghost, when He is mentioned in the baptismal ritual itself. Paul’s question would not make any sense if the baptismal ceremony employed a formula such as “I baptize you in the name of Jesus.” How would that formula be a guarantee that all baptized disciples had heard of the Holy Ghost? Trinitarians correctly explain Paul’s mental process as, “How could these people be disciples in Christian churches—they have not even heard of the Holy Ghost, but He is mentioned in the act of baptism itself! ‘Unto what then were ye baptized?’” Oneness Pentecostals would have made Paul think, “How could these people be disciples in Christian churches—they have not even heard of the Holy Ghost—now He isn’t mentioned in the act of baptism, since only the word “Jesus” is used in the formula. However, I’ll ask them what they were baptized unto anyway, as if that related to what they had just said somehow.”

Very early documents in church history demonstrate that even around the end of the first century baptism was administered employing the Trinitarian formula. Near the end of the first century, it was written: “Now concerning baptism, baptize as follows: after you have reviewed all these things, baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”⁶⁰ “For those things which the prophets announced, saying, ‘Until He come for whom it is reserved, and He shall be the expectation of the Gentiles,’ have been fulfilled in the Gospel, [our Lord saying,] ‘Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.’”⁶¹ Some decades later, declarations like the following are found: “For the law of baptizing has been

⁶⁰ Didache 7:1.

⁶¹ Chapter 9, Ignatius to the Philadelphians.

imposed, and the formula prescribed: ‘Go,’ He saith, ‘teach the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.’”⁶² In contrast, no extant patristic writer or ancient document says anything like “we should not baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, but in the name of Jesus Christ” or anything remotely similar. True churches in the earliest centuries of Christianity employed the Trinitarian baptismal formula (as even proto-Catholicism did).

When Biblical churches employ the Trinitarian formula in baptism, they are baptizing in Jesus’ name, just like the first century churches did. Oneness Pentecostals that employ the phrase “in the name of Jesus” when immersing people but believe the idolatrous heresy that Jesus is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit do not have any authority from God for their practice—they are the ones who do not really baptize in the name of Jesus Christ.

Acts 2:38 does not by any means prove that one must be baptized in order to receive the forgiveness of sins. This assertion not only exceeds the English of the verse, it ignores the variety of usage of the Greek preposition *eis* in the New Testament, the Biblical uses of *eis* associated with baptism, the grammatical structure of Acts 2:38, the commentary of Peter upon the events of Acts 2, the teachings of Peter elsewhere in Acts, and the teachings of every other preacher of the gospel in the book and in the rest of Scripture. Furthermore, Acts 2:38 neither contains a baptismal formula nor teaches or implies that the invocation of certain words at the time of baptism is essential to salvation. Nor does the verse deny the Trinity to teach that Jesus is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Rather, in Acts 2:38 Peter preached that people needed to repent, at which time they would receive the Holy Spirit, an event which Scripture never affirms is necessarily evidenced by miraculous speech in foreign languages, much less by babbling in non-miraculous gibberish. Those that repented were to be baptized on account of the remission of their sins. This baptism was performed by the authority of Jesus Christ, for He had instituted the ordinance for His church in Matthew 28:19. Acts 2:38 neither teaches baptismal regeneration nor modalism, but is entirely and indubitably compatible with the Trinity and with justification by repentant faith alone.

4.) Conclusion

Trinitarianism, not modalism or Oneness Pentecostalism, is taught in the Bible. The idea that Jesus Christ is the Father and the Holy Spirit as well as the Son is false.

⁶² Chapter 13, *On Baptism*, Tertullian.

The idea that Christ is not eternally Son, but only became Son at the incarnation, is likewise false. Vast numbers of passages obliterate modalism, but objections to Trinitarianism by modalists fail.

Modalists worship a false god. They need to repent and come in faith to the true God of the Bible—the one God who is eternally the personally distinct Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—or they will be eternally damned. Oneness Pentecostals must also reject their heresies of salvation by baptism, speaking in tongues, and good works, to embrace the Biblical way of salvation—justification by grace alone through faith alone (Romans 3:28; 4:5).