

The Triune God of the Bible

(please note that this is a WORK IN PROGRESS, portions of which have not yet been completed.)

I. Introduction: The Importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity

Believing in the Biblical doctrine of the Trinity is a matter of no small importance. To worship a false god is idolatry (Exodus 20:1-3), and all “idolaters . . . shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone” (Revelation 21:8). God must be worshipped in truth (John 4:24), but this is impossible if we have a false view of His nature. Holding improper ideas of God is in itself a great sin, and a cause of further evils (Exodus 20:4-6; Romans 1:18-25). One who believes in a false god or gods continually breaks the greatest of all commandments (Mark 12:29). Those who deny the Deity of the Father (John 17:3), of the Son (John 8:24), or of the Spirit (Acts 19:2) are lost. Scripture states that those with an improper view of the Person and saving work of the Son as God and man are unsaved (2 John 9) antichrists (1 John 2:22-23). Believing in the Trinity, then, is essential to salvation. Furthermore, Scripture commands, “Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” (Matthew 22:37). Love with the heart and the soul will lead the people of God to a longing to know their Lord ever the better, and love for Him with the mind will lead them to wish to understand all they can about Him. Those who have been brought into fellowship with Jehovah already “know the Lord” (Hebrews 8:11), and having once tasted that the Lord is gracious, they wish for ever-greater depths of intellectual and relational knowledge of Him. Furthermore, recognizing that their heavenly Father is seeking for worshippers (John 4:23), God’s own recognize the value of deep knowledge of Trinitarian teaching for the purpose of communicating the knowledge of God to the lost world (Mark 16:15; Psalm 67). Thus, the study of the doctrine of the Trinity is of immense value both for those who deny the doctrine, and are thus in need of faith in that one God who alone can deliver them from sin and eternal death, and for all those who have already been redeemed by Him.

This study presupposes the Biblical truths that every word of Scripture was infallibly given by inspiration (2 Timothy 3:16) and perfectly preserved in the traditional original language texts (Psalm 12:6-7). This Bible, examined according to literal, grammatical-

historical interpretation, is its sole authority (2 Timothy 3:17). Additional alleged revelation, common in many anti-Trinitarian religious systems, whether in the form of extra holy books, supposedly infallible or uniquely authoritative people or organizations, or biased translations of Scripture,¹ are rejected (Revelation 22:18-19; Ephesians 2:20; 1 Corinthians 13:8). These

¹ The *New World Translation* (NWT) of the anti-Trinitarian Watchtower Society (WTS, “Jehovah’s Witnesses”) is a classic example. Rejecting the original language *Textus Receptus* of the standard English Bible for the last 400 years, the King James Version (KJV), which is based on the New Testament Greek text representative of the overwhelming majority of manuscripts, the NWT opted to follow a tiny minority of corrupt manuscripts (a practice which is oddly followed by many other modern versions). The King James Bible was translated by some fifty incredibly scholarly men, such as Lancelot Andrews, who had mastered fifteen languages, and John Bois, who had read the entire Old Testament in Hebrew when he was five years old. Every portion of the translation was scrutinized at least sixteen times during the translation process, even apart from the consideration that the KJV was the culmination of a century-long refining process beginning with the Tyndale Bible and subsequent English versions. Information about the KJV translators is available to the public and published in many books (i. e., *The Translators Revived*, Alexander McClure. Port Huron, MI: Way of Life Literature, 2001; electronic ed., orig. pub. 1855.) In contrast, the NWT was made by an anonymous “New World Bible Translation Committee.” The Watchtower Society seeks to hide the identity of these men, but sources such as the former Watchtower Governing Body member Raymond Franz identify the constituents of the committee as seven men: Fred Franz, Nathan Knorr, Milton Henschel, Albert Schroeder, Karl Klein, and George Gangas. The majority of these “translators” were high school drop-outs. None had ever graduated from college. Only one of them had any training whatever in the Biblical languages—Fred Franz had taken one 2 credit hour course in New Testament Greek and a number of courses in non-Biblical, classical Greek. None of the “translators” had ever taken any courses in Hebrew (or Aramaic) in their lives; they had no knowledge of the language of the Old Testament and simply were totally unable to translate it (see pg. 50, *Crisis of Conscience*, Raymond Franz, Atlanta, GA: Commentary Press, 1985; pg. 64, *Kingdom of the Cults*, Walter Martin (rev. ed), Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1977; pgs. 105-106, 207, *A Guide to Cults and New Religions*, Ronald Enroth, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1983.). They knew just about as much Hebrew as a Hebrew national hot dog. These facts make it clear why the Watchtower tries to hide the identity of the WTS “translators.” No religious group in the world uses the NWT besides the Watchtower society because it is not a translation at all—the “translation” committee did not know the Biblical languages. It is a corruption that mutilates God’s Word when it contradicts Watchtower doctrine.

A few examples of the many corruptions in the NWT include:

- 1.) In Zechariah 12:10, Jehovah is speaking, and He says, “*they [the Jews] shall look upon me [Heb. ‘elay] whom they have pierced.*” Since this verse teaches that Jehovah was pierced by the Jews, and John 19:37 shows that this verse refers to the death of Christ, proving that Jesus is Jehovah, the NWT changes Zechariah 12:10 to “*the One whom they pierced,*” although this is impossible in Hebrew.
- 2.) The NWT adds the words “other” or “others” to Acts 10:36, Phil 2:9; Col 1:16, 17, 20, despite the fact that the word is not in any Greek MSS in the entire world, because without the addition Jesus Christ is “Lord of all,” has a Name “above every name,” and He created “all things” and is “before all things,” and so is Jehovah the Creator. God’s Word contradicts their doctrine, so they change His Word, instead of repenting of their doctrine.
- 3.) 1 Tim 4:1 reads, “*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly,*” but the WTS does not believe that the Spirit is a personal Being who can speak, so it replaces “Spirit” with “inspired utterance.” Similarly, in Genesis 1:2, God’s Word reads “the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters,” showing that the Spirit was involved in creation, but the Watchtower denies that the Holy Spirit is the Creator, so it changes “Spirit” to “active force.”

The Watchtower Society claims that the NWT is the true Bible because it has the name *Jehovah* in it more times than the KJV. The KJV does use the name *Jehovah* in various verses (Ex 6:3; Is 12:2, etc.), but usually it renders the Hebrew יהוה as *LORD* instead in the Old Testament (OT). Rather than being motivated by any sinister plot to malign Jehovah’s name, the KJV translators were simply following the practice of Christ and the apostles. Jesus Christ in Mt. 23:39 quoted Ps. 118:26 “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of [Jehovah]” with the Greek word *Kurios* (Lord). He did the same thing in many other places, such as Mt 22:44 when quoting

presuppositions are ably defended elsewhere—here they will not be addressed further.

II. The Definition of the Doctrine of the Trinity

It is very valuable in any sort of debate or discussion for all parties involved to know exactly what it is they are talking about. This is all the more necessary in a discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity, as its opponents have, with great frequency, evidenced either ignorance of the doctrine they are opposing or intentional misrepresentation of the Trinitarian position, and, in these days of apostasy and spiritual weakness in Christendom, many even of the people of God are less able to give the accurate, orthodox doctrine as confessed for nearly two thousand years. A short definition of the triune nature of the Godhead² would be,

Ps 110:1. The apostles also quoted the OT name Jehovah as Lord: Peter did it in Ac 2:34 (cf. Ps 110:1), Paul did it in Rom 10:13 (cf. Joel 2:32), James did it in Ac 15:16-17 (cf. Am 9:11-12), etc. The KJV generally translates the OT name Jehovah as LORD because that is what the Son of God and His disciples did.

While it would not necessarily be wrong to render יהוה as *Jehovah* in the OT every time instead of following the practice of Christ and the apostles and using LORD instead, the NWT corrupts Scripture by adding the name *Jehovah* to the New Testament, although it is not found in even one of the 5,000+ Greek New Testament (NT) manuscripts in existence. The Greek says *Kurios*, that is, *Lord*, every time the NWT alters the Bible to put the word *Jehovah* in the NT. However, the NWT is inconsistent. When the Father is called *Lord*, the NWT changes the word to *Jehovah*, but when the identical Greek word is used for Jesus Christ, as it is hundreds of times in the NT, or the Holy Spirit is called *Kurios*, the NWT leaves it as *Lord* instead of changing it to *Jehovah*. The WTS does this because it does not want to say *Jehovah-Jesus Christ* every time the NT says “the Lord Jesus Christ,” or have people say to Jesus, “Have mercy on me, O Jehovah, thou Son of David” (Mt 15:22), or have the Bible say of the Holy Spirit, “Jehovah is that Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:17). The NWT and the Watchtower Society that made it fall under the curse of Rev 22:18-19: “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”

This book, *The Triune God of the Bible*, will not create its own translation to attempt to hide things the Bible teaches, like the Watchtower Society does. Nor will it follow the practice of many false teachers of searching through countless English translations of disputed verses until it finds one that is consistent with its pre-determined position, and then using that one. It will use only the KJV, the traditional English Bible, the one that has been used universally in the English-speaking world for centuries by all who wished to have an accurate version of Scripture. When the meaning of words is an issue, it will, instead of sorting through countless other English paraphrases or versions, examine the traditional Greek Received Text (ed. Scrivener) of the New Testament and the traditional Hebrew Masoretic Text (Ben Chayyim/Ginsburg/Bomberg), as published by the Trinitarian Bible Society (*Holy Bible: The Holy Scriptures in the Original Languages: נביאים כתובים*; תורה, 1894/1998; H KAINH ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ, Beza/Scrivener, 1894, etc.). It should be noted that the Hebrew *Textus Receptus*, employed in this work, fully points the Tetragrammaton, unlike the Leningrad Codex.

² The Biblical word “Godhead” signifies the “Divine nature,” and it translates both the Greek *theios* (Acts 17:29) and the Greek *theotes* (Romans 1:20; Colossians 2:9). There are three personal distinctions within the one Godhead.

“One God in essence³ who eternally exists in three distinct Persons,⁴ the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”⁵ A somewhat larger definition from a standard confession of faith of Christian churches declares that “The Lord our God is but one only living and true God . . . in this divine and infinite Being there are three subsistences, the Father, the Word (or Son), and

³ The word *essence*, also signifying *being* or *substance*, translates the Greek *ousia*, from the verb *eimi*, “to be” (cf. Hebrews 11:6; Luke 15:12-13). Since “*ousia* derives from the Greek word for Being, ὁ ὢν . . . [and] God is referred to by Scripture as ὁ ὢν [Revelation 1:4, 8, 4:8; 11:17; 16:5], *ousia* is a term legitimately used to refer to God” (pg. 173, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725*, vol. 4, “The Trinity of God,” Richard A. Muller. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003). The *ousia* of God is also referenced in the Scriptural language of the “Godhead” (θεότης, Colossians 2:9), “nature” or “divine nature” (φύσις, Galatians 4:8; θεία φύσις, 2 Peter 1:4). *Ousia* is “applied to God both in the concrete and in the abstract—namely, both with reference to the being of God and also to the deity or divinity of God’s nature. Thus, in the concrete, God is called in ὁ ὢν Exodus 3:14 and Revelation 1:4, [8]—while in the abstract, both “deity,” *theotes* (Colossians 2:9), and “divine nature,” *theia physis* (2 Peter 1:4), are ascribed to God” (pg. 174, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, Muller, vol. 4, “The Trinity of God.”). With reference to the Godhead, *ousia* signifies “that which exists and therefore has substance” or “substance, essence . . . substantiality” while *hupostasis* is “the . . . basic structure/nature of an entity . . . substantial nature” or “reality . . . real nature . . . existence” (cf. Danker, Frederick William (ed.), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd. ed. (BDAG), Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000 (henceforth cited as BDAG); Liddell, H. G. & Scott, R. *Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed., New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1996.).

⁴ The word *person* translates the Greek *hupostasis*, found in Hebrews 1:3. This “text in the New Testament . . . both uses one of the standard terms of the orthodox trinitarian vocabulary and also offers a sense that the terms indicate a distinction in the Godhead . . . when the Apostle calls the Son of God ‘the express image of [the Father’s] person,’ he undoubtedly does assign to the Father some subsistence in which he differs from the Son. . . . [I]t would be strange to say that the essence of God is impressed on Christ, as the essence of both is simply the same . . . [thus *hupostasis*] mean[s] something other than *ousia*” (pg. 233, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Trinity of God*, Muller). The ὢν of Hebrews 1:3 teaches that the Son subsists eternally as a distinct *hupostasis* (ὑπόστασις) from the Father.

“[P]erson is understood as an incommunicable ‘mode’ of subsistence that limits and completes a substantial nature. A divine person, then, can be identified as ‘an incommunicable subsistence of the divine essence,’ granting that the divine essence is possessed in common by the three persons, while the persons represent incommunicable characteristics: Father, Son, and Spirit are God, but the Father is not the Son, the Son not the Spirit, and so forth. The essence is one, the persons several: thus, ‘essence is absolute, person relative: the persons of the Son and Spirit have an origin [not in time, but in being begotten and in proceeding eternally from the Father], the essence does not. Person generates and is generated: essence neither generates nor is generated.’ The persons therefore are identified according to what they have in common and how they are distinct: they have in common the numerically singular and indivisible divine essence, the essential properties, the works, dignity, and honor of God. They are distinct, however, in origin, in order, and in manner of operation, inasmuch as the Father is from himself (*a se*), the Son from the Father, and the Spirit from the Father and the Son; the Father is first, the Son second, and the Spirit third in order; and in internal operation [within the Godhead; all external operations are the acts of all three Persons], the Father acts *a se*, the Son from the Father, and the Spirit from the Son and the Father” (pg. 182, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Trinity of God*, vol. 4, Richard A. Muller).

⁵ God is one *ousia*, that is, one essence, being, or substance, in three *hupostaseis*, that is, three personal distinctions or Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. “While *ousia* [is] used to refer to the one being of the Godhead common to the three divine Persons, *hupostasis* [is] used to refer to them in their differences from one another and in their relations with one another in accordance with their particular modes of subsistence in God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” (pg. 219, *The Trinitarian Faith*, T. F. Torrance. New York, NY: T & T Clark, 2004).

the Holy Spirit, of one substance, power, and eternity, each having the whole divine essence, yet the essence undivided: the Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son; all infinite, without beginning, therefore but one God, who is not to be divided in nature and being, but distinguished by several peculiar relative properties and personal relations; which doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all our communion with God, and comfortable dependence on Him.”⁶ An ancient classical definition,⁷ which deals both with the nature of the relations of the three in the Triune God⁸ and with the incarnation of the Son, the change that took place when He became man, states:

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one in essence with⁹ the Father; by him all things were made.

For us men, and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the virgin Mary, and was made man.¹⁰ He was

⁶ *The London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, 2:1, 3.

⁷ The creeds are, in order, the Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan (with the Toledo *filioque*), Chalcedonian, and Athanasian creeds. They are reproduced substantially in their original form; the only alterations of note are the addition of an explicit *homoousios* and affirmation that the Spirit is *ho Theos* to the Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan Creed (in line with the confession of the Philadelphian Creed, recited at the Council of Ephesus of 431), the removal of the *Theotokos* from the creed of Chalcedon, and the rendition of the Latin *catholicam* as *Christian* in the Athanasian creed. For a discussion of these creeds and their textual development and significance, see Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Philip Schaff, vol. 3, 9:117-145.

⁸ In more depth, “the distinction in the one Godhead it is real and eternal, and is marked by certain properties peculiar to each Person and not communicable. These properties are either *external* or *internal*; the latter relating to the modes of subsistence in the divine essence, the former to the mode of revelation in the world. The *notae internae* are personal *acts* and notions; the former being (1) That the Father generates the Son, etc., and breathes the Spirit; (2) That the Son is begotten of the Father, and with the Father breathes the Spirit; (3) That the Spirit proceedeth from the Father and the Son. The personal *notions* are (1) Unbegottenness and paternity as peculiar to the Father; (2) Spiration as belonging to the Father and Son; (3) Filiation as peculiar to the Son; (4) Procession (*spiratio passiva*) as peculiar to the Spirit. The *external notes* are (1) The *works* in the economy of redemption peculiar to each: the Father sends the Son to redeem and the Spirit to sanctify; the Son redeems mankind and sends the Spirit; the Spirit is sent into the minds of men and renders them partakers of Christ’s salvation. (2) The attributive or appropriative works, i.e. those which, though common to the three Persons, are in Scripture usually ascribed to one of them, as universal creation, conservation, and gubernation to the Father through the Son; the creation of the world, raising of the dead, and the conduct of the last judgment, to the Son; the inspiration of the prophets, etc., to the Spirit” (“Trinitarianism, Part 1,” Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 97:385 (Jan 1940), pgs. 23-24, citing Dr. Alexander, *System of Biblical Theology*, Vol. I, pg. 104.).

⁹ Greek *homoousios*, of the same *ousia* as the Father.

¹⁰ Shedd states, “the following reasons for the incarnation of the second person, rather than of the first or third: . . . First, that by the incarnation the names of the divine persons should remain unchanged; so that neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit should have to take the name of a Son. Secondly, it was fitting that by the

crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried, and the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father; from thence he will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead; His kingdom will have no end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit, who is Lord and God, the giver of life, both one in essence with and proceeding from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spoke through the prophets. Amen.

An ancient creed that deals specifically with the Person of the Son and His assumption of a human nature after the incarnation, in what is known as the hypostatic union,¹¹ states:

We unanimously teach one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, complete as to his Godhead, and complete as to his manhood; truly God, and truly man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting; consubstantial¹² with the Father as to his Godhead, and consubstantial also with us as to his manhood; like unto us in all things, yet without sin; as to his Godhead begotten of the Father before all worlds, but as to his manhood, in these last days born, for us men and for our salvation, of the virgin Mary, one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, known in two natures, without confusion, without conversion, without severance, and without division; the distinction of the natures being in no wise abolished by their union,¹³ but the peculiarity of each nature being maintained, and both concurring in one person and hypostasis.¹⁴ We confess not a Son divided and sundered into two persons, but one and the same Son, and Only-begotten, and God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, even as the prophets had before proclaimed concerning him, and he himself hath taught us.¹⁵

incarnation men should become God's adopted sons, through him who is God's natural Son. Thirdly, it was proper that man, who occupies a middle position between angels and beasts, in the scale of creatures, should be redeemed by the middle person in the trinity. Lastly, it was proper that the fallen nature of man which was created by the Word (John 1:3) should be restored by him. In addition to these reasons, it is evident that it is more fitting that a father should commission and send a son upon an errand of mercy, than that a son should commission and send a father" (William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology* (sec. "Christology," Chap. 1, "Christ's Theanthropic Person," pgs. 4-5, elec. acc. in *Christian Library Series, vol. 17: Systematic Theologies*, AGES Library, Rio, WI: 2006).

¹¹ See Excursus #1 below for more detail on the hypostatic union.

¹² Greek *homoousios*.

¹³ It should be mentioned that the fact that Christ has a complete Divine nature and a complete human nature involves the truth that He has two wills, a Divine will (Luke 13:24; John 5:21) and a human will (Luke 22:42; John 6:38). An ancient Biblical declaration on this issue (here somewhat edited and condensed) stated that "we likewise preach two natural wills in Jesus Christ, and two natural operations undivided, inconvertible, inseparable, and unmixed; and the two natural wills are not contrary, but his human will follows the divine will, and is not resisting or reluctant, but rather subject to his divine and omnipotent will. Therefore we confess two natural wills and operations, harmoniously united for the salvation of the human race." This truth of two wills is known as *dyothelitism*, as opposed to the heretical position of only one will, *monothelitism*.

¹⁴ Greek *hypostasis*.

¹⁵ Since the Lord Jesus is one Person with two complete natures, a fully human nature and a fully Divine nature, what is true of either nature can be predicated of His Person. This doctrine, known as the *communicatio*

A somewhat more lengthy ancient Trinitarian definition is:

Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Christian faith. Which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. But this is the Christian faith: That we worship one God in trinity, and trinity in unity; Neither confounding the persons; nor dividing the substance.¹⁶ For there is one person of the Father: another of the Son: another of the Holy Ghost.¹⁷ But the Godhead of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one: the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father is uncreated: the Son is uncreated: the Holy Ghost is uncreated. The Father is immeasurable: the Son is immeasurable: the Holy Ghost is immeasurable. The Father is eternal: the Son eternal: the Holy Ghost eternal. And yet there are not three eternals; but one eternal. As also there are not three uncreated: nor three immeasurable: but one uncreated, and one immeasurable. So likewise the Father is Almighty: the Son Almighty: and the Holy Ghost Almighty, and yet there are not three Almighties: but one Almighty. So the Father is God: the Son is God: and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet there are not three Gods; but one God. So the Father is Lord: the Son Lord: and the Holy Ghost Lord. And yet not three Lords; but one Lord. For like as we are compelled by Christian truth to acknowledge every Person by himself to be God and Lord, So are we forbidden by the Christian religion to say, there are three Gods, or three Lords. The Father is made of none; neither created; nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone: not made; nor created; but begotten. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and the Son: not made; neither created; nor begotten; but proceeding. Thus there is one Father, not

idiomatum (in English, “The Communication of Properties,” in Greek, the ἀντίδοσις or ἀντιμετάστασις) explains that “by reason of the Unity of [Christ’s] Person, that which is proper to one nature, is sometimes in Scripture attributed to the Person denominated by the other nature” (*The London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, 8:7). For example, John 3:13 speaks of the “the Son of man which is in heaven.” The human nature of Christ was not in heaven at that time, but on the earth in the land of Israel, where the Lord was speaking to a man named Nicodemus (John 3:1-2). Nevertheless, because the Person who is the fully human “Son of man” is also fully God, and thus omnipresent (Jeremiah 23:24; Matthew 18:20), and “in heaven,” on earth, and everywhere else in the universe at the same time, Scripture can connect the humanity of the Savior with omnipresence. Acts 20:28 states that “God . . . hath purchased [the church] with his own blood,” although blood pertains to the human nature of Christ, not to His immaterial, incorporeal, spiritual Divine nature (John 4:24; Luke 24:39), for only one Person possesses both those two natures. Compare 1 Corinthians 2:8, where men “crucified [human nature] the Lord of glory [Divine nature].” In this manner of Scriptural speech, the properties of one nature are not applied to the other nature as such, but to the Subject, the Son of God, who possesses both natures. Christ’s divine nature does not possess the properties of humanity (such as being created or localized in space), nor does His human nature possess the properties of Divinity (such as being uncreated or omnipresent), but since the Lord is one Person, whether He is named by reason of both natures together, or only of one of them, He is properly assigned the properties of either nature. It should also be noted that in a manner similar to the coinherence of the three Persons of the Trinity (see footnote #13), the two natures of Christ, while eternally and unchangeably distinct, share one common life and interpenetrate each other.

¹⁶ In other words, the *hupostasis* of the Father, the *hupostasis* of the Son, and the *hupostasis* of the Spirit are distinct, and must not be confused the one with the other; while the three share only one essence or *ousia*. (Since this creed was originally composed in Latin, it employs the equivalents in that language (*substantia*, *persona*) to the Greek *ousia* and *hupostasis*.)

¹⁷ *Holy Ghost* and *Holy Spirit* are identical phrases, both representing the Greek *Pneuma Hagion* (cf. Mark 13:11; Luke 11:13).

three Fathers: one Son, not three Sons: one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts. And in this Trinity none is before or after another: none is greater or less than another. But the whole three Persons are co-eternal together, and co-equal. So that in all things, as aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped. He therefore that will be saved, must thus think of the Trinity.¹⁸

Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believe rightly concerning the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the true faith is, that we believe and confess: that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man; God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds: and man of the substance of his mother, born in the world; perfect God and perfect man: of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting. Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead: and inferior to the Father, as touching his manhood; who, although he be God and man: yet he is not two, but one Christ; one, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh: but by taking of the manhood into God;¹⁹ one altogether; not by

¹⁸ William G. T. Shedd writes, concerning the Divine consciousness, “the Scriptures teach that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three persons independently and irrespective of creation, redemption, and sanctification. If God had never created the universe, but had existed alone from all eternity, he would be triune. And the three persons are so real and distinct from each other, that each possesses a hypostatical or trinitarian consciousness different from that of the others. The second person is conscious that he is the Son, and not the Father, when he says, “O Father, glorify thou me,” John 17:5. The first person is conscious that he is the Father and not the Son, when he says, “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee,” Hebrews 1:5. The third person is conscious that he is the Spirit, and neither the Father nor the Son, when he says, “Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them,” Acts 13:2. These three hypostatical consciousnesses constitute the one self-consciousness of the Divine essence. By reason of, and as the result of these three forms of consciousness, the Divine essence is self-contemplative, self-cognitive, and self-communing. Though there are three forms of consciousness, there are not three essences, or three understandings, or three wills, in the Godhead; because, a consciousness is not an essence, or an understanding or a will. There is only one essence, having one understanding, and one will. But this unity of essence, understanding, and will, has three different forms of consciousness: namely, the Paternal, the Filial, and the Spiritual; because it has three different forms of subsistence: namely, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. If it had only one form of subsistence, as in the Sabellian scheme, it would have only one form of consciousness. It would exist only as a single subject, and would have only a corresponding consciousness. But this would not be a full and true self-consciousness, because this requires the three distinctions of subject, object, and percipient-subject, which are not given in the Sabellian triad.

It must be noticed that the Divine self-consciousness is not a fourth consciousness additional to the three hypostatical consciousnesses, but is the resultant of these three. The three hypostatical consciousnesses are the one Divine self-consciousness, and the one Divine self-consciousness is the three hypostatical consciousnesses. The three hypostatical consciousnesses in their, combination and unity constitute the one self-consciousness. The essence in being trinally conscious as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is self-conscious. As the one Divine essence is the same thing with the three persons, and not a fourth different thing by itself, so the one Divine self-consciousness is the same thing with the three hypostatical consciousnesses, and not a fourth different thing by itself. In this way, it is evident that the three hypostatical consciousnesses are consistent with a single self-consciousness, as the three hypostases themselves are consistent with a single essence. There are three persons, but only one essence; and three hypostatical consciousnesses, but only one self-consciousness” (*Dogmatic Theology* (sec. “Theology,” Chap. 4, “Trinity in Unity,” pgs. 24-25, elec. acc. in *Christian Library Series, vol. 17: Systematic Theologies*, AGES Library, Rio, WI: 2006). Shedd’s entire discussion in “Trinity in Unity” is excellent and highly commendable as an exposition of the orthodox Trinitarian faith.

¹⁹ “Incarnation must be distinguished from transmutation, or transubstantiation. The phrase ‘became man’ does not mean that the second person in the trinity ceased to be God. This would be transubstantiation. One substance, the divine, would be changed or converted into another substance, the human. . . . In saying that

confusion of substance: but by unity of Person. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man: so God and man is one Christ, who suffered for our salvation, descended into the grave, and rose again the third day from the dead. He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father: from whence he will come to judge the quick and the dead. This is the Christian faith: which except a man believe faithfully, he

“the Word was made flesh” (John 1:14), it is meant that the Word came to possess human characteristics in addition to his divine, which still remained as before. The properties of the divine nature cannot be either destroyed or altered. A human nature was united with the divine, in order that the resulting person might have a human form of consciousness as well as a divine. Previous to the assumption of a human nature, the Logos could not experience a human feeling because he had no human heart, but after this assumption he could; previous to the incarnation, he could not have a finite perception because he had no finite intellect, but after this event he could; previous to the incarnation, the self-consciousness of the Logos was eternal only, that is, without succession, but subsequent to the incarnation it was both eternal and temporal, with and without succession. This twofold consciousness may be illustrated by the union between the human soul and body. Prior to, or apart from its union with a material body, a man’s immaterial soul cannot feel a physical sensation or a sensuous appetite; but when united with it in a personal union, it can so feel. In like manner, prior to the incarnation, the second person of the Trinity could not have human sensations and experiences; but after it he could. The unincarnate Logos could think and feel only like God; he had only one form of consciousness. The incarnate Logos can think and feel either like God, or like man; he has two modes or forms of consciousness.

When, therefore, it is said that “God became man,” the meaning is that God united himself with man, not that God changed himself into man. Unification of two natures, not transmutation of one nature into another is meant. We might say of the union of soul and body, in the instance of a human person, that “spirit becomes matter;” that is, is materialized or embodied. We would not mean by this phrase, that spirit is actually changed into matter, but that it is united with matter in that intimate manner which is denominated personal union. In the incarnation, God is humanized, as in ordinary human generation, spirit is materialized or embodied. Each substance, however, still retains its own properties. In an ordinary man, spirit remains immaterial, and body remains material; and in the God-man, the divine nature remains divine in its properties, and the human remains human. . . .

The distinctive characteristic of the incarnation is the union of two diverse natures, a divine and a human, so as to constitute one single person. A single person may consist of one nature, or of two natures, or of three. A trinitarian person has only one nature: namely, the divine essence. A human person has two natures: namely, a material body, and an immaterial soul. A theanthropic person has three natures: namely, the divine essence, a human soul, and a human body. By the incarnation, not a God, not a man, but a God-man is constituted. A theanthropic person is a trinitarian person modified by union with a human nature, similarly as a trinitarian person is the Divine essence modified by generation, or spiration. A theanthropic person is constituted, consequently, in the same general manner in which an ordinary human person is: namely, by the union of diverse natures. In the case of a human individual, it is the combination of one material nature and one immaterial that makes him a person. . . . Says Hooker (V. liv.), ‘the incarnation of the Son of God consisteth merely in the union of natures, which union doth add perfection to the weaker, to the nobler no alteration at all.’

The divine-human person, Jesus Christ, was produced by the union of the divine nature of the Logos with a human nature derived from a human mother. Before this union was accomplished, there was no theanthropic person. There was the divine person of the Logos existing in the Trinity before this union, and there was the unindividualized substance of Christ’s human nature existing in the virgin Mary before this union; but until the two were united at the instant of the miraculous conception, there was no God-man. The trinitarian personality of the Son of God did not begin at the incarnation, but the theanthropic personality of Jesus Christ did. . . .

It is the divine nature, and not the human, which is the base of Christ’s person. The second trinitarian person is the root and stock into which the human nature is grafted. The wild olive is grafted into the good olive, and partakes of its root and fatness” (William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology* (sec. “Christology,” Chap. 1, “Christ’s Theanthropic Person,” pgs. 5-7, elec. acc. in *Christian Library Series, vol. 17: Systematic Theologies*, AGES Library, Rio, WI: 2006).

cannot be saved.

The definitions given above set forth the classical Trinitarian faith believed and confessed by God's people for many centuries. Those who believe in the Triune God of the Bible should meditate upon these carefully worded²⁰ and thought out²¹ definitions.²² They have stood the test of time and the opposition of unbelief in many forms. The widespread and persistent misunderstanding of the Trinity by its supposedly Christian opponents also makes one wish

²⁰ Anti-Trinitarians sometimes object to the use of extra-Biblical terminology in defining the Trinity. "Though expressed in various ways, the objection amount[s] to this: 'In the Bible, God has revealed to us everything we need for a godly life. Since He has not employed such terms as essence, subsistence, nature, person, etc., He can not have made salvation dependent upon belief in a doctrine dependent upon such extra-biblical words.' . . . Against this tendency [John] Owen [correctly] maintains that objection to the use of extra-scriptural words in theological discourse is not only groundless but also contrary to God's intent in giving us the Scripture. It is, [Owen points out], 'to deny all interpretation of the Scripture—all endeavors to express the sense of the words of it unto the understandings of one another; which is, in a word, to render the Scripture itself altogether useless. For if it be *unlawful* for me to *speak or write* what I conceive to be the sense of the words of the Scripture, and the nature of the thing signified and expressed by them, it is unlawful for me, also to think or conceive in my mind what is the sense of the words or nature of the things; which to say, is to make brutes of ourselves, and to frustrate the whole design of God in giving unto us the great privilege of his word.' For this reason, Owen argues, '[I]n the declaration of the doctrine of the Trinity, we may *lawfully*, nay, we must *necessarily*, make use of other words, phrases, and expressions, than what are literally and syllabically contained in the Scripture, but teach no other things.' . . .

The 'whole counsel of God' [is] 'either expressly set down in Scripture,' or deduced 'by good and necessary consequence' from it . . . the 'necessary consequence' of scriptural propositions [is] no less true and divine than the propositions themselves. Necessary consequences rightly drawn from a divine revelation are equally of divine authority. 'Hence it follows that when the Scripture revealeth the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost to be one God, seeing it necessarily and unavoidably follows thereon that they are one in essence (wherein alone it is possible they can be one), and three in their distinct subsistences (wherein alone it is possible they can be three),—this is no less of divine revelation than the first principle from whence these things follow.' . . .

[T]he enemies of the doctrine [of the Trinity] will always begin their opposition not unto the *revelation* of it, but unto the *explanation* of it; which is used only for further edification. Their disputes and cavils shall be against the *Trinity, essence, substance, persons, personality, respects, properties* of the divine persons, with the modes of expressing these things; whilst the plain *scriptural revelation* of the things themselves from whence they are but explanatory deductions, is not spoken to, nor admitted into confirmation . . . these explanations, so excepted against, are indeed not of any *original consideration* in this matter. Let the direct express revelations of the doctrine be confirmed, they will follow of themselves, nor will be excepted against by those who believe and receive it. Let that be rejected, and they will *fall of themselves*, and never be contended for by those who did make use of them'" (pgs. 98-100, *The Christology of John Owen*, Richard W. Daniels. Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2004).

²¹ While analogies for the Trinity from human experience, such as comparing the unity of the three Persons to the three states of water as gas, liquid, and solid, or to the human intellect, memory, and will, or to one who loves, the one loved, and the love itself, or to a father, mother, and son, etc. can have a certain value, since nothing in the earthly experience of mankind is exactly comparable to the tri-unity of God, they all of necessity fall short of an entirely accurate representation of the Biblical teaching and run the risk of misrepresenting the Trinitarian faith. This limitation must always be in mind when utilizing such illustrations.

²² Turretin, *Institutes*, vol. 1, 3:23, pgs. 253-260, gives helpful definitions of essence, nature, substance, subsistence, hypostasis, person, homoousion, perichoresis, property, relation, notion, and other words used to describe the glorious doctrine of the Trinity, along with a Biblical justification for the use of such vocabulary. See also footnotes #24, 26.

that they also would carefully study these definitions, and, if they still foolishly wished to set themselves against the Scriptural doctrine set forth in them, would at least argue against the Trinity instead of against caricatures and misrepresentations of the doctrine accepted by no one besides anti-Trinitarians.

Excursus #1: The Hypostatic Union

The *hypostatic union* refers to the extremely important fact of the union of the Divine and human natures in Christ. Charles L. Feinberg (“The Hypostatic Union,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 92:368 (Oct 1935), pgs. 412-426) explains that when “we have postulated the two natures in Christ, we are not by so much attributing to Him a dual personality. We never read in the Word that one nature in Christ speaks to the other or is distinguished from it as a distinct hypostasis. Nowhere in the Scriptures does the Son of God address the Son of man or vice versa (cf. Rom 1:2–5; 9:5; 1 John 1:1–3; John 1:1–14). ‘The human and the Divine nature exist in the person of the Redeemer by no means only outwardly together, or parallel to each other, but so intimately united that this personality is as little merely human as exclusively Divine, but is and remains to all eternity, Divine-human.’ So real is this union that in Scripture human attributes are ascribed to Him when He is designated by a divine title, and divine attributes when addressed by a human title (cf. Acts 20:28; 1 Cor 2:8; Col 1:13, 14; John 3:13; Rom 9:5; Rev 5:12).

Another feature to be kept in mind with regard to the hypostatic union is the fact that the divine nature was always hypostasized. The preincarnate Logos ever existed as a personality, the Second Person of the Trinity. The Logos was never enhypostatic [that is, without personality]. . . .

When the two natures united in Christ and the human nature received its personality from that of the Logos, this does not imply that the natures became somehow confused or commingled. Indeed, the natures maintain and retain their distinctness throughout together with their properties. . . . The two natures do not unite to form a theanthropic nature, but a theanthropic Person . . . what the Scriptures seek to convey is that the properties of both the human nature and divine nature are communicated to the theanthropic Person constituted of them.

Just a word need be said now concerning the consciousness of Christ. Some say He had a human consciousness; some hold a divine consciousness; others a divine-human consciousness. Christ had two forms of consciousness and experience: one in the realm of the human and one in the realm of the divine. But He had only one self-consciousness. He spoke of Himself with the first personal pronoun, was spoken to with the second personal pronoun, and spoken about with the third personal pronoun.

An error to be guarded against in considering this subject is that which would say the divine nature united with a human person. Because the human nature united with a divine Person when it united with a divine nature, does not warrant us in drawing a parallel for the human nature. . . . [T]he human nature before the union was enhypostatic, and have also called attention in our introduction to the distinction between nature and person. The Logos

did not take up into His consciousness the ‘whole human nature both distributed and undistributed, individualized, and unindividualized, but only a transmitted fractional part of the undistributed remainder of it, as this existed in the Virgin Mary.’ If the preincarnate Logos had united with a human person, there would have been another person added to the trinity which would have sensibly altered its constituency. . . .

[T]he hypostatic union is eternal. Scripture reveals nowhere that this union may sometime be dissolved. On the contrary, we read: “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever.” He is “over all, God blessed for ever.” This union did not cease for a moment while He was on earth. Now in heaven the glorified God-man continues unchangeably. Throughout all eternity it shall be the Man Christ Jesus.”

Feinberg also clarifies that the “union known as the hypostatic union is not analogous to any within the realm of human experience. Many attempts have been made, with recognition of their insufficiency and inadequacy to be sure, to liken it to the union in man of soul and body, or the union of iron and heat to get molten ore. When we speak of the hypostatic union, it is not meant to convey the idea of an indwelling of deity comparable to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers. Nor are the two natures bound together by the moral tie of friendship or sympathy. The manner of the union is confessedly inscrutable.

But there are clear features of this truth yet to be dealt with. The question arises early in one’s thinking on the subject as to which nature forms the basis of the divine-human personality. Did the humanity of Christ take on or assume deity or was the reverse condition true? . . . We believe the truth of the matter to be that the divine nature in Christ formed the basis of His personality. The human nature in Christ could not have been the foundation of His personality, because before the union with the divine nature it was enhypostatic, without individuation. The human nature in Christ was never personalized until the miraculous conception when it was joined to the divine nature, the Logos. If the human nature had been the base of His Person He would be a man-God, not God-man, anthropotheistic, not theanthropic. Shedd notes several other reasons in favor of this position. First, the divine nature must have been the primary one, because the theanthropic personality was not destroyed when Christ died. Second, Christ’s acts of power, as well as His knowledge, were regulated by the divine nature. If the Logos determined Christ was powerful and could not be apprehended; if the Logos chose Christ could be arrested, scourged, and crucified. If the Logos elected that Christ knew certain matters, He knew them, otherwise the reverse was true. The Logos always knew the hour of the Second Advent, but He did not care to vouchsafe this knowledge to the human consciousness of Jesus Christ. Third, Christ’s immutability is another proof of this contention. The Word states that “Jesus Christ [is] the same yesterday, and today, and for ever” (Heb 13:8).

Although the divine nature formed the starting point of the personality of Christ, this does not mean that His human nature was any the less real or complete. In Jesus Christ true deity and true humanity were consciously and actually present in the fullest sense of the word. All that could be predicated of God the Father and God the Holy Spirit as to deity could with equal justification be said of Christ. Though humbled, He was ever and always God. In fact, He could not have humbled Himself in the manner that He did, had He not been truly God. But at the same time Christ was every whit a man. All that can be attributed to

unfallen humanity was true of Christ. He was without sin, but sin is not an essential feature of true humanity, for Adam was without sin in his innocent state. . . .

What are the benefits of this union? First of all, the hypostatic union gave the world an impeccable Person. This predicates of Christ, mark you, not only anamartesia, but impeccability. It is not just a matter of *posse non peccare*, but of *non posse peccare*. It is not enough to say Christ did not sin; it must be declared unequivocally that He could not sin. . . .

A second consequence of the hypostatic union was that the God-man revealed the Father. When men wanted to see God, Christ so manifested Him that He could say: “he that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9). Never before nor since has God been so clearly revealed to men. But if Christ was the revealer of deity as God-man, He was likewise the revealer of true humanity. He alone of all men that ever walked the earth was utterly dependent upon God. God was in all His thoughts. In all things He pleased not Himself but the Father. He solely kept the whole law. He displayed to men what true humanity is. . . .

Yet another benefit of the union is that Christ can be a sacrifice for sin. This is well typified by the Kinsman-Redeemer who must meet certain qualifications. He must be a near kinsman; he must be able to redeem; he must be willing to redeem; he must be free from the difficulty himself. Christ answered to this description by becoming man, thus identifying Himself with the human race. The ultimate sacrifice for sin had to be a man, not bulls and goats, because man had sinned in the body here on earth and deserved death as the legitimate wages of sin. Therefore, Christ was a man. But to give this sacrifice its ineffably infinite value, in order to suffice as a propitiation for the sins of the whole world, He had to be God. The true sacrifice for sin had to be a God-man; this is provided for by the hypostatic union.

A further consequence of the union was that it furnished for redeemed humanity a faithful High-Priest. As a prophet speaks for God to men, so a priest speaks for men to God. In dying for sinful man Christ fulfilled only part of His high-priestly office. It involves, furthermore, intercession and advocacy. These phases of ministry are in behalf of believers only. The Lord Jesus as God-man intercedes for His own that they may be kept from the evil one while they are in the world, though not of it. He advocates for His own after they have sinned. In order to intercede or advocate He must be God to know fully God’s requirements of man and how to meet them, and He must be fully man to understand man’s need and be touched by the feeling of man’s infirmities. For this the hypostatic union was indispensable. “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). Job’s plaintive cry for a Daysman who can lay hold of both God for man and man for God has been answered and gloriously so.

Finally, by the hypostatic union the Logos became the head of a new race, the new creation. Romans 5:12–21 shows clearly that as death, condemnation, and judgment came from the first Adam to the fallen race, so from the Last Adam accrue to believers the new creation in Christ Jesus (Eph 2:10), life, righteousness, and justification. The Logos had to become man to undo (and “much more”) what the first man had wrought. He had to be God to grant and make possible such heavenly birth, privileges, and blessings (Eph 1:3) to those who willingly follow Him by faith (cf. 1 Cor 15:45; Eph 1:22; John 15:5; 2 Cor 5:17).”

Excursus #2: More Detailed Explanations and Details on Classical Trinitarianism

Philip Schaff provides further helpful thoughts on the classical doctrine of the Trinity:

“There is only *one* divine *essence* or *substance* (*ousia, substantia, essentia, physis, natura*). Father, Son, and Spirit are one in essence, or consubstantial (*homoousioi*). They are in one another, inseparable, and cannot be conceived without each other. In this point the [classic] doctrine is thoroughly monotheistic . . . in distinction from tritheism, which is but a new form of the polytheism of the pagans.

The terms *essence* (*ousia*) and *nature* (*physis*) . . . denote . . . against Arianism the strict divinity and essential equality of the Son and Holy Ghost with the Father. . . . [I]n the divine Trinity consubstantiality denotes not only sameness of kind, but at the same time *numerical* unity; not merely the *unum in specie*, but also the *unum in numero*. The, three persons are related to the divine substance not as three individuals to their species, as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or Peter, John, and Paul, to human nature; they are only one God. The divine substance is absolutely indivisible by reason of its simplicity, and absolutely inextensible and untransferable by reason of its infinity; whereas a corporeal substance can be divided, and the human nature can be multiplied by generation. Three divine substances would limit and exclude each other, and therefore could not be infinite or absolute. The whole fulness of the one undivided essence of God, with all its attributes, is in all the persons of the Trinity, though in each in his own way: in the Father as original principle, in the Son by eternal generation, in the Spirit by, eternal procession. The church teaches not *one* divine essence *and* three persons, but *one* essence *in* three persons. Father, Son, and Spirit cannot be conceived as three separate individuals, but are in one another, and form a solidaric unity. . . . In this one divine essence there are three persons or, to use a better term, hypostases, that is, three different modes of subsistence of the one same undivided and indivisible whole, which in the Scriptures are called the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. These distinctions are not merely different attributes, powers, or activities of the Godhead, still less merely subjective aspects under which it presents itself to the human mind; but each person expresses the whole fulness of the divine being with all its attributes, and the three persons stand in a relation of mutual knowledge and love. . . . Here the orthodox doctrine forsook Sabellianism or modalism, which, it is true, made Father, Son, and Spirit strictly coordinate, but only as different denominations and forms of manifestation of the one God.

But, on the other hand, as we have already intimated, the term *person* must not be taken here in the sense current among men, as if the three persons were three different individuals, or three self-conscious and separately acting beings. The trinitarian idea of personality lies midway between that of a mere form of manifestation, or a personation, which would lead to Sabellianism, and the idea of an independent, limited human personality, which would result in tritheism. In other words, it avoids the *monoousian* or [modalistic] trinity of a threefold conception and aspect of one and the same being, and the *triousian* or tritheistic trinity of three distinct and separate beings. In each person there is the same inseparable divine substance, united with the individual property and relation which distinguishes that person from the others.²³ The word *person* is in reality only a make-shift, in

²³ Specifically, “the paternity, filiation, and procession are real relational or relative distinctions [in God], but they are not real essential distinctions such as subsist between things and other things or such as would imply composition in one thing” (pg. 55, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725, Vol. 3: The Divine Essence and Attributes*, Richard A. Muller. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003).

the absence of a more adequate term. Our idea of God is more true and deep than our terminology, and the essence and character of God far transcends our highest ideas. . . .

Each divine person has his *property*, as it were a characteristic individuality, expressed by the Greek word *idiotes*, and the Latin *proprietas*. This is not to be confounded with attribute; for the divine attributes, eternity, omnipresence, omnipotence, wisdom, holiness, love, etc., are inherent in the divine *essence*, and are the common possession of all the divine hypostases. The *idiotes*, on the contrary, is a peculiarity of the *hypostasis*, and therefore cannot be communicated or transferred from one to another.

To the first person fatherhood, or the being unbegotten (*agennesia, paternitas*), is ascribed as his property; to the second, sonship, or the being begotten (*gennesia, genesis, generatio filiatio*), to the Holy Ghost, procession (*ekporeusis, procesio; also ekpempsis, missio*). In other words: The Father is unbegotten, but begetting; the Son is uncreated, but begotten; the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father . . . and . . . also from the Son. But these distinctions relate, as we have said, only to the hypostases, and have no force with respect to the divine essence which is the same in all, and neither begets nor is begotten, nor proceeds, nor is sent.

The divine persons are in one another,²⁴ mutually interpenetrate, and form a perpetual *intercommunication* and *motion* within the divine essence; as the Lord says: “I am in the Father, and the Father in me;” and “the Father . . . dwelleth in me” [John 14:10-11; cf. John 10:38].²⁵ This perfect indwelling and vital communion was afterwards designated (by John of Damascus and the scholastics) by such terms as *enuparxis, perichoresis, inexistencia, immanentia, inhabitatio, circulatio, permeatio, intercommunio, circumincessio*, [and in English is commonly referred to as the doctrine of *coinherence*].

The [classical] doctrine . . . contains, in substance, a distinction between two trinities: an immanent [or ontological] trinity of constitution (*ad intra, tropos uparxeos*), which existed from eternity, and an economic trinity of manifestation (*ad extra, tropos apokalypseos*) . . . for the generation of the Son and the procession of the Spirit are, according to the doctrine, an eternal process. The . . . [immanent] trinity of revelation [is seen] in the threefold progressive work of the creation, the redemption, and the preservation of the world, [and points] back thence to a trinity of being; for God has revealed himself as he is, and there can be no contradiction between his nature and his works. The eternal pre-

²⁴ It is said (John 14:10): “I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me.” . . . [T]he Father and the Son . . . are in each other . . . according to . . . the essence . . . [and] relation[.] . . . The Father is in the Son by His essence, forasmuch as the Father is His own essence and communicates His essence to the Son not by any change on His part. Hence it follows that as the Father’s essence is in the Son, the Father Himself is in the Son; likewise, since the Son is His own essence, it follows that He Himself is in the Father in Whom is His essence. This is expressed by Hilary (De Trin. v), ‘The unchangeable God, so to speak, follows His own nature in begetting an unchangeable subsisting God. So we understand the nature of God to subsist in Him, for He is God in God.’ It is also manifest that as regards the relations, each of two relative opposites [paternity and filiation] is in the concept of the other. . . . [T]he same applies to the Holy Ghost” (*Treatise on Sacred Doctrine*, Thomas Aquinas, “Whether the Son is in the Father, and conversely?” P(1)—Q(42)—A(5). Elec. acc. *Systematic Theologies*, vol. 17, Christian Library Series, Rio, WI: AGES Digital Software Library, 2006.).

²⁵ Note in John 14:10 that the correct text is ὁ δὲ πατήρ ὁ ἐν ἐμοὶ μένων, αὐτὸς ποιεῖ τὰ ἔργα. The ὁ ἐν ἐμοὶ μένων emphasizes the ontic character of the coinherence. 99.5% of MSS contain this ὁ; three do not. To reject thousands of MSS and claim that only three have the right text is insane.

existence of the Son and the Spirit is the background of the historical revelation by which they work our salvation” (*History of the Christian Church*, Philip Schaff, vol. 3, 9:130).

The Trinitarian doctrine of coinherence is “not merely a linking or intercommunication of the distinctive properties of the three divine Persons but a complete mutual indwelling in which each Person, while remaining what he is by himself as Father, Son, or Holy Spirit, is wholly in the others as the others are wholly in him” (Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, pg 305). Coinherence describes “the intimate mutual union of the persons . . . so as to designate thus that union by which the divine persons embrace each other and permeate (if it is right to say so) each other. So that although always remaining distinct, yet they are never separated from each other, but always coexist; wherever one is, there the other also really is” (*Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, Francis Turretin (trans. George Musgrave Giger, ed. James T. Dennison, Jr.), vol. 1, Topic 3, Question 23:13, pg. 257. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1992 (orig. pub. 1696)].

Excursus #3: Concerning the Unity and Diversity of the Works of the Persons of the Undivided Trinity

Concerning the classical view of the external works of the Persons of the Trinity (that is, all the works of God that relate to the created order, versus the internal and eternal actings within the Godhead itself whereby the Father begets the Son and the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son), John Owen well states the classical view:

“It is a saying generally admitted, that *Opera Trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa* [the external works of the Trinity are indivisible]. There is no such division in the external operations of God that any one of them should be the act of one person, without the concurrence of the others; and the reason of it is, because the nature of God, which is the principle of all divine operations, is one and the same, undivided in them all. Whereas, therefore, they are the effects of divine power, and that power is essentially the same in each person, the works themselves belong equally unto them: as, if it were possible that three men might see by the same eye, the act of seeing would be but one, and it would be equally the act of all three. . . . [Nonetheless] . . . there is such a distinction in [the] operations [of the three Persons], that one divine act may produce a peculiar respect and relation unto one person, and not unto another; as the assumption of the human nature did to the Son, for he only was incarnate. . . .

[S]ome things must be premised concerning the operation of the Godhead in general, and the manner thereof; and they are such as are needful to guide us in many passages of the Scripture, and to direct us aright[.] . . .

1.) [A]ll *divine operations* are usually ascribed unto *God absolutely*. So it is said God made all things; and so of all other works, whether in nature or in grace. And the reason hereof is, because the several persons are undivided in their operations, acting all by the same will, the same wisdom, the same power. Every person, therefore, is the author of every work of God, because each person is god, and the divine nature is the same undivided principle of all divine operations; and this ariseth from the unity of the persons in the same essence. But as to the manner of subsistence therein, there is distinction, relation, and order between and among them; and hence there is no divine work but is distinctly assigned unto each person, and

eminently unto one. So is it in the works of the old creation, and so in the new, and in all particulars of them. Thus, the creation of the world is distinctly ascribed to the Father as his work, Acts 4:24; and to the Son as his, John 1:3; and also to the Holy Spirit, Job 33:4; but by way of eminence to the Father, and absolutely to god, who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The reason, therefore, why the works of God are thus distinctly ascribed unto each person is because, in the undivided operation of the divine nature, each person doth the same work in the order of their subsistence; not one as the instrument of the other, or merely employed by the other, but as one common principle of authority, wisdom, love, and power. How come they, then, eminently to be assigned one to one person, another to another? As unto the Father are assigned *opera naturae*, the works of nature, or the old creation; to the Son, *opera gratiae procuratae*, all divine operations that belong unto the recovery of mankind by grace; and unto the Spirit, *opera gratiae applicatae*, the works of God whereby grace is made effectual unto us. And this is done[:]

1.) When any especial impression is made of the especial property of any person on any work; thae is that work assigned peculiarly to that person. So there is of the power and authority of the Father on the old creation, and of the grace and wisdom of the Son on the new.

2.) Where there is a peculiar condescension of any person unto a work, wherein the others have no concurrence but by approbation and consent.

Such was the susception of the human nature by the Son, and all that he did therein; and such was the condescension of the Holy Ghost also unto his office, which entitles him peculiarly and by way of eminence unto his own immediate works.

2.) Whereas the *order of operation* among the distinct persons depends on the *order of their subsistence* in the blessed Trinity, in every great work of God, the *concluding, completing, perfecting acts* are ascribed unto the Holy Ghost. . . . The beginning of divine operations is assigned unto the Father, as he is *fons et origo Deitatis*,—"the fountain of the Deity itself:" "Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things," Romans 11:36. The subsisting, establishing, and "upholding of all things," is ascribed unto the Son: "He is before all things, and by him all things consist," Colossians 1:17. As he made all things with the Father, so he gives them a consistency, a permanency, in a peculiar manner, as he is the power and wisdom of the Father. He "upholdeth all things by the word of his power," Hebrews 1:3. And the finishing and perfecting of all these works is ascribed to the Holy Spirit[.] . . . I say not this as though one person succeeded unto another in their operation, or as though where one ceased and gave over a work, the other took it up and carried it on; for every divine work, and every part of every divine work, is the work of God, that is, of the whole Trinity, inseparably and undividedly: but on those divine works which outwardly are of God there is an especial impression of the order of the operation of each person, with respect unto their natural and necessary subsistence, as also with regard unto their internal characteristic properties, whereby we are distinctly taught to know them and adore them. And the due consideration of this order of things will direct us in the right understanding of the proposals that are made unto our faith concerning God in his works and word. . . .

That these things may be rightly understood and apprehended, we must consider a twofold operation of God as three in one. The first hereof is absolute in all divine works whatever; the other respects the economy of the operations of God in our salvation. In those

of the first sort, both the working and the work do in common and undividedly belong unto and proceed from each person. And the reason hereof is, because they are all effects of the essential properties of the same divine nature, which is in them all, or rather, which is the one nature of them all. But yet as they have one nature, so there is an order of subsistence in that nature, and the distinct persons work in the order of their subsistence: John 5:19, 20, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.’ The Father doth not first work in order of time, and then the Son, seeing of it, work another work like unto it; but the Son doth the same work that the Father doth. This is absolutely necessary, because of their union in nature. But yet in the order of their subsistence, the person of the Father is the original of all divine works, in the principle and beginning of them, and that in order of nature antecedently unto the operation of the Son. Hence he is said to ‘see’ what the Father doth; which, according unto [the] rule in the exposition of such expressions, when ascribed unto the divine nature, is the sign and evidence, and not the means, of his knowledge. He sees what the Father doth, as he is his eternal Wisdom. The like must be said of the Holy Spirit, with respect both unto the Father and Son. And this order of operation in the Holy Trinity is not voluntary, but natural and necessary from the one essence and distinct subsistences thereof. Secondly, There are those operations which, with respect unto our salvation, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit do graciously condescend unto, which are those treated of in this place. Now, though the designing of this work was absolutely voluntary, yet, upon a supposition thereof, the order of its accomplishment was made necessary from the order of the subsistence of the distinct persons in the Deity; and that is here declared. Thus,

- 1.) The things to be declared unto us and bestowed on us are originally the Father’s things. He is the peculiar fountain of them all. His love, his grace, his wisdom, his goodness, his counsel, his will, are their supreme cause and spring. Hence are they said to be the ‘things that the Father hath’ [John 16:15].
- 2.) They are made the things of the Son, — that is, they are given and granted in and unto his disposal, — on the account of his mediation; for thereby they were to be prepared for us and given out unto us, to the glory of God. Answerable hereunto, as the Lord Christ is mediator, all the things of grace are originally the Father’s, and then given unto him.
- 3.) They are actually communicated unto us by the Holy Spirit: ‘Therefore said I, he [the Holy Spirit] shall take of mine and shall show it unto you’ [John 16:15]. He doth not communicate them unto us immediately from the Father. We do not so receive any grace from God, — that is, the Father; nor do we so make any return of praise or obedience unto God. We have nothing to do with the person of the Father immediately. It is the Son alone by whom we have an access unto him, and by the Son alone that he gives out of his grace and bounty unto us. He that hath not the Son hath not the Father. With him, as the great treasurer of heavenly things, are all grace and mercy intrusted. The Holy Spirit, therefore, shows them unto us, works them in us, bestows them on us, as they are the fruits of the mediation of Christ, and not merely as effects of the divine love and bounty of the Father; and this is required from the order of subsistence before mentioned. Thus the Holy Spirit supplies the

bodily absence of Jesus Christ, and effects what he hath to do and accomplish towards his [people] in the world; so that whatever is done by him, it is the same as if it were wrought immediately by the Lord Christ himself in his own person, whereby all his holy promises are fully accomplished towards them that believe.

And this instructs us in the way and manner of that communion which we have with God by the gospel; for herein the life, power, and freedom of our evangelical state do consist, and an acquaintance herewith gives us our translation “out of darkness into the marvelous light of God” [1 Peter 2:9]. The person of the Father, in his wisdom, will, and love, is the original of all grace and glory. But nothing hereof is communicated immediately unto us from him. It is from the Son, whom he loves, and hath given all things into his hand. He hath made way for the communication of these things unto us, unto the glory of God; and he doth it immediately by the Spirit, as hath been declared. Hereby are all our returns unto God to be regulated. The Father, who is the original of all grace and glory, is ultimately intended by us in our faith, thankfulness, and obedience; yet not so but that the Son and Spirit are considered as one God with him. But we cannot address ourselves with any of them immediately unto him. “There is no going to the Father,” saith Christ, “but by me,” John 14:6. “By him we believe in God,” 1 Peter 1:21. But yet neither can we do so unless we are enabled thereunto by the Spirit, the author in us of faith, prayer, praise, obedience, and whatever our souls tend unto God by. As the descending of God towards us in love and grace issues or ends in the work of the Spirit in us and on us, so all our ascending towards him begins therein; and as the first instance of the proceeding of grace and love towards us from the Father is in and by the Son, so the first step that we take towards God, even the Father, is in and by the Son. And these things ought to be explicitly attended unto by us, if we intend our faith, and love, and duties of obedience should be evangelical.” (pg. 195, 118-120, 236-238, *Pneumatologia: A Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit*, John Owen. elec. acc. Christian Library Series vol. 9, John Owen Collection. Rio, WI: AGES Digital Software, 2005. Books 2:3; 1:4; 2:5.)

III. Anti-Trinitarian Positions on the Nature of God

Opposition to the Trinity among those who claim to derive their doctrine from the Bible falls generally into two major categories: unitarianism and modalism. While trinitarianism affirms that God is one essence and three Persons, unitarianism denies the unity of essence of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, while modalism denies the trinity of Persons in the Godhead.²⁶

²⁶ This distinction in terminology, such that *Unitarianism* signifies Arianism or subordinationism, while *modalism* refers to Sabellianism or Patripassianism, will be maintained for the course of this discussion. One could argue that modalism is itself a form of unitarianism, since it affirms, as does Arianism, a single person in the Divine essence. However, these two heresies arrive at this conclusion through very different means. Sabellianism maintains the unitary person of its Godhead is Father, Son, and Spirit, while Arianism maintains that the Father is the only One who is properly God. As defined in this work, unitarianism denies the identity of the true God with the Son and the Spirit because it recognizes them as distinct from the Father, while modalism

The fundamental affirmation of Unitarians is that Jesus Christ is not really God. Groups that deny the Biblical doctrine of the unique and full Deity of Christ today include modern skeptics and atheists, theological liberals in a very wide array of denominations,²⁷ and modern cults and false religions such as Christadelphianism, Christian Science, the Unitarian-Universalist Church, Swedenborgianism, the Unification Church of Sun Myung Moon, the Unity School of Christianity, and the Way International of Victor Paul Wierwille.²⁸ All religions that fall outside of Christendom also reject the Lord Jesus' unique

affirms the identity of Son and Spirit with the true God because it views the terms as synonyms of "Father" or it views "Father, Son, and Spirit" as synonyms of "Jesus." "[T]he Arian mistake was to claim that substantial or essential identity removed all possibility of distinction; the Sabellian error similarly assumed that identity or singularity of substance removed distinction of persons—the former accordingly denied substantial identity in order to distinguish the three, while the latter denied genuine personal distinction in order to confess the one. Tritheists, beginning with the distinction of the persons, assumed different substances. In brief, all the major Trinitarian heresies involved difficulties with the terms 'substance' and 'person,' specifically, a failure to distinguish them properly" (pg. 31, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725*, vol. 4, "The Triunity of God," Richard A. Muller. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003).

²⁷ One who wishes, for some reason, to study the ungodly and often simply weird speculations and perversions of the blessed and holy Trinity by modern liberal theologians, Catholic and Protestant, is referred to pgs. 81-237 of *The Three-Personed God*, William J. Hill (Washington, D. C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1982). One noteworthy thing that can be gleaned from the mounds of nonsense in such a study is the fact that orthodox, classical Trinitarianism is under severe attack within both Catholicism and mainline Protestantism. The assumption that Bible-believing Baptist churches, the kind founded by the Lord Jesus Christ in the first century and perpetuated from that time to the present by His Almighty power (Matthew 16:18; 28:20; 1 Corinthians 11:26; Ephesians 3:21) are Trinitarian because of such apostate "Christian" religions is entirely erroneous—especially since genuine Trinitarianism is itself under both Catholic and Protestant assault.

²⁸ Although most of the modern Seventh Day Adventist cult is relatively pro-Trinitarian, a "study of Adventist history indicates that from the earliest years of [the] church to the 1890s a whole stream of writers took an Arian or semi-Arian position. The view of Christ presented in those years by Adventist authors was that there was a time when Christ did not exist, that his divinity is a delegated divinity, and that therefore He is inferior to the Father. In regard to the Holy Spirit, their position was that He was not the third member of the Godhead but the power of God. . . . Two of the principal founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Joseph Bates and James White [the husband of the "prophetess" Ellen White] . . . rejected the doctrine of the Trinity . . . [further] prominent Adventists who spoke out against the Trinity were J. N. Loughborough, R. F. Cottrell, J. N. Andrews, and Uriah Smith. . . . [These men made statements such as] 'the Trinity . . . is contrary to common sense . . . is contrary to scripture . . . its origin is Pagan and fabulous . . . the Son of God . . . did . . . have a beginning of days . . . [as] the first created being.' . . . During the early decades of the [Seventh Day Adventist] church Ellen White made statements which [were] . . . anti-Trinitarian [but she] received more light which eventually led to her very clear Trinitarian statements in the late 1890s. . . . The first positive reference to the Trinity in Adventist literature appeared . . . in 1892 . . . [but it still] insists on the eternal subordination of the Son to the Father . . . [in] 1897 Ellen White [taught that Christ was] . . . the self-existent One . . . equal to the Father . . . [in] spite of these [new] clear statements from the pen of Ellen White, it took many years before this truth was accepted by the [Seventh Day Adventist] church at large. . . . Uriah Smith believe[d] until his death in 1903 that Christ had a beginning . . . [as did] many [others] . . . [at] the 1919 Bible Conference . . . L. L. Caviness . . . [said] 'I cannot believe that the two persons of the Godhead are equal, the Father and the Son . . . I cannot believe the so called Trinitarian doctrine of the three persons always existing.' . . . All [the Seventh Day Adventist] pioneers, including Ellen White[,] were anti-Trinitarians [originally]" (pgs. 1-9, "The Doctrine of the

Trinity Among Adventists,” Gerhard Pfandel. Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1999). “James White remained an avowed anti-Trinitarian to his death and Ellen never sought to correct him or other anti-Trinitarian leaders. Her sons William and James were both anti-Trinitarians. Furthermore, Ellen White publicly supported Uriah Smith’s [anti-Trinitarian] book until her death in 1915” (“Anti-Trinitarian Nature of Early Adventism,” David Cloud, elec. acc. Fundamental Baptist CD-ROM library, Port Huron, WA: Way of Life Literature, 2003). Modern pro-Trinitarian Seventh Day Adventist publications admit, “[M]ost . . . early Seventh-day Adventists . . . believed that He [Christ] did not have eternity in the past . . . most pre 1890s Adventists were both anti-Trinitarian and semi-Arian. That is, they were opposed to the doctrine of the Trinity and the full divinity of Christ. . . . [M]ost early Adventists were not orthodox on the Godhead. James White, Joseph Bates, J. N. Andrews, Uriah Smith, Ellet J. Waggoner, and other leaders were in that number. Their position was widely known in the wider Protestant community. . . . [some explicitly preached that] Christ was a created being . . . such as the early Uriah Smith . . . very few among the earliest Adventist leaders . . . [were] not aggressively anti-Trinitarian” (pgs. 44-46, *Seventh-Day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine*, Annotated ed., Notes with Historical & Theological Introduction, George R. Knight. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2003). How can it be that professors of church history at Seventh-Day Adventist seminaries admit that the overwhelming majority of the “founders of Seventh-Day Adventism would not be able to join the church today if they had to subscribe to the denomination’s Fundamental Beliefs [on] . . . the Trinity . . . [that] Jesus is both etenal and truly God . . . [and on] the personhood of the Holy Spirit” (pg. 10, “Adventists and Change,” George R. Knight. *Ministry: International Journal for Clergy*, October 1993, 10-15. The article indicates that “George R. Knight is professor of church history at the [Seventh-Day Adventist] Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.”). This anti-Trinitarianism was never exposed as abominable heresy or idolatry by Ellen White. Mrs. White, in over 100,000 pages of writing, never once used the word “Trinity” to describe her view of the Godhead, and during some seventy years of her life as a “prophet,” while surrounded by scores of Seventh Day Adventist leaders who publicly spoke and wrote against the Trinity, she never once exposed their heresy as idolatry and blasphemy, but instead publically endorsed their persons, sermons, and writings. Thus, Seventh Day Adventism was anti-Trinitarian for over fifty years, before many of them began gradually moving (although there are still Arians within Seventh Day Adventism today) towards a relatively more Trinitarian position in the 1890s and the following decades. One wonders how a typical modern Trinitarian Adventist can believe that his denomination is the one true church, re-established in 1844 and years subsequently, but have his prophettess, her husband, her children, and countless Seventh Day Adventist leaders for decades be idolatrous anti-Trinitarians. Did the “one true church” worship the devil for over fifty years?

The “prophettess” Ellen White and her denomination also held other Trinitarian and Christological heresies. She taught (although, as her writings are not inspired, they are often contradictory and confusing) that the Lord Jesus took a sinful human nature. “Christ . . . took . . . our sinful nature” (pg. 181, *Medical Ministry*, Ellen. G. White. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing, 1963). “[T]he Son of God . . . took upon Him our sinful nature” (*The Review and Herald*, Dec. 15, 1896, cited pg. 535 of *Seventh-Day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine*, *ibid.*). “He [Christ] condescended to connect our fallen human nature with His divinity. . . . Having taken our fallen nature, He showed what it might become” (*Special Instruction Relating to the Review and Herald Office, and the Work in Battle Creek*, May 26, 1896, pg. 13, cited pg. 541, *Seventh-Day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine*, *ibid.*). “Jesus also told [the angels] . . . that He would take man’s fallen nature” (*Early Writings*, pg. 150, cited pg. 542, *Questions on Doctrine*). Christ “took upon himself fallen, suffering human nature, degraded and defiled by sin” (*Youth’s Instructor*, Dec. 20, 1900, pg. 394, cited in *Questions on Doctrine*, pg. 516). “Christ was not in as favorable a position in the desolate wilderness to endure the temptations of Satan as was Adam when he was tempted in Eden. The Son of God . . . took man’s nature after the race had wandered four thousand years from Eden, and from their original state of purity and uprightness. Sin had been making its terrible marks upon the race for ages[.] . . . [T]he human family had been departing every successive generation, [*sic*] farther from the original purity, wisdom, and knowledge which Adam possesseed in Eden. Christ bore the sins and infirmities of the race as they existed when He came to the earth . . . [He had] the weaknesses of fallen man upon Him . . . in order to elevate fallen man, Christ must reach him where he was. He took human nature, and bore the infirmities and degeneracy of the race” (*The Review and Herald*, July 28, 1874, cited pg. 542, *Questions on Doctrine*). Other Adventists leaders believed the same thing, as did the denomination at large. Unlike the Arian heresy, the Adventist teaching that Christ had a sinful human

Deity, including Islam, modern Judaism, the various forms of Buddhism and Hinduism,

nature was not rejected in the 1890s but remains common in the movement into modern times. “E. J. Waggoner in 1889 (see *Signs of the Times*, Jan. 21, 1889, pg. 39) . . . [made the] clear statement that Christ was born with ‘sinful tendencies’ as was every other child. . . that teaching [became] central to the teaching of Waggoner, A. T. Jones, and W. W. Prescott. At [the 1895] General Conference session Jones taught that ‘In [Christ’s] human nature there is not a particle of difference between him and you. . . All the tendencies to sin that are in human flesh were in his human flesh.’ . . . The teaching that Christ had sinful flesh in the sense of having the same tendencies to sin as every other child of Adam became the belief of the majority of Seventh-Day Adventists in the first half of the twentieth century. That teaching was so widely accepted that it no longer needed to be argued in Adventist literature. It was accepted as a fact. . . It was upon this teaching that M. L. Andreasen . . . the most influential theologian in Adventism . . . in the late 1930s and throughout the 1940s . . . [taught that] the final generation of [Adventists] would have to . . . live a sinlessly perfect life. . . Satan would be defeated by the final generation’s demonstration. God was dependent for his own vindication upon that demonstration[.] . . . [this] theology [was] accepted by the large majority of Adventists. And that theology, we need to note once more, was based upon the fact that Christ was just like every other child of Adam. He not only had a sinful human nature in the general sense, but He also possessed sinful tendencies. That is, He was viewed as having a nature just like Adam’s after the Fall. . . . [The teaching of] Jones, Waggoner, and Precott in the mid 1890s . . . held that Christ was just like other human beings without ‘a particle of difference’; that Christ had the same sinful tendencies as other humans. That interpretation . . . had been widely published and had become the accepted position of most Adventists. . . . [Any other] strand of Adventist thinking on the topic had been largely invisible . . . Andreasen [wrote in] 1959 . . . ‘That God . . . exempted Christ from the passions of corrupt men, is the acme of all heresy. . . Such a teaching is . . . completely contrary to what Seventh-Day Adventists have always taught and believed. . . To accept [this teaching . . . necessitates giving up faith in the Gift [Ellen White’s writings] God has given this people.’” (pgs. 516-525, *Questions on Doctrine*). For further evidence, see pgs. 8ff. of *The Word Was Made Flesh: One Hundred Years of Seventh-Day Adventist Christology, 1852-1952*, Ralph Larson (Cherry Valley, CA: Cherrystone Press, 1986); *Touched With Our Feelings: A Historical Survey of Adventist Thought on the Human Nature of Christ*, J. R. Zurcher, trans. Edward E. White (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1999). Zurcher, chairman of the Biblical Research Committee of the Euro-Africa Division of the Seventh Day Adventist denomination and Adventist professor, wrote: “The [t]raditional or [h]istorical [Adventist] Christology . . . [is] called postlapsarian because it teaches that Jesus came in fallen human nature, the nature of Adam *after* [emphasis in original] the Fall. Consequently Christ’s flesh . . . carried within it inherent tendencies to sin[.] . . . This teaching . . . [is] contrary to the beliefs of mainline Christianity. This is why Adventists have often been considered as heretics[.] . . . [The Adventist] church has taught, for a century—from the origin of the movement until 1950 [without question] the postlapsarian position[.] . . . [After 1950] some Adventist theologians, not understanding how it could be possible for Jesus to live without sin in fallen human nature . . . [and with] a desire on the part of some to be recognized as ‘authentic’ Christians . . . [adopted] a [n]ew Christology, or the [p]relapsarian [p]osition . . . [Nonetheless,] probably the most widespread [Adventist] . . . Christology . . . today . . . teaches . . . [i]n harmony with the traditional Christology of the pioneers . . . that Jesus took Adam’s human nature *after* [emphasis in original] the Fall” (pgs. 272-273, *ibid.*).

Ellen White also taught that the Lord Jesus could have sinned (“Christ . . . is the second Adam. The first Adam . . . could fall, and he did fall through transgressing. . . . Jesus Christ . . . took upon Himself human nature, and was tempted in all points as human nature is tempted. He could have sinned; He could have fallen . . . He was assailed with temptations in the wilderness, as Adam was assailed with temptations in Eden” (*Letter 8, 1895*, cited from “Ellen G. White Comments,” *Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. Francis D. Nichol, Raymond F. Cottrell, Don Neugeld, & Julia Neuffer. Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1956, vol. 5, pg. 1128). “Many claim that it was impossible for Christ to be overcome by temptation. Then He could not . . . have gained the victory that Adam failed to gain. . . . But our Saviour took humanity, with all its liabilities. He took the nature of man, with the possibility of yielding to temptation” (*The Desire of Ages*, pg. 117, cited pg. 543-4, *Questions on Doctrine*).

How could the “true church” and its prophetess, Ellen White, deny the Trinity, teach that Christ had a sinful nature and could have sinned? Does the “true church” commit idolatry, worship the devil, and blaspheme the sinless Son of God?

Sikhism, other Eastern religions, Masonry, and Scientology.²⁹ Many modern Unitarians do not take the Bible seriously as the infallible Word of God, and therefore assert without fear that the Lord Jesus was simply either a normal man of some kind, although likely a very good one, or a prophet from God, or special in some other way, but only one that pertains to mankind. However, since nobody who believes the Scriptures are the perfect truth of God could seriously read them and conclude that Jesus is only a man, Unitarians that affirm a faith in an infallible Bible almost always assign the Lord Jesus a semi-divine status, although with a variety of twists. They often state that the Father is fully God, while the Son is a god, a sort of lesser divine being. They believe concerning the Son that “there was a time when he was not;³⁰ and: he was not before he was made; and: he was made out of nothing, or out of another substance or thing,” or that “the Son of God is created, or changeable, or alterable.”³¹ Having denied the genuine Deity of the Son, modern Bible-supporting Unitarians generally proceed to allege that the Holy Spirit is neither God nor a personal Being, but an impersonal force.³² The most prominent and zealous representative of contemporary Bible-affirming Unitarianism is the Watchtower Society, otherwise known as Jehovah’s Witnesses.³³ This religion believes that the Father only is Jehovah, the Almighty and eternal God. The Son is the first and most important of created beings and a god,³⁴ and the Spirit is the impersonal³⁵

²⁹ See pgs. 688ff, *Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions*, John Ankerberg & John Weldon, Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publications, 1999, for documentation.

³⁰ In Greek, ἦν πότε ὅτε οὐκ ἦν. Cf. Athanasius, *Four Discourses Against the Arians*, Discourse 1:2, “Extracts from the Thalia of Arius,” in *A Select Library of the Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, second series, ed. Philip Schaff.

³¹ The language quoted comes from an appendix to the ancient Nicene creed, which is related to the Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan creed cited earlier, and was written to oppose Arianism, an ancient form of Unitarianism. The appendix correctly affirms that those who believe the views mentioned about the Son of God are *anathema*, that is, cursed by the Lord and condemned to hell (2 John 9; 1 Corinthians 16:22; Galatians 1:8-9). The modern Arians in the Watchtower society declare that “Jesus never claimed to be God. Everything he said about himself indicates that he did not consider himself equal to God in any way” (pg. 16, *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* Section “Is God Always Superior To Jesus?”)

³² The Unitarian Arius, from whom the term *Arianism* is derived, at first affirmed the personality of the Spirit, while denying His Deity, but, as a recognition of the personality of the Spirit leads to a consequent affirmation of His Deity, Arius’ followers, and modern Bible-affirming Unitarians, are generally united in their rejection of the Holy Spirit’s personality.

³³ Since *Jehovah* is a Biblical name for God (Psalm 83:18), but Biblically the Father is Jehovah, the Son is Jehovah, and the Holy Spirit is Jehovah, members of the Watchtower Society, since they reject this Biblical truth, are really not witnesses for Jehovah at all; the designation “Jehovah’s Witnesses” is, therefore, most inaccurate. Evangelistic Christians are Jehovah’s true witnesses.

³⁴ They also make the odd claim that “the Bible indicates that Michael is another name for Jesus Christ, before and after his life on earth” (pg. 218 *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower

“active force” of the Father.³⁶ A rejection of the Trinitarian affirmation that the Father, Son,

Bible and Tract Society, 2005), despite a total lack of Scripture equating the two, despite the specific affirmation that Michael is only “one of the chief princes” (Daniel 10:13), which contradicts the Watchtower notion that the Son is exalted above all other created beings. The Lord Jesus is contrasted with the angels, including Michael, in Hebrews 1:4-14; Colossians 2:18-19; etc. Michael, “contending with the devil,” did not dare to rebuke him or his angels (2 Peter 2:11), but said, “The Lord rebuke thee,” yet the Lord Jesus, since He is Jehovah, regularly “rebuked the devil” directly in His own authority, doing exactly what Michael, and all angels and men, did not dare to do (Matthew 17:18; Luke 4:35, 41; 9:42; Mark 9:25; Matthew 4:10), just as in Zechariah 3:2 it is written, “LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan.” The Watchtower employs two arguments to prove that the Son of God is Michael the archangel. 1.) In 1 Thessalonians 4:16, the Lord Jesus “shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.” Supposedly this does not just mean that the archangel Michael will give out his voice and be one of the angels with the Lord Jesus when He returns (cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:7), but proves that the Son of God is actually that archangel. Unfortunately for the Watchtower, the proposition that He is Michael because He comes “with the voice of the archangel” would also prove that the Savior is a trumpet, since He comes “with the trump of God” as well, and that He is a shout, since He also comes “with a shout.” The syntax of the Lord Jesus’ decent “with” a shout, “with” the voice of the archangel, and “with” the trump of God is exactly the same (ὅτι αὐτὸς ὁ Κύριος ἐν κελεύσματι, ἐν φωνῇ ἀρχαγγέλου, καὶ ἐν σάλπιγγι Θεοῦ καταβήσεται ἀπ’ οὐρανοῦ), so if Christ is one of the three, He must be all three. 1 Thessalonians 4:16 actually clearly differentiates the Lord Jesus from the archangel Michael. Then again, perhaps since Matthew 24:31 states that at Christ’s second coming He will return with “his angels” and the sound of a trumpet, the Savior really is all the angels together, not just Michael. 2.) Since “the Bible speaks of both Michael and ‘his angels’ and Jesus and ‘his angels,’” so that they are both over “an army of faithful angels” (pg. 219, *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*), the Watchtower affirms that Michael must be the Lord Jesus. Since “his angels” is also used in reference to Jehovah, and Jehovah is said to be over an army of faithful angels (Psalm 103:20-21; 104:4; 148:1-2), why does not the Watchtower follow its own argument and in this way “prove” that Michael the archangel is the one true God?

³⁵ Interestingly, the founder of the Watchtower Society, Charles T. Russell, on pgs. 57-58 of his book *Three Worlds, and the Harvest of this World* (N. H. Barbour: Rochester, NY 1877; elec. acc. <http://www.quotedstatements.com/3worlds.pdf>; italics in original) stated that the Christadelphian cult did not have “the most remote comprehension of [spiritual truths] because the “Holy Spirit, say they, is but a *principle*, or element of power, and not a intelligence. It is nothing more nor less than ‘electricity;’ is taught in one of their books . . . [they] cannot discern spiritual things . . . leading . . . *Christadelphians* into darkness. . . . Christadelphians . . . explain away the Holy Spirit. And the same reasoning, carried to its legitimate conclusion, can also dispose of both Christ and the Father.” Thus, Russell believed that those who deny that the Holy Spirit is an intelligence, a Being with personality, are lost in spiritual darkness. However, the position that the founder of the Watchtower Society viewed as heresy and spiritual darkness is the exact current position of the religion he founded. Russell preached that to call the Holy Spirit an impersonal force like electricity is spiritual darkness and shows one has not “the most remote comprehension” of spiritual truths, but today his followers write as follows: “Consider the far-reaching effects of an electric power plant. A power plant has a certain location in or near a city. But its electricity is distributed over all that area, providing light and power. It is similar with God. He is in the heavens. Yet his holy spirit, which is his invisible active force, can be felt everywhere, over all the universe. By means of his holy spirit God created the heavens, the earth and all living things. . . . He can send out his spirit, his active force, to do whatever he wants even though he is far away [in the body that God supposedly has]” (*You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*, (1982), p. 37). Thus, either the founder of the Watchtower, and all those who believed in his teachings in the nineteenth century, or the modern Watchtower society, who views Russell’s position as heresy, are necessarily idolaters. The modern Watchtower society thus necessarily believes that the one true religion for modern times, itself, was founded by an idolater, a devil worshipper (1 Corinthians 10:20).

³⁶ The Watchtower also holds to other errors in the doctrine of God. It rejects the Biblical teaching that God perfectly foreknows the future: “The view that God’s exercise of his foreknowledge is infinite [is in error]. . . Its advocates reason that God’s divinity and perfection require that he be omniscient (all-knowing), not only

and Spirit are one in essence unites all Unitarian groups.

Unitarians are lost. Through their affirmation that the Son of God is not the Almighty Creator, but a created being, they are guilty of idolatry and blasphemy. By opposing His character as one who possesses a fully Divine nature (and often by rejecting His full humanity as well), they also destroy the work of redemption; the Lord Jesus cannot fully unite God and man for He does not combine both genuine humanity and Deity in His Person. No real knowledge of the Father through the Son by the Spirit is possible. The sufficiency of His cross-work to redeem man is also destroyed by a rejection of His Divinity. They oppose the Father and the Holy Spirit as well; the Father is no longer eternally Father, for there was (allegedly) a time before the Son existed, and no one can be a Father without a Son. They would strip God the Spirit of His Deity, claiming that He is either just a force similar to gravity, or (following Arius) they must make the Spirit of God a created Being. Their god is a false god, one that cannot save them. As with all idolators, they worship the devil (Deuteronomy 32:17; 1 Corinthians 10:20).

respecting the past and present, but also regarding the future. For him not to foreknow all matters in their every detail would evidence imperfection, according to this concept. . . . The argument that God's not foreknowing all future events and circumstances in full detail would evidence imperfection on his part is, in reality, an arbitrary view of perfection . . . God chooses to exercise his infinite ability of foreknowledge in a selective way" (*The Watchtower*, 8/1/1970 pgs. 469-70). Despite its own (heretical, idolatrous) affirmation that Jehovah does not know the future perfectly, it quotes Mark 13:32, which speaks of the limited knowledge of the future of the Lord Jesus as man, and uses it to argue that the Savior is not God (*Should You Believe In the Trinity?* pg. 19). The Watchtower also rejects the Biblical teaching that God is omnipresent, affirming instead that He has a body: "Actually, by teaching that God is omnipresent Christendom has confused matters and made it more difficult for God to be real to his worshipers. How could God be present everywhere at the same time? . . . God being an individual, a Person with a spirit body, has a place where he resides, and so he could not be at any other place at the same time. . . . Jehovah God truly is a person and has a body as well as a certain location" (*Watchtower*, 2/15/81, pgs. 5-7). This place where the god of the Watchtower lives in his body was said, in the past, to be by "the constellation of the seven stars forming the Pleiades . . . The constellation of the Pleiades is a small one compared with others which scientific instruments disclose to the wondering eyes of man. But the greatness in size of other stars or planets is small when compared with the Pleiades in importance, because the Pleiades is the place of the eternal throne of God. (*Reconciliation*; 1928; p. 14), but recently they have been less specific, although, in accordance with their universal practice, never admitting any error. Their idolatrous rejection of omniscience and omnipresence directly contradicts passages such as Isaiah 45:21; 46:10; Acts 15:18; Ephesians 1:11; Jeremiah 23:24; 1 Kings 8:27; 2 Chronicles 2:6; Ephesians 1:23; and Psalm 139:7-10. The Watchtower also holds many heresies in other areas, including a rejection of the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ (contra John 2:18-22), justification by faith alone (contra Romans 3:28; 5:1), the eternal torment of the wicked (contra Revelation 14:10-11; 19:20-20:15; 21:8) and the Lord's church (preferring instead a supposed Divine guidance of their organization as a "prophet" from God, contra 1 Timothy 3:15). However, since this work focuses on the doctrine of the Trinity, these other grievous errors will not be further considered here. Documentation of their views (and those of many of the other pseudo-Christian, anti-Trinitarian religions mentioned earlier), along with Scriptural refutations, are found in the appropriate sections of the *Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions*, John Ankerberg & John Weldon, Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publications, 1999.

Modalism denies the trinity of Persons in the one God. It is also called Sabellianism (on account of a prominent early supporter, Sabellius), Patripassianism (the Father, *Pater*, suffered, *passio*, and died on the cross),³⁷ Oneness theology (on account of its affirmation of only one Person in God), “Jesus only” theology (since a significant segment of modalists baptize using the name of Jesus alone, instead of baptizing in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit), or Monarchianism (emphasizing the *monarchia*, the “single principle” or absolute unity of the Godhead). While the Trinitarian maintains that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are eternal, ontological³⁸ and personal distinctions, the modalist believes Father, Son, and Spirit are designations for the same Person,³⁹ emphasizing only different modes, manifestations, or functions of the one, solitary Person of God.⁴⁰ They deny that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are three essential and eternal distinctions in the one God.⁴¹

³⁷ Some modern modalists affirm that the human nature of Jesus is the Son and the Divine nature of Jesus is the Father; they would deny that the Father died, and thus would reject the *patripassian* designation.

³⁸ *Ontology* deals with *being*. The Biblical truth of *ontological* personal distinctions in the Godhead means that from eternity past to eternity future the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three distinct personalities inherent in the very *being* of God. The modalist affirms, in contrast, God is ontologically only one Person, who at different times acts like a Father, like a Son, and like a Spirit who produces holiness in us. The Trinity considered *ontologically* refers to God as He is in Himself, without regard to any works that He does in the world. The Trinity considered *economically* refers to the roles the three Persons assume for particular tasks, such as creation or redemption. The distinction between the economic Trinity (God as He acts in the world, God as He is toward us) and the ontological Trinity (God as He is in Himself) is very important, and must not be overlooked. The way that God works in the world, His economic revelation of Himself, is related to His character ontologically considered. Thus, “the ‘sending’ of divine persons is rooted in the intra-trinitarian relations of generation and procession: the Son and the Spirit are sent whereas the ungenerate or innascible Father only sends but never is sent—and the Son, who is generated but who is also a source of the procession of the Spirit, not only is sent but also sends. The Spirit, who is not a source of another person within the Trinity, is sent but does not send” (pg. 44, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy*, ca 1520 to ca 1725, vol 4, *The Triunity of God*, Richard A. Muller. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003). See footnotes #15, 26.

³⁹ Some modalists reject the use of the word Person (Greek *hupostasis*) for God.

⁴⁰ “[T]he Sabellians . . . [argued for] a purely rational distinction of persons in their outward manifestation or role coupled with an insistence that the persons were not distinct *ad intra*. . . . [In contrast, Trinitarians recognize that] the distinction of persons must be identified either as a modal or formal distinction or as a *distinctio realis minor* in order that the individual persons not be identified as, individually, the primary essence of the Godhead and the unity of divine being reduced to a generic unity of secondary essence. There is a fundamental coherence between the arguments leading to a refined sense of the distinction of persons—neither a *distinctio realis maior* such as stands between distinct things, distinct substances, or distinct realities; nor a distinction of reason or of concept such as stands between the essentially and subsistentially identical inseparable attributes of a thing—and the insistence, along the traditional patristic lines of argument, that the persons do not divide the divine primary essence or substance but are instead distinct modes of subsistence within that essence” (pg. 194-195, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Triunity of God*, Richard A. Muller).

⁴¹ Francis Turretin, in his *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, vol. 1, Question 25, I-III, pgs. 265-266, helpfully defines the distinction between the one essence of God and the three Persons in the Godhead, and

Modalism takes somewhat different forms; its adherents might affirm that the terms Father, Son, and Spirit refer to different ways that God acts or different roles God takes in the world, perhaps to His work as Creator, Savior, and Sanctifier. They might say that God was Father in the Old Testament, and then became the Son during the earthly life of Christ, and after the Lord Jesus' resurrection and ascension God became the Holy Spirit. They might, on the other hand, state that these three modes of God's acting as Father, Son and Spirit are simultaneous, rather than successive. Modalists often view the Father, Son, and Spirit as different relationships the solitary Person of God has with mankind; they are viewed as titles, offices, or economic⁴² roles similar to Shepherd, King, Holy One, or Rock. The one Person of God might be termed "Jesus" or the "Father." Modern modalistic groups include the followers of William Branham and the followers of Witness Lee in the Local Church cult. The most prominent contemporary advocate of modalism is the Oneness Pentecostal,

contrasts Trinitarianism with both modalism and tritheism: "[T]he orthodox faith is this: in the one only and most simple essence of God there are three distinct persons so distinguished from each other by incommunicable properties or modes of subsisting that one cannot be the other—although by an inexpressible circuminsession (*epherichoresin*) they always remain and exist in each other mutually. Thus the singular numerical essence is communicated to the three persons not as a species to individuals or a second substance to the first (because it is singular and undivided), nor as a whole to its parts (since it is infinite and impartible); but as a singular nature to its own act of being (*suppositis*) in which it takes on various modes of subsisting. Hence it is evident: (1) that the divine essence is principally distinguished from the persons in having communicability, while the persons are distinguished by an incommunicable property; (2) that it differs from other singular natures in this—that while they can be communicated to only one self-existent being (*supposito*) and are terminated on only one subsistence (because they are finite), the former (because infinite) can admit of more than one.

Hence it is that the three divine persons are not three gods (as among men) because the divine persons partake of the same numerical essence, and that infinite. But three men partake of the same specific essence only, not numerical. Thus the three persons of the Trinity are not to be called *synousioi* or *homoiousioi*, but *homoousioi* because they have between themselves not only a similar, but the same numerical essence (nothing like which exists in creatures). Nor do the properties by which they are mutually distinguished constitute unequal degrees (although they may designate their order as diverse modes of subsisting). By this neither is the essence divided in the persons nor are the persons separated from the essence, but they are only so distinguished that the one cannot be the other.

The question [between Trinitarians and the majority of their "Christian" opponents] is not whether God is one numerically. . . . Rather the question is whether these three names [of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit] designate three distinct persons subsisting in but one, undivided essence, which the orthodox maintain and the anti-Trinitarians deny. The latter consist of both they who, with Sabellius [the modalists], recognize only one person, who in different respects puts on now the name of Father, then of Son and again of Holy Spirit . . . and they who, with the Tritheists, from three persons make up three essences [and thus three gods]. . . . Against these [and others, such as the Arians], the orthodox faith must be established."

⁴² *Economic* roles in the sense of "God as He is toward us," that is, roles taken on by God to accomplish works in the world that relate to mankind or of creation in general, as opposed to *ontological* distinctions that relate to God as He is in Himself, without consideration of the created world or mankind. See footnotes #15, 24.

Apostolic Pentecostal, or “Jesus only” movement, including the United Pentecostal Church, the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, the Bible Way Church of our Lord Jesus Christ, the United Church of Jesus Christ, the Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith, and the Pentecostal Churches of Apostolic Faith. Oneness Pentecostalism today holds that Jesus is the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Some modern modalists believe that the word “Father” in the Bible speaks of the Divine nature of Jesus, while the term “Son” refers to the human nature of the unipersonal God.⁴³ The fundamental heresy of all modalists is the rejection of the three eternal, personal distinctions in the one being of God.⁴⁴

⁴³ In this they copy the doctrine of (the very far from infallible) Pope Callistus, who held that “God in uniting himself to the flesh of Jesus acquires visibility and is called Son, but he remains Father in his invisibility—so that Father and Son are one *prosopon*” (*The Three-Personed God*, William J. Hill. Washington, D. C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1982, pg. 34).

⁴⁴ The modalist heresy developed historically out of “an attempt to fathom the depths of [the Trinitarian] mystery by a process of speculation, instead of by a comprehensive reflection upon the Biblical data for its construction. (In some instances, probably, there was a desire to explain the doctrine and relieve it of its mystery. The modal trinity . . . is quite intelligible. It is a significant remark . . . that ‘the Scripture doctrine of the Trinity is more true than plain, while the heretical doctrine of the Trinity is more plain than true.’) As we examine [it], we shall perceive that the mind looked at only one side of the great truth, and dwelt upon only a single one of the several representations in the revealed word. [It] sought to affirm, and that very strongly, the doctrine of the deity of Christ; but denied his distinct personality. Christ, [modalists] held, was God the Father himself, in a particular aspect or relationship. Essence and Person were identical, for them; and as there was but one Essence there could be but one Person. [Modalists] . . . were denominated Patripassians or Monarchians, because they asserted the Monad and denied the Triad. They asserted the deity of Christ, but held the church doctrine of three persons to be irreconcilable with that of the unity of God. Hence they affirmed that there is only one divine Person. This one only Person conceived of in his abstract simplicity and eternity was denominated God the Father; but in his incarnation, he was denominated God the Son. Sometimes, a somewhat different mode of apprehension and statement was employed. God in his concealed unrevealed nature and being was denominated God the Father, and when he comes forth from the depths of his essence, creating a universe, and revealing and communicating himself to it, he therein takes on a different relation, and assumes another denomination: namely, God the Son, or the Logos.

In their Christology, the Patripassians taught that this single divine Person, in his form of Son or Logos, animated the human body of Christ; and denied the existence of a true human soul in the Person of Jesus Christ. It was, consequently, the divine essence itself in alliance with a physical organization and nature, that suffered for the sin of mankind; and hence the term Patripassians was given to the advocates of this doctrine.

The principal Patripassians . . . [were]: 1. Praxeas of Asia Minor . . . [who taught] that the Father descended into a virgin, was himself born of her, himself suffered, and finally that the Father himself is Jesus Christ. 2. Noetus [of] Smyrna . . . [and] 3. Beryl, bishop of Bostra in Arabia. . . . [who] was convinced of his error, and renounced his Patripassianism. . . .

Sabellius . . . [understood] by the Logos and the Holy Spirit two Powers (δυνάμεις) streaming forth from the divine Essence, through which God works and reveals himself. . . . [He] approximates to the Patripassians, in denying that Christ was merely an ordinary man upon whom the divine Logos only exerted a peculiar influence, and affirming that the Logos-Power itself belonged to the proper personality of Christ, and thereby determined and shaped his personal consciousness during the period of his earthly life. The Logos entered into union with Christ’s humanity, and not merely inspired it. But this more exalted view of the Person of Christ is immediately depressed again to the humanitarian level . . . by the further assertion, that this divine Logos-Power, which had thus issued forth from God, and united itself with a human body, and formed one

The god of modalism is not the God of the Bible; the affirmation that the Father, Son, and Spirit are the same person is a radically different view of God than the Scriptural, Trinitarian position. Modalist attempts to explain the numerous conversations between the Father and the Son in the Bible as the human and Divine natures of the Lord Jesus communicating (although a nature, unlike a person, has no consciousness and is in itself unable to communicate) make the Savior schizophrenic. The work of Christ on the cross is destroyed, for the Father cannot lay the sins of the world on His Son. By stripping the Persons of the Trinity of personal identity and distinct subsistence, and reducing them to mere titles, names, or offices, modalists deny the existence of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Their god is a false god, one that cannot save. As with all idolators, modalists worship the devil (Deuteronomy 32:17; 1 Corinthians 10:20).

Other anti-Trinitarian positions by groups that claim to believe in the Bible exist. For example, those who follow the teachings of Herbert W. Armstrong (the United Church of God, Global Church of God, Associated Church of God, etc.) believe that God is a family currently numbering two Persons, the Father and the Son, while the Holy Spirit is impersonal, being simply God's mind, power, life and love; in the future all faithful Armstrongites will join the divine family and become God themselves, so that God will consist of billions of Persons instead of the current two. Mormonism affirms that the Father, Son, and Spirit are three different gods out of an innumerable multitude of others; all the gods are people who, at one time, were faithful Mormons on planets somewhere in the

communion of life and consciousness with it during the period of Christ's earthly existence, was at the ascension of Jesus again withdrawn into the depths of the Divine Nature. . . .

Sabellius seems to have regarded the Monad *as antithesis* to the Triad, thus introducing four factors into the problem. Whether he regarded the Father as the Monad, or supposed the Father to stand in the same relation to the Monad, that the Logos and Spirit do, is uncertain. Neander is of the opinion that Sabellius held the Father as unrevealed to be the Monad, and as revealed to be the Father properly so called. He employed the following comparison to illustrate his view of the Trinity. 'As in the sun we may distinguish its proper substance, its round shape, and its power of communicating heat and light, so in God we may distinguish his self-subsistent essence (μόνως), the illuminative power of the Logos, and the enlivening energy of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers.' . . . Sabellius employed the [orthodox] phrase, 'three Persons,' but in the sense of personifications, or characters which the one essence assumed according to various occasions. . . .

Sabellius' trinity . . . is transitory. When the purposes of its formation are accomplished, the Triad is resolved again into the Monad. Sabellius did not apply the name of Son to the Logos; but only to the Person resulting from the union of the Logos with the man Jesus. He maintains, that in the Old Testament no mention is made of the Son of God [contra Psalm 2:7, 12; Proverbs 30:4; Isaiah 9:6; Daniel 3:25] but only of the Logos" (William G. T. Shedd, *History of Christian Doctrine*, vol. 1, bk. 3, chp. 2:2, "Classes of Anti-Trinitarians," pgs. 136-138; orig. pub. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1889; elec. acc. *Christian Library Series, vol. 17: Systematic Theologies*, AGES Library, Rio, WI: 2006).

universe, and all the people currently on the earth are the product of sexual union between a father god and a mother god.⁴⁵ Since Scripture is clearly utterly contrary to such revolting notions (Genesis 3:5; Isaiah 44:6, 8; 45:6, etc.), it is not surprising that both groups claim to have additional revelations that add to and effectively supplant the Bible—Mormonism adds the *Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants*, and the *Pearl of Great Price*, as well as the supposedly inspired teachings of whoever is its currently living “prophet,” while Armstrongism adds the allegedly inspired writings of Herbert W. Armstrong. Unitarianism and modalism are the only alternatives to Trinitarianism that have any even apparent plausibility⁴⁶ for those committed to the sole authority of the Bible.

⁴⁵ Documentation of the Mormon and Armstrongist views, along with a refutation of their blasphemous heresies, is found in the appropriate articles in the *Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions*, Ankerberg & Weldon.

⁴⁶ It is noteworthy, however, that most modern modalistic and Unitarian religious systems also provide for extra-Biblical “inspired” authorities to supplement the Bible. For example, the unitarian Watchtower society affirms that its governing body in Brooklyn, New York receives prophetic guidance from God: “we cannot find the Scriptural guidance we need outside the ‘faithful and discreet slave’ organization [itself]” (*The Watchtower*, Feb. 15, 1981), because the Watchtower governing body is allegedly God’s prophet: “This ‘prophet’ was not one man, but was a body of men and women. It was the small group of footstep followers of Jesus Christ, known at that time as International Bible Students. Today they are known as Jehovah’s Christian witnesses.” (*The Watchtower*, April 1, 1972). Thus, since one could not know the truth simply from the Bible, membership in the Watchtower Society is essential to salvation: “A . . . requirement [for life is that] we be associated with God’s channel, his organization . . . To receive everlasting life . . . we must identify that organization and serve God as part of it” (*The Watchtower*, Feb. 15, 1983). One would not come to believe in Watchtower doctrines without interpreting Scripture under the superior authority of the literature of the “inspired” Watchtower organization. “[P]eople cannot see the Divine Plan in studying the Bible by itself. . . if [a person] lays them [Watchtower literature, called “Scripture Studies” in this quote] aside and ignores them and goes to the Bible alone, though he has understood his Bible for ten years, our experience shows that within two years he goes into darkness [that is, leaves the Watchtower Society]. On the other hand, if he had merely read the Scripture Studies with their references, and had not read a page of the Bible, as such, he would be in the light at the end of the two years, because he would have the light of the Scriptures” (*The Watchtower*, Sept. 15, 1910, p. 298). Therefore, “from time to time, there have arisen from among the ranks of Jehovah’s people [members of the Watchtower Society] those, who . . . say that it is sufficient to read the Bible exclusively, either alone or in small groups at home. But, strangely, through such ‘Bible reading,’ they have reverted right back to the apostate doctrines that commentaries by Christendom’s clergy were teaching 100 years ago” (*The Watchtower*, August 15, 1981). That is, one who accepts the Bible alone as his authority for faith and practice leaves unitarian cults and becomes a Trinitarian.

Similarly, the largest modalistic groups are part of the Pentecostal/charismatic movement and thus accept additional “revelation” beyond the Bible, which then becomes the true ultimate authority through which the Bible is interpreted. One has not received salvation, according to Oneness teaching, unless one has experienced a supernatural (demonic) experience of “speaking in tongues” after receiving anti-Trinitarian baptism. The “[modalist] ‘Jesus only’ or ‘Oneness Pentecostal’ movement . . . [was] born, nurtured and matured within the ranks of Pentecostalism . . . the modern resurgence of modalism . . . began in April 1913 during a major Pentecostal camp meeting in Arroyo Seco, near Los Angeles, California. R. E. McAlister preached a sermon on Acts 2:38 where he argued that baptism was to be done in the name of Jesus only and not with a Trinitarian formula. John Scheppe was greatly influenced by the message and in prayer that night encountered a type of ‘revelation’ or mystical experience confirming the power of the name of Jesus . . .

IV. Biblical Proof for the Doctrine of the Trinity

(This portion has not yet been written—please see the work *Are You Worshipping Jehovah?* at <http://sites.google.com/site/faithalonesaves/salvation> for some of the many positive Biblical proofs for the Trinity).

- I.) There is only one God
- II.) The Father is God
- III.) The Son is God
- IV.) The Holy Spirit is God
- V.) Interpersonal relations in the Godhead

VI. Objections to the Doctrine of the Trinity

A. Introductory Considerations

Both Unitarians and modalists set forth a number of arguments for their respective theological positions. Objections common to both heresies will be dealt with first. Then uniquely Unitarian objections will be examined. Uniquely modalistic objections will be examined last.

Many heretical objections to Trinitarianism are invalidated simply by holding to a proper definition of the true doctrine. Unitarians often misrepresent the Trinity as modalism or tritheism. They then refute the idea that the Father is the same Person as the Son and as

Scheppe adopt[ed] a modalistic view of the Godhead . . . the movement grew and attracted prominent Assemblies of God leaders who soon split from the . . . denomination in 1916[.] . . . William Branham, a false prophet who was guided by spirits and reached millions of people in the 1930s-50s, was a Oneness preacher. . . . [There was] spiritism historically in the formation of the [Oneness] church and its leaders via occult visions or ‘angel’ contacts and guidance” (pgs. 366-368, *Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions*, John Ankerberg & John Weldon. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1999). The major modalistic groups, then, do not evaluate Scripture on its own terms, but do so in light of experiences with supernatural evil spirits masquerading as the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ, God the Father, holy angels, etc. This was unquestionably the case in the development of the Oneness movement in the early twentieth century. Thus, while the major Bible-affirming modalist groups regularly claim that Scripture is their sole authority, as do their unitarian counterparts, the claims of both groups are false. One who truly has Scripture as his sole authority for faith and practice will be or become a Trinitarian.

the Spirit, or then refute the idea that there are three gods, and state that they have refuted the still untouched Trinitarian position. Unitarians also often ignore the Christian doctrine that the Lord Jesus is one Person with two natures, one fully Divine and one fully human. They then take passages that deal with His human nature, demonstrate that He (as a true man of necessity does) has human attributes such as dependence upon God, and affirm that these texts, although they really have no bearing on the issue, prove the Son does not have a Divine nature. Modalists also like to misrepresent the Trinity as tritheism and confuse the Person and natures of Christ. A proper understanding of the definition of the Trinity in itself refutes many of the arguments made against it.

Anti-Trinitarians also have the burden of proof when they utilize the passages of Scripture examined below. They must, after refuting the positive arguments for the Trinity given in earlier sections of this book, show that the passages they now bring forth to state their case are absolutely incompatible and unreconcilable with the Trinitarian position. The Trinitarian does not need to prove anything with these verses—he has not built his case for the Triune God upon them; he must simply demonstrate that one (or more) ways exist to reconcile the anti-Trinitarian “proof-texts” with his theology. If one of these alleged proof-texts, examined on its own without any recourse to other portions of Scripture, could bear either an anti-Trinitarian or a Trinitarian interpretation, it has failed to refute the Trinity. It will not do to force an anti-Trinitarian interpretation upon verses that do not require it, ignore or tread lightly over the masses of verses that support the Trinity, and then favor either Unitarianism or modalism—Scripture is not contradictory. Trinitarians affirm that theirs is a balanced view of Scripture—they can affirm every text in the Bible that relates to the Divine nature, while Unitarians, modalists, and all other doctrines of God must pick certain verses, emphasize those, and neglect other equally inspired texts. If anti-Trinitarians wish to establish their doctrine from the Word of God, they cannot unbalance the Bible. Finally, the anti-Trinitarian cannot merely attempt to rip apart the Trinitarian conception; he must also build a coherent, compelling, Biblical case for his own theological alternative. The Arian must prove that Jesus Christ is the creator of everything except himself and a secondary true god underneath God the Father, not just argue against the Son being the Almighty God. He must prove that the Holy Spirit is impersonal, not just argue against His personality and

Deity. The modalist must prove that Jesus is the Father and Jesus is the Holy Spirit, and prove as well (if he adopts this version of modalism) that the word *Father* refers to Christ's Divine nature and the word *Son* to His human nature; he cannot just argue against Trinitarian personal distinctions. Thus, Unitarians and modalists face two requirements if they wish to establish their views as Biblical. Negatively, they must refute all the verses given in favor of the Trinity, and provide texts of their own that do not just create doubt about Divine Tri-unity but entirely eliminate the doctrine as a possibility. Positively, they must demonstrate that their own particular alternative theology is the position of Scripture. Only if they accomplish both of these tasks have they accomplished their goal with their proof-texts and arguments.

B. Objections Common to Unitarians and Modalists

- 1.) The word "Trinity" is not in the Bible.
- 2.) The doctrine of the Trinity comes from paganism.

Unitarians and modalists often directly affirm that Trinitarianism is derived from paganism. They commonly quote various publications as well to support such affirmations. For example, the Watchtower society, representative of modern Bible-affirming Arianism, declares "*The Encyclopedia of Religion* admits: 'Theologians today are in agreement that the Hebrew Bible does not contain a doctrine of the Trinity.' . . . *The Encyclopedia of Religion* says: 'Theologians agree that the New Testament also does not contain an explicit doctrine of the Trinity.'"⁴⁷ If they state, Trinitarianism does not come from the Bible, where does it come from? The Watchtower references the book "*The Paganism in Our Christianity* [which] declares: 'The origin of the [Trinity] is entirely pagan.'"⁴⁸ Similarly, the modalist leader David Bernard writes, "[T]he idea of a trinity did not originate with Christendom. It was a significant feature of pagan religions and philosophies before the Christian era, and its existence today in various forms suggests an ancient, pagan origin. . . . The Scriptures do not

⁴⁷ *Should You Believe In the Trinity?* pg. 6, in the section, "Is It Clearly a Bible Teaching?"

⁴⁸ *Should You Believe In the Trinity?* in the section, "How Did The Trinity Doctrine Develop?" pg. 11. The Watchtower makes the same quotation on pg. 3, since the organization likes it so much.

teach the doctrine of the trinity, but trinitarianism has its roots in paganism.”⁴⁹ However, the allegation that Trinitarian doctrine comes from paganism, rather than from Scripture, is entirely false. This notion has several severe problems.

First, since the word “Trinity” is not found in pre-Christian pagan writings, this objection to the Trinity contradicts the first one mentioned, namely, that Trinitarianism is unbiblical because the word “Trinity” is not in the Bible. If the fact that the word is not present means that the idea is not present, then the fact that the word “Trinity” is not in pre-Christian pagan authors means the idea is not found in paganism. The last objection to Trinitarianism contradicts the one at hand. Anti-Trinitarians should make up their minds to stick to the one or the other, but not employ them both. However, despite their contradictory nature, Unitarians and modalists generally do exactly this. For example, the Unitarian and modalist compositions quoted in the previous paragraph both employ the “the word ‘Trinity’ is not in the Bible” attack.⁵⁰ Anti-Trinitarian compositions often do not worry about the logical consistency of their allegations, but simply employ whatever attacks sound good at the time, even if they are contradictory.

Second, the affirmation that Trinitarianism came from paganism is not sustainable historically. As demonstrated earlier in this work, Trinitarianism is taught from Genesis to Revelation. The idea that, centuries after the inspiration of the New Testament, paganism somehow crept in and brought forth the idea of the Trinity is impossible in light of the clear Biblical evidence for Trinitarianism and the testimony of post-Biblical Christianity from even the earliest period.

Furthermore, the writers quoted in anti-Trinitarian literature to support their affirmations of the non-Biblical, pagan origin of the Trinity are usually extremely suspect. While, since “of making many books *there is no end*” (Ecclesiastes 12:12), it is not possible to trace and evaluate every single quotation in every anti-Trinitarian composition, an evaluation of the sources employed in the Watchtower’s *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* quoted above will be evaluated as representative of much of the distortion and

⁴⁹ *The Oneness of God*, David K. Bernard. Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, Chapter 11, sections “Pagan roots and parallels” and “Post-apostolic developments,”

⁵⁰ ““The word ‘Trinity’ is not found in the Bible” (*Should You Believe in the Trinity?* pg. 6), “The Bible does not mention the word *trinity*, nor does it mention the word *persons* in reference to God.” *The Oneness of God*, Bernard, Chapter 12, sec. “Nonbiblical Terminology.”)

misinformation advanced in the anti-Trinitarian cause.

As mentioned above, in the section of *Should You Believe in The Trinity?* entitled, “Is It Clearly a Bible Teaching?” the Watchtower writes: “*The Encyclopedia of Religion* admits: ‘Theologians today are in agreement that the Hebrew Bible does not contain a doctrine of the Trinity.’ . . . *The Encyclopedia of Religion* says: ‘Theologians agree that the New Testament also does not contain an explicit doctrine of the Trinity.’” The very vague references, without author, page number, volume number, publisher, or any other source information besides the title, can with diligence be traced to the many-volumed *Encyclopedia of Religion*, and found within the article on the Trinity in that set. There the article in the *Encyclopedia* does indeed declare, “Theologians today are in agreement that the Hebrew Bible does not contain a doctrine of the Trinity . . . the New Testament also does not contain an explicit doctrine of the Trinity.” However, the article goes on to say “the exclusively masculine imagery [that is, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit] of trinitarian doctrine [is a problem]. The fatherhood of God should be rethought in light of the critique of feminist theologies and also in view of the nonpatriarchal understanding of divine paternity . . . the Christian doctrine of God must be developed also within the wider purview of other world religions . . . [it] cannot be christomonistic, excluding persons of other faiths from salvation.” The reason the author of this article in the encyclopedia, Catherine Mowry LaCugna, denies that the Trinity is a Biblical doctrine is the same reason she thinks the “fatherhood of God should be rethought” and asserts that non-Christians are going to heaven—she is an radically liberal, anti-Bible “feminist theologian” who believes that much of the doctrine of the “Trinity is metaphysical speculation that must be rejected because it has given rise to ‘sexist and patriarchal’ outcomes [Her] approach [has] almost no reference to the biblical text and [manifests a] disdain for church history, [while it also] does not allow for the notion of truth or revelation outside of personal subjective experience.”⁵¹ “LaCugna argues that early Christian history and dogma took an improper approach by defining God’s inner life, the self-relatedness of

⁵¹ “The Revamping Of The Trinity And Women’s Roles In The Church” in “Egalitarians Revamp Doctrine of the Trinity,” Stephen D. Kovach, *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 2:1 (Dec 1996). Compare Lacugna’s book, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991), in which she argues that “feminist and liberationist perspectives are valuable for living life triunely. Salvation must lead to deification [people becoming gods] . . . For promoting a relational metaphysics, some may [also] think her a pantheist” (Roderick T. Leupp, book review of *God for Us: The Trinity & Christian Life*, by Catherine Mowry LaCugna. *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 39:2 (June 1996) p. 317).

the Father, Son and Spirit . . . she believes that valid criticisms have been made by liberation and feminist theologians about the Christian doctrine of God as sexist and oppressive . . . [she argues for a doctrine of God that will] allow oppressed persons (women and the poor) to be able to restructure the human community . . . [she believes that] the doctrine of monotheism . . . must be discarded . . . [while the inspiration of the Bible is also rejected, to affirm that] God can only reveal to people what they experience.”⁵² The Arians in the Watchtower society wish to convey the idea that rational scholarship, as evidenced in a weighty Encyclopedia, knows that the Trinity is not a Biblical doctrine—one who discovers that the quotations made are actually the raving of a far-left radical feminist who rejects Scripture, monotheism, and the Fatherhood of God, but believes that people can become deified, are not very likely to be impressed. The reason the Watchtower makes the reference hard to look up becomes clear.

To prove that Trinitarianism developed from Platonic philosophy, the Watchtower does not quote Plato, but rather mentions that in “the book *A Statement of Reasons*, Andrews Norton says of the Trinity: ‘We can trace the history of this doctrine, and discover its source, not in the Christian revelation, but in the Platonic philosophy . . . The Trinity is not a doctrine of Christ and his Apostles, but a fiction of the school of the later Platonists.’”⁵³ No further information is offered for the quotations, such as the publisher the pages in the book, or even more than a fragment of the title—not to mention the qualification of the author to comment on the subject. One can, through labor intensive research that the great majority of people who read *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* will not undertake, as the Arians who introduced the quotation are aware, discover the source of the quotation in a rare, book written over 150 years ago.⁵⁴ The powerful bias against the Trinity manifested by the fact that its author, Andrews Norton, was a Unitarian, and his book was published by a Unitarian association, is conveniently omitted, as is the great majority of the title of his book; a work by an unknown Andrews Norton entitled *A Statement of Reasons* is going to be much less obviously biased

⁵² “A Defense Of The Doctrine Of The Eternal Subordination Of The Son,” Stephen D. Kovach & Peter R. Schemm, Jr., *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 42:3 (September 1999), pgs. 473-476.

⁵³ Pg. 11-12, *Should You Believe In the Trinity?*

⁵⁴ The words are found on pgs. 94, 104 of *A Statement of Reasons for Not Believing The Doctrines of Trinitarians, Concerning The Nature of God and the Person of Christ*, by Andrews Norton. (Boston, MA: American Unitarian Association, 1886; 14th ed.). The first edition was published in 1856.

than a work entitled *A Statement of Reasons for not Believing the Doctrines of Trinitarians concerning the Nature of God and the Person of Christ* published by a prominent member of an association of Arian Trinity-haters. But did Norton faithfully believe that the Bible was the Word of God, and did he write against the Trinity because it contradicted his unwavering faith in the infallible Scriptures? Elsewhere in his *Statement of Reasons for Not Believing the Doctrines of Trinitarians*, he wrote:

Our Lord [Jesus Christ] . . . speaks of descending from heaven, conform[ing] his language to the conception of the Jews, that heaven was the peculiar abode of God. But we cannot receive this conception as true . . . there is no rational foundation for the opinion[.] . . . [T]he conceptions of the Apostle [Paul] respecting our Lord's future coming were erroneous . . . There is so little reason to suppose that the Second Epistle ascribed to St. Peter was written by him, that it is not to be quoted as evidence of his opinions. . . . I do not refer to the Apocalypse as the work of St. John, for I do not believe it to be so. . . . [The Apocalypse contains a large degree of] imperfection [in] its language[.] . . . [T]he Apostles . . . all appear to have expected [Christ's] personal and visible return to earth . . . to exercise judgment, to reward his faithful followers, to punish the disobedient, and to destroy his foes . . . [t]hese expectations were erroneous . . . they . . . adopted the errors of their age[.] . . . The Jews [believed that there were] . . . many supposed predictions and types of their Messiah [in their] . . . sacred books[.] . . . This mode of interpretation was adopted by some of the Apostles . . . this mistake was not corrected by Christ . . . this whole system of interpretation . . . so far as the supposed prophecies were applied to [Christ, was] erroneous. . . . [I]n [Christ's] discourses . . . he speaks, according to the belief of the Jews, of Satan as if he were a real being . . . [but he is an] imagination [and a symbol for the] abstract idea of moral evil.⁵⁵

Norton's rejection of Scripture for rationalism led him to reject the Trinity as "a doctrine which among intelligent men has fallen into neglect and disbelief. . . . [R]eligion must become the study of philosophers, as the highest philosophy. . . . The proper modern doctrine of the Trinity . . . is to be rejected, because . . . it is incredible. . . . The doctrine of the Trinity, then, and that of the union of two natures in Christ, are doctrines which, when fairly understood, it is impossible, from the nature of the human mind, should be believed. . . . [T]hey are intrinsically incapable of any proof whatever . . . they are of such a character, that it is impossible to bring arguments in their support, and unnecessary to adduce arguments against them. Here, then, we might rest."⁵⁶ Andrews Norton's fallen, sinful, mortal mind did not understand the revelation God had made of Himself as Triune. It did not meet his criteria

⁵⁵ Pgs. 388, 389, 397, 401, 402, 407, 409, 413, 418, 420, 421, Norton, *ibid.*

⁵⁶ Pgs. 5, 37, 40, 61-62, Norton, *ibid.*

of acceptable philosophy, and he thought it was impossible to believe, no matter what God said about it in the Bible. Norton did not reject the Trinity because he thought it was against the plain teaching of the Scripture and an import from paganism that was contrary to the infallible Word of God—he rejected the Trinity because he could not understand it perfectly and he idolatrously placed his mind above the all-knowing Lord.

The Watchtower quotation also conveniently left out devastating admissions the book itself states in between the two sections ten pages apart that are strung together to create the quote in *Should You Believe in the Trinity?*. Norton himself admitted that the idea “Plato . . . anticipated [the Trinity is an] error, for which there is no foundation. Nothing resembling the doctrine of the Trinity is to be found in the writings of Plato himself.”⁵⁷ Not only is there not a single quote from Plato in Norton’s chapter which is to prove that “we can trace the history of [the Trinity], and discover its source, not in the Christian revelation, but in the Platonic philosophy,” there is not a single quotation from a later pagan philosopher of the Platonic school. No pre-Christian writers are cited. Plato is not cited. Pagan Platonic philosophers are not cited. Why? Norton does not “adduce the facts on which [his assertion that the Trinity comes from Platonic philosophy is] founded, because the facts could not be satisfactorily stated and explained in a small compass.”⁵⁸ Norton tells his readers that, in the course of a chapter that is to prove that the Trinity came from Platonism, within a book written to oppose the Trinity, a book of 499 pages, not including forty-nine additional pages of numbered introductory material—and thus a massive volume of over 548 pages—he does not have any room to give even one quotation from Plato or a pagan Platonist to prove that the Trinity comes from Platonic paganism! The more modern Arians in the Watchtower Society will not, in their work *Should You Believe in the Trinity?*, quote Plato or a pagan Platonist to show that the Trinity comes from paganism—they will quote an earlier Arian, Andrews Norton. Andrews Norton will not quote Plato or a later pagan Platonist to show that the Trinity comes from pagan Platonism—he has no room for that in his 548 page book. If Norton will not quote Plato or Platonists to prove that the Trinity came from Platonism, how will he attempt to do it? In between the pages the Watchtower quotes, Norton cites

⁵⁷ Pgs. 95-96, Norton, *ibid.*

⁵⁸ See pg. 100.

various “learned Trinitarians . . . [who] in admitting the influence of the Platonic doctrine upon the faith of the early Christians, of course do not regard the Platonic as the original source of the Orthodox doctrine, but many of them represent it as having occasioned errors and heresies, and in particular the Arian heresy.”⁵⁹ Norton quotes Trinitarians who say that Platonic philosophy influenced early Christendom to prove that the Trinity came from Platonism—but he admits that these same authors declare that the Platonic influence did not produce the doctrine of the Trinity, but was the source of many errors, principally the Arian doctrine. Thus, the support Norton gives for his affirmation that the Trinity is false because it comes from paganism comes from historians who affirm that Arianism is what actually comes from paganism! It should be clear why the Watchtower wishes to keep Norton’s character as a Unitarian obscured, and to make their quotation from him very hard to trace. Andrews Norton gives no evidence at all from Plato or Platonic philosophers for his contention. Norton admits that Plato did not teach the Trinity. Norton admits that the Trinitarian historians who he quotes to prove his point actually affirm the opposite of his position, that is, that Platonic philosophy was the source of the Unitarian heresy, not of the Trinity. Someone who read Norton’s chapter and believed it was convincing would have to either have an extreme pre-formed bias against the Trinity or be amazingly gullible. But the Watchtower will leave out all these facts—culled from the pages between the first and second half of their own quotation—and thus reproduce a quotation that is not only entirely inaccurate but clearly intentionally misleading.

When the Unitarians in the Watchtower society wish to prove that the Trinity comes from paganism in general, they quote, more often than any other single reference book⁶⁰ in their *Should You Believe In the Trinity?* the work “*The Paganism in Our Christianity* [which] declares: ‘The origin of the [Trinity] is entirely pagan.’”⁶¹ While the lack of context makes the quotation extremely difficult to trace,⁶² one can with great diligence discover that it

⁵⁹ See pg. 100.

⁶⁰ See pgs. 3, 6, 11, *Should You Believe in the Trinity?*

⁶¹ *Should You Believe In the Trinity?* in the section, “How Did The Trinity Doctrine Develop?” pg. 11. Weigall is also quoted with approval elsewhere in this Watchtower work (pgs. 3, 6).

⁶² The publisher of the book is not cited. The page number the quote is from is not cited. The year the book was published is not cited. The ISBN number is not cited. The Watchtower work which quotes the book has no bibliography. Nothing is provided in the Watchtower composition that would enable the reader to access the book in question and discover if the author has any credibility is provided; the most basic conventions for

comes from pg. 197 of the book in question, written by one Arthur Wiegall⁶³ (New York, NY: Knickerbocker Press, 1928). An extensive quotation of Wiegall will demonstrate to all just how credible—or rather, incredible—he is:

[T]he miraculous . . . made [Christ] God incarnate to the thinkers of the First Century; all these marvels make Him a conventional myth to those of the Twentieth. Many of the most erudite critics are convinced that no such person [as Jesus Christ] ever lived. . . . [The] twelve disciples [were invented from] the twelve signs of the Zodiac. . . . [The gospels are] meagre and garbled accounts . . . borrowed from paganism . . . many of the details of the life of our Lord are too widely improbable to be accepted in these sober days. . . . [M]any gods and semi-divine heroes have mothers whose names are variations of “Mary” . . . the name of our Lord’s mother may have been forgotten and a stock name substituted. . . . The mythological origin of [the record of Jesus’ birth] is so obvious that the whole story must be abandoned. . . . [When] St. Luke says that when the child was born Mary wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger . . . [the] author was here drawing upon Greek mythology. . . . The story of the Virgin Birth . . . is derived from pagan sources. . . . The story of the forty days in the wilderness and the temptation by Satan . . . [comes from] a pagan legend. . . . the account of the Crucifixion . . . parallels . . . rites of human sacrifice as practiced by the ancients. . . . In primitive days it was the custom in many lands for a king or ruler to put his own son to death as a sacrifice to the tribal god. . . . in the primitive Passover a human victim was probably sacrificed. . . . [T]he side of Jesus [being] pierced by a lance . . . [relates to] a widespread custom [like] . . . the primitive Albanians used to sacrifice a human being to the moon-goddess by piercing his side with a spear. . . . Nobody in his senses now believes that Jesus ascended into Heaven . . . His body must anyhow have died or been cast aside. . . . such an ascension into the sky was the usual end to the mythical legends of the lives of pagan gods . . . [T]he Christian expression “washed in the blood of the Lamb” is undoubtably a reflection of . . . the rites of Mithra. . . . [T]he worshippers of Mithra practiced baptism by water. . . . There is no authentic evidence that Jesus ever intended to establish a Church . . . the Lord’s Supper has been changed . . . under Mithraic and other ancient influences. . . . The doctrine of the Atonement . . . nauseates the modern mind, and . . . is of pagan origin, being indeed the most obvious relic of heathendom in the Faith . . . it is not, of course, supported by anything known to have been said by Jesus. . . . this idea of a god dying for the benefit of mankind, and rising again, had its origin in the fact that nature seemed to die in winter and revive in spring. . . . [T]he *Logos* [the Greek term for “Word,” used of the Lord Jesus in John 1:1, 14; 1 John 5:7; Revelation 19:13] theory, which had been adopted by the author of the Gospel of St.

quoted material are neglected. In light of the radically, ridiculously unhistorical and unscholarly nature of the book in question, a desire on the part of the Watchtower society to make the book inaccessible and so prevent readers from discovering the facts about it is understandable, though detestable. The lack of page numbers, publishers, year published, etc. is a common factor for all works cited in this Watchtower publication.

⁶³ Wiegall is an individual of sufficient obscurity that his academic qualifications, or lack thereof, are nearly impossible to discover. It is not known if this great “historian” went to college, if he dropped out of high school (as did the majority of the New World “Translation” committee), etc.

John from the philosophy of Philo . . . went a long way towards establishing the identification of Jesus Christ with God . . . the idea of the *Logos* itself was pagan. . . . Sunday, too, was a pagan holy day . . . the Jewish Sabbath . . . is obviously derived from moon-worship. . . . Now Sunday . . . had been for long the holy day in the solar religions of Mithra . . . Christians . . . [worshipped on Sunday] by pagan custom. . . . in this Twentieth Century thoughtful men . . . [reject] the phantom crowd of savage and blood-stained old gods who have come into the Church, and, by immemorial right, have demanded the worship of habit-bound man.”⁶⁴

Weigall is obviously an irrational, Bible-hating wacko. He provides no documentation, no proof for the claims in his book; they are nothing but the speculations of his feverishly anti-Christian mind. The Watchtower quotes Weigall more than any other individual in their *Should You Believe in the Trinity?*—despite the fact that a quote from him on the origin of the Trinity has about equal weight with a quote from a supermarket tabloid about King Kong being sighted in Yosemite National Park or one of the Tooth Fairy opening up a dental practice in New York City.

The quotations made by Arians and Unitarians to affirm that the Trinity is derived from paganism are unreliable and untrustworthy. The Scripture, which is superior to all uninspired historical evidence, manifests the Biblical origin of Trinitarianism. The Arian and Unitarian interpretation of post-Biblical history is also unscholarly and mythological. The idea that the Trinity is derived from paganism cannot be sustained.

Arians (and others) sometimes put together a variety of pictures of three pagan gods in a group⁶⁵ to scare people into thinking that the Trinity comes from paganism, and sometimes manufacture or find various further quotations that allege that the Trinity was derived from various pagan religions.⁶⁶ However, there simply is no connection between pagans who worshipped many gods and sometimes put three of them together (as they would sometimes put two, four, or some other number of their gods together in a particular idolatrous image) and the tri-unity of the one God of the Bible.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Pgs. 17, 19, 20, 23-24, 50, 51, 60, 61-62, 68, 71, 85, 86, 87, 92, 105, 140, 141, 152, 155, 160, 163, 187-188, 229-230, 235-236, 277.

⁶⁵ cf. *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* pgs 2, 10

⁶⁶ cf. *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* pgs. 11-12.

⁶⁷ Robert Morey (pgs. 488-489, *The Trinity: Evidence and Issues*. Iowa Falls, IA: World Bible Publishers, 1996) writes, “The Watchtower . . . ‘proves’ [its] claim [that the Trinity comes from paganism] by pictures of three idols of various pagan deities standing together as if they represent the source of the Christian concept of the Trinity. For example, they point to Egyptian idols of Osiris, Isis, and Horus.

Similarly, Unitarians and modalists may affirm that Trinitarianism was derived from Plato or Platonic philosophy. They offer as proof for their contention extremely questionable quotations of the sort examined above, by people like Norton, Lacugna, and Weigall. What they do not do is quote Plato. A rather severe problem for their position is that the writings of Plato do not contain the doctrine of the Trinity.⁶⁸ Nor do the writings of Aristotle or other

This argument is based on two very basic logical fallacies. First, it commits the fallacy of equivocation in that the word ‘Trinity’ is being used with several different meanings. The word ‘Trinity’ according to Christian theology refers to one, infinite/personal God eternally existing in three Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. But the word ‘Trinity’ is used by the Arians to refer to any grouping of three finite gods and goddesses. Obviously there is no logical relationship between three finite gods and the one true God of Christianity.

Second, the fallacy of equivocation leads to the categorical fallacy of trying to relate together concepts that have no relationship at all. The following diagram illustrates the radical difference between the Trinity and pagan triads:

The Trinity	Pagan triads
one God	three gods & goddesses
infinite in nature	finite in nature
omnipotent	impotent
omniscient	ignorant of some things
omnipresent	limited to one place
immutable	mutable
perfect	imperfect
good	good and evil

The Watchtower’s attempt to link the Trinity to pagan triads reveals either that [it does] not understand the Trinity, or that, if [it] does, [it] is being deliberately deceptive.”

⁶⁸ Morey (pg. 489-490, *The Trinity: Evidence and Issues*) writes, “The same problem arises when [Arians—specifically the Watchtower in *Should You Believe in the Trinity?*] claims the doctrine of the Trinity came from Plato. They do not indicate where the Trinity can be found in the writings of Plato. They quote from Unitarians and other anti-Trinitarians who make the same claim, but nowhere do they quote Plato.

Since we are quite familiar with Plato and have translated some of his dialogues from the original Greek, we must go on record that we have never found in Plato anything even remotely resembling the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. Perhaps this is why Arians never give a single reference to Plato’s works to back up their claims. . . .

[T]he Watchtower . . . [has] made [the] claim many times . . . that . . . [Trinitarians] borrowed their concept of the Trinity from Platonism and used Plato’s Demiurge as their concept of Christ . . . What they fail to tell their readers is that Plato’s Demiurge was a finite being created by God and, thus, not equal to God. The following diagram reveals whose Christ is patterned after the Demiurge:

The Demiurge	Two Views of Christ	
<i>Platonism</i>	<i>Arianism</i>	<i>Trinitarianism</i>
created	created	not created
finite	finite	infinite
not eternal	not eternal	eternal
not omnipresent	not omnipresent	omnipresent
not omniscient	not omniscient	omniscient
not omnipotent	not omnipotent	omnipotent
semi-divine	semi-divine	full deity

From the above chart, it is clear that it is Arianism that has patterned its view of Christ from Plato’s Demiurge.”

pre-Christian pagan philosophers. Similarities of language⁶⁹ between post-Christian neo-Platonic philosophers and Christian Trinitarians are weak, and similarities of meaning are either nonexistent or very strained. If they were to indicate anything, they would demonstrate the influence of Christian theology upon the thought of post-Christian pagan philosophy, rather than the reverse.⁷⁰ Furthermore, even if one were to establish genuine and clear Trinitarian testimonial from pre-Christian pagan writings—which cannot be done—it would not demonstrate that Christians took pagan ideas into their theological system when they believed in the Trinity. The fact that the fundamentals of Trinitarian doctrine were given to Adam (Genesis 1:2, 26), recognized by righteous Gentiles in the Old Testament era (Job 19:25-27; 33:4, echoing Genesis 1:2) and believed by Israel in the Mosaic economy (Isaiah 48:16) makes the consideration that remnants of the original Trinitarian revelation might be present among those descendants of Adam that fell into paganism, or among those

It is also noteworthy that many Roman Catholics (though not all—some were rabid enough to attempt to read into Plato’s works what was clearly not present, a practice followed even by some earlier writers) who adopted and promulgated much of the philosophy of Plato in the medieval and subsequent eras, and tried with all their might to Christianize the Greek philosopher, were honest enough to admit that there was no Trinity in Plato. For example, “Marsilio Ficino, 1433–1499, one of the circle who made the court of Lorenzo the Magnificent famous, was an ordained priest, rector of two churches and canon of the cathedral of Florence. He eloquently preached the Platonic gospel to his ‘brethren in Plato,’ and translated the Orphic hymns, the *Hermes Trismegistos*, and some works of Plato and Plotinus, — a colossal task for that age. He believed that the divine Plotinus had first revealed the theology of the divine Plato and “the mysteries of the ancients,” and that these were consistent with Christianity. Yet he was unable to find in Plato’s writings the mystery of the Trinity” (David Schaff, *The Middle Ages: From Boniface VIII, 1294, to the Protestant Reformation, 1517*, Vol. 6, Chap. 8:65 in Philip Schaff’s *History of the Christian Church*, elec. acc.).

⁶⁹ The evident fact that the requirements of language will lead to some overlap in terminology between God’s people and paganism as believers communicate the truths about God derived from revelation should be obvious from a simple consideration of the necessities of discourse in a language common to believers and unbelievers. The fact that a Christian who is explaining truth about the nature of God in modern America at a secular university to a philosophy major may use terminology familiar to his unsaved philosophical friend does not mean that the Christian’s view of God came from anti-God philosophy. Christian theological works that employ a precision of logic and terminology also employed by careful non-Christian philosophical works do not thereby prove that the Christian content was adopted from that of the pagans. Likewise, the use of a Trinitarian word such as *hupostasis* by both Christians and pagans is no more proof that the Christian concept came from pagan philosophy than the fact that the phrase “one God” was employed by Christians and pagan philosophy demonstrates that Christians derived their idea of the unity of God from heathenism. One might as well conclude that a church building is an evil derived from the ungodly world because structures owned by both Christians and non-Christians follow common standards required by law in building codes.

⁷⁰ “The Socinian and rationalistic opinion, that the church doctrine of the Trinity sprang from Platonism and Neo-Platonism is . . . radically false. The Indian Trimurti, altogether pantheistic in spirit, is still further from the Christian Trinity. . . . [The post-Christian pagan writers] Plotinus (in *Enn.* V. 1) and Porphyry (in Cyril. Alex. 100 *Jul.*) who, however, were already unconsciously affected by Christian ideas, speak of *τρῆς ὑποστάσεις* but in a sense altogether different from that of the church” (Philip Schaff, *Ante-Nicene Christianity*, Vol. 2, Chap. 12:149 of his *History of the Christian Church*, elec. acc.).

pagans influenced by Israel or righteous Gentiles in the Old Testament era, a definite possibility. In this case, Trinitarian ideas present in pre-Christian, non-Jewish writings would be evidence of influence from the God of Adam and of Israel.⁷¹ What cannot in any wise be established historically is that Christian Trinitarianism was simply the influx of pagan thought into theological thinking.

Actually, unlike Trinitarianism, both Arian and Sabellian theology resulted in large measure from the influence of pagan thought upon Christianity. “[The system of] Sabellius . . . sprung out of Judaizing and Gnostic tendencies which were indigenous to Egypt. . . . [A] pantheistic tendency [also characterizes] Sabellianism as a whole. . . . Kindred ideas are also found in Pythagoreanism.”⁷² “[O]pposition to the Incarnate Word, when he really appeared, seemed to have predisposed [modalists, here discussed under the label of Monarchians] to accept a heathen philosophy, and to represent the Logos as Philo did as the manifest God not personally distinct from the concealed Deity. This error found its way into Christianity through the Gnostics, who were largely indebted to the Platonic school of Alexandria. . . . Sabellianism [in part is] found even in the later schools of gnostics, and the later Sabellianism approached to an emanation theory. . . . The leading tenet of the Monarchians [modalists] thus appears to have been introduced into Christianity principally through the Alexandrian Jews and the Gnostics. It may also have been derived immediately from heathen philosophers. . . . [T]he Monarchians who identified the Son with the Father and admitted at most only a modal trinity, a threefold mode of revelation . . . proceeded, at least in part, from pantheistic preconceptions, and approached the ground of Gnostic docetism.”⁷³ Modalism is a concept which mixes Christianity and paganism.

Similarly, “Arius . . . was following . . . a path inevitably traced for him by the

⁷¹ The affirmation of revelatory influence upon pagan philosophy is alleged, for example, by Justin Martyr, who asserts that Plato derived his idea that there was but one God from Jews living in Alexandria, Egypt (*Horatory Address to the Greeks*, Chapter 20).

⁷² “Sabellius” in the *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, John McClintock & James Strong, vol. 9. Rio, WI: AGES Digital Software Library, 2006, elec. acc.

Of course, this affirmation does not deny that Arius or Sabellius, added particular twists of their own to their pagan patrimony (so that, e. g., the article just quoted while affirming Sabellius’ pagan heritage, can also speak of his “originality.”)

⁷³ “Monarchianism,” *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, McClintock & Strong, vol. 6.

Middle Platonist preconceptions he had inherited,”⁷⁴ since “the impact of Platonism reveals itself in . . . thoroughgoing subordinationism.”⁷⁵ The Arian view of the incarnation of Christ “took as its premis[e] [a] Platonic conception.”⁷⁶

Examining the history of ancient Christianity, one notes that no physical evidence exists of Arius, Sabellius, or the disciples of either of these heretics affirming and disparaging Trinitarian doctrine as derived from paganism, while testimony from ancient Christianity affirms that modalist and Unitarian heretics derived their ideas from paganism. The Trinitarian Tertullian spoke strongly against the adoption of pagan philosophy, mentioning that “Plato has been the caterer to all these heretics” and speaks of “doctrines which the heretics borrow from Plato.”⁷⁷ He writes, “Indeed heresies are themselves instigated by [pagan] philosophy.”⁷⁸ Specifically speaking against the Unitarian heresy, Athanasius declared, “when the unsound nature of their phrases had been exposed at that time, and they were henceforth open to the charge of irreligion, that they proceeded to borrow of the Greeks [pagan philosophy] . . . so unblushing are they in their irreligion, so obstinate in their blasphemies against the Lord. . . . they are contentious, as elsewhere, for unscriptural positions . . . [their language, namely, adopting the term “Unoriginate” for God over “Father,” is] of the Greeks who know not the Son.”⁷⁹ Ambrose wrote, “Let us now see how far Arians and pagans do differ. . . . The pagans assert that their gods began to exist once upon a time; the Arians lyingly declare that Christ began to exist in the course of time. Have they not all dyed their impiety in the vats of philosophy?”⁸⁰ The evidence from patristic writers affirms that the doctrines of Arianism, Sabellianism, and other heresies were

⁷⁴ pg. 231, *Early Christian Doctrines*, J. N. D. Kelly. San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins, 1978 (5th rev. ed).

⁷⁵ pg. 131, *Early Christian Doctrines*, Kelly. The quote specifically speaks of the theology of the heretic and (less radical, but still) Arian precursor, Origin.

⁷⁶ pg. 281, *Early Christian Doctrines*, Kelly. Other heretics also adopted a Platonized view of the incarnation.

⁷⁷ Chapter 23, *A Treatise on the Soul*. (*Church Fathers — The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts & James Donaldson. elec. acc. *Accordance Bible Software*, ver. 1.1. This is the edition employed for quotations from patristic writers unless otherwise specified.). It would be very strange for Tertullian to condemn various heretics for deriving their doctrines from Plato if he himself derived his Trinitarianism from Plato.

⁷⁸ Chapter 7, *The Prescription Against Heretics*.

⁷⁹ *Defence of the Nicene Definition (De Decretis)*, 28, 31.

⁸⁰ *Exposition of the Christian Faith*, Ambrose. Book 1:13:85.

influenced by paganism. No extant ancient writer affirms that the Trinity was borrowed from pagan philosophy. Who is more likely to be correct on the development of Trinitarian theology—those who lived in the first centuries of Christianity, or the wackos quoted by modern Arians and Sabellians who lived a millenium and a half after the end of the ancient church period?

Arian arguments against the Trinity that involve verses of Scripture may be divided into four major categories.⁸¹ 1.) Arians misrepresent the Trinity as tritheism and prove monotheism, there is only one God. 2.) Arians misrepresent the Trinity as modalism and prove that the Father, Son, and Spirit are not the same Person. 3.) Arians ignore the fact that the Son of God is one Person with two distinct natures, one fully human and one fully Divine, and use verses that speak of the Lord Jesus' human nature to deny that He is also a Divine Person. Similarly, they regularly confuse the economic and ontological Trinity.⁸² 4.) Arians also make certain further uncategorizable arguments. A recognition of these four categories is important for both those who believe in the living God and for Arians. A Trinitarian who knows and can refute Arian allegations is far better equipped to seek to turn those deceived by Unitarian error from darkness to light. Furthermore, an understanding of Unitarian misrepresentations of Trinitarianism enables the Christian to have, through a clearer understanding of what his God is not, a deeper knowledge of who He is. He can thus more effectively “love the Lord [his] God with all . . . [his] mind” (Matthew 22:37). Also, since Unitarians “by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple” (Romans 16:18), Trinitarians need to pass beyond easily deceived spiritual simplicity to a deep and sound knowledge of the truth. It is important beyond measure for Arians to know and recognize the errors of their arguments, that “God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And *that* they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will” (2 Timothy 2:25-26)—for until an Arian

⁸¹ Robert Morey (pg. 492, *The Trinity: Evidence and Issues*. Iowa Falls, IA: World Bible Publishers, 1996) gives a good description of ten basic errors made by Arian groups when they argue for their views (mis)using Scripture. They are: 1.) Taking a verse out of context. 2.) Misapplying texts. 3.) Ignoring the grammar of the original text. 4.) Reading their own ideas back into the text. 5.) Deliberately mistranslating a verse. 6.) Quoting only a part of a commentator and twisting his words to make him say the exact opposite of what he said in the context. 7.) Inventing Hebrew and Greek grammatical terms and tenses. 8.) Quoting a part of a verse in such a way as to misrepresent what it is saying. 9.) Producing a false translation of the entire Bible. 10.) Depending almost entirely upon defunct nineteenth century Unitarian arguments.

⁸² These terms are defined in footnote #21.

repents, “He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father” (1 John 2:22-23). The four categories of objections will be examined in order. In each category, the general nature of the objection will be stated, quotations from Unitarian sources stating it will be supplied,⁸³ verses employed to support the objection will be listed, and a Biblical answer will be given.

1.) Unitarian misrepresentations of the Trinity as tritheism and arguments for monotheism

Arians argue that the Biblical truth of monotheism requires the rejection of Tri-unity in God. Since Trinitarians affirm that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, Unitarians allege that they believe in three gods. After proving that the Bible teaches that there is only one God, Arians then affirm that they have refuted the Trinity.

Unitarians argue:

God is one, not three. . . . The Bible teaching that God is one is called monotheism. . . . [M]onotheism . . . does not allow for a Trinity. . . . The Old Testament is strictly monotheistic.⁸⁴ . . . On this point there is no break between the Old Testament and the New. The monotheistic tradition is continued. . . . Thousands of times throughout the Bible, God is spoken of as one person. When he speaks, it is as one undivided individual. The Bible could not be any clearer on this. . . . Why would all the God-inspired Bible writers speak of God as one person if he were actually three persons? What purpose would that serve, except to mislead people? . . . God is one Person—a unique, unpartitioned Being who has no equal.”⁸⁵

Verses mentioned by Arians to support the fact that there is only one God include Exodus 20:2-3; Deuteronomy 6:4; Psalm 83:18; Isaiah 42:8; 45:5; 1 Corinthians 8:4-6; and Galatians 3:20. These references, and many others, demonstrate the truth of monotheism, that there is

⁸³ Since the Watchtower Society is the most prominent and zealous representative of contemporary Bible-affirming Unitarianism, and its arguments are representative of Arianism in general, its works will be quoted.

⁸⁴ It is noteworthy that, without in any way compromising their monotheism, “orthodox Jews held that the Messiah existed in eternity past. They would of course have gotten that from Micah 5:2, ‘His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity,’ and, His name is ‘Eternal Father, ...’ (Isa. 9:6). The First Book of Enoch calls Him the Head of Days, ‘an epithet alluding to his preexistence, or to the emergence of his name before God prior to the creation of the world.’ [pg. 17, Raphael Patai, *The Messiah Texts* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1979).]” (Mal Couch, “The Literary Value of the Book of Matthew,” *Conservative Theological Journal* 3:10 (December 1999) pg. 329).

⁸⁵ Pgs. 12-16, “What Does the Bible Say About God and Jesus?” in the Watchtower publication *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* This work is probably by far the most easily accessible and widely distributed specimen of modern Arian literature.

only one God.

Since Trinitarians are passionately committed to monotheism, this Unitarian argument is only convincing to people who are ignorant of the Trinitarian faith and who consequently believe Arians when they say that Trinitarianism is a belief in three gods.⁸⁶ No Trinitarian confession that presently exists, and none that has ever existed in history, has stated that there are three gods. Trinitarians believe that “The Lord our God is but one only living and true God . . . the essence [of God is] undivided,” and that “Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Christian faith. Which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. But this is the Christian faith: That we worship one God . . . [not] dividing the substance . . . there are not three eternal; but one eternal. As also there are not three uncreated: nor three immeasurable: but one uncreated, and one immeasurable. . . . [T]here are not three Almighty; but one Almighty. . . . [T]here are not three Gods; but one God. . . . not three Lords; but one Lord. . . . [W]e [are] forbidden by the Christian religion to say, there are three Gods, or three Lords. . . . He therefore that will be saved, must thus think of the Trinity.”⁸⁷ Someone who believes that there are three gods is not a Trinitarian. Only anti-Trinitarians say that the Trinity is a belief in three gods. According to Trinitarians, someone who believes in three gods is not a Trinitarian, nor a Christian, and is certain of damnation. The affirmation that Trinitarians deny monotheism and believe in three gods is a vile slander, a lie originating from the father of lies (John 8:44).⁸⁸ While some Unitarians may repeat this

⁸⁶ The Watchtower society’s desire to represent the Trinity as three gods is illustrated in its methodological advice to its devotees as they seek to bring prospects to join the Watchtower: “Ask the student [prospect for converting to the Watchtower], ‘How many Jehovahs are there?’ Let him answer. The answer is obvious that there is only one Jehovah. When he discerns this, you have caused him to register an important fact in his mind that he might otherwise have missed. Help him to appreciate further what this means to him. Reason with him, perhaps in this way: ‘If he is one Jehovah, then could he be three gods, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, as the Trinitarians teach?’ . . . You have . . . exposed a basic false doctrine—the doctrine of the Trinity” (*Watchtower*, April 1, 1970, pg. 210). This counsel is an excellent illustration of how false teachers are “deceiving, and being deceived” (2 Timothy 3:13). The prospective Watchtower convert is being deceived into thinking that the Trinity is a doctrine of three gods, and the already committed Watchtower member who is deceiving him is himself being deceived by the devilish lie taught in his literature.

⁸⁷ Quotations from *The London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689* and the Athanasian creed as cited above in the section, “The Definition of the Trinity.”

⁸⁸ Slander and false accusation are tactics Satan and his demons commonly use to oppose the truth (Matthew 26:59-61; Acts 17:7; Romans 3:8; etc.). Consider that the Greek word *diabolos*, usually translated “devil,” is also used for false accusers (2 Timothy 3:3) and for slanderers (1 Timothy 3:11). Misrepresentation

terrible misrepresentation in ignorance, believing the lies of their leaders, many Arian teachers and producers of Arian apologetic literature intentionally twist the Trinitarian position.⁸⁹ Since tritheism is obviously and grossly unscriptural, if Unitarians can caricature the Trinitarian faith as a belief in three gods, they can “refute the Trinity” with passages proving there is only one God. Invalid arguments and misrepresentations like this are necessary for the Unitarian who is not willing to repent—the Scriptural doctrine of the Trinity cannot be refuted Biblically, because it is the revealed truth from the Triune God who Authored the Bible.

The affirmations of Scripture that God is one are exactly what one expects to find in the Bible if Trinitarianism is true. Unitarians who believe in an infallible Bible, in contrast, end up supporting a form of polytheism, where the Father becomes a greater God and the Son becomes a lesser god. While they slander Trinitarianism as a belief in three gods, they themselves believe in (at least) two gods. The ancient “Arians worshipped Christ; ‘although not very God, He is God to us’ [they believed]. . . . The Arians worshipped Christ, whom they regarded as a created being: therefore, the [Trinitarians] urge[d] with one consent, they were idolaters. The idea of a created being capable of being worshipped was an Arian legacy

of the Trinity should be expected by those who are doing the devil’s work, who are both “deceiving [others], and being deceived [themselves]” (2 Timothy 3:13).

⁸⁹ A less blatantly slanderous version of this Unitarian argument would be, “Since God is one in essence, all personal distinctions within Him is impossible—including the tripersonality affirmed by Trinitarians.” However, the oneness of God affirmed in Scripture does not require this. It should be noted that average Arian, and typical Arian apologetic literature, will rarely attempt to accurately represent the Trinitarian position; e. g., the quotes mentioned in footnote #27 declare that God is “a unique, unpartitioned Being who has no equal,” as if the Trinitarian thought that God was divided or partitioned or had someone outside of Himself who was His equal. The Triune God who has revealed Himself in Scripture is not partitioned or divided; the three *hupostases* or subsistences coinhere and share the same undivided essence.

“[T]he emphasis is made [repeatedly in Trinitarian confessions] that the essence or being of God is indivisible. There is but one being that is God. The doctrine of the Trinity safeguards this further by asserting that ‘the whole undivided essence of God belongs equally to each of the three Persons’ [cf. Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1941) pgs. 87-89]. This follows logically on the heels of asserting the indivisibility of the being of God, for if three Persons share that one being, they must share all of that being. The Father is not just 1/3 of God—He is full Deity, just as the Son and the Spirit” (“The Trinity, the Definition of Chalcedon, and Oneness Theology,” James White, elec. acc. <http://www.aomin.org>, Alpha and Omega Ministries). “The *homoousion* properly understood involved a ‘rejection of any notion either of undifferentiated or of partitive relations between the three divine *hupostaseis* [and] carried with it the conception of eternal distinctions and internal relations in the Godhead as wholly and mutually interpenetrating one another in the one identical perfect being of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.’ . . . [Classical Trinitarians] abhorred any partitive thinking of God either as he is in himself or as he is towards us.” (*The Trinitarian Faith*, T. F. Torrance, pgs. 311-312, 328). See footnote #12.

to the Church, no doubt. But this very idea . . . marked them out as idolaters.”⁹⁰ In the words of an ancient opponent of Arianism, “if . . . the Word is a creature and a work out of nothing . . . if [Arians] name Him God from regard for the Scriptures, they must of necessity say that there are two Gods,” for “The Arians were in the dilemma of holding two gods or worshipping the creature.”⁹¹ Ancient Trinitarians confessed that they worshipped only the one true God: “We do not worship a creature. Far be the thought. For such an error belongs to heathens and Arians.”⁹² Modern Arians agree with their ancient counterparts that the Son can get “worship” as “a god.”⁹³ Modern Trinitarians continue to affirm, with the Scriptures and against the effective denial of the doctrine by Arianism, that there is only one true God and one Lord of all, and He alone is to receive worship.

The great truth of monotheism does not undermine Trinitarianism in any way—it is part of the essence of the Trinitarian doctrine. Unitarians can only attempt to use monotheism against the Trinity by means of misrepresentation, slander, and deceit. Indeed, it is the Arian doctrine that truly undermines the essential oneness of God.

2.) Unitarian misrepresentations of the Trinity as modalism and arguments that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not the same Person

Arians argue that the Scripture presents the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as three distinct entities. Since Trinitarians believe that there is only one God, Arians argue that they must believe that the Father is the same Person as the Son and as the Holy Spirit. After proving from Scripture that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are different, Arians then affirm that they have refuted the Trinity.

⁹⁰ Athanasius: *Select Works and Letters*, Prolegomena 2:3, “The Situation After The Council of Nicea,” in *Church Fathers — The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series*, ed. Philip Schaff, electronically accessed as an *Accordance Bible Software* module from OakTree Software, Inc. version 1.1.

⁹¹ Athanasius, “Discourse III Against the Arians,” chapter 25, in *Athanasius: Select Works and Letters*, in the *Church Fathers — The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series*, ed. Philip Schaff, electronically accessed as an *Accordance Bible Software* module from OakTree Software, Inc. version 1.1.

⁹² Athanasius, “Personal Letters,” Letter 60, “To Adelphius: Bishop and Confessor: Against the Arians” in *Athanasius: Select Works and Letters*, in the *Church Fathers — The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series*, ed. Philip Schaff, electronically accessed as an *Accordance Bible Software* module from OakTree Software, Inc. version 1.1

⁹³ The *Watchtower*, 15 Feb 1983, pg. 18.

Unitarians argue:

Someone [Jesus] who is “with” another person cannot also be that other person [the Father]. . . . Since Jesus *had* a God, his Father, he could not at the same time *be* that God. . . . At the very outset of Jesus’ ministry, when he came up out of the baptismal water, God’s voice from heaven said: “This is my Son, the beloved, whom I have approved.” . . . Was God saying that he was his own son, that he approved himself, that he sent himself? . . . Paul also said that Christ entered “heaven itself, so that he could appear in the actual presence of God on our behalf.” . . . If you appear in someone else’s presence, how can you be that person? You cannot. You must be different and separate. Similarly, just before being stoned to death, the martyr Stephen . . . saw two separate individuals. . . . To whom was [Jesus] praying? To a part of himself? . . . Then, as he neared death, Jesus cried out: “My God, my God, why have you deserted me?” To whom was Jesus crying out? To himself or to part of himself?⁹⁴ . . . And if Jesus were God, then by whom was he deserted?

John said that he had written his Gospel so that readers might come to believe that “Jesus is the Christ *the Son of God*”—not that he was *God*. . . . [T]he 144,000 have the Lamb’s “*name and the name of his Father* written on their foreheads.” . . . Could “the Lamb” be the same as “his Father”? Clearly not. In the Bible they are distinct. . . . [T]he fact that the Father is a separate person [from the Son], is highlighted also in the prayers of Jesus . . . Someone who is “with” another person cannot be the same as that other person.⁹⁵

Verses mentioned by Arians to support the fact that the Father, Son, and Spirit⁹⁶ are distinct include Revelation 14:1, 3; John 1:1b; Matthew 3:16-17; Mark 15:34; Hebrews 9:24; Acts 7:55; and many others. The verses mentioned in the refutation of modalism in this book also demonstrate that the Father, Son, and Spirit are, indeed, distinct.

Since Trinitarians deny that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are the same Person, this argument is effective only with people who are ignorant of the Trinitarian faith, and who consequently believe Arians when they state that this false doctrine is Trinitarianism. No Trinitarian confession that presently exists, and none that has ever existed in history, has affirmed that the Father, Son, and Spirit are the same Person—this is the modalistic heresy. Trinitarians believe that in the one God “there are three subsistences, the Father, the Word (or Son), and the Holy Spirit . . . the Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the

⁹⁴ See footnote #45 for the misrepresentation involved here.

⁹⁵ *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* sections “What About Trinity Proof-Texts?” and “Is God Always Superior to Jesus?” (pgs. 23-29; 16-20), and the article “Who Is The Only True God?” *Awake!* Magazine, April 22, 2005.

⁹⁶ Arians often focus this argument especially upon the distinction between the Father and the Son, since the majority of them depersonalize the Holy Spirit and make Him simply the Father’s power, and so essentially equate and deny personal distinction between the Spirit and the Father.

Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son . . . distinguished by several peculiar relative properties and personal relations.” They affirm that “Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Christian faith. Which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. But this is the Christian faith: That we worship one God in trinity, and trinity in unity; Neither confounding the persons; nor dividing the substance. For there is one person of the Father: another of the Son: another of the Holy Ghost. . . . The Father is made of none; neither created; nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone: not made; nor created; but begotten. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and the Son: not made; neither created; nor begotten; but proceeding. . . . He therefore that will be saved, must thus think of the Trinity.”⁹⁷ Trinitarians reject modalism, and modern modalistic groups, such as Oneness Pentecostalism, vehemently reject the Trinity.⁹⁸ Arians are just about the only ones who state that the Trinity teaches that the Father is the Son and the Son is the Holy Spirit. According to Trinitarians, someone who believes in modalism is not a Trinitarian, nor a Christian, and is certain of damnation. The Arian accusation is a slander and a lie. While some Unitarians may repeat this terrible misrepresentation in ignorance, believing the lies of their leaders, many Arian teachers and producers of Arian apologetic literature intentionally twist the Trinitarian position. Since modalism is refuted by many passages in Scripture, if Unitarians can twist the Trinitarian doctrine into it, they can “refute the Trinity” with passages proving that the Father, Son, and Spirit are different. Invalid arguments and misrepresentations like this are necessary for the Unitarian who is not willing to repent—the Scriptural doctrine of the Trinity cannot be refuted Biblically, because it is the revealed truth from the Triune God who Authored the Bible.

It should be noted that this second Arian argument, that the Trinity false because modalism is false, directly contradicts the first objection, that the Trinity is false because tritheism is false. On the one hand, if Trinitarians really believed in three gods, a Father god,

⁹⁷ Quotations from *The London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689* and the Athanasian creed as cited above in the section, “The Definition of the Trinity.”

⁹⁸ Real modalists affirm that “Jesus is the Father . . . the Father is the Holy Ghost . . . The Deity of Jesus Christ is the Father . . . The Deity of Jesus Christ is the Holy Ghost . . . modalism is the same as the modern doctrine of Oneness . . . Oneness believers also reject trinitarianism . . . trinitarianism differs from the Bible’s teaching on the Godhead” (pgs. 6; 318-319; 294, *The Oneness of God*, David K Bernard, Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 1995).

a Son god, and a Holy Spirit god, then to argue that someone who is “with another person cannot also be that other person”⁹⁹ would be irrelevant, since the “Trinitarian” would respond, “But I believe that the Father and Son are two different gods, not the same person.” On the other hand, if Trinitarians really believed in modalism, to argue that “God is spoken of as one person. . . . all the God-inspired Bible writers speak of God as one person” would be irrelevant, since the “Trinitarian” would respond, “I believe exactly this; the Father is the Son, and the Son is the Spirit; they are the same person.” Unitarians should at least pick one slander and stick to it, rather than, as the great majority of them do, employing both of these contradictory misrepresentations at the same time.¹⁰⁰ However, since all who do not know the true, Triune God walk “in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart” (Ephesians 4:17-18), such incoherent and contradictory attacks upon the character of God should be expected.¹⁰¹ As long as men reject the Trinity, it matters little to Satan whether they do so because they believe the doctrine is tritheistic, modalistic, or somehow both at the same time.

Unitarians employ certain other arguments that involve the misrepresentation of Trinitarianism as modalism, but with a variety of further twists. These arguments often involve other misrepresentations of Trinitarianism as well, such as confusing the one Person and two natures of the Son of God (the third category of Arian arguments, examined subsequently). The major Unitarian assertions related to misdefining the Trinity as modalism are refuted below; the believer who has that Spirit who opens eyes to understand the Scriptures (Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 2:10, 13) should be able to refute any other

⁹⁹ This Arian argument would also “prove” that the Father is not God, since quite a number of verses mention God and the Father as two distinct entities. Scripture speaks of “the will of God and our Father” (Galatians 1:4); “Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father” (Ephesians 5:20); “Now unto God and our Father be glory” (Philippians 4:20); “We give thanks to God and the Father” (Colossians 1:3); “the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ” (Colossians 2:2) “giving thanks to God and the Father” (Colossians 3:17); “God and our Father” (1 Thessalonians 1:3); “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father” (James 1:27); “God and his Father” (Revelation 1:6). If the fact that the Son is distinguished from God proves that He is a creature, because “someone who is with another person cannot also be that other person,” then the fact that the Father is distinguished from God proves that He is a creature as well. While these texts do not at all help the cause of Unitarianism, they do assist the Trinitarian when in conflict with modalism.

¹⁰⁰ Note that both arguments are repeatedly and strongly urged in the piece of Arian literature produced by the Watchtower society quoted above.

¹⁰¹ Compare Numbers 21:5, where rebels who did not know Jehovah complained that He did not provide them with any bread, and that they hated the bread that He had provided for them, in the same sentence.

modalistic misrepresentations without specific further analysis.

Unitarians argue that nobody has seen God (John 1:18), but people have seen the Lord Jesus (John 1:14), so Jesus is not God.¹⁰² However, John 1:18 defines the “God” whom nobody has seen at any time as “the Father,” who “the only begotten Son” has “declared.”¹⁰³ Of Him the apostle John declares, “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” (John 1:14). John 1:18a simply teaches that nobody has seen the Person of the Father at any time. When the Unitarian argument from John 1:18 is cleared of its ambiguities, it means, “nobody has seen God the Father (John 1:18a-c), but people have seen the Lord Jesus (John 1:14), so Jesus is not God the Father.” This form of the argument, which does indeed correspond to the teaching of the verses, is valid, but it refutes modalism rather than Trinitarianism. The anti-Trinitarian conclusion the Arian wishes to reach is, “nobody has seen God the Father, but people have seen the Lord Jesus, so Jesus is not God the Son,” but this is plainly invalid.

Indeed, the teaching of John 1:18 that nobody has ever seen the Father creates major problems for the Unitarian¹⁰⁴ in the many passages where the Messenger or Angel of Jehovah was seen and identified as Jehovah Himself. The Trinitarian recognizes these appearances as a revelation of God the Son, and thus harmonizes these texts with John 1:18. The Unitarian has no adequate harmonization, but creates contradictions in Scripture.

¹⁰² “So ‘the Word,’ who became flesh, lived on the earth as the man Jesus and was seen by people. Therefore, he could not have been Almighty God, regarding whom John says: “No man has seen God at any time.” —John 1:14, 18.” (The Watchtower magazine *Awake!* April 22, 2005).

¹⁰³ The fact that the Son can “declare” the Father requires His Divinity. The word is ἐξηγήσατο, an aorist middle indicative of ἐξηγήομαι, meaning “to make something fully known by careful explanation or by clear revelation” (*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, Johannes P. Louw & Eugene A. Nida (henceforth LN)). The word was used in extra-Biblical Greek of revealing “divine secrets” and with reference to “[D]ivine beings themselves” (BDAG). This sense of ἐξηγήομαι in John 1:18 as a full and complete declaration and thus as a full revelation of the Father is similar to the aorists in Acts 10:8; 15:14; Leviticus 14:57 (LXX); Job 28:27 (LXX). 1 Clement 49:2 is a helpful comparison; the question, “Who can describe (ἐξηγήομαι) the bond of God’s love?” is not, “Who can declare some truth about it?” but “Who can declare, reveal, or describe the full depths of God’s love?” The Son, because He Himself shares the divine essence with the Father, can fully reveal God, something no created being could possibly do (cf. Matthew 11:27; Luke 10:22).

¹⁰⁴ The modalist also has problems with the many passages where Jehovah has been seen, for his version of the Godhead leaves him in plain contradiction to John 1:18. Furthermore, those modalists who believe that the Father is the Divine nature of Jesus, and the Son is His human nature, cannot explain, as the Trinitarian can, Old Testament appearances of Jehovah as visions of the Son, because, on their view, He did not yet exist. Nor can they be the Father, since nobody has ever seen Him (John 1:18).

Arians also argue that God cannot be tempted, but Jesus Christ was tempted, so the Lord Jesus Christ is not God. Referencing Matthew 4:1 and James 1:13, Arians ask, “Could God be tempted? . . . Jesus is spoken of as being ‘tempted by the Devil.’ . . . Satan was trying to cause Jesus to be disloyal to God. But what test of loyalty would that be if Jesus were God? Could God rebel against himself? No, but angels and humans could rebel against God and did. . . . So if Jesus had been God, he could not have been tempted.”¹⁰⁵ This argument fails because the Lord Jesus Christ is one Person with two natures. In accordance with James 1:13, the Son of God, in His Divine nature, could not be tempted; He is immutably holy (Hebrews 7:26; 13:8). In contrast, the Lord Jesus’ human nature was both temptable and changeable—as Man, Christ was “in all points tempted like as *we are*, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15).¹⁰⁶ Christ was temptable because He was human. This Unitarian argument

¹⁰⁵ *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* section “What Does the Bible Say About God and Jesus?” pgs. 14-15.

¹⁰⁶ Contrary to the Unitarian declaration that “Jesus could have been disloyal[,] but he remained faithful” (*Should You Believe in the Trinity?* pg. 15), Scripture teaches that the Person of Christ was impeccable, that is, unable to sin.

“The truth and self-consistence of the doctrine of Christ’s impeccability appear, also, from a consideration of the constitution of his person. “Christ’s person is constituted of two natures: one divine, and the other human. The divine nature is both intemptable, and impeccable. ‘God cannot be tempted with evil,’ James 1:13. ‘It is impossible for God to lie,’ Hebrews 6:18. The human nature, on the contrary, is both temptable and peccable. When these two natures are *united* in one theanthropic person, as they are in the incarnation, the divine determines and controls the human, not the human the divine. . . .The amount of energy, therefore, which the total complex person possesses to resist temptation, must be measured not by the human nature but by the divine; and the amount of energy to resist temptation determines the peccability or impeccability of the person. Jesus Christ, consequently, is as mighty to overcome Satan and sin, as his mightiest nature is. His strength to prevent a lapse from holiness is to be estimated by his divinity, not by his humanity, because the former and not the latter is the base of his personality, and dominates the whole complex person.

Consequently, what might be done by the human nature if *alone*, and by itself, cannot be done by it in this *union* with omnipotent holiness. An iron wire by itself can be bent and broken in a man’s hand; but when the wire is welded into an iron bar, it can no longer be so bent and broken. And yet iron, whether in a bar or in a wire, is a ductile and flexible metal; and human nature, whether in a God-man or a mere man, is a temptable and fallible nature. A mere man can be overcome by temptation, but a Godman cannot be. When, therefore, it is asked if the person named Jesus Christ, and constituted of two natures, was peccable, the answer must be in the negative. For in this case the divine nature comes into the account. As this is confessedly omnipotent, it imparts to the person Jesus Christ this divine characteristic. The omnipotence of the Logos preserves the finite human nature from falling, however great may be the stress of temptation to which this finite nature is exposed. Consequently, Christ while having a peccable human *nature* in his constitution, was an impeccable *person*. Impeccability characterizes the God-man as a totality, while peccability is a property of his humanity.

But it may be asked, If the properties of either nature may be attributed to the person of the God-man, why may not both peccability and impeccability be attributed to the person of the God-man. We say that Jesus Christ is both finite and infinite, passible and impassible, impotent and omnipotent, ignorant and omniscient, why may we not also say that he is both peccable and impeccable? If the union in one person of the two natures allows of the attribution of contrary characteristics to the one God-man in these former instances, why not also in this latter?

assumes—it does not prove—that because the Lord is human, and thus temptable, He cannot be Divine as well. Its anti-Trinitarian conclusion requires the hidden and unproved anti-Trinitarian assumption that Christ does not have two natures. Having assumed its conclusion in its premises, it then states what it previously assumed to be true as if something had been accomplished. While this Unitarian argument proves nothing in favor of its doctrine, it is a fine example of poor exegesis and of illogic.

Unitarians also argue that since Jesus died, but God cannot die, Jesus cannot be God. The Watchtower society states, “After Jesus died, he was in the tomb for parts of three days. If he were God, then Habakkuk 1:12 is wrong when it says, ‘Oh my God, my Holy One, you

Because, in this latter instance, the divine nature cannot *innocently* and *righteously* leave the human nature to its own finiteness without any support from the divine, as it can in the other instances. When the Logos goes into union with a human nature, so as to constitute a single person with it, he becomes responsible for all that this person does through the instrumentality of this nature. The glory or the shame, the merit or the blame, as the case may be, is attributable to this one person of the God-man. If, therefore, the Logos should make no resistance to the temptation with which Satan assailed the human nature in the wilderness, and should permit the humanity to yield to it and commit sin, he would be implicated in the apostasy and sin. The guilt would not be confined to the human nature. It would attach to the whole theanthropic person. And since the Logos is the root and base of the person, it would attach to him in an eminent manner. Should Jesus Christ sin, incarnate God would sin; as incarnate God suffered, when Jesus Christ suffered.

In reference, therefore, to such a characteristic as *sin*, the divine nature may not desert the human nature and leave it to itself. In reference to all other characteristics, it may. The divine nature may leave the human nature alone, so that there shall be ignorance of the day of judgment, so that there shall be physical weakness and pain, so that there shall be mental limitation and sorrow, so that there shall be desertion by God and the pangs of death. There is no sin or guilt in any of these. These characteristics may all attach to the total person of the God-man without any aspersion upon his infinite purity and holiness. They do, indeed, imply the humiliation of the Logos, but not his culpability. Suffering is humiliation, but not degradation or wickedness. The Logos could consent to suffer in a human nature, but not to sin in a human nature. The God-man was commissioned to suffer (John 10:18), but was not commissioned to sin.

Consequently, all the innocent defects and limitations of the finite may be attributed to Jesus Christ, but not its culpable defects and limitations. The God-man may be weak, or sorrowful, or hungry, or weary; he may be crucified, dead, and buried; but he may not be sinful and guilty. For this reason, the divine nature constantly supports the human nature under all the temptations to sin that are presented to it. It never deserts it in this case. It empowers it with an energy of resistance that renders it triumphant over the subtlest and strongest solicitations to transgress the law of God. . . .

It is objected to the doctrine of Christ’s impeccability that it is inconsistent with his temptability. A person who cannot sin, it is said, cannot be tempted to sin. . . . This is not correct; any more than it would be correct to say that because an army cannot be conquered, it cannot be attacked. Temptability depends upon the constitutional *susceptibility*, while impeccability depends upon the *will*. So far as his natural susceptibility, both physical and mental, was concerned, Jesus Christ was open to all forms of human temptation excepting those that spring out of lust, or corruption of nature. But his peccability, or the possibility of being overcome by these temptations, would depend upon the amount of voluntary resistance which he was able to bring to bear against them. Those temptations were very strong, but if the self-determination of his holy will was stronger than they, then they could not induce him to sin, and he would be impeccable. And yet plainly he would be temptable” (William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology* (sec. “Christology,” Chap. 5, “Christ’s Impeccability,” pgs. 2-5, elec. acc. in *Christian Library Series, vol. 17: Systematic Theologies*, AGES Library, Rio, WI: 2006). Shedd’s entire discussion of Impeccability is tremendous.

do not die.’ But the Bible says that Jesus did die and was unconscious in the tomb. And who resurrected Jesus from the dead? If he was truly dead, he could not have resurrected himself. On the other hand, if he was not really dead, his pretended death would not have paid the price for Adam’s sin. But he did pay that price in full by his genuine death. So it was ‘God [who] resurrected [Jesus] by loosing the pangs of death.’ (Acts 2:24) The superior, God Almighty, raised the lesser, his servant Jesus, from the dead.”¹⁰⁷ The problems in this argument are manifold. First, since Trinitarians are not modalists, they believe that the Father and the Son are distinct Persons, and when they say with the Scripture that on the cross “God . . . purchased . . . the church . . . with his own blood” (Acts 20:28), they mean that the Son died on the cross, not the Father, or the Holy Spirit, or the entire Godhead. Second, since Trinitarians believe that the Son is one Person with two distinct natures, one fully human and one fully Divine, when they say that Jesus Christ died on the cross, they do not mean that His Divine nature died, but that His human nature died; the Divinity of the Son of God has never been, and never will be, subject to death. Third, physical death for mankind signifies the separation of the soul and spirit from the body, not the cessation of conscious or unconscious existence or annihilation.¹⁰⁸ The Arian argument from the Lord

¹⁰⁷ *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* section “Is God Always Superior to Jesus?” pg. 18.

¹⁰⁸ Soul-sleep and annihilationism have been ably and repeatedly refuted. See, e. g., *Avoiding the Snare of Seventh-Day Adventism*, David Cloud, Port Huron, MI: Way of Life Literature, 1999, Chapters “Heresy #3: Soul-Sleep” and “Heresy #4: Annihilation of the Wicked,” *The Doctrine of Endless Punishment*, William G. T. Shedd, *Christian Library Series, vol. 18: Classic Theological Collection*, AGES Library, Rio, WI: 2006; “Does the Bible Teach Annihilationism?” Robert A. Peterson, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 156:621 (January 1999) 13-28, etc. The New Testament phrase “for ever” (εἰς+αἰών) always signifies actual eternity in its 62 appearances in the New Testament (Matthew 6:13; 21:19; Mark 3:29; 11:14; Luke 1:35, 55; John 4:14; 6:51, 58; 8:35, 51, 52; 10:28; 11:26; 12:34; 13:8; 14:16; Romans 1:25; 9:5; 11:36; 16:37; 1 Corinthians 8:13; 2 Corinthians 9:9; 11:31; Galatians 1:5; Ephesians 3:21; Philippians 4:20; 1 Timothy 1:17; 2 Timothy 4:18; Hebrews 1:8; 5:6; 6:20; 7:17, 21, 24, 28; 13:8, 21; 1 Peter 1:23, 25; 4:11; 5:11; 2 Peter 2:17; 3:18; 1 John 2:17; 2 John 1:2; Jude 13, 25; Revelation 1:6, 18; 4:9, 10; 5:13, 14; 7:12; 10:6; 11:15; 14:11; 15:7; 19:3; 20:10; 22:5). The word rendered “everlasting” or “eternal” (αἰώνιος) likewise denotes actual eternity in each of its 71 appearances (Matthew 18:8; 19:16, 29; 25:41, 46; Mark 3:29; 10:17, 30; Luke 10:25; 16:9; 18:18, 30; John 3:15-16, 36; 4:14, 36; 5:24, 39; 6:27, 40, 47, 54, 68; 10:28; 12:25, 50; 17:2-3; Acts 13:46, 48; Romans 2:7; 5:21; 6:22-23; 16:25-26; 2 Corinthians 4:17-5:1; Galatians 6:8; 2 Thessalonians 1:9; 2:16; 1 Timothy 1:16; 6:12, 16, 19; 2 Timothy 1:9; 2:10; Titus 1:2; 3:7; Philemon 1:15; Hebrews 5:9; 6:2; 9:12, 14-15; 13:20; 1 Peter 5:10; 2 Peter 1:11; 1 John 1:2; 2:25; 3:15; 5:11, 13, 20; Jude 1:7, 21; Rev 14:6). Thus, verses that speak of “everlasting fire” (Matthew 25:41), in which those “to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever” (Jude 13) will be endlessly tormented, verses that employ even more emphatic terminology (“for ever and ever”) for the woe of the damned, so that “the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night” (Revelation 14:11), and many other passages that indicate that in hell “their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:44, 46, 48) all mean exactly what they say.

Jesus' death involves the invalid assumption that the death of Christ meant that He ceased to exist for three days. Furthermore, since Scripture assigns the resurrection of the Lord Jesus not only to the Father (Acts 2:24; 3:15), and to the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 3:18), but to the Son Himself (John 2:19, 21; John 10:17-18), the contention that, death wrongly being equated with annihilation, Jesus "could not have resurrected himself," flies directly in the face of the Biblical testimony. The declaration that the Lord Jesus, in His death, only "paid the price for Adam's sin," rather than for all sin (Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 9:14; 1 John 1:7; Revelation 1:5), is also a fearful error. So even if Habakkuk 1:12 read "you [God] shall not die" instead of what it really says, "we [God's people] shall not die,"¹⁰⁹ it would be entirely irrelevant as an anti-Trinitarian text. The Unitarian argument, when stated clearly, would run as follows: "Accepting as inspired a reading not found in any Hebrew manuscript, Habakkuk 1:12 states that God cannot die. Trinitarians believe that the human nature of Jesus Christ died on the cross. Therefore Jesus Christ does not have a Divine nature and is not God." This is self-evidently invalid and a terribly poor argument.

Arians often attempt to refute Trinitarianism by confusing it with modalism and then proving that the Father, Son, and Spirit are different. This, however, is as invalid as confusing Trinitarianism with tritheism and then proving that there is only one God. Since the Trinity is a Biblical doctrine, there is no way to prove its actual affirmations erroneous with Scripture; the need for this sort of misrepresentation thus arises for those who are not willing to turn to the true God.

3.) Unitarian disregard for the Trinitarian and Christological doctrine that the Son is one

¹⁰⁹ This mistranslation of the Watchtower society comes from their very corrupt New World Translation (see footnote #1). The verse actually says, "Art thou not from everlasting, O LORD my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die." The Old Testament people of God, Israel, would not be utterly destroyed by her enemies, and all true believers will not suffer the second death in the lake of fire (Revelation 21:8). The NWT's corruption of the verse to "you [in reference to God] shall not die" is simply not the reading of the Hebrew text. The section of the verse in question reads, *H^{al}lô' 'attâ miqqedem Y^hōwāh 'lōhay? Q^eḏōšî lō' nāmūt.* The verb נִכְנַח in the verse is plainly an imperfect 1st person plural, "we shall not die," not a 2nd person singular, "you shall not die." The entire Masoretic textual tradition reads "we," not "you." There are no Hebrew manuscripts that read with the NWT. The Greek Old Testament (LXX) reads ἀποθάνομεν, "we shall not die," as do Symmachus and the text of Habakkuk found at Qumran. The *tiqqun sopherim*, הִיָּה רֵאִוִי תִמּוֹת אֱלֹהִים שְׁכִינָה הַכְּתוּב (see the footnote to Habakkuk 1:12 in the Trinitarian Bible Society *Hebrew Old Testament*, Bomberg/Ginsburg edition, London, England: Tyndale House, 1894/1998) cannot establish the NWT reading; it is impossible that God would allow the Hebrew text to be corrupted or changed, so that every extant Hebrew MSS is wrong (Matthew 5:18; Psalm 12:6-7; Revelation 22:18-19).

Person with two natures, one fully human and one fully Divine

Arians argue that the Scripture presents the Son as subordinate to the Father. Since the Son was sent by His Father and became man, they conclude that He must, therefore, be created and inferior in His nature to the God. Many of the seemingly most convincing Unitarian arguments follow these lines. Their argument in general will first be examined, and then the particular passages that constitute the first-order of Arian Biblical argumentation will be individually examined.

Unitarians argue:

Having been created by God, Jesus is in a secondary position in time, power, and knowledge . . . when God sent Jesus to earth as the ransom, he made Jesus to be . . . a perfect man, “lower than angels.” (Hebrews 2:9; compare Psalm 8:5, 6.) How could any part of an almighty Godhead—Father, Son, or holy spirit—ever be lower than angels?¹¹⁰

The Father’s superiority over the Son, as well as the fact that the Father is a separate person, is highlighted also in the prayers of Jesus, such as the one before his execution: “Father, if you wish, remove this cup [that is, an ignominious death] from me. *Nevertheless, let, not my will, but yours take place.*” (Luke 22:42) If God and Jesus are “one in essence,” as the Trinity doctrine says, how could Jesus’ will, or wish, seem different from that of his Father?¹¹¹

Verses that indicate a form of subordination of the Son to the Father are mentioned in the quotation; others can also be used to argue for it. Texts Arians use to affirm that the Son is subordinate, as a creation by God, and which will be specifically examined in this section, are Mark 13:32; Hebrews 5:8; Revelation 1:1; John 14:28; 1 Corinthians 11:3; and 1 Corinthians 15:28.

Trinitarians believe that the “Lord Jesus Christ . . . [is] truly God, and truly man . . . consubstantial with the Father as to his Godhead, and consubstantial also with us as to his manhood; like unto us in all things, yet without sin . . . the distinction of the natures being in no wise abolished by their union, but the peculiarity of each nature being maintained, and both concurring in one person.” They “believe and confess . . . [that] the Son of God, is . . .

¹¹⁰ *Should You Believe In The Trinity?* section “What Does the Bible Say About God and Jesus?” pg. 14-15. The Watchtower doctrine that the Lord Jesus is the archangel Michael, the ruler of the rest of the angels, makes one wonder, in light of their specific question here, “How can the highest angel ever be lower than the other angels?”

¹¹¹ “Who Is The Only True God?” *Awake!* Magazine, April 22, 2005.

perfect God and perfect man. . . . Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead: and inferior to the Father, as touching his manhood; who, although he be God and man: yet he is not two, but one Christ.”¹¹² Passages of Scripture that affirm the equality of the Father and the Son speak of their sharing the common Divine essence; passages that speak of the subordination of the Son to the Father (when not referring to the distinction between the economic and ontological Trinity) very often refer to Christ’s human nature.¹¹³ Since the Lord Jesus is fully human, Trinitarians unhesitatingly affirm the important Biblical truth that He is “inferor to the Father as touching his manhood.” This fact by no means establishes Unitarianism; it is simply a necessary corollary of the genuine incarnation of the Son. The human nature of Christ did not always exist; it came into being in the first century. It is not all powerful, everywhere present, or all-knowing. It possesses none of the incommunicable Divine attributes, those that uniquely distinguish God from all of creation. The Lord Jesus Christ was a real human baby, who became a real child, who as He grew older “increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man” (Luke 2:52). He grew tired (John 4:6) and needed to sleep (Mark 4:38). He ate (John 4:31; Luke 24:43). He wept (John 11:35).

¹¹² Quotations from the Chalcedonian and Athanasian creeds as cited above in the section, “The Definition of the Trinity.” The doctrines of the hypostatic union and the *communicatio idiomatum* are also very important when considering the Person of Christ in relation to His two natures; see footnote #11.

¹¹³ In the words of Augustine (*On The Trinity*, 1:11), “Wherefore, having mastered this rule for interpreting the Scriptures concerning the Son of God, that we are to distinguish in them what relates to the form of God, in which He is equal to the Father, and what to the form of a servant which He took, in which He is less than the Father; we shall not be disquieted by apparently contrary and mutually repugnant sayings of the sacred books. For both the Son and the Holy Spirit, according to the form of God, are equal to the Father, because neither of them is a creature, as we have already shown: but according to the form of a servant [Christ] is less than the Father, because He Himself has said, “My Father is greater than I” [John 14:28]; and He is less than Himself, because it is said of Him, He emptied Himself” [Philippians 2:7]; and He is less than the Holy Spirit, because He Himself says, “Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven Him” [Matthew 12:32]. And in the Spirit too He wrought miracles, saying: “But if I with the Spirit of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you” [Matthew 12:28]. And in Isaiah He says, — in the lesson which He Himself read in the synagogue, and showed without a scruple of doubt to be fulfilled concerning Himself, — “The Spirit of the Lord God,” He says, “is upon me: because He hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek[.] He hath sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives,” [Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:18-19] etc.: for the doing of which things He therefore declares Himself to be “sent,” because the Spirit of God is upon Him. According to the form of God, all things were made by Him [John 1:3]; according to the form of a servant, He was Himself made of a woman, made under the law [Galatians 4:4]. According to the form of God, He and the Father are one [John 10:30]; according to the form of a servant, He came not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him [John 6:38]. . . . According to the form of God, “He is the True God, and eternal life;” [1 John 5:20] according to the form of a servant, “He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” [Philippians 2:8]. — According to the form of God, all things that the Father hath are His [John 17:15], and “All mine;” He says, “are Thine, and Thine are mine” [John 17:10]; according to the form of a servant, the doctrine is not His own, but His that sent Him [John 7:16].”

The Savior was in every way human, for “it behoved him to be made like unto *his* brethren”; had He not been so, He could not have made “reconciliation for the sins of the people” (Hebrews 2:17). Humans are, by definition, inferior in nature to God. Were the Lord Jesus, considered as a man, not inferior and subordinate to the Father, He would not have been truly man, and He would not have been able to substitute Himself for and redeem men, nor represent them now as their High Priest, nor serve as an effective mediator between God and men (1 Timothy 2:5).¹¹⁴ Arians regularly take passages that deal with Christ as man, or that deal with some aspect of His human nature, and claim that these prove that He has no Divine nature, and is not God. This will not do; if Unitarians prove correct the portions of Trinitarian creeds that affirm the genuine humanity of Christ, they have hardly disproved the portions that affirm His genuine Deity. That Jesus is true man does not mean He is not true God. Such Arian arguments will only convince the one who does not properly understand the Trinitarian position. “Jesus is not God because the Bible teaches He is subordinate to the Father” sounds convincing, but when clarified as, “Jesus cannot have a Divine nature because His human nature is inferior to the Father’s Divine nature,” it is self-evidently invalid. The Unitarian “proof” does not address the issue.

Arians ask questions like “How could any part of an almighty Godhead . . . ever be lower than angels?” . . . If God and Jesus are ‘one in essence,’ how could Jesus’ will, or wish, seem¹¹⁵ different from that of his Father?¹¹⁶ They state, “Speaking of the resurrection of Jesus, Peter and those with him told the Jewish Sanhedrin: ‘God exalted this one [Jesus] . . . to his right hand.’ (Acts 5:31) Paul said: ‘God exalted him to a superior position’¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Consider that the present tense nature of the Lord Jesus’ mediatorial role in 1 Timothy 2:5 requires that the Son continues to have a human nature today, and He will do so to all eternity; otherwise sinners have no mediator now, and salvation is impossible. Hebrews 8:1-4 and many other texts likewise indicate the enduring character of the humanity of Christ. The Lord rose from the dead with His truly human body (John 2:18-22; Luke 24:39), and He will continue to be truly Man to all eternity future.

¹¹⁵ The Watchtower needs to include the word “seem” here because it affirms that the passages about the oneness of the Son and the Father, such as John 10:30, refer to a unity of will, to mutual agreement, not to unity of essence; so there really was no disagreement, according to their own doctrine, between the will of the Father and the Son. The reader is intended to ignore the word “seem” and think, “How could the Father and the Son disagree, but they be one in essence?” but the question cannot be phrased so because Arians do not usually think there really was disagreement. This Arian argument is thus based on a dogma that is rejected by the Arians who offered it.

¹¹⁶ “Who Is The Only True God?” *Awake!* Magazine, April 22, 2005.

¹¹⁷ The NWT’s “exalted him to a superior position” does not correctly represent the Greek; the KJV literally and correctly translates the verse.

(Philippians 2:9). If Jesus had been God, how could Jesus have been exalted, that is, raised to a higher position than he had previously enjoyed? He would already have been an exalted part of the Trinity. If, before his exaltation, Jesus had been equal to God, exalting him any further would have made him superior to God.”¹¹⁸ The answer to such questions is very simple, and very Trinitarian. Jesus Christ was not lower than the angels as God, but as man.¹¹⁹ As He has two natures, so He has two wills, one human and one Divine.¹²⁰ The

¹¹⁸ *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* section “Is God Always Superior to Jesus?” pg. 19

¹¹⁹ It should be noted that argument in Hebrews 2:9 and Philippians 2:5-11 that men should be humble in imitation of the humility demonstrated by the Son of God in becoming incarnate only makes sense if the Son is true God, not a created being. “The Redeemer is represented as submitting to be humbled — ‘made a little lower than the angels,’ for the sake or with a view to the glory that was to be the recompense of his sufferings. This is a very important representation —one that should be most attentively considered; and from it may be drawn, we think, a strong and clear argument for the divinity of Christ.

We could never see how it could be humility in any creature, whatever the dignity of his condition, to assume the office of a Mediator and to work out our reconciliation. We do not forget to how extreme degradation a Mediator must consent to be reduced, and through what suffering and ignominy he could alone achieve our redemption; but neither do we forget the unmeasured exaltation which was to be the Mediator's reward, and which, if Scripture be true, was to make him far higher than the highest of principalities and powers; and we know not where would have been the amazing humility, where the unparalleled condescension, had any mere creature consented to take the office on the prospect of such a recompense. A being who knew that he should be immeasurably elevated if he did a certain thing, can hardly be commended for the greatness of his humility in doing that thing. The nobleman who should become a slave, knowing that in consequence he should be made a king, does not seem to us to afford any pattern of condescension. He must be the king already, incapable of obtaining any accession to his greatness, ere his entering the state of slavery can furnish an example of humility. And, in like manner, we can never perceive that any being but a divine Being can justly be said to have given a model of condescension in becoming our Redeemer . . . If he could not lay aside the perfections, he could lay aside the glories of Deity; without ceasing to be God he could appear to be man; and herein we believe was the humiliation -- herein that self emptying which Scripture identifies with out Lord's having been ‘made a little lower than the angels.’ In place of manifesting himself in the form of God, and thereby centring on himself the delighted and reverential regards of all unfallen orders of intelligence, he must conceal himself in the form of a servant, and no longer gathering that rich tribute of homage, which had flowed from every quarter of his unlimited empire, produced by his power, sustained by his providence, he had the same essential glory, the same real dignity, which he had ever had. These belonged necessarily to his nature, and could no more be parted with, even for a time, than could that nature itself. But every outward mark of majesty and of greatness might be laid aside; and Deity, in place of coming down with such dazzling manifestations of supremacy as would have compelled the world he visited to fall prostrate and adore, might so veil his splendours, and so hide himself in an ignoble form, that when men saw him there should be no ‘beauty that they should desire him.’ And this was what Christ did, in consenting to be ‘made a little lower than the angels;’ and in doing this he emptied himself, or ‘made himself of no reputation.’ The very being who in the form of God had given its light and magnificence to heaven appeared upon earth in the form of a servant; and not merely so — for every creature is God's servant, and therefore the form of a servant would have been assumed, had he appeared as an angel or an archangel -- but in the form of the lowest of these servants, being ‘made in the likeness of men’ — of men the degraded, the apostate, the perishing” (Henry Melvill, cited in *The Treasury of David*, Charles Spurgeon, note on Psalm 8:4, elec. acc. in Hamel, Ken, *The Online Bible for Mac*, version 3.0).

¹²⁰ See footnote #9 for the classic Trinitarian statement of this doctrine.

Lord Jesus was not exalted to the right hand of God¹²¹ as the eternal, preexistent Son of God, but as the perfectly human Son of Man He obtained more glory than He possessed during His earthly ministry (Philippans 2:8). As God the Son He was, even while on earth, in the bosom of the Father (John 1:18) and in heaven (John 3:13), and, as He was one in essence with the Father, He possessed for all of eternity past the very Divine glory of the Father's own self, and so was unable to receive a higher rank of glory (John 17:5).¹²² As human, the "Son of man . . . [is] on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56). As God, the Lord Jesus was omnipresent, and therefore did not need to leave the earth and ascend anywhere, but as man He had a body in a particular location and, after His resurrection, "was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God" (Mark 16:19; cf. Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9). Proving that Christ is fully human does no more to refute the orthodox doctrine of the Deity of Christ than does proving that there is only one God or proving that the Father and the Son are distinct.

In Mark 13:32 (cf. Hebrews 5:8, Revelation 1:1), the Lord Jesus says, "of that day and *that* hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." Commenting on this, Arians argue:

Jesus had limited knowledge . . . had Jesus been the equal Son part¹²³ of a Godhead, he would have known what the Father knows. But Jesus did not know, for he was not equal to God. . . . Similarly, we read at Hebrews 5:8 that Jesus "learned obedience from the things he suffered." Can we imagine that God had to *learn* anything? No, but Jesus did, for he did not know everything that God knew. And he had to learn something that God never needs to learn—obedience. God never has to obey anyone. The difference between what God knows and what Christ knows also existed when Jesus was resurrected to heaven to be with God. Note the first words of the last book

¹²¹ To argue that the Lord Jesus must be inferior to the Father because one who holds the right-hand position is subordinate is also an exceedingly poor argument, since Psalm 16:8 states that Jehovah was at king David's right hand, and Psalm 121:5 states that Jehovah is at every saint's right hand.

¹²² Consider also that the Lord Jesus affirms in John 17:5 His distinct existence "before the world was" (*πρὸ τοῦ τὸν κόσμον εἶναι*), that is, in eternity. Every place in Scripture *πρὸ* and *κόσμος* are associated, as they are in John 17:5, Scripture refers to eternity past (John 17:24; Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:20). The declaration of John 17:5 requires that the Lord Jesus is the Creator of the world, not part of the creation, for He existed before there was any creation. Arianism is thus refuted. Modalism is likewise refuted, for back before the world began the Son was also "with" the Father, and so a distinct subsistence or Person from Him.

¹²³ Note again the misrepresentation of Trinitarianism as the idea that three are three "parts" to God, so that one-third of God is the Father, one-third is the Son, and one-third is the Holy Spirit, contrary to the Trinitarian affirmations, in the words of the London Baptist Confession and the Athanasian creed as quoted earlier, "the Father, the Word (or Son), and the Holy Spirit . . . each hav[e] the whole divine essence, yet the essence [is] undivided" for Trinitarians are neither "confounding the persons; nor dividing the substance." No accepted Trinitarian creed has ever stated this Watchtower slander; the enemies of the one only living and true Triune God will happily propagate it, however.

of the Bible: “The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him.” (Revelation 1:1, *RS*, Catholic edition) If Jesus himself were part of a Godhead, would he have to be given a revelation by another part of the Godhead—God? Surely he would have known all about it, for God knew. But Jesus did not know, for he was not God.¹²⁴

When Unitarians use Mark 13:32 to attempt to deny the omniscience of the Son of God, they contradict John 21:17, where Peter tells Jesus Christ, “Lord, thou knowest all things,” and John 16:28-31, where the Lord Jesus’ discusses His relation to the Father. “His disciples [therefore] said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly . . . Now are we sure that thou knowest all things.” Recognizing that Christ is God, the disciples affirmed the Lord Jesus’ omniscience. Since omniscience, knowing everything, is a characteristic unique to the Almighty, had Jesus not been Jehovah their declaration would have been entirely inappropriate. No created being could, without sinning, have heard such an affirmation and refrained from rejecting it in the strongest sort of language. Christ, however, accepted their faith in His omniscience; recognizing His Deity was involved in believing in Him (John 16:31; cf. 20:28-29). Since the Lord Jesus is all-knowing, He can do what is possible only for Jehovah, not for Mary, any other human, or any other created being whatsoever; He can hear and answer prayers made to and through Him simultaneously by millions all over the world at the same time (1 Corinthians 1:2; Romans 10:12-13; John 14:12-13; cf. Joel 2:32; Zephaniah 3:9; Genesis 4:26, etc.).¹²⁵ The Lord Jesus’ omniscience is also evidenced in His knowing all men and all that is in men (John 2:24-25), for “only” Jehovah knows these things (1 Kings 8:39; Proverbs 15:11). Christ is He who “he which searcheth the reins and hearts” (Revelation 2:23), but such working and knowledge is peculiar to Jehovah (Jeremiah 11:20; 17:10; Psalm 44:21, etc.). No human, no angel, no finite being could know every single man and absolutely everything about them—but the Son of God does, for He shares the same Divine essence as the Father and the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:10).¹²⁶ Every single thing

¹²⁴ *Should You Believe In The Trinity?* section “Is God Always Superior to Jesus?” pg. 19. It is ironic that the Watchtower will argue that the Son is not God by attempting to prove that He is not all knowing, while it believes that the Father is not all knowing either (see footnote #22)! The Watchtower’s god actually does have to learn things, for it does not perfectly know the future!

¹²⁵ The Watchtower correctly teaches that “our prayers . . . must be directed only to Jehovah God” (pg. 167, *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* 2006 ed.). If the Lord Jesus is not Jehovah, why does Scripture contain numerous examples of people praying to Him? In addition to the verses cited above, consider Acts 2:21; 7:59-60; 9:14, 21; 22:16, etc.

¹²⁶ No finite, created being could possibly “search all things,” nor have the specific knowledge predicated in 1 Corinthians 2:10 of the Holy Ghost, namely, that of the very “deep things of God” (cf. Romans 11:33).

that the Father does He shows the Son (John 5:20); only if the Son were omniscient could He comprehend everything involved in sustaining and governing all in the universe, from its vast expanses to its smallest atoms, not to mention the angelic world, and all else; He has the same knowledge as the Father Himself. The Son is omniscient, One “in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3).

If many verses testify to the omniscience of God the Son, how can Mark 13:32 say that the time of the second coming is not known by the Son? The verse itself gives the answer; “of that day and *that* hour knoweth no man . . . but the Father.”¹²⁷ The contrast is between the created order and God; Mark 13:32 speaks of Christ as the Son of man, not as the Son of God.¹²⁸ The three Persons who possess the one Divine essence are

¹²⁷ οὐδεὶς οἶδεν . . . εἰ μὴ ὁ πατήρ; The contrast is between the created order, none of which (οὐδεὶς) knows the day or the hour, and God, who does. The overarching statement that no part of creation knows the time of the second coming (note that in the identical οὐδεὶς οἶδεν in Matthew 24:36, the KJV italicizes *man*) is followed by an exalted category of created beings, and the most exalted of all of creation; not just does nobody know in general, but specifically the heavenly angels and the Son of man do not know (οὐδεὶς οἶδεν, οὐδὲ . . . οὐδὲ); only God, here referenced as the Person of the Father, does.

¹²⁸ Shedd mentions another reasonable explanation: “Omniscience is ascribed to the Son. John 21:17, ‘Lord thou knowest all things.’ John 16:30, ‘We are sure that thou knowest all things.’ John 2:24, 25, ‘Jesus knew what was in man.’ John 1:49, ‘When thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee.’ Revelation 2:23, ‘I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts.’ Compare with 1 Kings 8:29, ‘Thou only knowest the hearts of all the children of men.’ In Mark 13:32, Christ is said to be ignorant of the day of judgment. This is explained, by many, by a reference to his human nature. He was ignorant in respect to his humanity. But there is another explanation which refers it to the total theanthropic person. An *official* ignorance is meant. Augustine so explains. ‘Christ as the Mediator was not authorized, at that time, to give information respecting the time of the final judgment, and this is called “ignorance” upon his part; as a ditch is sometimes called “blind” because it is hidden from the eyes of men, and not because it is really so.’ Macknight interprets in the same way. This use of ‘know’ for ‘making known,’ is frequent in Scripture. Genesis 22:12, ‘Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing that thou has not withheld thine only son from me.’ In 1 Corinthians 2:2, St. Paul says, ‘I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ.’ To ‘know’ means to ‘make known,’ in Matthew 11:27. ‘No one knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any one the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will *reveal* him.’ Compare John 1:18, ‘The only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.’ A particular trinitarian person is officially the one to reveal another, and in this reference the others do not officially reveal, and so are officially “ignorant.” Paul (Galatians 1:16) says that ‘it pleased God the Father to reveal his Son in him.’ This explanation of the ‘ignorance,’ spoken of in Mark 13:32, as official, agrees . . . with other statements of Scripture. When it is said that ‘the Father only’ knows the time of the day of judgment, this must be harmonized with the truth that the Holy Spirit is omniscient, and ‘searcheth the deep things of God,’ 1 Corinthians 2:10. The Holy Spirit is not ignorant of the time of the day of judgment, but like the incarnate Son he is not commissioned to reveal the time. Again, it is not supposable that Christ now seated on the mediatorial throne is ignorant, even in respect to his human nature, of the time of the day of judgment, though he is not authorized to officially make it known to his church” (“Trinity in Unity,” Chapter 4 in *Theology: The Doctrine of God*, in *Dogmatic Theology*, William G. T. Shedd, elec. acc. in *Christian Library Series*, vol. 17: *Systematic Theologies*, AGES Library, Rio, WI: 2006).

omniscient¹²⁹—all created beings are not so. As the eternal Son of God, the Lord Jesus is all-knowing (John 16:30); as the Son of man, as true man, consubstantial with Adam’s race and conceived in the womb of Mary in space and time, He is limited in knowledge.¹³⁰ Not only

¹²⁹ Arians might object that even without the specific limiting “neither the Son” clause, Matthew 24:36 reads, “But of that day and hour knoweth no *man*, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only,” which, they would affirm, limits omniscience to the Father, thus proving that neither the Son nor the Spirit possess omniscience and are therefore not true God. However, the truth is that the statement that the Father alone knows no more excludes the knowledge of the Son and the Spirit than the statement “neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son” (Matthew 11:27c) should be understood as a claim that the Father lacks self-knowledge, being is ignorant of Himself, or that the Father requires the Son to give Him knowledge of Himself (Matthew 11:28d). Matthew 11:27; 24:36; and Mark 13:32 all speak of knowledge that is peculiar to God, that is, the Trinity, alone, knowledge not possessed by any creature.

¹³⁰ T. F. Torrance (*The Trinitarian Faith*, pgs. 186-188; footnotes of original patristic sources not reproduced below) comments well on the way Trinitarians in the early church period dealt with the Arian rejection of the Deity of Christ on account of Scriptural affirmations of His human ignorance: “It is basically the same argument that is to be applied to the atoning exchange between ignorance and wisdom in Christ—a problem that was much discussed in the fourth century, for the Arians had appealed to passages in the Gospels such as those in which it was said of Jesus that he increased in wisdom and even was lacking in knowledge [Luke 2:52; Mark 13:32]. Athanasius handled this question in entire consistency with his arguments about what the Son of God had done in making himself one of us and one with us in what we actually are in order to save us. That is to say, while the Son or Word of God who is one and the same being as the Father enjoys a relation of mutual knowing between himself and the Father, nevertheless in his self-abasement in the form of a servant he had condescended, for our sakes, really to make our ignorance along with other human limitations his own, precisely in order to save us from them. ‘He incorporated the ignorance of men in himself, that he might redeem their humanity from all its imperfections and cleanse and offer it perfect and holy to the Father.’ The fact that Christ was both God and man, and thus acted as God and as man, led some theologians in the fourth century to make ambiguous statements about the ‘economic ignorance’ of Christ, and sometimes even to speak of it as unreal. Gregory Nazianzen, and Gregory Nyssen, both insisted on the reality of our Lord’s ignorance as essential to his humanity; but it was Cyril of Alexandria who developed the soteriological approach of Athanasius most fully. For him the ignorance of Christ was just as essential to his amazing self-abasement or *κενωσις* as his physical imperfections and limitations, all of which are to be predicated of his one incarnate reality (*μια φσις σεσαρκωμενη*). It was an economic and vicarious ignorance on our Lord’s part by way of a deliberate restraint on his divine knowledge throughout a life of continuous *kenosis* in which he refused to transgress the limits of the creaturely and earthly conditions of human nature.

As the Word or Mind of God become flesh Jesus Christ was the incarnate wisdom of God, but incarnate in such a way as really to share with us our human ignorance, so that we might share in his divine wisdom. This was not just an appearance of ignorance on his part, any more than his incarnating of the Word or Mind of God was only in appearance. Had either been in appearance only, it would have emptied the economic condescension of the Son to save and redeem of any reality. Unless the Son of God had assumed the whole nature of man, including his ignorance, man could not have been saved. The wonderful exchange that lies at the heart of the interaction of the incarnation and atonement operates right here, as at every other point in the relation between God and sinful human being, for the human mind is an absolutely essential element in creaturely being. Hence God in Christ Jesus took it up into himself along with the whole man, in order to penetrate into it and deal with the sin, alienation, misunderstanding, and darkness that had become entrenched within it. Jesus Christ came among us sharing to the full the poverty of our ignorance, without ceasing to embody in himself all the riches of the wisdom of God, in order that we might be redeemed from our ignorance through sharing in his wisdom. Redemption was not accomplished just by a downright *fiat* of God, nor by a mere divine ‘nod,’ but by an intimate, personal movement of the Son of God himself into the heart of our creaturely being and into the inner recesses of the human mind, in order to save us from within and from below, and to restore us to undamaged relations of being and mind with himself. Thus throughout his earthly life Christ laid hold of our alienated and darkened human mind in order to heal and enlighten it in himself. In and

does Mark 13:32 itself indicate that *Son* in the verse means *Son of man*, but in the immediate context of Christ's discourse in Mark 13 (v. 26; cf. v. 34) the Lord refers to Himself as "Son of man." By way of contrast, the phrase *Son of God* does not appear on the lips of the Lord Jesus anywhere in Mark 13—or in the gospel of Mark—or in the synoptic gospels. As a real human boy growing up, "Jesus increased in wisdom" (Luke 2:52); He learned things that He had not known before. This was essential to His true humanity; if Christ was, in the words of the classic Trinitarian language of the creed of Chalcedon, "consubstantial also with us as to his manhood," He could not be omniscient in His human nature; a genuinely human brain simply could not contain the almost infinite information found in the totality of creation.¹³¹ The Arian objection, "Jesus is not God, because He is not omniscient," which appears strong, is really the argument, "Jesus is not God, because He is truly man," which is very deficient. If the Lord Jesus had a "human" nature that was omniscient, He would not really have been human—and the classic Trinitarian doctrine of Christ would have been false.

Just as the affirmation of limited knowledge in Mark 13:32 relates to the Savior's human nature, so Hebrews 5:8 relates to the Lord Jesus as High Priest,¹³² an office impossible apart from His genuine humanity. Like the Aaronic high priests, the Lord Jesus was "taken from among men" (Hebrews 5:1). While unlike those priests in that He never sinned, He was "compassed with infirmity" (5:2) in that He was "touched with the feeling of

through him our ignorant minds are brought into such a relation to God that they may be filled with divine light and truth. The redemption of man's ignorance has an essential place in the atoning exchange, for everything that we actually are in our lost and benighted condition has been taken up by Christ into himself in order that he might bring it under the saving, renewing, sanctifying, and enlightening power of his own reality as the incarnate wisdom and light of God."

¹³¹ The comment of Lightfoot is worthy of consideration: "Christ calls himself the Son, as Messiah. Now the Messiah, as such, was the Father's servant (Isaiah 42:1), sent and deputed by him, and as such a one he refers himself often to his Father's will and command, and owns he *did nothing of himself* (John 5:19); in like manner he might be said to *know nothing of himself*. The revelation of Jesus Christ was what *God gave unto him*, Revelation 1:1. [Lightfoot] thinks, therefore, that we are to distinguish between those excellencies and perfections of [Christ], which resulted from the personal union between the divine and human nature, and those which flowed from the anointing of the Spirit; from the former flowed the infinite dignity of his person, and his perfect freedom from all sin; but from the latter flowed his power of working miracles, and his foreknowledge of things to come. What therefore (saith [Lightfoot]) was to be revealed by [Christ] to his church, he was pleased to take, not from the union of the human nature with the divine, but from the revelation of the Spirit, by which he yet knew not this, but *the Father* only knows it; that is, God only, the Deity; for (as Archbishop Tillotson explains it) it is not used here *personally*, in distinction from the Son and the Holy Ghost, but as the Father is, *Fons et Principium Deitatis--The Fountain of Deity*." (*An Exposition of the Old and New Testament* by Matthew Henry, orig. pub. 1721, note on Mark 13:28-37; elec. acc.).

¹³² The conclusion of the sentence which includes Hebrews 5:8 makes this clear: "Called of God an high priest after the order of [the man] Melchisedec" (v. 10; cf. v. 6).

our infirmities; [being] in all points tempted like as *we are, yet* without sin” (4:15). Since “no man” takes this honor to himself, He was called of God to the office (5:4-6). He was “flesh,” and in the garden of Gethsemane offered up “strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death” (v. 7; cf. Luke 22:44). It was as man that the Lord Jesus “learned . . . obedience by the things which he suffered” (v. 8), and, by means of His death, resurrection, and ascension, when He as man “passed into the heavens” (4:14) became the “perfect” (5:9; cf. 2:10) Redeemer and High Priest (v. 10). The affirmation of Hebrews 5:8 that the Lord Jesus “learned” does not relate to His Divine nature at all, or somehow prove that He did not have one—it is an affirmation about His human nature.¹³³ Furthermore, even in relation to His humanity, Hebrews 5:8 is not an affirmation of limited cognition of facts. The verb “learned,” from *manthano*, here signifies learning “less through instruction than through experience or practice” (BDAG), that is, to “learn from experience” (LN). It is not that Christ did not know how to obey and then finally figured it out,¹³⁴ but that He experienced obedience as He submitted Himself to the Father even to the death of the cross. This submission was necessary for Him to become the perfect High Priest and the “author of eternal salvation” (v. 9). Christ’s obedience is imputed to the elect, so that the Father reckons them as having perfectly obeyed on account of their Substitute; His obedience was not for Himself, but for us. For an Arian to quote Hebrews 5:8 and ask, “Can we imagine that God had to *learn* anything? No, but Jesus did, for he did not know everything that God knew,” as if Hebrews 5:8 had to do with the Savior, in the garden of Gethsemane, discovering facts about how to obey God that He did not know before, disasterously misinterprets the verse.

For a Unitarian to quote Revelation 1:1 and ask, “If Jesus himself were part of a Godhead, would he have to be given a revelation[?] . . . Surely he would have known all

¹³³ The glorious combination of humanity and Deity in the Person of Christ in the amazing mystery of the incarnation is seen in the fact that He was by nature God’s Son (ὁ υἱὸς), and therefore *homoousios* with the Father (cf. Hebrews 1:1-12; 5:5), yet He, as man, had to learn obedience. The “though” and “yet” of Hebrews 5:8 emphasize this amazing contrast. These words are hardly necessary were the Lord Jesus not God (cf. also v. 9; only Jehovah is the “author of eternal salvation”); what would be so amazing about a creature having to learn things?

¹³⁴ When the Unitarian argument on Hebrews 5:8 is carefully analyzed, no Bible-affirming Arian would actually want to make it. To gain a denial of the Savior’s omniscience, would they really dare to say that He did not know how to obey for a period of time? Or would they really say that the sinless Savior was disobedient, and then became obedient? If not, Hebrews 5:8 is removed from the Arian arsenal.

about it, for God knew,” is an even worse corruption of Scripture than the gross mistake of utilizing Hebrews 5:8 to argue that the Son of God has no Divine nature. Unfortunately for the Arian, “The Revelation of Jesus Christ,” which refers to the giving of the entire book of Revelation, obviously denotes Christ revealing Himself to man, by the sovereign ordination of the Father to Him as mediator (“which God gave unto him”),¹³⁵ not Christ having knowledge revealed to Him.¹³⁶ The very next clauses manifest the true interpretation of the verse. It is a revelation from Jesus Christ (and also about Jesus Christ)¹³⁷ to His servants of “things to come” (John 16:12-13), specifically given to the apostle John by means of an angel. To twist Revelation 1:1 into an affirmation that the Son of God did not know certain things, and so He needed to get a revelation about them, is a frightful misinterpretation.

The Son of God, having become flesh, is now one divine Person with two distinct natures, so that He is fully God and fully man. Since He is true God, He is all knowing, and Scripture testifies to His omniscience; since He is true man, His humanity is necessarily limited in knowledge, and Scripture testifies to this important aspect of His identification with the sons of Adam. Unitarians fail badly when they argue against Christ’s Deity because of verses proving the Trinitarian truth that, considered as true man, the Lord Jesus is limited in knowledge.

¹³⁵ Consider Lightfoot’s comment on this verse in footnote #86.

¹³⁶ A comparison to other instances of a “revelation of” (ἀποκάλυψις followed by a genitive) is helpful. In Romans 2:5, the “revelation of the righteous judgment of God” does not mean that righteous judgment is learning something or having something revealed to it. In Romans 8:19, the “manifestation/revelation of the sons of God” is not the sons of God learning something, but being revealed. In Romans 16:25, “the revelation of the mystery” is not a mystery made into a personal being that somehow learns something. In Galatians 1:12, Paul had the gospel revealed to him from Jesus Christ; the “revelation of Jesus Christ” was not the Savior discovering what the gospel was. In 1 Peter 1:13, “the revelation of Jesus Christ” refers to Christ being revealed, not to Christ learning something by revelation. See also Luke 2:32; 1 Corinthians 1:7; 2 Corinthians 12:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:7; 4:13 for the only remaining related constructions in the New Testament. Revelation 1:1 does not refer to Christ having facts revealed to Him.

However, even if Revelation 1:1 did affirm that the Father gave revelation to Christ, no denial of His Deity would follow; it would be an affirmation that the Savior has a genuine human nature; the prophetic office of Christ (Deuteronomy 18:15-18; John 3:34; Acts 3:22; 7:37), part of His mediation between God and man, as the God-man, the *Theanthropos*, (1 Timothy 2:5), involves Him speaking the Word from God to man.

¹³⁷ Whether the construction is a subjective or objective genitive (or even plenary; cf. *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, Daniel Wallace (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), pg. 120-121) makes no difference for the question of the validity of the Arian argument; neither view permits the idea that the verse refers to Jesus Christ receiving a revelation, or having things revealed to Him by the Father. The following genitives suggest that “the revelation from Jesus Christ” is the fundamental sense, although there is no need to exclude the fact that it is also a revelation about Him, for the Lord Jesus is the one who shows things to His servants through His angel and the apostle John, and in v. 2 “word of God,” “testimony of Jesus Christ,” and “of all things” makes the verse look like a subjective genitive.

In John 14:28, the Lord Jesus said, “my¹³⁸ Father is greater than I.” Commenting on this, Unitarians argue:

The Bible’s position is clear. Not only is Almighty God, Jehovah, a personality separate from Jesus but He is at all times his superior. Jesus is always presented as separate and lesser, a humble servant of God. . . . And this is why Jesus himself said: “The Father is greater than I.” The fact is that Jesus is not God and never claimed to be.¹³⁹

Does John 14:28 establish an ontological¹⁴⁰ subordination,¹⁴¹ an inferiority of being,¹⁴² of the Son of God to the Father? It cannot do so, because other texts¹⁴³ affirm that the Son is “equal with God” (Philippians 2:6; John 5:18), one worthy of equal honor to the Father (John 5:23), so that the Lord Jesus said, “I and *my* Father are one” (John 10:30), even as “the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost . . . are one” (1 John 5:7). John 14:28 refers to the human nature of the Messiah, particularly to Christ in His pre-glorified state on earth as a servant.¹⁴⁴ It fits

¹³⁸ ὁ πατήρ μου μείζων μου ἐστὶ. It should be noted that the textual corruption that removes the μου is supported by a tiny fraction of MSS, while thousands of MSS, 98% of the evidence (including **8**), supports the Received Text. The μου is a reference to the Son’s eternal ontic relation to the Father, by which He possesses the entire Divine nature, even within this attempted proof-text for the Arian heresy.

¹³⁹ *Should You Believe In the Trinity?* section “Is God Always Superior to Jesus?” pg. 20.

¹⁴⁰ See footnotes #24, 26 for the definition of ontology.

¹⁴¹ Arians could also attempt to use John 10:29 to prove ontological subordination in the Son. However, the verse contrasts the Father with created beings. An inequality in nature or contrast between the Father as Creator and the Son as (alleged) creature is not in view at all. Indeed, Christ affirms in v. 28 that no one has the power to pluck the elect from His hand, just as v. 29 affirms that no one has the power to pluck them from His Father’s hand, and 10:30 affirms the unity of essence of the Father and the Son.

¹⁴² The *Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary* on John 14:28 comments on this passage, “These words, which Arians and Socinians perpetually quote as triumphant evidence against the proper Divinity of Christ, really yield no intelligible sense on their principles. Were [merely] a holy *man* on his deathbed, beholding his friends in tears at the prospect of losing him, to say, ‘Ye ought rather to joy than weep for me, and would if ye really loved me,’ the speech would be quite natural. But if they should ask him, *why* joy at his departure was more suitable than sorrow, would they not start back with astonishment, if not horror, were he to reply, ‘*Because my Father is greater than I?*’ Does not this strange speech from Christ’s lips, then, *presuppose such teaching* on His part as would make it extremely difficult for them to think He could gain anything by departing to the Father, and make it necessary for Him to say expressly that there was a sense in which He *could* do so? Thus, this startling explanation seems plainly intended to correct such misapprehensions as might arise from the emphatic and reiterated teaching of *His proper equality with the Father*--as if so Exalted a Person were incapable of any accession by transition from this dismal scene to a cloudless heaven and the very bosom of the Father—and by assuring them that this was *not* the case, to make them forget their own sorrow in His approaching joy.

¹⁴³ See these verses analyzed in an earlier section of this work.

¹⁴⁴ Matthew Poole mentions, commenting on John 14:28, in addition to the interpretation defended above, two further possibilities for the sense in which the Father is “greater,” for a total of at least three reasonable methods whereby Trinitarians lose nothing by the passage. “*For my Father is greater than I*; not greater in essence, (as the Arians and Socinians would have it), [Christ] had many times before asserted the contrary; but greater, 1.) Either as to the order amongst the Divine Persons; because the Father begat, the Son is begotten; the

perfectly with the Trinitarian faith that the Son is “equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead: and inferior to the Father, as touching his manhood.”¹⁴⁵ The verse itself demonstrates that the human nature of the Redeemer is in view; as the Son of man, who is limited in space to His completely human body, the Lord must “go away” and “go unto the Father” in heaven after His resurrection and ascension, and then “come again” at His second advent. As man, the Son is inferior to Father.¹⁴⁶ The Father who sent Him is greater in

Father is he from whom the Son proceeded by eternal generation: in which sense, divers of the ancients, amongst whom Athanasius, Cyril, and Augustine, and some modern interpreters, understand it. Or: 2.) As Mediator sent from the Father, so he is greater than I. Or: 3.) In respect of my present state, while I am here in the form of a servant; and in my state of humiliation” (*Annotations Upon the Holy Bible*, Matthew Poole, elec. acc. in the *Online Bible*, Ken Hamel).

¹⁴⁵ Compare the remarks of Augustine in his *On the Trinity* (1:7):

But because, on account of the incarnation of the Word of God for the working out of our salvation . . . the man Christ Jesus might be the Mediator between God and men, many things are so said in the sacred books as to signify, or even most expressly declare, the Father to be greater than the Son; men have erred through a want of careful examination or consideration of the whole tenor of the Scriptures, and have endeavored to transfer those things which are said of Jesus Christ according to the flesh, to that substance of His which was eternal before the incarnation, and is eternal. They say, for instance, that the Son is less than the Father, because it is written that the Lord Himself said, “My Father is greater than I.” But the truth shows that after the same sense the Son is less also than Himself; for how was He not made less also than Himself, who “emptied Himself, and took upon Him the form of a servant?” For He did not so take the form of a servant as that He should lose the form of God, in which He was equal to the Father. If, then, the form of a servant was so taken that the form of God was not lost, since both in the form of a servant and in the form of God He Himself is the same only-begotten Son of God the Father, in the form of God equal to the Father, in the form of a servant the Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; is there any one who cannot perceive that He Himself in the form of God is also greater than Himself, but yet likewise in the form of a servant less than Himself? And not, therefore, without cause the Scripture says both the one and the other, both that the Son is equal to the Father, and that the Father is greater than the Son. For there is no confusion when the former is understood as on account of the form of God, and the latter as on account of the form of a servant. And, in truth, this rule for clearing the question through all the sacred Scriptures is set forth in one chapter of an epistle of the Apostle Paul, where this distinction is commended to us plainly enough. For he says, “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but emptied Himself, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and was found in fashion as a man.” The Son of God, then, is equal to God the Father in nature, but less in “fashion.” For in the form of a servant which He took He is less than the Father; but in the form of God, in which also He was before He took the form of a servant, He is equal to the Father. In the form of God He is the Word, “by whom all things are made;” but in the form of a servant He was “made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law.” In like manner, in the form of God He made man; in the form of a servant He was made man. For if the Father alone had made man without the Son, it would not have been written, “Let us make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness.” Therefore, because the form of God took the form of a servant, both is God and both is man; but both God, on account of God who takes; and both man, on account of man who is taken. For neither by that taking is the one of them turned and changed into the other: the Divinity is not changed into the creature, so as to cease to be Divinity; nor the creature into Divinity, so as to cease to be creature.

¹⁴⁶ Even if “my Father is greater than I” referred to the Divine Person of the Son, rather than to His human nature (which the phrase does not), it would not require that the Son is lesser in nature than the Father. While the word “greater” (μείζων) can distinguish between the Creator and His creation (1 John 4:4), the word is also used to compare humans who are perfectly equal in nature but with different positions (Matthew 23:11; Luke 22:26-27), plants that are equally plants but different in size (Matthew 13:32), and an elder or “greater” son in

authority (John 13:16; John 14:24). The incarnate Son was on earth when He spoke John 14:28, and His Divine glory was veiled (Philippians 2:7-8) until the time of the ascension (John 14:28b,f; 17:5); the Father endured no such limitation.¹⁴⁷ Indeed, the Son of man was lower even than the angels during His earthly ministry (Hebrews 2:7, 9). In contrast, as the eternal Son of God, consubstantial with and equal to the Father, the Lord Jesus is omnipresent, and so does not “go” to the Father or “come” from Him: He is in heaven even while on earth (John 3:13), with no need, therefore, to ascend or descend; He “fillet all in all” (Ephesians 1:23); He is in the midst of two or three gathered in His name all over the world (Matthew 18:20; 28:20; Mark 16:20); He dwells within the hearts of all His people everywhere and they are all in Him (John 6:56; 14:20, 23; 17:23; Romans 8:10; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 3:17; Colossians 1:27; Revelation 3:20), and the saints, all over the world,

comparison to his equally human brother (Romans 9:12). Even if the word did refer (which it does not) to the Divine Son’s place in the Godhead, rather than His incarnate humanity in the form of a servant during His earthly ministry, the distinction established would be one of rank or authority, rather than a differentiation in being; the Son would still be, in His nature, equally God with the Father, but He would have a different role, an economic (but not ontological) subordination in the Trinity (See footnotes #24, 26). Both a servant and he who sends a servant are equally human, although they have different positions or ranks (John 13:16); the Son of God, who takes the nature and office of a servant to Himself in the incarnation, and is sent by the Father for the work of redemption, is lesser in His assumed office, although equal to the Father in His Divine Person. Indeed, the Lord uses *μείζων* in the same discourse that contains John 14:28 to refer to distinctions of role and authority between those equal in nature (John 15:20). Unitarians must wrest John 14:28 from its context if they would gain support for their error from it.

¹⁴⁷ John Gill, fitly commenting on “My Father is greater than I,” states, “not with respect to the divine nature, which is common to them both, and in which they are both one; and the Son is equal to the Father, having the self-same essence, perfections, and glory: nor with respect to personality, the Son is equally a divine person, as the Father is, though the one is usually called the first, the other the second person; yet this priority is not of nature, which is the same in both; nor of time, for the one did not exist before the other; nor of causality, for the Father is not the cause of the Son’s existence; nor of dignity, for the one has not any excellency which is wanting in the other; but of order and manner of operation: these words are to be understood, either with regard to the human nature, in which he was going to the Father, this was prepared for him by the Father, and strengthened and supported by him, and in which he was made a little lower than the angels, and consequently must be in it inferior to his Father; or with regard to his office as Mediator, in which he was the Father’s servant, was set up and sent forth by him, acted under him, and in obedience to him, and was now returning to give an account of his work and service; or rather with regard to his present state, which was a state of humiliation: he was attended with many griefs and sorrows, and exposed to many enemies, and about to undergo an accursed death; whereas his Father was in the most perfect happiness and glory, and so in this sense ‘greater.’ That is, more blessed and glorious than he; for this is not a comparison of natures, or of persons, but of states and conditions: now he was going to the Father to partake of the same happiness and glory with him, to be glorified with himself, with the same glory he had with him before the foundation of the world; wherefore on this account, his disciples ought to have rejoiced, and not have mourned.”

are “in Christ.”¹⁴⁸ When Christ spoke the words of John 14:28, as the Son of man He was on earth before the disciples, soon to die, rise, and ascend to heaven; as the eternal Son of God He was and perpetually is¹⁴⁹ “in the bosom of the Father” (John 1:18). Indeed, two affirmations of the omnipresence of the Person of the Son (John 14:20, 23; 15:2-7)¹⁵⁰ bracket the statement in John 14:28 about the Lord Jesus’ human nature, its limitations in space (14:28, 31) and subjection to the Father (14:28). Unitarianism gains nothing with John 14:28.

In 1 Corinthians 11:3, Paul stated, “But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman *is* the man; and the head of Christ *is* God.” Commenting on this, Unitarians argue:

Almighty God, Jehovah, [is] a personality separate from Jesus [and] is at all times his superior. Jesus is always presented as separate and lesser, a humble servant of God.

That is why the Bible plainly says that “the head of the Christ is God” in the same way that “the head of every man is the Christ.” (1 Corinthians 11:3).¹⁵¹

However, the phrase, “the head of Christ is God” speaks of the humanity of the Lord Jesus, not His Divine nature; it does not contradict the testimonies recorded elsewhere in 1 Corinthians to the Lord Jesus’ Deity (1:2; 8:6; 10:4, 9; cf. Exodus 17:5-6; 17:2, 7; Numbers 21:5-6; Deuteronomy 6:16). 1 Corinthians speaks about Christ as the perfect man, as the second Adam and the representative of redeemed humanity (1 Corinthians 15:20-22; cf. Ephesians 4:13, 15). As man, the head of the household, represents woman in Scripture, as

¹⁴⁸ Romans 8:1; 12:5; 16:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 15:18; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 12:2; Galatians 1:22; 3:28; 6:15; Ephesians 1:1, 3, 10; 2:6, 13; Philippians 1:1; 4:21; Colossians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 2:14; 4:16; 2 Timothy 1:9; 3:12; Philemon 23; 1 Peter 5:14; etc.

¹⁴⁹ Note the only begotten Son “is” in the bosom of the Father in John 1:18; He is perpetually there as a state of being; ὁ μονογενὴς υἱός, ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς.

¹⁵⁰ “At that day ye shall know that I *am* in my Father, and ye in me [requires Christ’s omnipresence], and I in you [also omnipresence]. . . . 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 [impossible unless both the Father and Son are omnipresent] . . . Every branch in me [omnipresence] that beareth not fruit . . . Abide in me, and I in you [omnipresence]. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me [omnipresence]. I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him [omnipresence] the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing [this would be a big problem if the presence of Christ’s human body was required!]. If a man abide not in me [omnipresence], he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast *them* into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me [omnipresence], and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.”

¹⁵¹ *Should You Believe In The Trinity?* section, “Is God Always Superior to Jesus?” pg. 20.

man is the generic term for the human race,¹⁵² and even as the first Adam represented his wife in Genesis, so does the second Adam represent His people. Identified with the perfect man, the Lord Jesus, the people of God are dead with Christ (Colossians 2:20; 3:3), buried with Christ (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12), and risen with Christ (Ephesians 2:7; Colossians 3:1). The Messiah, the perfect Man, is the head of all other men (1 Corinthians 11:3b) and mediates the rule of God to man, bringing all those who are in Him underneath the rule of God, even as He is underneath that rule (1 Corinthians 11:3d). The affirmation of the full humanity of Christ found in 1 Corinthians 11:3 by no means denies His full Deity.

Furthermore, even if the headship spoken of had reference to the Son considered in His preincarnate state as God (which it does not), it would not establish an ontological subordination, but an economic differentiation in roles. The verse itself indicates that “the head of the woman is the man” (11:3c), and men are to have authority over women in the home (Ephesians 5:23), in the church (1 Timothy 2:11-3:5), and in the state (Isaiah 3:12), but both men and women are entirely equal as humans—both share in an identical human nature (Galatians 3:28). A subordination of role assumed by the Son to the Father in the work of redemption would not deny an equality of nature between them. This recognition is consistent with the use of the Greek word “head,” *kephale*, elsewhere in Scripture and related contemporary literature.¹⁵³ Even if one denied the fact that the headship by God of Christ in 1 Corinthians 11:3 pertained to the Messiah as man, the Arian conclusion that the Son of God does not share the same Divine nature, but is ontologically inferior to the Father as a created being, would not follow. This verse does not help Unitarians at all.

1 Corinthians 15:28 reads, “And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in

¹⁵² *Man*, not *woman*, is the generic term for a person, and the masculine *he*, not the feminine *she*, is used for mixed and unidentified groups in Biblical Hebrew and Greek, and even in English grammar.

¹⁵³ In addition to 1 Corinthians 11:3c, the word κεφαλή or “head” is used in the New Testament of items equal or identical in nature, but of different authority or weight, in Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17; Acts 4:11; 1 Pet 2:7 (cf. Psalm 118:22); each passage referencing stones that are entirely equal as rocks, but one is the “head” stone (representing Christ as the head of mankind, although sharing an identical and equal human nature). The living stones of the spiritual temple, the church, are also equal in nature to the human Messiah, the head stone (Ephesians 2:20-22; 1 Peter 2:5). In the LXX (cf. the Hebrew OT), κεφαλή is used for men equal in nature but differing in authority in Deuteronomy 28:13, 44; Judges 11:8, 9, 11, 13; Psalm 18:43; Daniel 2:38. In the apostolic patristic writings, a sense of equality of nature but difference in role for κεφαλή appears in 1 Clement 37:5 (a literal head is equally part of a body with all the rest); Barnabas 6:4 (the cornerstone metaphor spoken of in the NT); Shepherd 66:3 (the husband and his family are equally human).

all.” Commenting on this verse, Unitarians argue:

After his resurrection, [Jesus] continues to be in a subordinate, secondary position. . .

. In the everlasting future in heaven, Jesus will continue to be a separate subordinate servant of God. . . . Jesus never claimed to be God.¹⁵⁴

Many modalists also use 1 Corinthians 15:28 to attack the eternal equality of the Son of God with His Father.¹⁵⁵ Does 1 Corinthians 15:28 deny that the Son is one in essence with the Father and prove that He has no Divine nature? Does the subjection mentioned in the verse prove that He is merely a creature, infinitely inferior in being, from eternity past to eternity future, to the Father—as is true of necessity for all of creation when contrasted to the Creator? Apart from the fact that such an affirmation would contradict vast numbers of passages of Scripture, it would be hard to see the contextual significance of such an affirmation in 1 Corinthians 15, with its emphasis upon the resurrection from the dead. Furthermore, if the verse speaks of a subordination of being, why is it that only when “all things shall be subdued unto him [Christ]” that “then shall the Son also himself be subject”? Why the “then” in the verse? If the apostle Paul wished to teach Unitarianism in this verse, how could he declare that only at this future period of time, only “then” in the eternal state, will the Son be subject? Is the Son equal to the Father now, but “then” He will no longer be equal? Would it not be the strangest of affirmations to declare that, at this present time, a part of creation, Christ, is equal in nature to his Creator, God, but in the future this created being will be inferior in his essence? If Arians wish to use 1 Corinthians 15:28 is to prove an ontological subordination of the Son to the Father, they would need to believe that the essence of the Son changes, so that He currently has an equal and unsubordinated Divine nature, but He will somehow surrender that nature in the future for one that is unequal and

¹⁵⁴ Pg. 19-20, *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* section, “Is God Always Superior to Jesus?”

¹⁵⁵ Oneness Pentecostal writer David Bernard writes, “Not only did the Sonship have a beginning, but it will, in at least one sense, have an ending. This is evident from I Corinthians 15:23-28. In particular, verse 24 says, ‘Then cometh the end, when he [Christ] shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father. . . .’ Verse 28 says, ‘And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.’ This verse of Scripture is impossible to explain if one thinks of a ‘God the Son’ who is co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father.” Bernard also affirms that “Jesus will cease acting in His role as Son . . . [after] His final act as Son [when he] will present the church to Himself.” The former objection to the eternal Sonship of Christ in 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 is refuted in the same manner as the very similar Arian objections in the text above. The latter argument, that Christ will cease to be Son, is obviously an invalid deduction from 1 Corinthians 15:28. No affirmation is there made of an obliteration of the Son, but rather the verse states that He will continue eternally “subject” to the Father as the mediatorial King in His mediatorial kingdom.

subject. Furthermore, if the Son is no longer to be Ruler of all, why do many passages of Scripture affirm that He “shall reign . . . for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end . . . of the increase of *his* government and peace *there shall be* no end . . . upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. . . . All people, nations, and languages, [will] serve him: his dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom *that* which shall not be destroyed. . . . the everlasting kingdom [belongs to] our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. . . . Christ . . . shall reign for ever and ever . . . Unto the Son [the Father] *saith*, Thy throne, O God, *is* for ever and ever” (Luke 1:33; Isaiah 9:6-7; Daniel 7:14; 2 Peter 1:11; Revelation 11:15; Hebrews 1:8)?¹⁵⁶ Ontology simply does not fit the sense of 1 Corinthians 15:28 at all; the subordination is of necessity one of role or office, an economic subordination pertaining to the Son as the Mediator. The Arian view of 1 Corinthians 15:28 contradicts the rest of the Bible and does not make sense of the verse itself in context. This should be expected, because it differs radically from the intention of the apostle who penned it, and of the Holy Spirit who gave the verse by inspiration.

1 Corinthians 15:24-28¹⁵⁷ deals with the mediatorial kingdom¹⁵⁸ of Christ, a rulership

¹⁵⁶ It is true that the saints will also reign for ever (Daniel 7:18; Revelation 22:5), but this sort of patently subordinate authority cannot be compared with the manner of the Son’s kingship as Jehovah from eternity past to eternity future; it is utterly contrary to Scripture to compare the subordinate reign of the saints *within* the kingdom of God to the sovereign rule *over* the kingdom of “the Son” of whom it is said, “Thy throne, O God, *is* for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness *is* the sceptre of thy kingdom” (Hebrews 1:8).

¹⁵⁷ Wilber Wallis (“The Problem of an Intermediate Kingdom in 1 Corinthians 15:20-28,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 18:4 (Fall 1975) p. 242) notes a chiasmic structure in v. 24-28:

The end—24a

Kingdom delivered over to Father—24b

All enemies destroyed—24c

All enemies put underfoot—25 (Ps. 110:1)

Last enemy destroyed—26

All things subjected—27a (Ps. 8:6)

All things completely and finally subjected (hypotetaktai)—27b

All things subjected—28a

Son made subject—28b

“That God may be all in all”—28c

¹⁵⁸ “The mediatorial kingdom may be defined . . . as the rule of God through a divinely chosen representative who not only speaks and acts for God but also represents the people before God; a rule which has especial reference to the human race (although it finally embraces the universe); and its mediatorial ruler is always a member of the human race” (“The Greatness of the Kingdom,” Part I, Alva J. McClain, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 112:445 (Jan 1955) p. 18). In the eternal state, “When the last enemy is put down by our Lord as the mediatorial king, when even death itself is abolished and complete harmony is established, then the purpose of

that concerns the Son as the God-man or *Theanthropos*,¹⁵⁹ which He fully assumed at His ascension, and which will have its manner of administration altered markedly¹⁶⁰ at the consummation of time spoken of in 1 Corinthians 15:24-28. The passage refers of necessity to the mediatorial kingdom, not the universal kingdom of God, because v. 24 indicates that the reign in question is not in the hands of the Father—God never ceases to reign in His universal kingdom. The context of the passage strongly emphasizes the humanity of Christ; He died and rose again in His human nature, (v. 20); He is the second Adam, and the salvation of the elect requires that the Lord Jesus is as equally “man” as he who sinned in the Garden of Eden (v. 21-22); He is the head and representative of redeemed mankind (v. 23); He is the human Messiah (v. 24-26), who, as “man . . . and the son of man,” has been given dominion over the creation (v. 27; Psalm 8:6, 4), and who mediates the rule of God over all the universe and puts “all things under his feet” (v. 25; Psalm 8:6-8) until the time when all

his mediatorial kingdom will have been fulfilled. Then the Son will deliver up his kingdom to God the Father, to be merged into the eternal kingdom, thus being perpetuated forever, but no longer as a separate entity (1 Cor 15:24–28). This does not mean the end of the rule of our Lord Jesus Christ. He only ceases to reign as the mediatorial King in history. But as the only begotten Son, very God of very God, He shares with the other Persons of the Triune God the throne of the eternal kingdom. In that final and eternal city of God, center of a redeemed new heaven and earth, there is but *one* throne. It is called, ‘the throne of *God* and of the *Lamb*’ (Rev 22:3–5)” (“The Greatness of the Kingdom, Part IV: The Mediatorial Kingdom from the Acts Period to the Eternal State,” McClain, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 112:448 (Oct 55) p. 310]. The four parts of McClain’s series on the Kingdom in *Bibliotheca Sacra* (12:445 (Jan 55) p. 11-27; 112:446 (Apr 55) p. 107-124; 112:447 (Jul 55) p. 209-224; 112:448 (Oct 55) p. 304-311) are very helpful in understanding the concept of the mediatorial kingdom and its distinction from the eternal kingdom of God.

¹⁵⁹ The “messianic or mediatorial kingdom . . . belongs to Christ, not as the Logos, but as the Son of Man, the *Theanthropos*; God manifest in the flesh. . . . Viewed as extending over all creatures, it is a kingdom of power, which, according to 1 Corinthians 15:24, he shall deliver up to God even the Father, when his mediatorial work is accomplished” (Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 4:4:4:5, 7 (sec. “The Kingdom of Heaven” in “The Concomitants of the Second Advent” elec. acc. in *Christian Library Series*, vol. 17: *Systematic Theologies*, AGES Library, Rio, WI: 2006).

¹⁶⁰ “As eternal Son, the 2nd person doubtless shares forever, the natural and infinite dominion of the Godhead. But this Mediatorial kingdom is conferred and economical, exercised not merely in His divine nature, but by Him as *Theanthropos*. . . . the passage from 1 Corinthians 15:24 . . . [indicates] a striking change will then take place in the method of the mediatorial kingdom . . . it will consist largely in this, that Christ’s power over the universe . . . will be returned to the [Triune] Godhead. But the restoration of the [saints] to the Father, as an accomplished enterprise, is to be received, not as implying a severance of Christ’s headship, but as a surrendering of Himself along with it, body and head, as an aggregate. Let 1 Corinthians 3:23 be compared. . . . [T]he dominion of the God-man over wicked men and angels and inanimate nature is resorted to the Godhead, so that it may again be “all in all.” (Dabney, *Systematic and Polemic Theology*, Lecture 45, “Christ’s Humiliation and Exaltation,” elec. acc. *Christian Library Series*, vol. 17, AGES Software).

evil is finally and utterly destroyed and the eternal state commences (v. 28).¹⁶¹ As God, the Son reigns unchangeably from eternity past to eternity future (Hebrews 1:8) in perfect equality with the Father and the Holy Spirit; as the incarnate Mediator He was given a special rulership by God the Father (Psalm 110:1), but He will remain eternally subordinate¹⁶² to the One who bestowed this mediatorial kingdom upon Him.¹⁶³ The Christ's

¹⁶¹ John Darby (*Synopsis of the Books of the Bible*, part 2; the New Testament; comments on 1 Corinthians, pgs. 46-49 (598ff); elec. acc. in *Christian Library Series, vol. 15: Classic Commentary Collection*, AGES Library, Rio, WI: 2006) comments:

“When He has put all His enemies under His feet, and has given back the kingdom to His Father (for it is never taken from Him, nor given to another, as happens with human kingdoms), then the Son Himself is subject to Him who has put all things under Him, in order that God may be all in all. The reader should observe, that it is the counsels of God with regard to the government of all things which is here spoken of, and not His nature; and moreover it is the Son, as man, of whom these things are said. This is not an arbitrary explanation: the passage is from Psalm 8, the subject of which is the exaltation of man to the position of head of all things, God putting all things under His feet. Nothing, says the apostle, is excepted (Hebrews 2:8) save, as he adds here, that He is necessarily excepted who put all things under Him. When the man Christ, the Son of God, has in fact accomplished this subjugation, He gives back to God the universal power which had been committed to Him, and the mediatorial kingdom, which He held as man, ceases. He is again subject, as He was on earth. He does not cease to be one with the Father, even as He was so while living in humiliation on the earth, although saying at the same time “Before Abraham was, I am.” But the mediatorial government of man has disappeared — is absorbed in the supremacy of God, to which there is no longer any opposition. Christ will take His eternal place, a Man, the Head of the whole redeemed family, being at the same time God blessed for ever, one with the Father. In Psalm 2 we see the Son of God, as born on earth, King in Zion, rejected when He presented Himself on earth; in Psalm 8 the result of His rejection, exalted as Son of man at the head of all that the hand of God has made. Then we find Him here laying down this conferred authority, and resuming the normal position of humanity, namely, that of subjection to Him who has put all things under Him; but through it all, never changing His divine nature, nor — save so far as exchanging humiliation for glory — His human nature either. But God is now all in all, and the special government of man in the Person of Jesus — a government with which the assembly is associated (see Ephesians 1:20-23, which is a quotation from the same Psalm) is merged in the immutable supremacy of God, the final and normal relationship of God with His creature. We shall find the Lamb omitted in that which is said in Revelation 21:1-8, speaking of this same period.

Thus we find in this passage [1 Corinthians 15] resurrection by man — death having entered by man; the relationship of the saints with Jesus, the source and the power of life, the consequence being His resurrection, and theirs at His coming; power over all things committed to Christ, the risen Man; afterwards the kingdom given back to God the Father, the tabernacle of God with men, and the man Christ, the second Adam, eternally a man subject to the Supreme — this last a truth of infinite value to us (the resurrection of the wicked, though supposed in the resurrection brought in by Christ, not being the direct subject of the chapter).”

¹⁶² Then “*shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him; which must be interpreted and understood with great care and caution; not in the Sabellian sense, of refunding of the characters of the Son, and so of the Father unto God; when they suppose these characters, which they imagine to be merely nominal, bare names, will be no more, and God shall be all; but as the Father will always remain a father, so the Son will remain a son; for, as the Son of the Highest, he will reign over his people for ever, and he the Son, as a priest, is consecrated for ever more: nor in the Eutychian sense, of the change of the human nature into the divine, in which they fancy it will be swallowed up, and God will be all; but Christ will always continue as a man; he went up to heaven as such, and he will return as a man, and be visible to all in the human nature, and in that be the object of the wonderful vision of the saints to all eternity: nor in the Arian sense, according to the divine nature, as if he was in that inferior to the Father, when he is equal with him, has all the perfections he has, and the whole fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him; it is much better and safer to understand it as it commonly is of him, as man; though in this sense, he was always subject to his Father, ever since he was*

enemies will be “put down” (v. 24) or “destroyed” (v. 26), because all things must be “subject” or “subdued” to Him, that is, brought into their proper place, orderly arranged in submission to God’s government.¹⁶⁴ Perfect harmony and union of redeemed man and universe with God cannot take place until the destruction of all enemies; until then the perfect arrangement of the Son under God cannot take place, not because of an unwillingness on the part of the Messiah to be under the Father, but because the realm Christ is to bring in subjection to God is not in perfect order and submission. The Son will forever be in His proper place in God’s government; as God, He is equal to the Father and consubstantial with Him; as man, He is consubstantial with humanity, and the one who unites the chosen to God through His redemptive work in human nature; 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 demonstrates that this perfect harmony of the resurrected elect with the Triune God through the incarnate Son

incarnate, whereas this seems to respect something peculiar at this time . . . it is best, therefore to understand it of the Son’s giving up the account of his mediatorial kingdom and concerns to his Father; when it will appear that he has in the whole of his conduct and administration been subject to him; that he has in all things acted in his name, done all by his power, and to his honour and glory; and now having accomplished all he undertook and was intrusted with, gives in his account, delivers up his charge, and resigns his office; all which will be plain proofs of his subjection: when I say he will resign or lay aside his office as Mediator, my meaning is not that he will cease to be God-man and Mediator; but that he will cease to administer that office as under God, in the manner he now does: he will be the prophet of the [elect], but he will not teach by his Spirit, and word, and ordinances as now, but will himself be the immediate light of the saints, he will be a priest for ever, the virtue of his sacrifice and intercession will always remain, but he will not plead and intercede as he now does; he will also reign for ever over and among his saints, but his kingdom will not be a vicarious one, or administered as it now is; nor be only in his hands as Mediator, but with God, Father, Son, and Spirit” (John Gill, *An Exposition of the Old and New Testament*, orig. pub. 1809, comment on 1 Corinthians 15:28).

¹⁶³ Charles Hodge, in response to the question, “How does the sovereignty of Christ as Mediator differ from his sovereignty as God?” properly answers, “His sovereignty as God is essential to his nature, underived, absolute, eternal, and unchangeable. His sovereignty as mediatorial King is derived, given to him by his father as the reward of his obedience and suffering; it is special, having respect to the salvation of his own people and the administration of the provisions of the covenant of grace [and, as premillennialists recognize, it pertains to His millennial rule]; and it attaches, not to his divine nature as such, but to his person as God-man, occupying the office of Mediator” (*Outlines of Theology*, Chapter 27, “Mediatorial Kingship of Christ,” Question 1.).

Similarly, Lewis Sperry Chafer (“Trinitarianism, part 7,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 98:391 (Jul 41) pg. 275), considering the relationship of the Theanthropic Person of Christ to the Father, writes, “On the divine side of His Being, the Christ of God always occupied the exalted place of fellowship with the Father on the ground of equality—notably His High Priestly prayer as recorded in John 17:1–26; and every reference to His Deity implies this equality and oneness. On the human side of His being, that which is inherently the creature’s relation to the Creator is expressed to perfection, namely, perfect submission to the Father’s will. The complete obedience of Christ to the Father has been made the occasion of doubt as to His equality with the Father. Strong emphasis is needed at this point which enforces the truth that His subservient attitude is altogether the function of His humanity. There was that in His own divine nature which was first *willing* to be the obedient One. He *willingly* left the glory, and that exercise of His volition preceded His incarnation (Heb 10:4–7). In like manner, He will exercise authority in all future ages by the appointment of the Father. He reigns forever and ever, but on the ground of the truth that all authority is committed unto Him of the Father (Matt 28:18; John 5:27; 1 Cor 15:24–28).”

¹⁶⁴

Note the analysis of *hupotasso* below.

will be the the blessed state of eternity future.¹⁶⁵ All things will be in harmony in the eternal

¹⁶⁵ Charles Hodge comments, with excellent insight, on 1 Corinthians 15:28: “When the work of redemption has been accomplished, the dead raised, the judgment held, the enemies of Christ all subdued, then, and not till then, will the Son also himself be subject to him who put all things under him. This passage is evidently parallel with that in v. 24. The subjection of the Son to the Father here means precisely what is there meant by his delivering up the kingdom to God even the Father. The thing done, and the person who does it, are the same. The subjection here spoken of is not predicated of the eternal Logos, the second person of the Trinity, any more than the kingdom spoken of in v. 24 is the dominion which belongs essentially to Christ as God. As there the word *Christ* designates the Theanthropos, so does the word *Son* here designate, not the Logos as such, but the Logos as incarnate. And as the delivery of the kingdom or royal authority over the universe committed to Christ after his resurrection, is consistent at once with his continued dominion as God over all creatures, and with his continued headship over his people; so is the subjection here spoken of consistent with his eternal equality with the Father. It is not the subjection of the Son as Son, but of the Son as Theanthropos of which the apostle here speaks. The doctrine of the true and proper divinity of our Lord is so clearly revealed in Scripture, and is so inwrought into the faith of his people, that such passages as these, though adduced with so much confidence by the impugnors of that doctrine, give believers no more trouble than the ascription of the limitations of our nature to God. When the Bible says that God repents, we know that it is consistent with his immutability; and when it says the Son is subject or inferior to the Father, we know that it is consistent with their equality, as certainly as we know that saying that man is immortal is consistent with saying he is mortal. We know that both of the last-mentioned propositions are true: because mortality is predicated of man in one aspect, and immortality in another aspect. In one sense he is mortal, in another sense he is immortal. In like manner we know that the verbally inconsistent propositions, the Son is subject to the Father, and, the Son is equal with the Father, are both true. In one sense he is subject, in another sense he is equal. The son of a king may be the equal of his father in every attribute of his nature, though officially inferior. So the eternal Son of God may be coequal with the Father, though officially subordinate. What difficulty is there in this? What shade does it cast over the full Godhead of our adorable Redeemer? The subordination, however, here spoken of, is not that of the human nature of Christ separately considered, as when he is said to suffer, or to die, or to be ignorant; but it is the official subordination of the incarnate Son to God as God. The words ἀυτός ὁ υἱός, *the Son himself*, here designate, as in so many other places, not the second person of the Trinity as such, but that person as clothed in our nature. And the subjection spoken of, is not of the former, but of the latter, i.e. not of the Son as Son, but of the Son as incarnate; and the subjection itself is official and therefore perfectly consistent with equality of nature.

There is another difficulty connected with this verse which it may be well to notice. According to the Scriptures and the creeds of all the great historical churches . . . the term Son, as applied to Christ, designates his divine nature. It is a term of nature and not of office. He was from eternity the Son of God. Yet it is of the Son that subjection is here predicated. This is urged as an argument against his eternal sonship. The fact, however, is, that the person of Christ may be designated from one nature, when the predicate belongs either to the opposite nature or to the whole person [the doctrine of the *communicatio idiomatum*]. That is, he may be called God when what is said of him is true only of his human nature or of his complex person as God and man; and he may be called man, when what is said is true only of his divine nature. Thus he is called the Son of Man when omnipresence and omniscience are ascribed to him; and he is called God, the Son of God, the Lord of glory when he is said to die. These passages do not prove that the human nature of Christ is every where present; or that his divine nature suffered and died. Neither do such expressions as that in the text prove that the Son as such is inferior to the Father, nor that the term Son is not a scriptural designation of his divine nature. The principle here adverted to is so important, and serves to explain so many passages of Scripture, that it will bear to be often repeated.

That God may be all in all. Before the ascension of Christ, God reigned as God; after that event he reigned and still reigns through the Theanthropos; when the end comes, the Theanthropos will deliver up this administrative kingdom, and God again be all in all. Such is the representation of Scripture, and such seems to be the simple meaning of this passage. When our Lord ascended up on high all power in heaven and earth was given to him. It was given to him then, and therefore not possessed before. He is to retain this delegated power in his character of Mediator, God-man, until his enemies are put under his feet. Then he, the God-man, is to

state. All redeemed humanity and the redeemed creation (which is under man, and so ultimately under the Man of men, the Messiah, as in Psalm 8) will be subject in He who is Son of God and Son of Man to the one Triune God,¹⁶⁶ who will reign eternally¹⁶⁷ as the “all in all.”¹⁶⁸

This mediatorial rule of Christ as the God-man is explicated elsewhere in Scripture as well. Hebrews 2:5-17 indicates that The Divine-human Messiah will have the world to come put in subjection to Him (v. 5). At this time, the Son of Man is exalted greatly, having received current dominion at His ascension (1 Peter 3:22), especially over the church

deliver it up. And God as God will reign supreme. The phrase here used, τὰ πάντα . . . ἐν πᾶσιν, *all in all*, depends (as is the case with all similar formulas), for its precise meaning on the connection. . . Paul is speaking simply of the continuance of the mediatorial dominion of Christ over the universe. That dominion was given to him for a specific purpose; when that purpose is accomplished, he will give it up, and God, instead of reigning through Christ, will be recognized as the immediate sovereign of the universe; his co-equal, co-eternal Son, clothed in our nature, being, as the everlasting head of the redeemed, officially subordinate to him. In other words, the whole question, so to speak, is whose hands are to hold the reins of universal dominion. They are now in the hands of Christ; hereafter they are to be in the hands of God as such. The passage does not teach us the design of redemption, but what is to happen when the redemption of God’s people is accomplished. Then the Messianic reign is to cease, and God is to rule supreme over a universe reduced to order, the people of God being saved, and the finally impenitent shut up with Satan and his angels in the prison of despair” (*An Exposition of 1 Corinthians*, elec. acc. in *Christian Library Series, vol. 15: Classic Commentary Collection*, AGES Library, Rio, WI: 2006).

¹⁶⁶ Note the single throne of God and the Lamb in Revelation 22:3.

¹⁶⁷ “God’s original purpose was to manifest His absolute authority and this purpose is realized when Christ unites the earthly theocracy with the eternal kingdom of God. Thus, while Christ’s earthly theocratic rule is limited to one thousand years, which is sufficient time to manifest God’s perfect theocracy on earth, His reign is eternal” (*Things To Come*, J. Dwight Pentecost. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1965, pgs. 492-493).

¹⁶⁸ *That God may be all in all*; for by God is not meant the Father personally, but God essentially considered, Father, Son, and Spirit, who are the one true and living God; to whom all the saints will have immediate access, in whose presence they will be, and with whom they shall have uninterrupted fellowship, without the use of such mediums as they now enjoy; all the three divine Persons will have equal power and government in and over all the saints; they will sit upon one and the same throne; there will be no more acting by a delegated power, or a derived authority: God will be all things to all his saints, immediately without the use of means; he will be that to their bodies as meat and clothes are, without the use of them; and all light, glory, and happiness to their souls, without the use of ordinances, or any means; he will then be all perfection and bliss, to all the elect, and in them all, which he now is not; some are dead in trespasses and sins, and under the power of Satan; the number of them in conversion is not yet completed; and, of those that are called many are in a state of imperfection, and have flesh as well as spirit in them; and of those who are fallen asleep in Christ, though their separate spirits are happy with him, yet their bodies lie in the grave, and under the power of corruption and death; but then all being called by grace, and all being raised, and glorified in soul and body, God will be all in all: this phrase expresses both the perfect government of God, Father, Son, and Spirit, over the saints to all eternity, and their perfect happiness in soul and body, the glory of all which will be ascribed to God; and it will be then seen that all that the Father has done in election, in the council and covenant of peace, were all to the glory of his grace; and that all that the Son has done in the salvation of his people, is all to the glory of the divine perfections: and that all that the Spirit of God has wrought in the saints, and all that they have done under his grace and influence, are all to the praise and glory of God, which will in the most perfect manner be given to the eternal Three in One (John Gill, *An Exposition of the Old and New Testament*, orig. pub. 1809, comment on 1 Corinthians 15:28).

(Ephesians 1:20-23), and the certain prospect of future absolute rule over all, but all creation it is not at this time completely subjected to Him (v. 6-9; Psalm 8:4-6). Those who are united by faith to the *Theanthropos*, He who assumed a completely human nature to redeem them by His substitutionary death, (v. 16-17) will partake of His glory (v. 10-15), being united to God through Him who is both God and man and made sons of God through Christ, the Captain of their salvation (v. 10). It is a shame that Arians, in ignorance of or hostility to the sublime and glorious beauty of the mediatorial kingdom of the Son as the God-man and the wonderful union the elect enjoy with Him and with the the Triune God through Him, will desecrate 1 Corinthians 15:28 to support their idolatry.

Even if the affirmation of 1 Corinthians 15:28 that “the Son also himself [shall] be subject unto him that put all things under him” referred to the Divine nature of God the Son (which it certainly does not), rather than to Him as the Mediator and God-man, the Arian dogma that the Son is a creature, a part of the created order, and therefore infinitely inferior in nature to His Father, would not be established. The word translated *be subject* in the verse, *hupotasso*, is “a Greek military term meaning ‘to arrange [troop divisions] in a military fashion under the command of a leader.’ In non-military use, it was ‘a voluntary attitude of giving in, cooperating, assuming responsibility, and carrying a burden.’”¹⁶⁹ The verb is defined as, in the active voice, “to cause to be in a submissive relationship,” and in the passive voice employed in 1 Corinthians 15:28,¹⁷⁰ to “become subject . . . subject oneself, be subjected or subordinated, obey” (BDAG); these considerations suit a reference to an economic subordination of role, rather than an ontological subordination of being, in 1 Corinthians 15:28. The etymological derivation of the word from the verb *tasso*, “to bring about an order of things by arranging, arrange, put in place” (BDAG), which in combination with *hupo* (“under”) gives a sense of “to arrange under,” also supports the idea of economic subordination rather than inferiority of being.¹⁷¹ Conclusively, *hupotasso* is used many times

¹⁶⁹ *Greek English Lexicon*, Joseph Henry Thayer, elec. acc. in Hamel, Ken, *The Online Bible for Mac*, version 3.0.

¹⁷⁰ ὑποταγήσεται.

¹⁷¹ Note the economic subordination in association with ontic equality among humans in Luke 7:8, where the concept of being “under authority” is associated with *hupo* and *tasso*: καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ ἄνθρωπός εἰμι ὑπὸ ἐξουσίαν τασσόμενος, ἔχων ὑπ’ ἐμαυτὸν στρατιώτας, καὶ λέγω τούτῳ, Πορεύθητι, καὶ πορεύεται καὶ ἄλλῳ, Ἔρχου, καὶ ἔρχεται καὶ τῷ δούλῳ μου, Ποίησον τοῦτο, καὶ ποιεῖ. Compare also the association of *tasso* and *hupotasso* in Romans 13:1; 1 Corinthians 16:15-16.

elsewhere in Scripture for a subordination of role, one generally voluntary, of entities not at all inferior in being to those to whom they submit.¹⁷² Even if one granted the invalid Arian assumption that the question of the essential nature of the Son was in view in 1 Corinthians 15:28, nothing in the Greek word employed requires the affirmation of the Unitarian dogma of His intrinsic inferiority of being—only a submission in role would be supported. The verse provides no support whatever for Arianism.

Jesus Christ is not just fully God, but also fully Man—this is orthodox Trinitarian doctrine, a belief that Trinitarians properly recognize is essential to man’s salvation. Christ’s genuine humanity is clearly proven in Scripture, and is rejoiced in by Trinitarians. Unitarian attempts to deny the Trinity with verses that deal with the humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ (Mark 13:32; Hebrews 5:8; Revelation 1:1; John 14:28; 1 Corinthians 11:3; 15:28) entirely miss the point.

4.) Miscellaneous Unitarian arguments

Unitarians advance a number of allegedly Biblical arguments that cannot be neatly classified underneath the first three headings. Those that, on the surface, seem the most plausible argue that the Son was the first created being, based on Colossians 1:15; Revelation 3:14; and Proverbs 8:22. Associated with the argument from Proverbs 8:22 is the Unitarian affirmation that the designation of Christ as the “only-begotten” proves His status as a creature. Finally, Arians argue that Jesus was only “a god” based on John 10:34-36 and

¹⁷² In Luke 2:51, Christ is “subject” to His earthly parents, but He certainly was not inferior in His being to them—even the most rabid Arian would admit he was superior in His being to Joseph and Mary! The Lord voluntarily assumed a subordinate role. In Luke 10:17, 20 fallen angels are subject to the disciples (admittedly involuntarily), although humans have a nature inferior to angels (Psalm 8:5; Hebrews 2:7). In 1 Corinthians 14:34, women are subject in their role to men, although they are equal in nature. Similarly, wives are subject to their husbands, although equal in nature (Ephesians 5:22, 24; Colossians 3:18; Titus 2:5; 1 Peter 3:1, 5). In 1 Corinthians 16:16, submission by believers to Paul’s fellowlaborers is enjoined; certainly this is a voluntary submission of role, not an affirmation that those working with Paul were somehow a higher class of being, super-humans that normal men were inferior to. In 1 Peter 5:5, the younger are to submit to those who are older (but identical in nature) to them. Titus 2:9 and 1 Peter 2:18 command servants to be submissive to their equally human masters. In Ephesians 5:21 and 1 Peter 5:5, all believers are to mutually submit to each other—they can hardly all be inferior in nature to one another! A voluntary assumption of a subordinate role is far more naturally the sense of the Son’s subjection in 1 Corinthians 15:28 than is an inferiority of being.

Luke 2:51; 10:17, 20; Romans 8:7, 20; 10:3; 13:1, 5; 1 Corinthians 14:32, 34; 15:27-28; 16:16; Ephesians 1:22; 5:21-22, 24; Philippians 3:21; Colossians 3:18; Titus 2:5, 9; 3:1; Hebrews 2:5, 8; 12:9; James 4:7; 1 Peter 2:13, 18; 3:1, 5, 22; 5:5; constitute the New Testament appearances of ὑποτάσσω.

related texts. If these Unitarian arguments fail to establish their doctrine of the Person of Christ, they have no even apparently formidable Biblical attempts left, and their Christological objections to the Trinity are found to be without merit.

Colossians 1:15b calls the Lord Jesus Christ “the firstborn of every creature.” Commenting on this, Arians argue:

Jesus had an existence in heaven before coming to the earth. But was it as one of the persons in an almighty, eternal triune Godhead? No, for the Bible plainly states that in his prehuman existence, Jesus was a created spirit being, just as angels were spirit beings created by God. Neither the angels nor Jesus had existed before their creation. . . . Having been created by God, Jesus is in a secondary position in time, power, and knowledge. . . . Jesus, in his prehuman existence, was “the first-born of all creation.” (Colossians 1:15) . . . Yes, Jesus was created by God as the beginning of God’s invisible creations.¹⁷³

Is the title “firstborn” for Christ equivalent to “first-created,” thereby proving that the first thing the Father created was the Son? Since, immediately after calling the Lord Jesus “firstborn,” Paul declares that “by him [the Son of God] 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: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist” (Colossians 1:16-17), one immediately suspects that “firstborn” is no equivalent to “first-created.” Paul would hardly in the same sentence affirm that Christ was Himself created, then, in an absolute contradiction, declare that “by him were all things created . . . all things were created by him” (v. 16; cf. John 1:3). Also, since creation exists to please God (Revelation 4:11), unless Jesus Christ is God, all things could not be created “for him” (v. 16), nor could “all” be created “for him” if He was Himself created! Nor could the Son be before all created things (v. 17a), nor could He sustain all creation (v. 17b), nor be distinguished from “all things” (v. 20), if He was Himself a created thing. The phrases immediately following the ascription of the title “firstborn” to Christ make it impossible to contend that the word is a synonym for “first-created.”¹⁷⁴ Indeed, the

¹⁷³ Pg. 14, “What Does the Bible Say About God and Jesus?” in *Should You Believe In the Trinity?*

¹⁷⁴ The Watchtower Society, recognizing that Colossians 1:16-20 destroys its doctrine that the Son of God is a creature, brazenly corrupts God’s Word in its *New World Translation* by adding the word “other” to the inspired text, so that a Watchtower society member, reading its own “translation” of the “Bible,” will read that Christ created all “other” things and is before all “other” things. This is such a blatant corruption that one hesitates to deal with it, lest people who are ignorant of Greek think that there is some chance that it should be taken seriously (nobody who knows Greek would take it seriously). No Greek manuscript in the world has the

very reason He is firstborn (v. 15) is that He is not created, but the Creator (v. 16-17)!¹⁷⁵ Furthermore, the Greek language has a specific word for “first-created” (*protoktistos*);¹⁷⁶ why would Paul use “firstborn” (*prototokos*)¹⁷⁷ instead, if he really wished to convey the idea that the Son was the first creature God made out of nothing?¹⁷⁸ Both the context of Colossians 1:15b, and the word choice itself in the passage, demonstrate the bankruptcy of the Unitarian argument from “firstborn.”

In Israel, “the right of the firstborn”¹⁷⁹ was “a double portion” of the inheritance (Deuteronomy 21:17); the firstborn son had privileges over his siblings. The “firstborn,” as “the chief of all [his household’s] strength” (Psalm 105:36; 78:51), possessed “the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power” (Genesis 49:3). The firstborn son of the monarch inherited the kingdom of Israel (1 Chronicles 3:10ff.; 2 Chronicles 21:3; cf. 2 Kings 3:27), except in the extraordinary situation where God by a specific revelation instructed otherwise

word “other,” and no other Bible version, ancient or modern, has ever been bold enough to corrupt Scripture in this way. As if this did not settle the issue, or rather, this corruption that is so obvious that it is a total non-issue, one notes that “create” (κτίζω) and “all things” (τὰ πάντα) are associated in the New Testament, in addition to Colossians 1:16, only in Ephesians 3:9 and Revelation 4:11, which affirm that “God . . . created all things” and that the “Lord [God] . . . created all things.” Does the Watchtower wish to say that God is a created being, who did not create everything, but only all “other” things? Of course, nothing that could reasonably support their corruption appears with *ktidzo* and *panta* in the LXX, the apostolic patristic writers, or anywhere else (cf. LXX Psalm 88:48; Hosea 13:4; Haggai 2:9; Malachi 2:10; Isaiah 45:7; Daniel 4:37; 14:5; 3 Maccabees 2:3; Wisdom 1:14; Sirach 18:1; 23:20; 39:21, 29; also Didache 10:3; Shepherd 26:1; 58:2; 59:5; 66:4, etc.—note that references such as Sirach 1:4; Shepherd 8:1; 12:1 are unrelated, since they do not have the subject-*ktidzo-ta panta* [direct object] pattern of Colossians 1:16). See footnote #1 for more on the corruption of the *New World Translation*.

¹⁷⁵ Note the “for” (ὅτι; “because” or “since”) that begins v. 16. He is firstborn because “by him were all things created . . . all things were created by him, and for him.”

¹⁷⁶ πρωτόκτιστος, “first created,” Liddell, H. G. & Scott, R. *Greek-English Lexicon*.

¹⁷⁷ πρωτότοκος.

¹⁷⁸ “[Based on] πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως, Colossians 1:15 . . . the Arians inferred that Christ himself is a κτίσις of God, to wit, the first creature of all. But πρωτότοκος is not equivalent to πρωτόκτιστος or πρωτόπλαστος [“first-formed,” cf. Wisdom 7:1; 10:1]: on the contrary, Christ is by this very term distinguished from the creation. . . . A creature cannot possibly be the source of life for all creatures. . . . The text indicates the distinction between the eternal generation of the Son from the essence of the Father, and the temporal creation of the world out of nothing by the Son. Yet there is a difference between μονογενής and πρωτότοκος, which Athanasius himself makes: the former referring to the relation of the Son to the Father, the latter, to his relation to the world” (*History of the Christian Church*, Philip Schaff, 3:9:124).

¹⁷⁹ The הַבְּכֹרִית (cf. Genesis 25:34; 1 Chronicles 5:2), related to the Hebrew word *firstborn*, בְּכוֹרִית (cf. πρωτοτόκια, *birthright*, Hebrews 12:16, in relation to πρωτότοκος, *firstborn*, and πρωτοτόκεω, “right of the firstborn,” Deuteronomy 21:16, LXX). The language of a “right” pertaining to the firstborn itself supports the connection of *firstborn* and privilege. Compare “the firstborn according to his birthright,” הַבְּכֹרִית כְּכֹרֶתוֹ (Genesis 43:33).

(1 Chronicles 3:5; 28:5) and transferred the authority of the firstborn.¹⁸⁰ Scripture employs the word *firstborn* to refer to one who is first in rank, in a position of special authority, exaltation, or blessing, rather than using the word for birth order only.¹⁸¹ The uses of the word outside of the realm of human and animal birth to refer to things that are in a heightened, exalted, or extreme state, rather than the first appearance of such things temporally, supports this fact (Isaiah 14:30; Job 18:30). Further evidence comes from Jacob’s receipt of the firstborn position and the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant over his elder brother Esau (Genesis 25:23, 31-34; 27:29, 36-37; Romans 9:11-13), Ephraim’s receiving the position of firstborn and the position of one “greater” than the older Manasseh (Genesis 48:14-20; Deuteronomy 33:17), and Joseph’s receiving firstborn status over his elder brother Reuben (Genesis 49:3-4, 22-26; cf. 48:5; 1 Chronicles 5:1). 1 Chronicles 26:10 makes the connection between rule and firstborn status explicit: “Hosah, of the children of Merai, had sons; [of which] Simri [was] the chief, (for *though* he was not the firstborn [in time], yet his father made him the chief.”¹⁸² Deuteronomy 21:16 indicates that a father practicing polygamy was not to, of his own volition, choose to “make [the son of a preferred wife] firstborn”¹⁸³ and so give the favored child greater inheritance rights. A father obviously could not change the physical order in which children were born to make another child the firstborn, but a position, and rights, can be transferred. Also, Jehovah, who is sovereign over all nations (Deuteronomy 4:19; Psalm 22:28; 86:9), had brought great numbers of them into existence for many centuries before He founded Israel (Genesis 10)—nevertheless, He said, “Israel *is* . . . my firstborn” (Exodus 4:22; cf. Jeremiah 31:9), because of the special position and privilege bestowed on her as “a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that *are* upon the earth” (Deuteronomy 14:2). Such uses provides helpful Biblical background to

¹⁸⁰ This exception itself illustrates the connection of the firstborn privilege with authority, rather than simply with primogeniture; the order in which children are born is irrevocable, but the authority of the firstborn can be transferred. Of course, in ordinary cases the eldest child also possessed the authority of the firstborn.

¹⁸¹ “Examples [of this usage of firstborn as] . . . first rank . . . can also be adduced from the cuneiform documents from Mesopotamia, particularly from Nuzi” (“The Term ‘Son of God’ in the Light of Old Testament Idiom,” S. Herbert Bess, *Grace Journal*, 6:2 (Spring 1965) pg. 20; examples are given in S. Herbert Bess, *Systems of Land Tenure in Ancient Israel* (University of Michigan, 1963), pgs. 26-35.

¹⁸² The actual eldest son was not fit to be the chief, either because of his death and the cessation of his line, or for some other reason. Regardless of the reason for Simri’s exaltation, the natural connection between rule and firstborn status is clear.

¹⁸³ יִזְכֶּל לְבִכּוֹר

the designation of the Son of God as “firstborn.”¹⁸⁴

The word “firstborn” in Colossians 1:15, rather than teaching that the Son was part of creation, emphasizes His authority over¹⁸⁵ the created order.¹⁸⁶ The term signifies

¹⁸⁴ Consider also the following usages of πρωτότοκος in the LXX: ἡγάπα αὐτόν ὅτι πρωτότοκος αὐτοῦ ἦν, “he loved him, for he was his first-born,” 2 Samuel 13:21; καὶ ἀπεκρίθη ἀνὴρ Ἰσραὴλ τῷ ἀνδρὶ Ἰουδα καὶ εἶπεν δέκα χεῖρές μοι ἐν τῷ βασιλεῖ καὶ πρωτότοκος ἐγὼ ἢ σύ καί γε ἐν τῷ Δαυιδ εἰμὶ ὑπὲρ σέ καὶ ἵνα τί τοῦτο ὕβρισάς με, “And the men of Israel answered the men of Juda, and said, We have ten parts in the king, and we are [lit. I am] firstborn over you, we have also an interest in David above you: and why have ye thus insulted us,” 2 Samuel 19:43. Consider also the references in the apostolic patristic writers: ὅς ἂν μεθοδεύῃ τὰ λόγια τοῦ κυρίου πρὸς τὰς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας καὶ λέγη μήτε ἀνάστασιν μήτε κρίσιν, οὗτος πρωτότοκός ἐστι τοῦ σατανᾶ, Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippian 7:1; also Επιγινώσκω, ἐπιγινώσκω τὸν πρωτότοκον τοῦ σατανᾶ, Martyrdom of Polycarp 23:3.

¹⁸⁵ The Son is “firstborn of every creature” (πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως) in the sense of “firstborn over every creature/all creation.” The genitive “of [every] creature” is a genitive of subordination, specifying “that which is subordinated to or under the dominion of the head noun [here “firstborn”] . . . [for] of supply the gloss *over* or something like it that suggests dominion or priority” (pg. 103, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, Daniel Wallace). Other examples include Matthew 9:34, “the prince of [over] the devils” (τῷ ἄρχοντι τῶν δαιμονίων); “King of [over] kings, and Lord of [over] lords” (Βασιλεὺς βασιλέων καὶ Κύριος κυρίων); Mark 15:32 (ὁ βασιλεὺς τοῦ Ἰσραήλ); 2 Corinthians 4:4 (ὁ Θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου); John 12:31 (ὁ ἄρχων τοῦ κόσμου), etc. Commenting specifically on Colossians 1:15’s πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως, Wallace writes, “the firstborn over all creation . . . both due to the lexical field of ‘firstborn’ including ‘preeminent over’ (and not just a literal chronological birth order) and the following causal clause (‘for [ὅτι] in him all things were created’)—which makes little sense if mere chronological order is in view, it is far more likely that this [passage] expresses subordination [of the creation to the firstborn than it is likely that a partitive genitive is in view]. . . . The resultant meaning seems to be an early confession of Christ’s lordship and hence, implicitly, his deity” (pg. 104, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*).

¹⁸⁶ An alternative theologically orthodox view of this passage affirms that Christ is πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως in that He existed before all creatures or creation; any temporal notion in the verse would affirm that the Son existed in the eternity before time, when only God existed, and therefore is Divine. The sovereignty Christ possesses as the *prototokos* would be consequent upon His eternity. Marvin Vincent (*New Testament Word Studies*, comment on Colossians 1:15, elec. acc. in *Christian Library Series, vol. 15: Classic Commentary Collection*, AGES Library, Rio, WI: 2006) is representative: “As *image* points to *revelation*, so *first-born* points to *preexistence*. . . . The true sense is, *born before the creation*. Compare *before all things*, v. 17. This fact of priority implies *sovereignty*. He is exalted above all thrones, etc., and all things are *unto* (εἰς) *Him*, as they are elsewhere declared to be unto God. Compare Psalm 89:27; Hebrews 1:2.” Philip Schaff (*History of the Christian Church*, vol. 1, 11:71) writes, “The eternal *pre-existence* of Christ . . . *before the creation* is expressly asserted, Col. 1:15 . . . an existence *before* all creation must be an uncreated, therefore a divine or eternal existence which has no beginning as well as no end. (John carefully distinguishes between the eternal ἦν of the pre-existent Logos, and the temporal ἐγένετο of the incarnate Logos, John 1:1, 14; comp. 8:58. This is not inconsistent with the designation of Christ as “the first-born of all creation,” Col. 1:15; for πρωτότοκος is different from πρωτόκτιστος (*first created*), as the Nicene fathers already remarked, in opposition to Arius, who inferred from the passage that Christ was the first *creature* of God and the *creator* of all other creatures. The word first-born corresponds to the Johannean μονογενής, *only-begotten*. ‘Both express,’ as Lightfoot says ((xi) Com. on Col.) ‘the same eternal fact; but while μονογενής states it in itself, πρωτότοκος places it in relation to the universe.’ We may also compare the προτόγονος, *first-begotten*, which Philo applies to the Logos, as including the original archetypal idea of the created world. ‘The first-born,’ used absolutely (πρωτότοκος מְבֹרָךְ Ps. 89:28), became a recognized title of the Messiah. Moreover, the genitive πάσης κτίσεως is not the partitive, but the comparative genitive: the first-born as compared with, that is, *before*, every creature. So Justin Martyr (πρὸ πάντων τῶν κτισμάτων), Meyer, and Bp. Lightfoot, in loc.; also Weiss, *Bibl. Theol. d. N. T.*, p. 431 (who refutes the opposite view of Usteri, Reuss, and Baur, and says: “*Da πάσης*

“pertaining to existing superior to all else of the same or related class—‘superior to, above all’ (LN), or “to having special status associated with a firstborn . . . [derived from] the special status enjoyed by a firstborn son as heir apparent in Israel” (BDAG; cf. Deuteronomy 21:17). Rather than affirming that the Son of God is part of the created order, the title *firstborn* signifies his authority (cf. Romans 8:29; Revelation 1:5) over the entire creation, as the Creator Himself (cf. Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2).¹⁸⁷ He is “firstborn . . . that in all *things* he might have the preeminence” (Colossians 1:18). He is worshipped as God because He is the firstborn, the one with absolute authority over all created beings (Hebrews 1:6).

The Messianic prophecy that Christ would be the “firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth” (Psalm 89:27) should control our understanding of “firstborn” in Colossians 1:15, as Paul evidently refers to this Old Testament text. Psalm 89:27 indicates that the Messiah would have supreme authority over creation, being exalted above all subordinate rulers, including “the kings of the earth.” There is absolutely nothing in the psalm to validate the Unitarian contention that “firstborn” means that the Messiah was the first being God created.

κρίσεως *jede einzelne Creatur bezeichnet, so kann der Genii. nur comparativ genommen werden, und nur besagen, dass er im Vergleich mit jeden Creatur der Erstgeborne war*). The words immediately following, John 1:16, 17, exclude the possibility of regarding Christ himself as a creature. Lightfoot, in his masterly Comm. (p. 212 sq.), very fully explains the term as teaching the absolute pre-existence of the Son, his priority to and sovereignty over all creation.”

Whether *prototokos* is considered as a designation of the Son’s authority or temporality (or both), it does nothing to establish Unitarianism. If Christ is first-born temporally, He existed before all the creation, and therefore was never created, but possesses the uncaused and eternal self-existence unique to God (Exodus 3:14; Psalm 90:2; Isaiah 57:15). If Christ is first-born in authority, Colossians 1:15 cannot in any way assist the Arian in his quest to prove that the Son was created out of nothing. The fact that Christ is distinguished from the created order as the firstborn (v. 15), and the specific and repeated declarations that He created absolutely everything in vv. 16-17, devastate the Unitarian contention concerning the significance of *prototokos*.

¹⁸⁷ “In relation to the universe, Christ is “the firstborn over all creation.” . . . “Firstborn” (*prototokos*) . . . may denote either priority in time . . . or supremacy in rank. . . . In the present passage perhaps we should see both meanings. Christ is *before* all creation in time; he is also *over* it in rank and dignity. The major stress, however, seems to be on the idea of supremacy.

Some see in the word an allusion to the ancient custom whereby the firstborn in a family was accorded rights and privileges not shared by the other offspring. He was his father’s representative and heir, and to him the management of the household was committed. Following this line of interpretation, we may understand the passage to teach that Christ is his Father’s representative and heir and has the management of the divine household (all creation) committed to him. He is thus Lord over all God’s creation. . . .

A superficial reading of the KJV . . . might lead one to conclude that Christ is a part of creation, the first of God’s created beings. Such a reading of the phrase, however, is not in keeping with the context, which in the sharpest manner distinguishes Christ from creation. Nor is that understanding of the phrase demanded by the grammar. κτίσεως (*ktiseos*, “creation”) might be construed either as an ablative of comparison (“before creation”) or as a genitive. In the latter case, it is either a genitive of reference (“with reference to creation”) or an objective genitive (“over creation”), which is the . . . interpretation [of the translation of the commentary]” (comment on Colossians 1:15, in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Frank E. Gaebelein, ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990, elec. acc. in an *Accordance Bible Software* module from OakTree Software, Inc.).

On the contrary, Psalm 89:27 validates His Lordship and true Divinity.¹⁸⁸

When Arians argue that Christ was created because He is called “firstborn” in Colossians 1:15, they must, among other serious difficulties, overlook the lexical distinction between the Greek words “firstborn” and “first-created,” the overwhelming contextual evidence that the Son is Creator, not a creature, the significance of *firstborn* as a position of authority in both the Old and New Testaments, and the prophecy of the Messiah as firstborn in Psalm 89:27. An accurate understanding of the Lord Jesus as the firstborn over the creation powerfully validates His Deity, rather than denying it.

A related objection by Arians to the Deity of Christ concerns His status as the only-begotten Son. Interestingly, many modern modalists also reject the Biblical doctrine of the eternal Sonship of Christ and His status as eternally begotten.¹⁸⁹ Unitarians argue:

The Bible calls Jesus the “only-begotten Son” of God. . . . [H]ow can a person be a son and at the same time be as old as his father? Trinitarians claim that in the case of Jesus, “only-begotten” is not the same as the dictionary definition of “begetting,” which is “to procreate as the father.” . . . They say that in Jesus’ case it means “the sense of unoriginated relationship,” a sort of only son relationship without the begetting. . . . Does that sound logical to you? Can a man father a son without begetting him? . . . Jesus said that he had a prehuman existence, having been created by God as the beginning of God’s invisible creations. . . . So Jesus, the only-begotten Son, had a beginning to his life. And Almighty God can rightly be called his Begetter, or Father, in the same sense that an earthly father . . . begets a son. . . . Hence, when the Bible speaks of God as the “Father” of Jesus, it means what it says—that they are two separate individuals. God is the senior. Jesus is the junior—in time, position, power, and knowledge.¹⁹⁰

This Unitarian rhetoric may be divided into two main facets: 1.) Human fathers are older

¹⁸⁸ The word “higher” (אֲדָמָה), used in Psalm 89:27 for the firstborn Messiah, is used elsewhere in the Psalter only for God (and frequently with Him): see 7:17; 9:2; 18:13; 21:7; 46:4; 47:2; 50:14; 57:2; 73:11; 77:10; 78:17, 35, 56; 82:6; 83:18; 87:5; 89:27; 91:1, 9; 92:1; 97:9; 107:111. It therefore supports the Deity of Christ, as do other texts in the book (Psalm 2 (cf. Hebrews 1:5; Matthew 14:33); 45:6 (cf. Hebrews 1:8); 102:12, 25-27 (cf. Hebrews 1:10-12); 110:1 (cf. Matthew 22:44; Hebrews 1:13), etc.).

¹⁸⁹ For example, leading modalist or Oneness Pentecostal author David Bernard writes, “Jesus [is] the only begotten Son of God. However, many people use the phrase ‘eternal Son.’ Is this latter phrase correct? No. The Bible never uses it and it expresses a concept contradicted by Scripture. The word *begotten* is a form of the verb *beget*, which means ‘to procreate, to father, to sire.’ Thus *begotten* indicates a definite point in time - the point at which conception takes place. By definition, the begetter (father) always must come before the begotten (offspring). There must be a time when the begetter exists and the begotten is not yet in existence, and there must be a point in time when the act of begetting occurs. Otherwise the word *begotten* has no meaning. So, the very words *begotten* and *Son* each contradict the word *eternal* as applied to the Son of God. . . . [T]he idea of an eternal Son is incomprehensible. The Son of God had a beginning” (Chapter 5, *The Oneness of God*).

¹⁹⁰ *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* section, “What Does the Bible Say About God and Jesus?” pgs. 15-16.

than their sons, so God the Father must be older than His Son, and “only begotten” must, for Christ, mean “created” (“God can be called [the Son’s] Begetter, or Father, in the same sense that an earthly father begets a son.”). 2.) Misrepresentation and ridicule of the Trinitarian doctrine of eternal generation (“Not the same as the dictionary definition of begetting . . . in Jesus’ case [Trinitarians say] it means . . . a sort of only son relationship without the begetting. . . . Does that sound logical to you?”) along with standard misrepresentations of the Trinity (such as modalism: “the [Father and the Son] are two [and] separate” is supposed to refute the Trinity). The fact that human fathers are older than their sons, combined with the misrepresentation and ridicule, is supposed to establish the Arian doctrine (which is not really positively presented; it is essentially assumed as true once the Trinitarian position has been attacked) that the Son was “created by God as the beginning of God’s invisible creations,” so that the Father created the Son, and then the Son created everything else. Arians use the word *only begotten* to establish that “there was a time when [the Son] was not; and: he was not before he was made; and: he was made out of nothing, or out of another substance or thing.”¹⁹¹

The Biblical, Trinitarian doctrine that “the Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son”¹⁹² has already been explicated and established in an earlier section of this composition. At this point, the problems with the Arian attack, and with the Arian alternative that *only begotten* means that the Son was created by the Father, will be the focus of analysis.

Unitarians contend that their equation of *only begotten* with *created* is taking language literally. Whether or not they know what the Trinitarian doctrine is,¹⁹³ the Unitarian assertion is that eternal generation, as affirmed by Trinitarians, is not literal, and

¹⁹¹ The classical Arian doctrine.

¹⁹² *The London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, 2:1, 3.

¹⁹³ Anyone who believed that the Son is only begotten because of “a sort of only son relationship without the begetting” would indeed believe something ridiculous. Of course, this has absolutely nothing to do with the Trinitarian contention that the Son is eternally begotten. As with the slanders that Trinitarians believe in three gods, and Trinitarians believe that the Father is the Son and the Son is the Holy Spirit, only Arians and the simple, ignorant people they often prey upon think this is Trinitarian doctrine. Such “deceiving, and being deceived,” characteristic of “evil men and seducers” (2 Timothy 3:13) successfully furthers the purposes of the god of this world, the object of Arian and all other idolatrous worship (2 Corinthians 4:4), but to someone who actually is acquainted with the doctrine of the Trinity, an Arian who would equate such nonsense with Trinitarianism is exposed as either devilishly deceptive, or brainlessly ignorant—if not both.

therefore is false. However, Arians themselves, when they think of God, do not “literally” press “only begotten” as “to procreate as Father.” Their argument would assist them only if they embraced the revolting notions of Greek and Roman paganism, and affirmed that the Biblical God was Father of the Son because He was not a Spirit (John 4:24; Luke 24:39), but had a fleshly body, enabling him to have sexual relations with a mother god, who then become pregnant and gave birth some time later to a little baby son god. Human children are begotten through marital relations and the union of a sperm and an egg, a very different concept than the Unitarian dogma that the Father created the Son out of nothing. The Arian contention of literalness also breaks down since human fathers do not actually create anything—creation is a work of God alone (Isaiah 44:24)—so human begetting is hardly identical to the alleged creation of the Son by God. Not only is the Arian “literal” comparison of human relationships to the relation between the Father and the Son not literal, it is very selective. Human fathers are older than human sons, so God the Father must have created His Son out of nothing in time, Arians contend—although this conclusion is never drawn or implied in Scripture—for this is taking *Father* and *Son* “literally.” Why not press “literal” human relationships in other ways as well? Human fathers have their own fathers—so why not “prove” through this “literal” use of the language of *Father* for God that there is a grandfather god that created God the Father? Why not prove that, since human fathers have aunts and uncles, cousins, brothers, sisters, toddlers, teenagers, and all sorts of other relatives, that there is a big family of gods, from the Aunt Matilda god to the Uncle Joe god? Certainly the word *only begotten* does not justify the Unitarian’s selectively seeking to drag the transcendent, high, and holy mystery of the personal relations between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit down to the earthly level of human relationships.

There are very serious exegetical problems with the Unitarian affirmation that *beget* is a synonym with *create*, so that the Son’s being begotten proves His creation out of nothing. First, *beget* and *create* are simply different words with different significations.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁴ “Arius . . . identified *gennetos* [γεννητός], meaning “begotten,” with the distinct Greek term *genetos*, meaning “created.” (pg. 43, *The Three-Personed God*, William J. Hill). The identification of the two word groups is certainly erroneous, as a study of relevant Greek literature demonstrates their distinction. Nor does *μονογενής* simply mean *unique* rather than *only begotten*, for the alternative Greek word *μοναδικός* has existed from at least the days of Plato to express the former idea.

Second, Hebrews 1:5 asks, “unto which of the angels said [the Father] at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?” The dogma that *beget* means *create* requires Unitarians to affirm one of two impossible consequences. One way, on Arian presuppositions, that Paul could ask the question in Hebrews 1:5 would be if the Father did not create or beget the angels—in which case they are not “sons of God” because the Father created them. If the Father did not create the angels, then Christ created the angels—and thus angels are only “sons of God” if Christ is God, which is the end of Unitarianism. Alternatively, Unitarians could answer the question of Hebrews 1:5, “why, the Father could call all the angels “sons” in this way, for He has begotten or created every one of them.” They then must disembowel the context of Hebrews 1:5 and turn the verse into nonsense. Third, if Arians wish to make the two synonyms, the only-begotten Son would become, not a “created” Son only, but the “only-created” Son. Arians would thus, in their attempt to support the unique Deity of the Father, be driven to the position that He only created the Son, while the Son created everything else—they must rob God of the uniquely Divine work of creation¹⁹⁵ (as they must the uniquely Divine prerogative of worship,¹⁹⁶ and even the title

¹⁹⁵ The Hebrew verb “to create” (בָּרָא) is used only of the action of the one God in all of its 48 appearances in 41 verses; see Genesis 1:1, 21, 27; 2:3-4; 5:1-2; 6:7; Exodus 34:10; Numbers 16:30; Deuteronomy 4:32; Psalm 51:12; 89:13, 48; 102:19; 104:30; 148:5; Ecclesiastes 12:1; Isaiah 4:5; 40:26, 28; 41:20; 42:5; 43:1, 7, 15; 45:7-8, 12, 18; 48:7; 54:16; 57:19; 65:17-18; Jeremiah 31:22; Ezekiel 21:35; 28:13, 15; Amos 4:13; Malachi 2:10. The OT word “is a specifically theological term, the subject of which is invariably God” (*The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, (KB) Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, trans. & ed. M.E.J. Richardson. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2000). The verb “to create” (κτίζω) is only used in the New Testament for God, that is, for the members of the Trinity (including not the Father only (Ephesians 3:9), but the Son, Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 1:16, etc.), for the verb is “in the NT, used exclusively of God’s activity in creation” (Louw & Nida on κτίζω); see Mark 13:19; Romans 1:25; 1 Corinthians 11:9; Ephesians 2:10,15; 3:9; 4:24; Colossians 1:16; 3:10; 1 Timothy 4:3; Revelation 4:11; 10:6. The overwhelming majority usage of κτίζω in the LXX pertains to God: see Genesis 14:19, 22; Exodus 9:18; Leviticus 16:16; Deuteronomy 4:32; 32:6; Psalms 32:9; 50:12; 88:13, 48; 101:19; 103:30; 148:5; Proverbs 8:22; Ecclesiastes 12:1; Isaiah 22:11; 45:7-8; 46:11; 54:16; Jeremiah 38:22; Ezekiel 28:13,15; Daniel 4:37; 14:5; Hosea 13:4; Amos 4:13; Malachi 2:10; 1 Esdras 6:12; Judith 13:18; 3 Maccabees 2:3, 9; Ode 2:6; Wisdom 1:14; 2:23; 10:1; 11:17; 13:3; Sirach 1:4, 9; 7:15; 10:18; 17:1; 18:1; 23:20; 24:8-9; 31:13, 27; 33:10; 38:1, 4, 12; 39:21, 25, 28-29; 40:1, 10; 44:2; 49:14; Solomon 18:11-12 (but cf. Haggai 2:9; 1 Esdras 4:53). The collection of the apostolic patristic writings follows the New Testament usage to ascribe the work of creation (using κτίζω) to God, that is, the Trinity, alone—note that these writings specifically designate as Creator not the Father alone, but the Son (“God . . . [sent not] to men some subordinate, or angel or ruler or one of those who manage earthly matters, or one of those entrusted with the administration of things in heaven, but the Designer and Creator of the universe himself, by whom he created the heavens, by whom he enclosed the sea within its proper bounds, whose mysteries all the elements faithfully observe, from whom the sun has received the measure of the daily courses to keep, whom the moon obeys as he commands it to shine by night, whom the stars obey as they follow the course of the moon, by whom all things have been ordered and determined and placed in subjection, including the heavens and the things in the heavens, the earth and the things in the earth, the sea and the things in the sea,

God!) and give it to one they affirm is a creature.

No verse whatever affirms or hints that God only created one thing, while many verses state plainly that “God created the heaven and the earth” (Genesis 1:1), “every living creature” (Genesis 1:21), “man” (Genesis 1:27), and “all things” (Revelation 4:11; 10:6; Genesis 2:3 + Genesis 1; Isaiah 42:5; Mark 13:19; etc.).¹⁹⁷ No secondary, non-Divine agency was involved: “God himself . . . created . . . formed . . . made . . . [and] established” (Isaiah 45:18) the created order. If the use of such an abundance of synonymns, both here and elsewhere throughout the Bible, does not prove to the Arian that God alone is, in every sense, the Creator, one wonders what the Holy Spirit could have written in the Bible that would convince him. When Unitarians are driven to the position that the Father created only one thing, they should be asked, “Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, *that* the everlasting God, the LORD, [is] the Creator” (Isaiah 40:28)? “Hath not one God created us” (Malachi 2:10)?

Furthermore, to equate *only begotten* with *only-created* requires Arians to abandon their contention that Christ is called Son for the same reason that the unfallen angels, and Adam, are called sons of God, namely, that they were created by God—for if Christ is Son because He was created, and the angels and Adam are sons of God because they were created,¹⁹⁸ there are myriads upon myriads of beings in heaven whose existence contradicts

fire, air, abyss, the things in the heights, the things in the depths, the things in between—this one he sent to them!” Diogenes 7:2) and the Holy Spirit (“The preexistent Holy Spirit, which created the whole creation, God caused to live in the flesh that he wished,” Shepherd 59:5) also.

¹⁹⁶ Scripture condemns those who worship creatures rather than God the Creator (Romans 1:25) as idolaters.

¹⁹⁷ Note as well that Revelation 5:13 states that “every creature” in every location (πᾶν κτίσμα) ascribes the same sort of praise and worship to the Father and to the Lamb. This is noteworthy because: a.) No creature is worthy of the same honor as the one God—to put creatures and the Creator on the same level is abominable idolatry (Romans 1:25). b.) If “every creature” ascribes glory to the Lamb, the Lamb cannot be a creature, but must be One who is outside of the created order, namely, God.

¹⁹⁸ This is the Arian contention; however, it should be noted that Adam is never called υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ, “son of God,” in Scripture. Luke 3:38 simply says he was “of God,” τοῦ Θεοῦ, hence the KJV italics. The reference to angels as “sons of God” is both only in the plural, and only a title found in the Old Testament. Nor, since the angelic references (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7) set the unfallen or elect angels (1 Timothy 5:21) in contrast to those that sinned and fell (Job 1:6), is it clear that their “sonship” is one of creation, rather than one of grace or reward. The fallen angels were equally created by God, but they are not called “sons of God.” Thus, there is no clear reference in either Testament to beings as “sons of God” because of their status as created beings—and certainly to compare an unstated sonship of Adam or the angels by creation to Christ’s nature as the Father’s only-begotten is to make entirely unwarranted assumptions. This is not to say that there are no instances of fatherly images describing God as the Creator (cf. Psalm 90:2, יֵלֵךְ and יֵהִי; Acts 17:28, γένος . . .

the idea that the Son was the only-created Son. To reply that *only-created* really means something like *only-directly-created (and everything else was indirectly created)*, can by no stretch of language be considered a “literal” interpretation of *only begotten*, even apart from the fact that *beget* does not mean *create* and God alone is the sole Creator of all things.

Nobody could honestly read the gospels and conclude that Christ’s “my Father”¹⁹⁹ signified “my Creator,” or anything at all similar to it. The apostle John explains that when the Lord Jesus “said . . . that God was his Father, [He was] making himself equal with God” (John 5:18). His disciples worshipped Him because He was the Son of God (Matthew 14:33). As human fathers and sons possess an identical and equal human nature, so the Lord Jesus is the Son of God in that He possesses the Divine nature in absolute equality²⁰⁰ with His Father—and since there is only one God and thus the Divine nature is necessarily unitary, His Sonship and equality as Deity requires His consubstantiality with the Father. The radical distinction between Christ’s ontological Sonship, His Sonship of nature and being,²⁰¹ and the adoptive sonship of believers²⁰¹ is apparent in the careful Biblical distinction

ὑπάρχοντες τοῦ Θεοῦ). It is a great leap, however, to convert such imagery into the Arian assertion that “the Son of God” or even “sons of God” signifies “being/beings created by God.”

¹⁹⁹ The New Testament references are: Matthew 7:21; 10:32-33; 11:27; 12:50; 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, 36-37, 43; 6:32, 65; 8:18-19, 28, 38, 49, 54; 10:18, 25, 29, 32, 37; 14:2, 7, 12, 20-21, 23, 28; 15:1, 8, 10, 15, 23-24; 20:17; Revelation 2:27; 3:5, 21. To substitute “my Creator” for Christ’s “my Father” in these passages is patently ridiculous. The truth is that every “my Father” from the Son of God affirms His eternal generation, and therefore His consubstantiality.

²⁰⁰ “The term ‘father’ does not denote a higher grade of being, but exactly the same grade as the term ‘son’ does. A human son is as truly man, as a human father. He is constituted of human nature as fully and entirely as his father is. Augustine (Sermo 140, § 5) remarks that ‘if the Son were not equal to the Father, he would not be the *son* of God.’ The substance or constitutional nature determines the grade of being. A person having a human nature is *ipso facto* human; whether he comes by it by the act of creation, as Adam and Eve did, or by propagation, as Cain and Abel did. So a person who possesses the Divine nature is *ipso facto* divine, whether possessing it by paternity, or filiation, or procession. Christ asserts that ‘as the Father hath life in himself, so he hath given to the Son to have life in himself,’ John 5:26. But ‘life in himself’ is self-existence. As the Father has self-existence, so he has given to the Son to have self-existence. The difference in the manner in which self-existence is possessed by the Father and Son, makes no difference with the fact. The Son has self-existence by communication of that essence of which self-existence is an attribute. The Father has self-existence without communication of it, because he has the essence without communication of it” (“Trinity in Unity,” Chapter 4 in *Theology: The Doctrine of God*, in *Dogmatic Theology*, William G. T. Shedd, elec. acc. in *Christian Library Series*, vol. 17: *Systematic Theologies*, AGES Library, Rio, WI: 2006).

²⁰¹ Note the explicit contrast in Galatians 4:4, 6-7: Christ is “His [the Father’s] Son” (*the* Son of Him [God], ὁ Θεὸς τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ), while believers are plural “sons,” (υἱοί) and the individual believer is referred to without the Greek article as “a son” (υἱός). This is consistent with the rest of Scripture; believers are “sons” (Matthew 5:9, 45; 17:26; Luke 20:36; Romans 8:14, 19, 9:26; Galatians 3:26; cf. Luke 6:35; 2 Corinthians 6:18; Hebrews 2:10; also Luke 16:8; John 12:36; 1 Thessalonians 5:5) and one believer is “a son” (Hebrews 12:5-8), while Christ is *the* Son.

between Christ's "my Father" and the "our"²⁰² or "your Father"²⁰³ of the redeemed. The Lord Jesus never equates His Sonship with that of God's people by uniting Himself with them in a common "our Father."²⁰⁴ Believers are referred to in the plural as "sons of God" by adoption (Romans 8:15, 23; Galatians 4:5; Ephesians 1:5), and an individual believer is a "son of God." In contrast, the Lord Jesus is *the*²⁰⁵ Son of God,²⁰⁶ *the* Person of *the* Son²⁰⁷ in

²⁰² Matthew 6:9; Luke 11:2; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 1:2; Ephesians 1:2; Philippians 1:2; 4:20; Colossians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1, 3; 3:11, 13; 2 Thessalonians 1:1-2; 2:16; 1 Timothy 1:2; Philemon 1:3.

²⁰³ Matthew 5:16, 45, 48; 6:1; 6:4, 6, 8, 14-15, 18, 26, 32; 7:11; 10:20, 29; 18:14; 23:9; Mark 11:25-26; Luke 6:36; 11:13; 12:30, 32; John 20:17.

²⁰⁴ John 20:17 (the only reference in the Johannine literature) to "your Father" specifically distinguishes the Fatherhood and Godship of the Father to the Son as *Theanthropos* from that of the Fatherhood and Godship of the Father to the saints; Christ does not say, "I ascend unto our Father and our God," but "I ascend unto my Father [by nature], and your Father [by adoption]; and to my God [as the Theanthropic Mediator], and your God [as one of His forgiven people]." Cf. also the radical differences between the prayer Christ commands the saints to pray ("Our Father, which art in heaven," etc. Matthew 6:9-13) but He cannot Himself pray ("forgive us our debts . . . and lead us not into temptation"), and the prayer He prays but the saints can by no means copy (John 17).

²⁰⁵ Note that while the ontic character of the Lord Jesus' Sonship is spoken of with the article in the large majority of instances in the NT, He is referred to a few times as simply *Υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ*; cf. John 10:36; Mark 1:1; Hebrews 1:2; 3:6; 5:8; 7:28; Luke 1:35. This does not undermine the character of Christ as *the* Son of God for the following reasons. 1.) The converse, that no one other than Christ is designated in Scripture as "the Son of God" or any equivalent, is what is affirmed, and what supports His unique Sonship. 2.) The syntactical structure noun + *τοῦ Θεοῦ* (as in Mark 1:1 with *υἱός*), which appears 362 times in the New Testament, has a definite head noun, whether or not an article is present, in the overwhelming majority of instances, and in not even one case is the head noun clearly indefinite. The structure noun + *Θεοῦ* is similar—out of 106 examples in the Greek Testament, the overwhelming majority are definite, perhaps a small fraction are qualitative, and none are certainly indefinite. 3.) In each of the few non-articular *υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ* verses, Christ's unique ontic Sonship is set forth; no instance is truly indefinite, but each is either definite or qualitative (and the quality required is ontological, not adoptive, Sonship). For example, in John 10:36, *Υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ*, since it precedes the verb, is not indefinite, but definite or qualitative, in accordance with Colwell's rule and construction (see pgs. 256-271, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, Wallace); John 19:7 is a slander of the Lord's enemies; Hebrews 1:2 is a generic qualitative, not an indefinite, use of "Son," which is defined using the powerfully ontological language of v. 3, further explicated as His relation to the Father in v. 5, and climaxed with the affirmation that He is Jehovah Himself because He is the Son, v. 8-10. Hebrews 3:6 employs *son* analogically to demonstrate Christ's position as heir and ruler in contrast with Moses' position as *servant* (*θεράπων*). In Hebrews 5:8, "The absence of the article qualifies. Its absence emphasizes nature, quality, essence. . . . [An] expanded translation should read, 'Though He were Son as to His essence.' The thought of the writer is that in spite of the fact that the Lord Jesus is the Son of God, coparticipant eternally with the Father and the Spirit in the divine essence and therefore God, He learned obedience. . . . while in the omniscience of His deity He knew what obedience was, in His humanity He learned what it was experientially" (pg. 31, "The Practical Use of the Greek New Testament, Part IV: The Greek Article in New Testament Interpretation," Kenneth S. Wuest. *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 118:469 (Jan 61), 27-35). The idea of Hebrews 5:8, *καίπερ ὢν υἱός*, "although being Son," is that Christ is Son in the sense of being the only begotten, the eternally begotten ontological Son, as declared in v. 5, yet He learned obedience, etc. Hebrews 7:28 contrasts the Lord's superior, eternal and necessary Sonship with the blessings bestowed on "men," and speaks of Him as Son in the sense of Psalm 2:7 (cf. Psalm 110). "The expression 'Son of God' . . . is monadic . . . a [monadic] noun does not, of course, require the article to be definite" (pg. 248, Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*). The plain *υἱὸς Θεοῦ* of Luke 1:35 is cited as an example of this monadic construction; furthermore, the text would be definite based on

the Trinity,²⁰⁸ the unique beloved of the Father,²⁰⁹ and is so by nature, as a consequence of of His eternal generation. As the only begotten Son (Hebrews 1:5), He possesses the entire Divine nature (Hebrews 1:3), and is Himself worshipped (Hebrews 1:6) as Jehovah,²¹⁰ the

Apollonius' Corollary (Wallace, pgs. 250ff.). Thus, syntax and context support the ontic Sonship of Christ, in contrast to the adoptive sonship of the saints, even in those passages without the specific use of the article. Jesus Christ is *the* Son of God, the only and eternal Son by His very nature, unlike believers, who are only adopted sons.

The closest comparison in language between the saint's sonship and the Lord Jesus' Sonship is Revelation 21:7, ὁ νικῶν κληρονομήσει πάντα, καὶ ἔσομαι αὐτῷ Θεός, καὶ αὐτὸς ἔσται μοι ὁ υἱός, where, uniquely in the New Testament, the believer is called ὁ υἱός (Note even here the removal of the article found in the *Textus Receptus* (and therefore in the autographa because of Scriptural promises of verbal preservation) in the UBS/CT and Byzantine/Majority Greek platforms, leaving the believer as nonarticular υἱός). However, in Revelation 21:7 also the context makes it exceedingly clear that the saints' sonship is that of adoption, to become "[God's] people, [so that] God himself shall be with them, *and be their God*" (Revelation 21:3), a blessing received by all who are "athirst [and therefore drink] of the fountain of the water of life freely" (Revelation 21:6). The sonship of the saint in the resurrected and glorified state in the New Jerusalem, referenced in Revelation 21:7, when he has received "the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of [his] body" (Romans 8:23), is contrasted with the everlasting rejection and torment of those who do not take the water of life and receive adoption into the family of God, and so have their portion, "their part" (τὸ μέρος αὐτῶν, cf. Matthew 24:51; Luke 12:46; 15:12; Revelation 20:6; 22:19) or inheritance, in the lake of fire with their father the devil as children of wrath (John 8:44; Ephesians 2:3). Furthermore, since in Revelation 20:11-15 Christ is the One sitting (20:11, τὸν καθήμενον ἐπ' αὐτοῦ [θρόνον]) on the throne, the ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου of 21:5 appears to be the Son of God, who is Himself also called Θεός in Revelation 20:12. Further support for this is found from the "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end" titles of 21:6, which are used elsewhere in Revelation for the Son (Revelation 1:8; 11; 3:14; 22:13). Thus, in Revelation 21:7, the believer is not called ὁ υἱός because of His relationship to God the Father, but because of His relationship to God the Son (cf. Isaiah 9:6; Hebrews 2:13).

Even if one concluded that the language of Revelation 21:7 refers to God the Father to the exclusion of the Son (but note in 22:1 the Father and the Son share the same throne), as the God of the believer, the fact that the believer is the Father's adopted son is still radically different from the relation of the Son to the Father. As the incarnate Messiah, the submissive and subordinate Man, God was Christ's God, but as the eternal, only begotten Son who possesses the identical nature with He who begat Him, God was His Father, not His God. Another consideration, on the assumption that the Father is the subject in view in 21:7, is that the articular υἱός might relate to the ineffable union, brought in the New Jerusalem to its eternal fruition, of the Son of God with His elect, so that they could be called, as one with Him, ὁ υἱός. The contrast between Christ as *the* Son of God by nature, and believers as sons by adoption, is not set aside by Revelation 21:7.

²⁰⁶ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ. This is the confession of all His people (John 1:34, 49; 11:27; 20:31; Acts 8:37; 9:20; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 4:13; Hebrews 4:14; 6:6; 7:3; 10:29; 1 John 3:8; 4:15; 5:5, 10, 12, 13, 20) and His own confession (John 5:25; 9:35; 11:4; Revelation 2:18), validated even by His human (Matthew 26:63; Luke 22:70) and angelic (Mark 3:11 Luke 4:9; 4:41) enemies.

²⁰⁷ ὁ υἱός, John 3:35, 36; 5:19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 26, 6:40; 8:35, 36; 14:13; 17:1; 2 John 9.

²⁰⁸ Matthew 28:19 shows that He is *the* Son in His Divine *hypostasis* or Person, as *the* Father and *the* Holy Spirit are.

²⁰⁹ The Father calls Him "my beloved Son/the beloved Son of me" (ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός), Matthew 3:17; 17:5; Mark 1:11; 9:7; Luke 3:22; 9:35; 20:13; 2 Peter 1:17; cf. Colossians 1:12-13; Ephesians 1:6. He is "the Son of [the living] God" (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος).

²¹⁰ Hebrews 1:10-12 quotes Psalm 102:25-27, where Jehovah is the one addressed by the psalmist. Thus, Paul's application of this passage to Christ is an affirmation that He is Jehovah. The quotation has yet more power. The "thou, Lord" of Hebrews 1:10 is not found in Psalm 102:25-27—Paul reaches back to Psalm 102:12, "But thou, O LORD [*Jehovah*]," and then picks up the quotation of v. 25-27. The apostle does not just

true God (Hebrews 1:8).

The eternal generation of the Person of the Son by the Person of the Father²¹¹ is attested Scripturally through multiple strands of evidence. First, a unique verb form, not used for human generation, is used for the begetting of the Son by the Father in the New Testament.²¹² Second, the fact that both the Father and the Son are equally eternal and

deliberately and intentionally take a passage speaking of Jehovah and apply it to the Lord Jesus Christ, but he emphasizes pointedly that he is doing so.

²¹¹ “The orthodox doctrine, expressed in traditional language, teaches that it is the Person of the Son, not the essence of the Son, that is generated. There is not a second and generated essence. Nor is it the essence that does the generating. The generation is a generation of a Person by a Person” (pg. 113, *The Trinity*, Gordon Clark, 2nd ed. Jefferson, MR: Trinity Foundation, 1990). The attempt to support the heretical doctrine of the generation of the essence of the Son is based on the corruption *μονογενῆς θεός*, unfortunately adopted in many modern Bible versions, for the inspired *μονογενῆς υἱός* in John 1:18. This textual corruption, and the Arianism derived from it, have significant problems.

Considering internal evidences, following the Arian allegation that *μονογενῆς* means “only-created,” John 1:18 would call Christ “the only created God/god.” They thus not only deny that God alone is the Creator (as documented in footnote #148), but their corruption makes the one true God Himself into a created being, or creates a polytheism (strictly a henotheism) of two gods, with one greater god that created a lesser god (which then went on to create angels, that are also supposedly gods in the sense Christ is a god—but nonetheless, this second lesser god is the “only created god.”). Such notions have no support whatever in Scripture. Furthermore, the contextual connection John established between John 1:18 and 34 in his gospel, based upon the inspiration of “Son” in v. 18, is eliminated by the Arian alteration.

The external evidence against the “begotten god” reading is overwhelming. “It is doubtful that the author would have written *μονογενῆς θεός*, which may be a primitive, transcriptional error [*(γρ/θρ)*] in the Alexandrian tradition” (Allen Wikgren (an editor of the United Bible Society Greek New Testament), cited in *A Textual Commentary of the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. New York, NY: American Bible Societies, 1994, note on John 1:18). “Instead of ‘the only begotten Son (as in over 99.5% of the Greek manuscripts), some five manuscripts (of inferior quality, objectively so) have ‘an only begotten god,’ while another two (also inferior) have ‘the only begotten god.’ . . . [W]hy follow seven manuscripts of demonstrably inferior quality against [99.5%]? The original and therefore true reading is certainly ‘the only begotten Son’” (*The Gospel According to John*, trans. & comm. Wilbur N. Pickering. Brasilia, 2006; elec. acc.). The reading “only begotten Son” is “witnessed to by every Greek manuscript (2,000+, and as many lectionaries) except seven (only p66, p75, Aleph, B, C, L, and the cursive 33 have anything else). . . . Dean Burgon notes that the first mention of the only-begotten God is in Excerpts from Theodotus, a fragment, where it is attributed to Valentinus (c. A. D. 150), the Gnostic heretic, who sought to make a distinction between the Word and the Son. The Gnostics then saw the Word and the Son as two persons (the Word was seen as God supreme, and the Son as a lesser god - but spiritual only, for to the Gnostics the flesh was evil. So they taught that Christ was a man only in appearance. The change from Son to God preserved their doctrine that God was a pure Spirit, and the only-begotten God being in the Father’s bosom also was uncontaminated by flesh). The Excerpts were definitely for Son. . . . It is noteworthy that the only manuscripts which have only-begotten God are from Egypt, the only country where the Gnostics were able to dominate. . . . For the Versions . . . the Old Latin, the Vulgate, the Georgian, and the Slavonic have Son. . . . Tertullian, Hippolytus of Rome, (both third century), Athanasius, and Chrysostom [only employ the reading “Son”] . . . Irenaeus . . . Origen, Eusebius, Gregory of Nyssa, [and] Basil of Caesarea [also testify to the existence of the reading “Son”]” (*Textual and Translational Notes on the Gospels*, Jay P. Green, Sr. elec. acc. in the Online Bible software program of Ken Hamel. Note on John 1:18).

²¹² The common tense in the New Testament for human fathers begetting children is the aorist. This is also used at times of the new birth. The aorist is employed 71 times in 44 verses: Matthew 1:2-16, 20; 2:1; 19:12; 26:24; Mark 14:21; Luke 1:57; 23:29; John 1:13; 3:3-5, 7; 9:2, 19-20, 34; 16:21; Acts 2:8; 7:8, 20, 29; Romans 9:11; 1 Corinthians 4:15; Galatians 4:29; Philemon 10; Hebrews 11:12, 23; 1 John 5:1, 18. The birth

unchanging requires that their relation must also be eternal; the Son existed in glory with the Father before the creation of any finite beings (John 17:1, 5). The Arian position requires that God was not always the Father, for if there was a time when He had no Son, He was not then Father. And if both Father and Son are eternal, what is their relation, if the one does not beget, and the other is not begotten? Christ was the Son before He entered the world (John 3:16); before He was sent (1 John 4:9; Romans 8:3); and from “everlasting” (Micah 5:2). Third, the noun *monogenes*, “only-begotten,”²¹³ supports the doctrine of eternal generation.

of men, and descriptions of them as recipients of the new birth, are sometimes indicated with the perfect passive (18 times in 15 verses: John 3:6, 8; 8:41; 9:32; 18:37; Acts 22:3, 28; Galatians 4:23; 2 Peter 2:12; 1 John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18). The present and future tenses of γεννάω appear in Matthew 2:4; Luke 1:13, 35; Galatians 4:24; & 2 Timothy 2:23. However, the eternal generation of the Son of God by the Father uniquely employs the perfect active indicative of γεννάω (Acts 13:33; Hebrews 1:5; 5:5; cf. Psalm 2:7, LXX). While one would not expect this distinction concerning the glorious doctrine of the Son of God’s generation to be maintained in uninspired Koiné, it is not contradicted by it; the writings of the apostolic patristic writers do not employ the perfect active of γεννάω, although the verb in other forms is found 21 times, and the LXX, in 251 uses of the verb, does not employ a perfect active indicative of anything other than the Son’s generation in Psalm 2:7 (although Jeremiah 16:3 employs a perfect active participle—but note the common use of the participle, without any uses whatsoever of the perfect indicative, in Josephus: Antiquities 1:315; 3:236; 7:192, 198; 8:109; 12:203; 16:67, 69, 96, 211, 248, 324, 391; War 1:622).

Perhaps the significance of the perfect tense for the ineffable act of the Son’s eternal generation is that this generation “began” with the “today” of the eternal state (cf. Proverbs 8:24-25) and continues now, as it will to all eternity. John Gill, commenting on Hebrews 1:5, states, “today, designs eternity, as in Isaiah 43:13, which is one continued day, an everlasting now; and this may be applied to any time and case, in which Christ is declared to be the Son of God; as at his incarnation, his baptism, his transfiguration on the Mount, and his resurrection from the dead, as in Acts 13:33; Romans 1:4; and at his ascension to heaven, when he was made Lord and Christ, and his divine Sonship more manifestly appeared.”

²¹³ μονογενής is derived from μόνος, “only,” and γεννάω [cf. γεννητός], “to beget.” The modernistic concept that μονογενής simply means that the Son is “unique” is false. The fact that the classical derivation is at least as natural as its upstart alternative which derives the noun from γίνομαι or γένος, that the verb γεννάω (which is unquestionably “to beget”) is clearly employed in Scripture for the Son’s relation to the Father, not the noun μονογενής only, the existence of the alternative noun μοναδικός to express the idea of “unique,” and the consent of other passages of Scripture that teach eternal generation (Micah 5:2, etc.) demonstrate that the old derivation is correct.

“Traditionally, the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son was supported by an appeal to the five Johannine texts in which Christ is identified as *monogenes* (Jn 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; I Jn 4:9). As early as Jerome’s Vulgate, this word was understood in the sense of ‘only begotten’ (*unigenitus*), and the tradition was continued by the Authorized Version. However . . . [many today] reject this understanding and believe, instead, that the idea behind the word is more along the lines of ‘only’ (RSV) or ‘one and only’ (NIV). One of the main arguments is that the *-genes* suffix is related to the verb *ginomai* rather than *gennao*, thus acquiring the meaning ‘category’ or ‘genus.’

Unfortunately, this argument requires a selective reading of the evidence. It ignores the wealth of lexemes that have the *-genes* suffix. After searching *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* . . . a comprehensive collection of all extant Greek literature up to the 6th century AD, [it is estimated] that there are approximately 120 such words in the Greek vocabulary. Of these, 30% are not listed in *Liddell and Scott*, but the lexicon’s glosses of 55% contain such words as ‘born’ and ‘produced.’ For example, *neogenes* is glossed as “newly produced,” and *theogenes*, “born of God.” A mere 11% involve meanings related to ‘kind’ (e.g., *homogenes* means ‘of the same genus’), while the remainder of usages have miscellaneous meanings. The sheer

Since he who is begotten possesses the same nature as he who begets, the Son possesses the entire Divine nature as a consequence of being begotten by the Father. Since God is one, the Divine nature is necessarily one, so the Son is one in essence with the Father on account of being begotten by Him. Since the Divine nature is also necessarily eternal, the Son is as eternal as the Father, and His begetting must express His eternal relation to His Father.

Another severe problem for the Arian contention that *only begotten* does not teach the Trinitarian doctrine of eternal generation, but means that the Son was the first created being, is that no verse connects His begetting and the beginning of creation. Christ was in a particular manner declared or set forth as the Son of God at His incarnation (Luke 1:35), His baptism (Matthew 3:17), His transfiguration (Matthew 17:5) and His resurrection (Acts 13:35; Romans 1:4). His Sonship is mentioned in conjunction with other events and Scriptural declarations (Psalm 2:7; Hebrews 1:5; 5:5). The Lord Jesus is repeatedly called “only begotten” (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9). The copious references to the Son’s being begotten on many occasions and in connection with various acts of God is natural if He is indeed eternally generated, as Trinitarianism affirms—since the Son’s “goings forth *have been* from of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2), the Father’s “Thou *art* my Son; this day have I begotten thee” (Psalm 2:7; Acts 13:33; Hebrews 1:5) is true of any and every day, as it

preponderance of the evidence would indicate that *monogenes* in the Johannine literature could very well mean “only begotten.” (Lee Irons, “The Eternal Generation of the Son”).

Furthermore, “even if *genes* comes from *genos*, the family relationship concept may be maintained. . . . meanings for *genos* [include] . . . ancestral stock, *descendant* . . . a relatively small group with common ancestry, *family, relatives* . . . a relatively large people group, *nation, people* . . . This family relationship concept can be seen, for example, in Revelation 22:16 where our Lord describes Himself as the “offspring of David.” The word translated “offspring” is *genos*” (“The translation ‘only-begotten’ referring to the Son of God,” in “What I Would Like To See in A Bible Version for Study Purposes,” Myron J. Houghton, *Faith Pulpit*, Ankeny, IA: Faith Theological Seminary, July/August 2006)—and could not one derive γεννάω itself from an earlier root from which also came γένος? Those who contend that μονογενής simply means “unique” should consider the fact that century after century of Greek patristic writers, who thought, spoke, and wrote in Greek from their youth, unanimously affirmed, based on μονογενής, that the Son is “only-begotten” and eternally generated. How many of the modern opponents to eternal generation fluently speak—not to mention think—in Greek? Is their Greek really so much better than that of the delegates to the Council of Nicea and the other ancient Councils, so that they can correct the unanimous ancient affirmation of Trinitarian orthodoxy that the Son is eternally begotten? “[I]t must surprise the student to learn that Athanasius and a hundred Greek bishops, whose mother tongue was Greek, knew less Greek than we do, and in particular did not know that *monogenes* is derived from *ginomai* rather than from *gennaō*. Even so, the two verbs are themselves derived from an earlier common stem. At any rate, the *genes* in *monogenes* derives immediately from *genos*. This word as a matter of fact suggests begetting and generation, as much as if it had been derived from *gennaō*. *Genos* means first of all race, stock, kin. *Genei uios* means a natural as opposed to an adopted son. *Genos* also means direct as opposed to collateral descent” (pg. 120, *The Trinity*, Gordon Clark. 2nd ed. Jefferson, MR: Trinity Foundation, 1990).

has been true from eternity past and will be true for the eternity to come. Christ's many works manifest that He is in truth the eternally begotten Son. However, not one verse connects the Son's generation with the beginning of the creation of the world. If *only begotten* really meant *created, only-created, first-created*, or some other similar Arian conception, one would expect that all—or at least a large number—or at least a handful—or certainly at least one verse would connect His being begotten with the beginning of creation, and affirm that His creation out of nothing at the beginning of time was the reason He is denominated *only begotten*. However, no verse like this is found in Scripture. Unitarians, having no exegetical basis for their contention, simply declare out of nothing that the word *only begotten* means that the Son was the first created being.

Unitarians attempt to use Hebrews 11:17 to support their contention that *only begotten* establishes that Christ is a created being. They ask, “why does the Bible use the very same Greek word for ‘only-begotten’ (as Vine admits without any explanation)²¹⁴ to describe the relationship of Isaac to Abraham? Hebrews 11:17 speaks of Isaac as Abraham’s ‘only-begotten son.’ There can be no question that in Isaac’s case, he was only-begotten in the normal sense, not equal in time or position to his father.”²¹⁵ However, this verse does not in any wise establish the Arian contention. The union and process that fathers and mothers are involved in to produce sons is a very different than the alleged creation of the Son out of nothing by the Father, a Spirit without a body or parts. The use of “only-begotten” for Isaac certainly does not mean that Abraham usurped the uniquely Divine role of Creator and formed Isaac out of nothing, so that he was Abraham’s “only-created.” One notes that the Arian quotation affirms that Isaac was not “equal in time or position” to Abraham, but leaves out “nature,” the essential point in question,²¹⁶ because Isaac was entirely and absolutely

²¹⁴ The implication of this parenthesis is that Trinitarians are somehow embarrassed and afraid of Hebrews 11:17, so Vine, as their representative, ignores or refuses comment upon it. While such fast and loose playing with the evidence is consistent with the hermeneutical gymnastics of the Watchtower society and other Unitarian cults, the fact that hundreds, or rather, many thousands of Trinitarians who have written on the relation of the Son to the Father, or have commented on the book of Hebrews, have fully and carefully commented on this text, exposes the fact that Vine does not explain the text in one citation in one place in one book is entirely irrelevant.

²¹⁵ *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* section, “What Does the Bible Say About God and Jesus?” pg. 15-16.

²¹⁶ Even if *monogenes* affirmed the Arian contention that the Father is superior in “position,” that is, role, to the Son (which the word by no means establishes), it would not deny to the Son the Divine essence, any more

equal in his humanity to Abraham. All the sons of Adam are equally human, receiving their humanity by the very act of generation from their fathers. Every time *monogenes* is used in Scripture for relations besides that of God the Father and God the Son,²¹⁷ an absolute equality of nature is involved. Indeed, the equality of nature of the one begotten to the one who begets is the entire point in question with the use of the word *only begotten*—and the fact that the Lord Jesus is indeed true Son of the Father, as the Father’s only begotten, establishes the Son’s equality of nature. The “normal sense”²¹⁸ of *only begotten* establishes the Son’s absolute Deity—the Arians who try to change the word to *only-directly-created* or some other such nonsense are the ones who refuse to accept the true and plain signification of the term.²¹⁹

The Arian argument from Hebrews 11:17 thus requires one to ignore the equality of nature that is the central idea of the word *only begotten*.²²⁰ It reduces to “Abraham was born

than the superior position or role the husband has in the marital relation establishes that he is somehow more human or superior in nature to his wife. Cf. the discussion of the Unitarian argument from 1 Corinthians 11:3.

²¹⁷ The word is used for human generation in Luke 7:12; 8:42; 9:38; Hebrews 11:17, and of the relation of the Father and the Son in John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9.

²¹⁸ The assumption, inherent in the Unitarian apologetics on the question, that the descriptive *only begotten* for the relation of the Son to the Father should be interpreted in light of a fundamental or “normal” meaning of the word derived from mankind is also most questionable. Would it not be better to view the human father-son relation, and the words used in Scripture to describe it, as a secondary or derived sense that reflects the fundament of the Father-Son relation in the Trinity? Did not God, who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will, and whose creation reflects His eternal power and Godhead, both inspire every word of Scripture and ordain at creation the means of human generation in accordance with His own eternal and sovereign good pleasure? Why would the words of the eternal relation of Father and Son be derived, then, from temporal human generation, rather than *vice versa*?

²¹⁹ The fact that the all the arguments Arians derive from their “proof-texts” totally fall apart when analyzed carefully illuminates the common practice in the Watchtower Society’s *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* of quoting a “proof-text” and then asking confusing or deceptive questions, instead of attempting to show with direct statements how the verse is supposed to establish the Watchtower form of Unitarianism (“Jesus is Michael the archangel”), or deny the Deity of Christ (“This verse states that Jesus Christ does not possess the Divine nature”) or affirm that Christ was created (“This verse proves that Jesus Christ was created out of nothing for the following reasons.”). Unitarian heresy cannot be derived from Scripture by sound exegesis, so it is not surprising that its proselytizing literature regularly does not attempt to logically derive its dogmas by declarative statements that follow from each other, but instead assumes the much easier task of planting doubts with beguiling questions in the minds of those not grounded in Scripture (cf. Genesis 3:1, “Now . . . the serpent . . . said . . . Yea, hath God said[?]”).

²²⁰ “As all generation indicates a communication of essence on the part of the begetter to the begotten (by which the begotten becomes like the begetter and partakes of the same nature with him), so this wonderful generation [of the Son by the Father] is rightly expressed as a communication [or “sharing”] of essence from the Father (by which the Son possesses indivisibly the same essence with him and is made perfectly like him). . . This generation was 1.) made without time; not in time, but from eternity. Therefore not priority or posteriority of duration can be observed here, although there may be priority of order according to which the Son is from the Father, although not after the Father.” (*Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, Francis Turretin, 3:29:4-5).

before Isaac was, so Jesus Christ is not God because He was begotten.” It is very obvious that in human generation fathers are older than their sons, but this does not help the Unitarian unless he now wishes to affirm that the Greek *only begotten* really means *younger* instead of *only-created*. The fact that human fathers are older than their children is a necessary consequence of human nature, which is very incompletely comparable to the Divine nature. Since human nature is finite, weak and limited, changeable, and bound by time, the human nature communicated to children by the temporal begetting of their parents is finite, weak and limited, changeable, and time-bound; for this reason, human children are younger than their parents. Since the Son of God is begotten eternally by the Father, the Divine nature communicated to Him is necessarily eternal, omnipotent, self-existent, and immutable, possessing all the Divine attributes of His Father. Furthermore, since there is of necessity but one Divine nature and God is one (Galatians 3:20), the communication of the Divine nature to the Son by the Father requires the consubstantiality of the Begotten with the Begetter. Besides, the nature of the Son’s begetting is a high and holy mystery beyond human comprehension. All the Arians wish to derive from Hebrews 11:17 stems from the requirements of human nature, and thus is inapplicable to a generation by God. Arians who wish to confound the human processes by which babies are born with the Father’s begetting of His Son should also argue that the declarations that God rests (Genesis 2:3), remembers (Exodus 2:24), repents (1 Samuel 15:35), bows down His ear (Psalm 31:2), and causes men to rest under the shadow of His wings (Psalm 36:7) prove that absurdities that God gets tired, is forgetful, is a sinner, is hard of hearing, and has feathers.

The Unitarian contention on Hebrews 11:17 is entirely unfounded. What, then, is the contextual reason that Isaac is called Abraham’s only begotten in the verse? First, Abraham’s willingness to offer up Isaac (Hebrews 11:17-19; Genesis 22) is a Biblical figure (imperfect, of course, as are all Old Testament types and figures) of God the Father’s offering up of His own Son for the sins of the world. Isaac is called *only begotten* because he pictures the Father’s true only begotten Son. But how does this designation for Isaac fit at all—did not Abraham also beget Ishmael (Genesis 16:16), who was born before Isaac and was to live for many years after Isaac’s birth? Did not Abraham beget many sons with

Keturah (Genesis 25:1-2)?²²¹ How then can Isaac be Abraham’s “only son” (Genesis 22:2, 12, 16)²²²? Isaac’s unique relation to Abraham as the only child of Sarah, one who was begotten differently than Abraham’s other sons through miraculous intervention (Genesis 18:10-14; 21:1-8), and one who was the heir of the covenant promises (Genesis 17:19-21), explains Isaac’s receipt of the *only begotten*²²³ title.²²⁴ In this Isaac was a fit picture of the Son of God, who bears an absolutely unique relation to His Father as eternally begotten of Him and one in essence with Him, and, incarnate, is the One in whom all the “all the

²²¹ Note that the Arian contention that Isaac was *only begotten* because Abraham brought him into existence or created him also has difficulty accounting for these other children. If Isaac was *only begotten* because he was the only one Abraham brought into existence, where did these other children come from?

²²² His ἄριστος ; note that this word is used of Christ in Zechariah 12:10.

²²³ Josephus, in *Antiquities* 20:2:1:17ff., narrates that Monobazus, the king of Adiabene, on account of a miraculous event (20:2:1:18), viewed his son Izates as “only begotten,” and, although Izates had an elder brother by the same wife, and other brothers besides, Monobazus made him the recipient of great favor and exaltation. Izates had an “elder brother, by Helena also, as [Monobazus] had other sons by other wives besides. Yet did he openly place all his affections on this his only begotten son Izates, which was the origin of that envy which his other brethren, by the same father, bare to him; while on this account they hated him more and more, and were all under great affliction that their father should prefer Izates before them all” (20:2:1:20-21, $\text{τούτου πρεσβύτερος ἐκ τῆς Ἑλένης γενόμενος ἄλλοι τε παῖδες ἐξ ἐτέρων γυναικῶν τὴν μέντοι πᾶσαν εὐνοίαν ὡς εἰς μονογενῆ τὸν Ἰζάτην ἔχων φανερός ἦν φθόνος δὲ τοῦντεῦθεν τῷ παιδί παρὰ τῶν ὁμοπατριῶν ἀδελφῶν ἐφύετο κάκ τούτου μῖσος ἠϋξέτο λυπομένων ἀπάντων ὅτι τὸν Ἰζάτην αὐτῶν ὁ πατήρ προτιμῶη).$

²²⁴ “In what sense Isaac is said to be the only-begotten of Abraham, who had one son before him and many after him, is declared partly in the following words, ‘Concerning whom it was said, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.’ He is that only son in whom the promise of the seed shall be accomplished. Further to clear the reason of this expression, it may be observed, [1.] That the sons of Abraham by Keturah were not yet born. [2.] Ishmael, who was born, was before this, by the command of God himself, put out of his family, as one that should not be the heir of his family, by whom his seed should be reckoned. [3.] He was his only-begotten by Sarah, who was concerned in all this affair between God and him no less than himself. [4.] The Holy Ghost taketh into consideration the whole state of things between God and Abraham, in his call, in his separation from the world, in the covenant made with him, in what he was designed unto in the promise made unto him concerning the blessed Seed; in all which Isaac alone had any concernment; and if he had failed, though Abraham had had an hundred children, they must have all fallen to the ground. Therefore, as Abraham was placed in these circumstances, he was his only-begotten son. [5.] This expression is used in the Scripture sometimes for as much as peculiarly and entirely beloved, above all others, Proverbs 4:3; and there is great respect had hereunto” (John Owen, *Exposition of Hebrews*, 11:17-19, elec. acc. in *Christian Library Series*, vol. 9: *Systematic Theologies*, AGES Library, Rio, WI: 2005). “Isaac was Abraham’s ‘only-begotten son’ in respect of Sarah and the promises: he sent away his other sons, by other wives (Ge 25:6). Abraham is a type of the Father not sparing His only-begotten Son to fulfil the divine purpose of love. God nowhere in the Mosaic law allowed human sacrifices, though He claimed the first-born of Israel as His” (*A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*, R. Jamieson, A. R. Fausset D. Brown, orig. pub. Hartford, S.S. Scranton, 1871, elec. acc. in Hamel, Ken, *The Online Bible for Mac*, version 3.0). “No one (he says) could allege, that he had another son, and expected the promise to be fulfilled from him, and therefore confidently offered up this one. ‘And’ (his words are) ‘he offered up his only-begotten, who had received the promises.’ Why sayest thou ‘only-begotten’? What then? Of whom was Ishmael sprung? I mean ‘only-begotten’ (he would say) so far as relates to the word of the promise. Therefore after saying, ‘Only-begotten,’ showing that he says it for this reason, he added, ‘of whom it was said, In Isaac shall thy seed be called’” (Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, XXV).

means “create” in any of its 85 appearances in 75 OT verses.²³¹ It is possible that the rather unusual²³² mistranslation of Proverbs 8:22 in current copies of the LXX is a scribal error²³³ arising from Sirach 24:9 in the Apocrypha, where wisdom, the personified representation of “the book of the covenant of the most high God, even the law which Moses commanded for an heritage unto the congregations of Jacob” (24:23), said “[God] created me from the beginning before the world, and I shall never fail.”²³⁴ Origen’s Hexapla²³⁵ gives strong evidence for the Hebrew “possessed” instead of “created.” The Greek word *ektesato*,²³⁶ the correct translation for the Hebrew *qanah*, “possessed,” is the translation given by the Greek versions of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotian,²³⁷ and therefore appears in every column of the Hexapla²³⁸ except that for that of the Seventy.²³⁹ Origen also takes the unusual step of commenting on the LXX translation *ektise*, “created,” that the Hebrew has *qanah*, supporting

²³¹ Genesis 4:1; 14:19, 22; 25:10; 33:19; 39:1; 47:19-20, 22-23; 49:30; 50:13; Exodus 15:16; 21:2; Leviticus 22:11; 25:14-15, 28, 30, 44-45, 50; 27:24; Deuteronomy 28:68; 32:6; Joshua 24:32; Ruth 4:4-5, 8-10; 2 Samuel 12:3; 24:21, 24; 1 Kings 16:24; 2 Kings 12:13; 22:6; 1 Chronicles 21:24; 2 Chronicles 34:11; Nehemiah 5:8, 16; Psalm 74:2; 78:54; 139:13; Proverbs 1:5; 4:5, 7; 8:22; 15:32; 16:16; 17:16; 18:15; 19:8; 20:14; 23:23; Ecclesiastes 2:7; Isaiah 1:3; 11:11; 24:2; 43:24; Jeremiah 13:1-2, 4; 19:1; 32:7-9, 15, 25, 43-44; Ezekiel 7:12; Amos 8:6; Zechariah 11:5; 13:5.

²³² The rendition of קָנָה as κτίζω is also a unique or at least unusual mistranslation in the LXX—the other 66 times κτίζω appears in the Greek Old Testament (including 37 in Apocryphal books; the verb appears 30 times in books found in the Hebrew canon) it is never a formal equivalent for the Hebrew קָנָה (although in Genesis 14:19, 22 the Hebrew participle קָנָה , “possessor,” is changed to the LXX phrase ὃς ἔκτισεν , [He] who created”; the other 28 (or 64 total in the LXX) times κτίζω appears it does not bear any relation to קָנָה at all. The most common translation of קָנָה is a form of κτάομαι , to get/acquire/possess, the word that should also have been used in Proverbs 8:22.

²³³ Intriguingly, Gregory of Nyssa wrote concerning the LXX “we have ourselves read in more ancient copies ‘possessed’ instead of ‘created’” (*Against Eunomius*, II:2:10), evidencing that there were copies of the LXX itself (since his comment does not pertain to the alternative versions of Aquila, etc.) in his day that followed the Hebrew rendering.

²³⁴ $\text{πρὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς ἔκτισέν με καὶ ἕως αἰῶνος οὐ μὴ ἐκλίπω}$.

²³⁵ Cited from Fridericus Field, *Origenis Hexaplorum : quae supersunt sive veterum interpretum graecorum in totus Vetus Testamentum fragmenta*, vol. 2. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1875.

²³⁶ ἐκτήσατο , from κτάομαι , signifying to “procure for oneself, get, acquire . . . [and esp. in the perfect and pluperfect, but perhaps in the aorist] possess.” Louw-Nida defines the verb as “to acquire possession of something” (57.58). BDAG defines it as “to gain possession of, procure for oneself, acquire, get.”

²³⁷ Cf. the Latin Vulgate, *Dominus possedit me*.

²³⁸ The patristics evidence this dominance of “possessed” in all Greek Old Testament alternatives to the LXX: “They say, in tact, that ‘the Lord created me’ is a proof that our Lord is a creature, as if the Only-begotten Himself in that word confessed it. But we need not heed such an argument. They [are not] . . . able to show that the idea of the word in the Hebrew leads to this and no other meaning, seeing that the other translators have rendered it by ‘possessed’ or ‘constituted’” (Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius* II:1:22).

²³⁹ That is, columns A, Σ, and Θ all read ἐκτήσατο , not ἐκτίσέν .

the view that he also knew that *create* was a mistranslation in the LXX of his day.²⁴⁰ The inspired text of Scripture simply does not say that the Son was “created” in Proverbs 8:22.²⁴¹

Proverbs eight actually supports the doctrine of the eternal existence and the eternal generation of the Son in the strongest manner. The type of the Son as Wisdom makes this plain. Who can imagine that God was not always wise, that His Wisdom was not always with Him? In eternity past the Father did not have any wisdom? The specific declarations in Proverbs 8:22-31 powerfully manifest the Son’s eternity. He was already “possessed” by the Father “in the beginning of his way,²⁴² before his works of old” (v. 22)—so the Son belonged to the Father, as the Father did to the Son, and the Spirit to each, as their precious possession and treasure, from eternity. The Son is “from everlasting,²⁴³ from the

²⁴⁰ That is, column O reads, κύριος ἐκτίσέ με (Ἑβρ. ἀδωναὶ κανανὶ) ἀρχὴν ὁδῶν αὐτοῦ εἰς ἔργα αὐτοῦ.

²⁴¹ Even if the mistranslation of the current LXX were correct, it would not require that the Son is a creature. Athanasius (incorrectly, as one with no significant knowledge of Hebrew), accepting the LXX reading as valid, argues that it “has a very apposite [meaning]; for it is true to say that the Son was created too, but this took place when He became man; for creation belongs to man. And any one may find this sense duly given in the divine oracles, who, instead of accounting their study a secondary matter, investigates the time and characters, and the object, and thus studies and ponders what he reads. Now as to the season spoken of, he will find for certain that, whereas the Lord always is, at length in fulness of the ages He became man; and whereas He is Son of God, He became Son of man also. And as to the object he will understand, that, wishing to annul our death, He took on Himself a body from the Virgin Mary; that by offering this unto the Father a sacrifice for all, He might deliver us all, who by fear of death were all our life through subject to bondage. And as to the character, it is indeed the Saviour’s, but is said of Him when He took a body and said, ‘The Lord created me a beginning of His ways unto His works.’ For as it properly belongs to God’s Son to be everlasting and in the Father’s bosom, so on His becoming man, the words befitted Him, ‘The Lord created me.’ For then it is said of Him, as also that He hungered, and thirsted, and asked where Lazarus lay, and suffered, and rose again. And as, when we hear of Him as Lord and God and true Light, we understand Him as being from the Father, so on hearing, ‘The Lord created,’ and ‘Servant,’ and ‘He suffered,’ we shall justly ascribe this, not to the Godhead, for it is irrelevant, but we must interpret it by that flesh which He bore for our sakes: for to it these things are proper, and this flesh was none other’s than the Word’s. And if we wish to know the object: attained by this, we shall find it to be as follows: that the Word was made flesh in order to offer up this body for all, and that we partaking of His Spirit, might be [saved and made like Him], a gift which we could not otherwise have gained than by His clothing Himself in our created body, for hence we derive our name of ‘men of God’ and ‘men in Christ.’ But as we, by receiving the Spirit, do not lose our own proper substance, so the Lord, when made man for us, and bearing a body, was no less God; for He was not lessened by the envelopment of the body, but rather . . . rendered it immortal” (*De Decretis* (Defence of the Nicene Definition), Chapter 3). Many other Trinitarian patristic writers dealt at length with this passage and with the LXX rendering, e. g., Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius*, II:3:2; Gregory Nazianzen, *Orations* 30:2, Hilary of Poitiers, *On the Trinity*, 12:35ff., etc.

²⁴² The beginning of the Father’s way is eternity past, “before” the creation, the “works of old.”

²⁴³ מְעוֹלָם. This Hebrew term is not restricted to a designation of absolute eternity (cf. Joshua 24:2, etc.), but is often used in this sense in Scripture: “Blessed *be* the LORD God of Israel for ever and ever (מְעוֹלָם וְעַד הָעוֹלָם). And all the people said, Amen, and praised the LORD” (1 Chronicles 16:36); “Wherefore David blessed the LORD before all the congregation: and David said, Blessed *be* thou, LORD God of Israel our father, for ever and ever (מְעוֹלָם וְעַד הָעוֹלָם)” (1 Chronicles 29:10); “Then the Levites, Jeshua,

beginning,²⁴⁴ or ever the earth was” (v. 23). He was with the Father “before the mountains were settled,” and “before the hills . . . while as yet he had not made the earth” (v. 25-26), just as God exists “before the mountains were brought forth, or ever [He] formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting” (Psalm 90:2). When there were “no depths . . . no fountains . . . fields . . . world . . . heavens . . . clouds . . . sea . . . foundations of the earth” (v. 24-29), then the Son testifies that He was “by him [the Father], *as one brought up with him*: and I was daily *his* delight, rejoicing always before him” (v. 30). Proverbs eight testifies of this ineffable joy, delight, and love of the Father for the Son and the Son for the Father (cf. John 17:24), and their joy in the redemption of the elect (Proverbs 8:31; cf. John 17:3, 6; Ephesians 1:4).

In the eternity past spoken of in Proverbs eight, the Son was begotten, or “brought forth”²⁴⁵ (v. 24, 25). The verb in this Hebrew tense²⁴⁶ signifies “to be brought forth through

and Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabniah, Sherebiah, Hodijah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah, said, Stand up and bless the LORD your God for ever and ever (מִן־הָעוֹלָם עַד־הָעוֹלָם): and blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise” (Nehemiah 9:5); “thou, O LORD, *art* our father, our redeemer; thy name *is* from everlasting (מִן־הָעוֹלָם)” (Isaiah 63:16); “I cause you to dwell . . . in the land . . . for ever and ever (לְמִן־עוֹלָם וְעַד־עוֹלָם)” (Jeremiah 7:7—this includes eternity on the new earth, Revelation 21:1); “Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindnesses; for they *have been* ever of old (כִּי מִעוֹלָם הֵמָּה)” (Psalm 25:6); “Blessed *be* the LORD God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting (מִן־הָעוֹלָם וְעַד־הָעוֹלָם)” (Psalm 41:13); “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting (מִן־הָעוֹלָם עַד־הָעוֹלָם), thou *art* God” (Psalm 90:2); “Thy throne *is* established of old: thou *art* from everlasting (מִן־הָעוֹלָם)” (Psalm 93:2); “But the mercy of the LORD *is* from everlasting to everlasting (מִן־הָעוֹלָם וְעַד־הָעוֹלָם) upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children’s children” (Psalm 103:17); “Blessed *be* the LORD God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting (מִן־הָעוֹלָם וְעַד־הָעוֹלָם | מִן־הָעוֹלָם): and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the LORD” (Psalm 106:48).

²⁴⁴ When מְרֵאשׁ is in an absolute or unmodified state, as in Proverbs 8:23, it designates eternity in its other Old Testament references (Ecclesiastes 3:11; Isaiah 40:21; 41:4; 41:26). When modifiers are attached to it, or it is in a construct state, it naturally has a variety of other significations; “from the beginning” is a very different time designation than “from the beginning of the week,” etc.; cf. Leviticus 13:12; Numbers 23:9; etc.; but note the absolute form in 2 Samuel 16:1, although “of the hill” (as in the KJV) is implied). Since the Son was already extant in the beginning, He is eternal, as eternal as the Father. The difference between מִן־הָעוֹלָם and מְרֵאשׁ is that the former “points backwards into the infinite distance” and the latter indicates that the Son existed before “the beginning of the world” (*Commentary on the Old Testament*, C. F. Keil & F. Delitzsch, orig. pub. T & T Clark, Edinburgh, elec. acc. in the *Christian Library Series*, vol. 15: *Classic Commentary Collection*, AGES Library, Rio, WI: 2006, on Proverbs 8:23).

²⁴⁵ “‘Was begotten,’ as the Targum and Syriac version; the Septuagint is, ‘he begot me’; and so it is to be understood of the eternal generation and sonship of Christ; for the word הוֹלֵלְתִי is used of generation, Job 15:7 Ps 51:5. Christ is the firstborn of every creature, begotten, born, and brought forth before any creature was

labour pains.”²⁴⁷ Psalm 51:5a and Job 15:7b, the only other comparable references,²⁴⁸ both also speak of the begetting or bearing process.²⁴⁹ The Son’s eternal existence as God, and His eternal generation by the Father, are beautifully taught in Proverbs eight. He is by no means a creature, a temporal creation of the Father, but His “goings forth”²⁵⁰ *have been* from of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2)—from before the origin of time, the Son existed (Isaiah 48:16);²⁵¹ from all eternity He has been, and is being now, and will be to all eternity future, begotten by the Father.

The Unitarian dogma that *only-begotten* means *created* runs into various other problems as well. It requires that God the Father, Jehovah, who “changeth not” (Malachi 3:6), was not always Father—indeed, for all of eternity past, until He supposedly decided to create the Son, He was not the Father. Furthermore, contrary to the Biblical, Trinitarian

in being. . . . [T]his [is] a matter of infinite moment and concern, and deserving of the strictest attention and observation . . . the eternal generation of Christ [is] an article of faith most surely to be believed.” (John Gill, *An Exposition of the Old and New Testament*, on Proverbs 8:24-25).

²⁴⁶ הוֹלֵלָהּ, Polal perfect 1 common singular of הִל, both in v. 24 and v. 25.

²⁴⁷ KB.

²⁴⁸ Both verses also have a polal perfect 1 common singular verb. No other references to הִל in the Polal are found in the Old Testament.

²⁴⁹ Note the translation γεννώ, present active indicative of γεννάω, “to bear or beget,” for “brought forth” in Proverbs 8:25, LXX. The Greek Old Testament supports the Son’s eternally being begotten (consider the present tense) in this text. It is noteworthy that the LXX also renders the קָנָה of v. 24 with γεννάω in Zechariah 13:5.

²⁵⁰ The *hapax legomenon* מוֹצֵאָה, “goings forth,” here denotes “the act of going out. . . . [The possibility of this] meaning . . . is placed beyond all doubt by Hosea 6:3; 1 Kings 10:28; Ezekiel 12:4; and 2 Samuel 3:25. . . . The [sense of the place, rather than the act of going out] . . . does not suit the predicate מִיָּמֵי עוֹלָם here, since the *days* of eternity cannot be called *places* of departure. . . . [T]he meaning ‘times of going forth’ cannot be supported by a single passage. . . . Both קָדָם and מִיָּמֵי עוֹלָם are used to denote hoary antiquity . . . both words are . . . used in Proverbs 8:22 and 23 to denote the eternity preceding the creation of the world” (*Commentary on the Old Testament*, C. F. Keil & F. Delitzsch, on Micah 5:2 (v. 1, Heb.)). The fact that the plural form, “goings forth,” is used in Micah 5:2 suggests that this going was an eternal process, not a point action, and thus supports the eternal generation of the Son. The plural does not require a reference to two different actions; compare the plural of the related, masculine form of מוֹצֵאָה, מוֹצְאִים, used of a singular act in Ezekiel 12:4.

The LXX has the plural ἔξοδοι, from ἔξοδος, for מוֹצֵאָה in Micah 5:2. The definition of this word in Liddell-Scott’s *Greek-English Lexicon* includes “going out . . . procession . . . emission.” Sirach 40:1 employs ἔξοδος of the birth process.

²⁵¹ מֵעַתָּה הָיְתָהּ שָׁם אֲנִי, translated as “from the time that it was, there *am* I” in the KJV, and signifying “‘before the time that it was, there was I’; Christ existed before his incarnation, before he appeared as the great Prophet in Israel; he existed as the Word and Son of God from all eternity, and was with God his Father from everlasting; he was by him, and brought up with him, and lay in his bosom so early” (John Gill, *An Exposition of the Old and New Testament*, on Isaiah 48:16).

doctrine, the Arian god had nobody “rejoicing always before him” (Proverbs 8:30), but was isolated and solitary, with no ability to exercise love or engage in communion. He needed to create the world in order to manifest these attributes. In contrast, the Trinitarian God is entirely self-sufficient, able to fully exercise His love in the everlasting communion among the Father, Son, and Spirit.

The fact that the Son is the Father’s *only begotten* does nothing to advance the Arian dogma that Christ is a creature. On the contrary, it firmly fixes the absolute and equal Deity of the Son of God with His Father, and thus strongly favors the classical doctrine of the Trinity.

Revelation 3:14 is used by Unitarians to affirm that the Son was the first creature made by the Father. They argue,

The Bible plainly states that in his prehuman existence, Jesus was a created spirit being, just as angels were spirit beings created by God. Neither the angels nor Jesus had existed before their creation. Jesus, in his prehuman existence, was . . . “the beginning of God’s creation” (Revelation 3:14) . . . Yes, Jesus was created by God as the beginning of God’s invisible creations.²⁵²

Thus, Arians use the reference to Christ as “the beginning of the creation of God”²⁵³ to establish their dogma that the Son was the first being created out of nothing by the true God. They equate “beginning” with the passive “one begun,” and affirm that this phrase is equivalent to “the first creature created by God,” thus supporting Unitarianism. However, Arians must overlook the context of this statement, the lexical definitions of the word here rendered “beginning,”²⁵⁴ the other uses of this word in Scripture, the background of the Greek Old Testament, and the evidence of ancient Christian literature to come to their conclusion.

The context of the declaration of the Son of God to the church at Laodicea plainly affirms His Deity. Immediately after Revelation 3:14, Christ states, “I know thy works” (3:15). For Christ to know all the works of all the members of the church at Laodicea, and the other churches mentioned in Revelation 2-3 (2:2, 9, 13, 19; 3:1, 8) indicates His omniscience. The Lord Jesus states, “I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will

²⁵² *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* section “What Does the Bible Teach About God and Jesus?” pg. 14.

²⁵³ ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ Θεοῦ.

²⁵⁴ ἀρχή.

give unto every one of you according to your works” (Revelation 2:23)—but searching and knowing the heart is a work that pertains to Jehovah alone (1 Samuel 16:7; 1 Chronicles 28:9; 29:17; 2 Chronicles 6:30; Psalm 7:9; 44:21; Jeremiah 11:20; 17:10; 20:10, 12; Acts 1:24; Romans 8:27; Hebrews 4:13), just as is the work of being Judge of all men (Psalm 62:12; Romans 2:5-11; 14:12; 1 Peter 1:17; Revelation 20:12). It would be very strange if the Lord Jesus were to deny His Deity in Revelation 3:14, but then affirm it in the very next verse. Furthermore, Christ’s declaration in Revelation 3:19, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten” also indicates His nature as Jehovah, for the Lord Jesus alludes to the many other Scriptural passages that affirm that the one God is the loving Chastener of His people (Deuteronomy 8:5; 2 Samuel 7:14; Job 5:17; Psalm 6:1; 29:11; 94:10; Proverbs 3:11-12; Jeremiah 2:30; 7:28; 10:28; 30:11; 31:18; Zephaniah 3:2; 1 Corinthians 11:32; Hebrews 12:5-9). Furthermore, for Christ to be in the presence of and fellowship with all those who seek Him (Revelation 3:20) requires His Deity. No Being that is not omnipresent and omniscient can know about and commune with “any man” worldwide who seeks for His fellowship.²⁵⁵ Since Jesus Christ affirms His Deity (at least) three times²⁵⁶ in His message to the church at Laodicea (Revelation 3:15, 19, 20), a Unitarian who takes Revelation 3:14 as an affirmation that Christ is a creature makes the Lord repeatedly contradict Himself.

Greek lexica demonstrate that *arche*, “beginning” in Revelation 3:14, affirms that Christ is the origin or source of the creation, not the first created being. The Greek word in this verse means “one who or that which constitutes an initial cause—‘first cause, origin,’”²⁵⁷ or “beginning, origin . . . one with whom a process begins, beginning . . . the first cause, the

²⁵⁵ One can see from this how grievously Roman Catholicism errs in its practice of prayers to dead people. Assuming that a dead person, like Mary, is able to hear and answer, or have fellowship with, the millions who at every moment are praying to her worldwide, ascribes to such a person the Divine attributes of omniscience and omnipresence. Even if dead people in heaven wanted men on earth to pray to them (which they do not), and they did nothing else all day and night than try to listen to the prayers of each one on earth who petitioned them, the sheer fact of the continuing humanity of the dead would require that the overwhelming majority of such prayers would not be answered. If, say, 10,000,000 people (a very conservative estimate—it is only c. 0.1% of the population of the world) were praying to Mary at any given moment, she would only be able to understand what one, or maybe two or three, of them would be saying at a time. Without divinizing Mary, 99.99% of those who call on her are certain of a busy signal. However, there are a great many devils idolatrous worshippers can have fellowship with (1 Corinthians 10:20) while they believe they are communing with God or the saints. God alone is the One “that hearest prayer” (Psalm 65:2).

²⁵⁶ As we will see, the phrase in question in Revelation 3:14 is itself an affirmation of the Deity of the Son; thus, at least four declarations of this doctrine are found in the discourse to the Laodicean church.

²⁵⁷ *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, Johannes P. Louw & Eugene A. Nida (LN), 89:16.

beginning,²⁵⁸ or “beginning, origin . . . source,”²⁵⁹ or “beginning, origin . . . the person . . . that commences . . . that by which anything begins to be, the origin, the active cause.”²⁶⁰ The Arian who uses Revelation 3:14 to prove his Christological dogma must prove that “beginning” does not mean “origin,” a common definition of the word according to all standard Greek lexica.²⁶¹ The phrase “the beginning of the creation of God”²⁶² is an objective genitive followed by a subjective genitive, signifying “the beginner/originator of God’s creation.”²⁶³ Revelation 3:14, rather than teaching that the Lord Jesus is a creature, actually strongly affirms His Deity (in accordance with the context of Revelation 3:14-22) as the Creator.

The context of the other uses of *arche* in the book of Revelation very strongly supports a signification of “beginning” in the sense of origin or source, rather than the Unitarian interpretation of “one begun,” in Revelation 3:14. The word appears in three other verses in the Revelation (1:8; 21:6; 22:13). In Revelation 1:8, Christ, the speaker (see v. 7, 17-18),²⁶⁴ declares “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning [*arche*] and the ending, saith the

²⁵⁸ Danker, Frederick William (ed.), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd. ed. (BDAG).

²⁵⁹ Liddell, H. G. & Scott, R. *Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed.

²⁶⁰ *Greek English Lexicon*, Joseph Henry Thayer, elec. acc. in Hamel, Ken, *The Online Bible for Mac*, version 3.0.

²⁶¹ This is not to say that the semantic range of ἀρχή includes nothing besides the idea of origin or source. The word can also, for example, mean “the first place, principality . . . magistracy” (Thayer), “an authority figure who initiates activity or process, ruler, authority” (BDAG), “first place or power, sovereignty” (Liddell-Scott), or “one who rules or governs — ‘ruler, governor’” (Louw-Nida). This sense would convey the idea in Revelation 3:14 that Christ is the ruler or sovereign over the creation of God, again distinguishing Him from the creation and affirming His eternity and Deity. To properly gain exegetical legitimacy for their position, Unitarians must prove that in Revelation 3:14 ἀρχή means neither origin or source of the creation, nor ruler or sovereign over the creation, since both possibilities place the Son of God outside the realm of the created order to affirm His Divinity. Such proof never has been, nor ever will be, forthcoming.

²⁶² τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ Θεοῦ.

²⁶³ Alternatively, if one takes ἀρχή to signify *sovereign/ruler* [of God’s creation], τῆς κτίσεως is a genitive of subordination, so that “the genitive substantive specifies that which is subordinated to or under the dominion of the head noun. . . [the] of [means] . . . over or something like it that suggest dominion or priority” (pg. 103, Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*). The subjective genitive τοῦ Θεοῦ is unchanged. Note that in Colossians 1:15’s πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως the genitive of κτίσις in relation to Christ is a genitive of subordination (cf. also 1:18). This is significant since the church at Laodicea, addressed in Revelation 3:14-22, was certainly familiar with the epistle to the Colossians, including its Christological declarations (Colossians 4:16). Cf. the designation of Christ as ἀρχηγός in Acts 3:15; 5:31; Hebrews 2:10; 12:2.

²⁶⁴ “Is the spokesman [of v. 8] God the Father or God the Son? Persuasive evidence has been advanced in favor of the latter identification. ἐγώ εἰμι (*Ego eimi*, ‘I am’), the words with which the verse begins, is a frequent self-designation appropriated by Jesus in the NT, especially in the gospel of John (e. g., John 8:58). . .

Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.”²⁶⁵ The status of *arche*, through its connection with the titles of Alpha and Omega, the fact that He who has this title is, and was, and is to come, and the affirmation that He who is these things is “the Almighty,” clearly manifests that Christ is “the beginning” in the sense that He is the Creator or source of all. A creature might be the “beta,” but no creature is the “Alpha and Omega,” nor the self-existent He who “is,” nor “the Almighty.”²⁶⁶ In Revelation 21:6, God²⁶⁷ states that He is “Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.” Here again “the beginning” is the Originator or Beginner of all, not one who is Himself begun or originated. In Revelation 22:12-13, the Son says, “I come quickly; and my reward *is* with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.” Here again “the beginning” is paralleled with being the “Alpha” and “the first.” A creature made by God could be “the second,” but God alone is “the first.” The other uses of “the beginning” in Revelation by no means support the Unitarian affirmation that in Revelation 3:14 Christ is “the beginning” in the sense that He is “one begun.” Rather, Revelation 3:14’s ascription to Christ of the title “the beginning” harmonizes with the other uses of the word *arche* in the book to reveal the Son as the Creator and Originator of all creation, the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the One who always was, who of Himself is, and who always will be, the Almighty.

‘The Alpha and the Omega’ is a self-description by Jesus in Revelation 22:13. It more probably carried the same force in this verse. Jesus Christ has been the central figure in vv. 1-7. A switch to God the Father in v. 8 is improbable because it is so abrupt[.] [T]he case is further strengthened by a comparison of this verse with Rev. 1:17-18, where similar titles are without question applied to Christ[.] Lastly, because *erchetai* in v. 7 clearly refers to Christ’s coming, the same must be the case with ὁ ἐρχόμενος (*ho erchomenos*, “the coming one”) in v. 8. The evidence in favor of seeing Christ as the speaker is impressive” (*Revelation 1-7: An Exegetical Commentary*, Robert L. Thomas. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1992, comment on Revelation 1:8).

²⁶⁵ The Received Text reading ἀρχὴ καὶ τέλος is supported by many Greek MSS, the Latin Vulgate, codex Sinaiticus, etc. The reading ὁ Κύριος, rather than κύριος ὁ Θεός, is also correct. The common, classical, traditional Greek Bible, the Received Text, in all its readings, is inerrant and autographical.

²⁶⁶ Arians universally deny the reference of this verse to the Lord Jesus, despite the context of v. 7, for they cannot accept that He is “the Almighty” (even apart from their difficulties with the other titles of the verse). However, even if one granted the (invalid, anti-contextual) Unitarian asseveration that God the Father is in view in Revelation 1:8, the point that ἀρχὴ signifies origin or source, not “one begun,” is unassailable, unless Unitarians wish to argue that the Father is a created being because He is the ἀρχή.

²⁶⁷ Indeed, the Son appears to be the God on the throne in this text, as He is the One who executes the judgment of 20:11-15 on His throne. See the discussion in footnote #154. Arians would be loath to admit that the Son is He who speaks in 21:6, for the speaker is plainly the one God in 21:7. But ascribing the declaration of 21:6 to the Father drives them to the fact that if God is “the beginning,” the title refers to the uncreated Originator of all things.

Not only does a simple word study of *arche* in Revelation demonstrate that Christ is Beginning in that He is Source and Originator of creation, but the anaphoric²⁶⁸ article²⁶⁹ in Revelation 3:14 ties the use of “beginning” back to the use in 1:8, just as the other titles in 3:14 connect back to previous mentions of these titles for Christ.²⁷⁰ Thus, Greek grammar indicates that Christ is “the beginning” in 3:14 because He is “Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, . . . the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty” (Revelation 1:8).

The fact that the church at Laodicea was familiar with the epistle to the Colossians also contributes to the understanding of the Lord Jesus as “the beginning” in Revelation 3:14. The Colossean church had sent a copy of their Pauline epistle to the nearby²⁷¹ Laodicean church (Colossians 4:16). There are definite similarities in terminology in the message to the Laodiceans (Revelation 3:14-22) and the book of Colossians.²⁷² The Christological declaration in Colossians 1:15ff²⁷³ that the Lord Jesus Christ is the firstborn, the first in rank, over every creature (v. 15) and the beginning (*arche*, v. 18) because He is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe (v. 16-17) supports the Trinitarian recognition that Revelation 3:14 teaches that the Son is not a creature but the Originator and Source of creation.²⁷⁴ In

²⁶⁸ “The anaphoric article is the article denoting previous reference. (It derives its name from the Greek verb ἀναφέρειν, ‘to bring back, to bring up.’) The first mention of the substantive is usually anarthrous because it is merely being introduced. But subsequent mentions of it use the article, for the article is now pointing back to *the* substantive previously mentioned. The anaphoric article has, by nature, then, a pointing force to it, reminding the reader of who or what was mentioned previously. It is the most common use of the article and the easiest usage to identify” (pg. 217-218, Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*).

²⁶⁹ ἡ ἀρχή.

²⁷⁰ 3:14, “the Amen” (ὁ Ἀμήν), 1:18, “I *am* he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen” (καὶ ὁ ζῶν, καὶ ἐγενόμην νεκρός, καὶ ἰδοὺ, ζῶν εἰμὶ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων, ἀμήν); 3:14, “the faithful and true witness” (ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστὸς καὶ ἀληθινός), 1:5, “Jesus Christ, *who is* the faithful witness,” (Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός) and “He that is true” (ὁ ἀληθινός, 3:7). In 3:14, the articles on each title are anaphoric.

²⁷¹ Only c. 20 miles separated the cities of Colossae and Laodicea.

²⁷² cf. Revelation 3:21/Colossians 3:1 (cf. Ephesians 2:6); Revelation 3:17-19/Colossians 1:27; 2:8, 18, 23; 2:2, 3.

²⁷³ Compare the discussion of Colossians 1:15, and Christ’s position as firstborn, above.

²⁷⁴ “The view that takes *arche* in the active sense to mean ‘beginner,’ ‘originator,’ or ‘initiator’ is clearly preferable [to the passive sense of *arche* as ‘one begun.’]. . . . This . . . is the meaning that corresponds with Paul’s response to the doctrinal error that had arisen earlier in nearby Colosse and perhaps already existed in Laodicea because of the close communications that existed between churches in the two cities. . . . Paul uses very similar terminology [to that of Revelation 3:14] in Colossians 1:15 where he calls Christ ‘the first begotten of all creation’ and in Colossians 1:18 where he calls Him ‘the beginning (ἀρχή).’ . . . At that point in Colossians, he was developing Christ’s uniqueness as creator and counteracting an error regarding the Person of

Colossians 1:18, Christ is the *arche* in the same sense that He is *arche* in the four uses in the book of Revelation (1:8; 3:14; 21:6; 22:13). As the Creator and Sustainer (Colossians 1:16-17) who is over every creature (Colossians 1:15), He is the Beginning (Colossians 1:18), the Source or Origin of the entire created order and all things whatsoever (v. 18c). The Lord Jesus, who is also the source,²⁷⁵ founder, sustainer (John 1:35-37; 3:29; Matthew 16:18),²⁷⁶ and life-giver²⁷⁷ for the church, is of right her head²⁷⁸ and ruler (v. 18a-b). As the source and origin and thus the ruler of all, He is the first in rank, the firstborn, over the dead (v. 18d), and possesses “in all *things* . . . the preeminence” (v. 18e).²⁷⁹ The Arian dogma that Christ is *arche* as the first created being is impossible in Colossians 1:18. It is plainly negated in v.16-17, which shows the Son is the Creator, not a creature. Only God has the preeminence in all

Christ that reduced Him to the level of a hierarchy of mediating powers . . . this is probably the point of [‘the beginning of the creation of God’] in Revelation 3:14. . . . Christ is unique and therefore pre-eminent. He has supreme authority and power to execute His word, including the warnings and promises in the message to follow[.] The words *tes ktiseos tou Theou* (“the creation of God”) require a sense that is inclusive of all creation. The meaning is the same as that of *πάντα* (*panta*, ‘all things’) in John 1:3 and *τὰ πάντα* (*ta panta*, ‘all things’) in Colossians 1:16. [That is, the phrase speaks of] His creatorship of the whole universe” (*Revelation 1-7: An Exegetical Commentary*, Robert L. Thomas, on Revelation 3:14).

²⁷⁵ One might alternatively interpret the *ἀρχή* of Colossians 1:18 in the sense of *ruler*; this would likewise give no support for the Unitarian dogma that Christ is a creature on account of Revelation 3:14. It is true that His headship or rule over the church is in view in Colossians 1:18, but this rule is on account of His position as *ἀρχή*; He rules because He is the source (*ἀρχή*) of the creation (v. 16-17), the One who is before all things, who created all things, and sustains all things.

²⁷⁶ The Lord Jesus originated the church during His earthly ministry; otherwise verses such as Matthew 16:18; 18:20 would have been a great cause of confusion. The church was “added unto,” not founded, on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41, 47). Christ sang in the church (Hebrews 2:12 & Matthew 26:30), His bride (John 3:29; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:23-33) and gave the church the ordinances (1 Corinthians 11:2) of baptism (John 4:1ff.; Matthew 28:18-20) and the Supper (Matthew 26:26-30; 1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:18, 22ff.) long before Pentecost.

²⁷⁷ Christ brings spiritual life to the church by rising from the dead and conquering death and sin for her (Colossians 1:18; 2:13-14), as well as by nourishing and cherishing her as the Head of the body (Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:15-16; 5:29-30).

²⁷⁸ The emphatic *αὐτός* for the Lord Jesus’ headship over the church conveys the “meaning . . . that Christ alone—Christ and no other—is Head of the church.” This unique headship makes sense if the Son is God—if He were merely a creature, one would wonder how the Lord Jesus could be Head of something in this preeminent way. Would not God be over Christ as the real Head of the church? Furthermore, if the *ὅς* “in this context is almost equivalent to ‘because he is’” then Christ’s Headship of the church is rooted in His position as her *ἀρχή*, so that the “meaning then is that Christ is the origin and source of the life of the church, the fount of its being” (*Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Colossians 1:18).

²⁷⁹ The *αὐτός* in v. 18e is unneeded grammatically (as in v. 18a) and “is normally not expressed in Greek because it is implied in the personal ending of the verb. Here, however, it is expressed, suggesting that preeminence is the exclusive right of Christ. ‘He himself’ or ‘he alone’ is the idea. ‘Have supremacy [KJV, preeminence]’ literally means ‘have the first place’; or perhaps better still, ‘become first.’ C.F.D. Moule takes the whole phrase to mean: “‘that he might be alone supreme among all’—sole head of all things”” (*Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Colossians 1:18). This sort of supremacy is consistent only with Christ’s absolute Deity.

things (v. 18e; Isaiah 48:11). No creature, of whatever greatness, could do what Christ does for the church, or be at all an effective head of every one of His assemblies worldwide. No creature could have all fulness (Colossians 1:19) dwell in Him, especially not the “fulness of the Godhead” (Colossians 2:9). The fact that the church at Laodicea would have been familiar with the designation of Christ as Beginning, in the sense that He was true God, Origin and Source of all, in Colossians 1:18, supports the same sense in Revelation 3:14. The comparison of the message to Laodicea and to Colossae further demonstrates the anti-contextual nature of the Arian reading of Revelation 3:14.

Amazingly, Arians argue that the word “beginning” in Revelation 3:14 “cannot rightly be interpreted to mean that Jesus was the ‘beginner’ of God’s creation . . . [in light of the fact that] John uses various forms of the Greek word [*arche*] more than 20 times, and these always have the common [anti-Trinitarian] meaning . . . Jesus was created by God as the beginning of God’s invisible creations.”²⁸⁰ The other uses of *arche* in the book of Revelation, inspired by God through the apostle John, have already been analyzed and been shown to powerfully verify that Revelation 3:14 teaches that Christ originates creation, so much so that the dishonesty of claiming Johannine usage in support of the Unitarian position on Revelation 3:14 is blatant. The Unitarian claim also runs afoul of the rest of John’s writings. John’s gospel affirms that the Son of God already “was,” already existed, “in the beginning [*arche*]” (John 1:1, 2), so He existed before all time-bound beings and is eternal.²⁸¹ 1 John 1:1 likewise affirms that the Son already “was” from all eternity and thus predates all temporal “beginning.” 1 John 2:13-14 twice calls the Son of God the One who is “from the beginning,” again identifying Him as the eternal God. John 6:64 likewise employs *arche* to affirm the eternal existence of the Lord Jesus by indicating that He knew from before the start of creation who the elect and non-elect were—obviously He could only have knowledge from eternity if He existed from that time. To conclude that John’s use of *arche* in some way supports Arianism is wildly inaccurate.²⁸²

²⁸⁰ *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* section “What Does the Bible Teach About God and Jesus?” pg. 14.

²⁸¹ Compare ἀρχή in Genesis 1:1 (LXX) and in John 1:1-2: ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν (Genesis 1:1); Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν Θεόν, καὶ Θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος. οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν Θεόν. (John 1:1-2).

²⁸² The other appearances of ἀρχή in John’s writings are John 2:11; 8:25, 44; 15:27; 16:4; 1 John 2:7, 24; 3:8, 11. These references prove nothing one way or another about the status of the Lord Jesus as Creator or

The uses of this common word²⁸³ elsewhere in the New Testament also demonstrates that Unitarians have greatly overreached in their attempt to find support for their dogma in Revelation 3:14. Hebrews 7:3 teaches that the Son of God “has neither beginning [*arche*] of days, nor end of life.” Although Unitarians say, “So Jesus . . . had a beginning to his life,”²⁸⁴ the Bible says the Lord Jesus “has neither beginning of days, nor end of life.” Hebrews 1:10, speaking of Christ, declares, “Thou, Lord, in the beginning [*arche*] hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands.” This passage with *arche* validates that the Son of God existed as Jehovah²⁸⁵ before the creation of the world, and is Himself the Creator of all. The New Testament use of *arche*, “beginning” in Revelation 3:14, provides no support at all for Unitarian dogma.

The Greek Old Testament²⁸⁶ validates the use of *arche* as “source” or “origin,”²⁸⁷ supporting the Trinitarian interpretation of Revelation 3:14. Numerous verses²⁸⁸ validate this sense of *beginning*: “For the worshipping of idols not to be named is the beginning [*arche*],

creature. It should be noted that the Johannine uses of ἀρχή are not all temporal—origin or source is clearly attested (Revelation 1:8; 21:6; 22:13-14). It should also be noted that ἀρχή after a preposition does not necessarily denote a reference to the beginning of the created order; the start of Christ’s ministry (John 15:27), the start of the rebellion of Satan (1 John 3:8), the first hearing of the Christian message (1 John 2:24), etc. are also attested Johannine uses.

²⁸³ Since ἀρχή appears 58 times in the New Testament, and most of the uses are not Christologically significant, comment on each of these appearances will not be undertaken. The word commonly means “ruler” or something similar (cf. Colossians 2:10; Titus 3:1. Such uses provide no support for Arianism, for the Son as “ruler of the creation of God” gives Unitarians less than nothing). The word is found in various genitive constructions, including both the objective genitive Trinitarians hold is found in Revelation 3:14 (“the creation’s origin/the Originator of creation) and the partitive genitive that Arianism assumes for the verse. It is not surprising that the common partitive genitive would be employed among the numerous NT references to ἀρχή. Unitarianism is required to prove, not assume, that this category is employed in Revelation 3:14, if it wishes to use the verse as a proof-text—but this it cannot do.

²⁸⁴ *Should You Believe In the Trinity?* section “What Does the Bible Say About God and Jesus?” pg. 16.

²⁸⁵ See footnote #164.

²⁸⁶ Brenton’s version of the LXX is cited, unless otherwise mentioned, for the canonical Greek OT. For the Apocrypha, the King James Version is used unless another translation is specifically mentioned.

²⁸⁷ Of course, not all of the 215 appearance of the word in the LXX are this usage. The view, consistent with the Deity of Christ, that *arche* in Revelation 3:14 means “ruler” also finds ample parallels in the LXX (Genesis 34:2; 42:6; 49:10; Leviticus 4:22; Numbers 2:5, 7, 10; Judges 4:2; 1 Chronicles 29:12; *et alii*). Clear uses of ἀρχή + genitive that fit this interpretation are also found; note the genitives of subordination in Exodus 6:25; Numbers 3:24, 30, 32, 16:2, etc. Job 40:19 (LXX, 40:14) even refers to the “chief of the creation of the Lord” (ἀρχή πλάσματος κυρίου). Numerous further significations of ἀρχή are likewise represented.

²⁸⁸ Good examples of this use, other than those listed below, are found in Proverbs 16:7; Ecclesiastes 3:11; Wisdom 6:17, 22; 7:5, 17, 18; 12:16; 14:12; Sirach 25:24.

the cause, and the end, of all evil.”²⁸⁹ “Reason is the beginning [*arche*] of every work, and counsel precedes every undertaking.”²⁹⁰ “The fear of the Lord is the beginning [*arche*] of wisdom.”²⁹¹ “For pride is the beginning [*arche*] of sin, and he that hath it shall pour out abomination.”²⁹² “For the devising of idols was the beginning [*arche*] of spiritual fornication, and the invention of them the corruption of life.”²⁹³ Furthermore, God, in language very similar to that of the book of Revelation, is explicitly called *arche* in connection with His character as the self-existent I AM: “Who has wrought and done these things? He has called it who called it from the generations of old; I God, the first [*arche*] and to all futurity, I AM” (Isaiah 41:4).²⁹⁴ The Greek Old Testament background for the use of *arche* in Revelation 3:14 does not help the Arians.

Instances of *arche* as *source* or *origin*²⁹⁵ are also found in apostolic patristic writers who are almost contemporary with the composition of the book of the Revelation: “Flee from divisions, as the beginning [*arche*] of evils.”²⁹⁶ “The love of money is the beginning [*arche*] of all troubles.”²⁹⁷ Furthermore, Christ is “he who was from the beginning [*arche*], who appeared as new yet proved to be old, and is always young as he is born in the hearts of saints. This is the Eternal One, who today is accounted a Son, through whom the church is

²⁸⁹ Wisdom 14:27 (ἡ γὰρ τῶν ἀνωνύμων εἰδώλων θρησκεία παντὸς ἀρχὴ κακοῦ καὶ αἰτία καὶ πέρας ἐστίν). The connection of *arche* and “source” is explicit.

²⁹⁰ Sirach 37:16 (RSV Apocrypha). ἀρχὴ παντὸς ἔργου λόγος καὶ πρὸ πάσης πράξεως βουλή.

²⁹¹ Psalm 110:10 (ἀρχὴ σοφίας φόβος κυρίου). Also Proverbs 1:7; 9:10; Sirach 1:14.

²⁹² Sirach 10:13 (ὅτι ἀρχὴ ὑπερηφανίας ἀμαρτία καὶ ὁ κρατῶν αὐτῆς ἐξομβρήσει βδέλυγμα). Note also Sirach 10:12: “The beginning [*arche*] of pride is when one departeth from God, and his heart is turned away from his Maker” (ἀρχὴ ὑπερηφανίας ἀνθρώπου ἀφίστασθαι ἀπὸ κυρίου καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ ποιήσαντος αὐτὸν ἀπέστη ἡ καρδία αὐτοῦ).

²⁹³ Wisdom 14:12 (ἀρχὴ γὰρ πορνείας ἐπίνοια εἰδώλων εὐρεσις δὲ αὐτῶν φθορὰ ζωῆς).

²⁹⁴ τίς ἐνήργησεν καὶ ἐποίησεν ταῦτα ἐκάλεσεν αὐτὴν ὁ καλῶν αὐτὴν ἀπὸ γενεῶν ἀρχῆς ἐγὼ θεὸς πρῶτος καὶ εἰς τὰ ἐπερχόμενα ἐγὼ εἰμι.

²⁹⁵ The use of the word for “ruler” is also found; cf. Martyrdom of Polycarp 10:2: “The proconsul said: ‘Persuade the people.’ But Polycarp said: ‘You I might have considered worthy of a reply, for we have been taught to pay proper respect to rulers [*archais*] and authorities appointed by God, as long as it does us no harm; but as for these, I do not think they are worthy, that I should have to defend myself before them’” (ἔφη ὁ ἀνθύπατος: Πείσον τὸν δῆμον. ὁ δὲ Πολύκαρπος εἶπεν: Σὲ μὲν κἂν λόγου ἤξιωσα, δεδιδάγμεθα γὰρ ἀρχαίς καὶ ἐξουσίαις ὑπὸ θεοῦ τεταγμέναις τιμὴν κατὰ τὸ προσήκον τὴν μὴ βλάπτουσαν ἡμᾶς, ἀπονέμειν: ἐκείνους δὲ οὐκ ἀξίους ἡγοῦμαι τοῦ ἀπολογεῖσθαι αὐτοῖς).

²⁹⁶ Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans 8:1 (Τοὺς δὲ μερισμοὺς φεύγετε, ὡς ἀρχὴν κακῶν).

²⁹⁷ Polycarp to the Philippians 4:1 (Ἀρχὴ δὲ πάντων χαλεπῶν φιλαργυρία). Polycarp is alluding to 1 Timothy 6:10, “For the love of money is the root of all evil” (ρίζα γὰρ πάντων τῶν κακῶν ἐστὶν ἡ φιλαργυρία). Polycarp’s substitution of *arche* for the apostle Paul’s “root” clearly evidences a use of ἀρχή for source or origin. Note also Barnabas 1:6.

enriched and grace is unfolded and multiplied among the saints, grace which gives understanding, reveals mysteries, announces seasons, rejoices over the faithful, [and] is given to those who seek.”²⁹⁸ The apostolic patristic writers affirmed Christ is the “beginning” because He “is the Eternal One.” The use of *arche* in the most ancient Christian literature supports the Trinitarian contention that Christ is “beginning” as God, not “one begun” as a creature.

In Revelation 3:14, Christ is “the beginning of the creation” because He is the source or origin of all things, the One who began the creation. The phrase establishes the Deity of Christ. The Unitarian who wishes to use the phrase as a proof-text that the Son of God was created must engage in serious mutilation of the Scriptural and Koiné Greek context. The verse fails as an Arian proof-text because of the context of Christ’s declaration to the church at Laodicea, the context of the book of Revelation, the contextual comparison to the epistle to the Colossians, the context of John’s usage of “beginning,” and the context of the word in the rest of the New Testament. It fails because of the lexical significance of the word “beginning [*arche*].” It fails because of the evidence of the Greek Old Testament and the apostolic patristic writings. It is like all other Arian proof-texts—it miserably fails to undermine the doctrine of the Trinity in any way.

Arianism urges John 10:34-36 as support for the assertion that the Lord Jesus Christ is merely a secondary true god instead of being equal in nature to His Father. The passage reads, “Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?” Commenting on these words, the Watchtower Society writes:

Does saying that Jesus Christ is “a god” conflict with the Bible’s teaching that there is only one God? No, for at times the Bible employs that term to refer to mighty creatures. Psalm 8:5 reads: “You also proceeded to make him [man] a little less than godlike ones [Hebrew, ‘elo-him’],” that is, angels. In Jesus’ defense against the charge of the Jews, that he claimed to be God, he noted that “the Law uses the word gods of those to whom the word of God was addressed,” that is, human judges. (John 10:34, 35, JB; Psalm 82:1-

²⁹⁸ The Epistle to Diognetus 11:4-5 (οὗτος ὁ ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς, ὁ καινὸς φανεῖς καὶ παλαιὸς εὐρεθεὶς καὶ πάντοτε νέος ἐν ἀγίων καρδίαις γεννώμενος. οὗτος ὁ αἰεὶ, ὁ σήμερον υἱὸς λογισθεὶς, δι’ οὗ πλουτίζεται ἡ ἐκκλησία καὶ χάρις ἀπλουμένη ἐν ἀγίοις πληθύνεται, παρέχουσα νοῦν, φανεροῦσα μυστήρια, διαγγέλλουσα καιροῦς, χαίρουσα ἐπὶ πιστοῖς, ἐπιζητοῦσι δωρομένη).

6) Even Satan is called “the god of this system of things” at 2 Corinthians 4:4.

Since the Bible calls humans, angels, even Satan, “gods,” or powerful ones, the superior Jesus in heaven can properly be called “a god.” . . . Jesus has a position far higher than angels, imperfect men, or Satan. Since these are referred to as “gods,” mighty ones, surely Jesus can be and is “a god.”²⁹⁹

The Arian argument will be evaluated on two levels. First, the specific argument that in John 10:34-36 Christ denied that He was the one true God, but instead claimed a secondary divinity, will be evaluated. Second, the affirmation that the use of the plural “gods” simply means “powerful ones” and evidences that it is proper to designate someone powerful as “a god,” so that the Lord Jesus is merely a lesser true god, will be examined.

The context of John 10:34-36 undermines the affirmation that the Lord Jesus was denying His true Deity in the discourse. Immediately before the passage in question, Christ had affirmed His unity of essence with the Father by declaring, “I and *my* Father are one,” and in so doing calling “God . . . his Father, making himself equal with God” (John 5:18). Immediately afterwards the statements of John 10:34-36, He affirmed His coinherence with the Father, and thus His equality with Him, by affirming that “the Father *is* in me, and I in him” (John 10:38). So far was Christ from convincing the Jews that He was not true God after His discourse in John 10:34-38 that “therefore they sought again to take him” (John 10:39) and stone Him for blasphemy for what He had spoken. Since, based on His words in John 10:34-38, the Jews “therefore” sought “again” to stone Him “for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God” (John 10:33), it is clear that His statements were actually an affirmation of His Deity, rather than a denial of it. They were understood so by the Jews Christ was refuting, and the apostle John, recording the encounter under inspiration in the gospel, gives no indication whatsoever that their assumptions were incorrect. On the contrary, the Jews sought to stone Christ for doing “again” what He had done before—claiming, as the apostle John states, that He was “equal with God” (John 5:18).

John 10:34-38 is the Lord Jesus’ response to the charge made by the Jews in 10:33: “The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.” Christ defends both His words (vv. 34-36) and His works (vv. 37-38), which had both been brought up as an issue in the previous verses (vv. 32-33). In v. 34, the Lord quotes Psalm 82:6: “I have said, Ye *are* gods; and all

²⁹⁹

Pg. 28, *Should You Believe In the Trinity?* the section, “What About Trinity ‘Proof Texts?’”

of you *are* children of the most High.”³⁰⁰ The Old Testament contains a number of references where judges are called “gods” because they possess authority from God as His representatives, as those sent by Him (cf. Exodus 22:28).³⁰¹ Their position as God’s representatives and as those sent by Him enabled them to possess the title *gods* in a secondary and derived way. As Christ explains, “he called them gods, [because] unto [them] the word of God came,³⁰² and the scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35). Based on this statement,³⁰³ Christ argues *a minori ad majus*,³⁰³ from the lesser to the greater: since men,

³⁰⁰ Psalm 82:6: אֲנִי־אֵמַרְתִּי אֱלֹהִים אַתֶּם וּבְנֵי עֲלִיּוֹן כְּלַכֶּם :
LXX (81:6): ἐγὼ εἶπα θεοὶ ἐστε καὶ υἱοὶ ὑψίστου πάντες.

³⁰¹ Note Exodus 21:6, “Then his master shall bring him unto the judges [הַאֱלֹהִים]; 22:8, “If the thief be not found, then the master of the house shall be brought unto the judges [הַאֱלֹהִים]”; 22:28, “Thou shalt not revile the gods [אֱלֹהִים; LXX θεούς], nor curse the ruler of thy people.” References that show that judges and others sent by God had authority from Him, but do not call people θεοί or אֱלֹהִים, include Exodus 4:16; Deuteronomy 1:17; 19:17; 2 Chronicles 19:6-7.

³⁰² This phrase likely refers to either the fact that the Word came to the judges through the Mosaic code which they were to administer, or to their induction into their offices as judges, during which they were charged or presented with the Mosaic legislation. The first option appears preferable. It is related to the use of “a god” in Exodus 7:1, where Moses is “made . . . a god to Pharaoh” as the messenger of the Word and will of God to the king.

³⁰³ The idea that Christ is defending His words in the previous discourse in John 10 by arguing *a majori ad minus*, from the greater to the lesser, granting the assumptions of his audience and showing how they cannot accept the consequences (*ad hominem*), does not suit the context. This assumption makes His argument run something like, “you Jews recognize that even humans are called ‘gods,’ Psalm 82:6 (John 10:34-35), so how can I be committing blasphemy by claiming a lesser title, ‘son of God’ (John 10:36).” First, Christ’s audience understood Him to be claiming full Deity (John 10:39). For Him to claim to be lower than the unjust judges (“gods”) of Psalm 82, who are under the wrath of God and receive punishment (Psalm 82:7-8), would hardly be a cause for a charge of blasphemy or for death by stoning. Rather, His audience would likely be delighted in what would easily be viewed as a declaration of His own sinfulness and a renunciation of all Messianic claims. Second, Christ’s statements that the Father had sanctified Him and sent Him into the world, and that He did the works of His Father (10:36-37), would not in any way contribute to His (alleged) argument that He was claiming a lesser title than did the unjust judges of Psalm 82. Third, the greater-to-lesser movement would require that the gap between “unjust judges” and their title of אֱלֹהִים or gods was less than the gap between the Lord Jesus and the title “Son of God” in the eyes of the Jews. The gap between the judges and the title “gods” is only less than the gap between the Lord Jesus and the title “Son of God” if the Jews believed Christ was morally superior or at least relatively comparable to the unjust judges of Psalm 82. However, in the eyes of His Jewish audience, the Lord Jesus’ claims made Him infinitely worse than the judges. The judges of Psalm 82 were simply disobedient men who lived long ago, while the Lord Jesus was, in their eyes, a blasphemer who was also a present, personal threat to them. The *a majori ad minus* device allegedly employed in John 10:34-36 grants the presuppositions of one’s audience for the argument’s sake, but Christ’s reasoning fails upon the presuppositions of His audience. Fourth, Christ’s response to the Jewish attack upon His works was clear and powerful (John 10:37-38). Why would the Lord couple an evasive and problematic defense of His words in 10:34-36 to a clear, plain and uncompromising defense of His works in 10:37-38? An *a majori ad minus* argument in John 10:34-36 does not fit the context.

For a brief refutation of the unscriptural idea that Christ is employing a system of non-literal rabbinic hermeneutics, see footnote #19 of “An Apologetic Study of John 10:34-36,” W. Gary Phillips, *Bibliotheca*

specifically the unjust judges of Psalm 82, receive the divine title although it little befits them, how much the more may He who is the true Son of God because of His possession of the Divine essence claim the Divine title with infinitely greater appropriateness? “If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?” (John 10:35-36). Christ is arguing, “You accuse Me of blasphemy (v. 33). Scripture—which cannot be broken—affirms that human beings were called by Divine title simply because of their commission and position. How much the more may I, the eternal Son of God, who have received a far greater Divine commission, and bear the Divine title by nature, not by grace (as they did), go by my Divine title?³⁰⁴ Your accusation of blasphemy is ridiculous.” Christ did not in any way deny His true Deity in John 10:34-36. Rather, He employed Psalm 82³⁰⁵ to refute the Jewish attempt to call Him a

Sacra 146:584 (Oct 89) 405-420. Phillips’ study has been helpful for other material in the discussion of John 10:34-36 above.

³⁰⁴ Christ’s claim to be “the Son of God,” v. 36, is a claim to the Divine title. If He is the Son of God, He is *Eloheim*. See the discussion in the section above on the nature of the Son as the only-begotten. Note that the footnotes in that section clearly demonstrated that nothing can be made of the nonarticularity of Ἰῴος τοῦ Θεοῦ in John 10:36. The Jews considered an affirmation that one was nonarticulate of Ἰῴος τοῦ Θεοῦ in this way a claim to Deity and a blasphemy deserving of death (John 19:7). Note also that the Lord did not claim to be merely one of the אֱלֹהִים of Psalm 82:6 (a title given to the judges in a similar fashion to their title of *gods*), but to be *the* Son of God. The idea of Christ’s argument in John 10:36-38 is not, “I am just one of the sons of the Most High in the sense that the unjust judges of Psalm 82 were—that is why I am not committing blasphemy” but it is “I am *the* Son of God, who am in the Father and the Father in Me—I am not blaspheming when I claim to be God because I am God.”

³⁰⁵ W. Gary Phillips (pgs. 415-416, “An Apologetic Study of John 10:34-36,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 146:584) explains effectively why Christ referenced Psalm 82 in this discourse:

One plausible reason why Jesus specifically chose Psalm 82 to prove His point may be that it allowed Him to draw the sharpest contrast between those who bear the divine title by grace (e.g., wicked humans) and those who bear it by nature (the preexisting [sanctified/sent] Son). Jesus was not comparing Himself with the judges in the psalm, except at the principal level—both received a divine commission. The charge had been made that Jesus made Himself God (10:33). Rather, Jesus claimed that an act of the Father placed the Son in human form (v. 36). The relative clause (πρὸς οὓς . . . [‘unto whom . . .’ 10:35] contains the judges’ commission; likewise the second relative clause (introduced by ὃν [‘whom . . .’ 10:36]) highlights Jesus’ divine commission. At this level Jesus and the judges may be compared and placed in the same category.

However, the following contrasts (both implicit and explicit, from the immediate and the larger contexts of Johannine themes) provide the rationale for a fortiori movement *a minori ad majus* within the “commission” principle.

1. The judges were conceived normally; Jesus’ origin was from above (“sanctified/sent”; cf. also 1:14, 18; 3:16).
2. The judges were *made* “gods” (i.e., they were engaged otherwise until the Word of God came to them), and both their title and their commission were temporary; Jesus, accused of making Himself God (v. 33), was the preexistent Son (an inference from “sanctified/sent”; cf. 1:1; 8:58).

blasphemer and reaffirmed the legitimacy of His claim.³⁰⁶ John 10:34-36 provides no support whatsoever for the Arian affirmation that the Lord Jesus Christ is some sort of secondary true god created by the Father.

Furthermore, verses that employ the plural form “gods” do not by any means prove that the Lord Jesus Christ is a lesser true god. The references do not establish that “gods” means “powerful ones,” that any group of powerful beings can be called “gods,” that a

3. The judges were men to whom the Word of God came (v. 35); Jesus was the Word incarnate (1:14).

4. The judges were themselves to be judged for their wickedness. Their exalted position did not relieve them from accountability, but rather enhanced it (Ps 82:7–8; however, their special commission was no less divine); Jesus is the Judge par excellence (another of John’s themes—5:22, 27, 30; 8:16, 26; 9:39). To deny Him as the Son of God is to blaspheme (see also Acts 13:45; 18:6; 1 Tim 1:13).

5. The judges would die for their wickedness (Ps 82:7); Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life (11:25—the very next incident, which also serves as the climax of John’s Gospel).

Once properly understood, it becomes very clear that John 10:34-36, with its reference to Psalm 82 and its *minori ad majus* argument, fits beautifully within the context of John chapter 10 and constitutes a powerful reaffirmation by the Lord Jesus of His true Sonship and equality with the Father.

³⁰⁶ W. Gary Phillips provides the following helpful comments and syllogistic reconstruction of Christ’s argument:

One should begin where Jesus began—with Scripture. Though the phrase “Scripture cannot be broken” has many ramifications, Jesus was affirming at least that what Scripture asserts cannot be considered blasphemous. This was the very reason Jesus appealed to Scripture as His authority. Thus it serves well as a beginning premise for a polysyllogism:

Major premise: The assertions of Scripture are not blasphemous.

Minor premise: Scripture asserts the principle that individuals who are divinely commissioned can be called by divine title (*general*).

Conclusion: The principle (that individuals who are divinely commissioned can be called by divine title [*general*]) is not blasphemous.

Then the conclusion of the first syllogism becomes the major premise of the second syllogism as follows.

Major premise: The principle (stated above) is not blasphemous.

Minor premise: That Jesus may rightly be called by His (*specific*) divine title (Son of God) is included in the principle, *a fortiori*.

Conclusion: That Jesus may rightly be called by His (*specific*) divine title (Son of God) is not blasphemous. (pg. 418, “An Apologetic Study of John 10:34-36,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 146:584).

Phillips also notes (pg. 419) that “*A fortiori* argumentation is common in the Scriptures. Paul’s epistles [including] Hebrews, for example, contain many instances. Jesus’ teachings include the following: Matthew 6:28–30; 7:9–11; 10:25, 28, 29–31; 12:11–12; Luke 13:15–16; 14:1–6; 18:1–8. One example that is particularly comparable to John’s passage in logical structure is Mark 2:23–28. . . . Jesus’ enemies would have had to admit that, given His premises, His argument was valid. . . . The Jews would have agreed with Jesus’ premises [in John 10:34-36] until He again claimed to be God’s unique Son. The *a fortiori* element (moving from the lesser to the greater) would have stung them deeply. . . . Jesus, knowing that they would not accept His words, pointed them to the second prong of His response—His works (cf. John 8:48 with 10:21 and Luke 11:15). Ultimately, however, their problem did not rest in deficient reasoning capacity or in malfunctioning sense perception; the problem lay in their wicked hearts. They *did not* believe His words or recognize His works because they *would not* receive His words or recognize His works (John 10:26–27).”

singular powerful being can be called “a god,” or that the Lord Jesus Christ, because He is (allegedly) a powerful being created by Jehovah, is a true god. On the contrary, Scripture identifies the Son as Jehovah and the One who all “gods” must worship.

First, the fact that idols, false gods that do not exist and have no power whatsoever, are termed *gods* shows that the word is not synonymous with the phrases *powerful ones* or *mighty ones*. Paul wrote, “we know that an idol *is* nothing in the world, and that *there is* none other God but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) 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 8:4-6). Idols, false gods, may be “called gods,” but there is, in truth, but one God. Idols “*are* silver and gold, the work of men’s hands. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: they have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: they have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat. They that make them are like unto them; *so is* every one that trusteth in them” (Psalm 115:4-8). All idolators “serve gods, the work of men’s hands, wood and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell” (Deuteronomy 4:28). They “lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, *and* hire a goldsmith; and he maketh it a god: they fall down, yea, they worship. They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him, and set him in his place, and he standeth; from his place shall he not remove: yea, *one* shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble” (Isaiah 46:6-7). Isaiah powerfully portrays to utter impotence of false gods:

13 The carpenter stretcheth out *his* rule; he marketh it out with a line; he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house. 14 He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish *it*. 14 Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth *it*, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth *it*; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. 16 He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth *himself*, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: 17 And the residue thereof he maketh a god, *even* his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth *it*, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou *art* my god. 18 They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; *and* their hearts, that they cannot understand. 19 And none considereth in his heart, neither *is there*

knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten *it*: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? 20 He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, *Is there* not a lie in my right hand? (Isaiah 44:13-20).

Scripture makes it very plain that the false gods of the heathen are exactly the opposite of “powerful ones.” They cannot see, smell, walk, speak, or act. They cannot get up from one place and go to another one. They cannot deliver anybody. They cannot do anything at all. The fact that false gods cannot do anything at all, but are nothing in this world, demonstrates the fallacy of the Unitarian affirmation that the terms *gods* and *powerful ones* are synonyms.

Second, Scripture does not affirm that any group of mighty beings can be called “gods.” As noted above in the discussion of John 10:34-36, judges, because they have been commissioned by God and have authority from Him (Romans 13:1-7; 2 Chronicles 19:6-7; cf. the principle in John 13:20), are in a small number of references called “gods” (Exodus 21:6; 22:8, 28). Likewise, since angels are “sent forth” as “ministering spirits” (Hebrews 1:14), on very rare occasions they are called gods (Psalm 8:5; Hebrews 2:9) having been commissioned by God as His servants, and possessing authority from Him.³⁰⁷ Neither reference establishes that any group of mighty beings can be called *gods*. Scripture never uses the word *gods* for “mighty men of valour” (Joshua 1:14; 6:2; 8:3; Judges 6:12; 1 Chronicles 5:24, etc.) or any other warriors in powerful armies. No groups other than angels and men in places of judicial or civil leadership are called *gods*, and these groups receive the plural term, not because of their inherent power or might, but because they have received authority from God.

Third, no single being is called “a god” in an unqualified sense anywhere in the Bible. Satan is called “the god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4) because he seeks and receives the worship that ungodly men ought properly to render to the one true God. He rules and controls the current ungodly system of things (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Ephesians 2:2). The fact that the recipient of the false worship offered by the ungodly in the current system of this age is called the “god of this world” does not establish that any particular single mighty being

³⁰⁷ Thus, the Old Testament word *angel*, מַלְאָכִים, means “messenger,” and the New Testament word for *angel*, ἄγγελος, likewise means “messenger” or “one who is sent,” illustrating that the spirit beings called angels are God’s servants which He has commissioned to perform the numerous tasks that He sends them out upon. Both the Old Testament and New Testament words for *angel* are even employed for human messengers (cf. Genesis 32:4, 7; 1 Samuel 23:27; Ezekiel 23:40; Matthew 11:10; Luke 7:24).

can be called “a god.” The qualifiers “of this world” are appended to the title of Satan as “a god,” because Satan is absolutely by no means God, or “a god,” in any absolute sense, but only “a god” with respect to the limited sphere of this current world system. Satan is not by nature “a god,” but he became “god of this world” after the Fall of man, and he will lose this role when Christ returns to rule the earth and removes the devil from this position. In like manner, “the LORD said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh” (Exodus 7:1) because Jehovah said to Moses, “Thou shalt speak all that I command thee” (Exodus 7:2) to the king of Egypt. Moses was not God or “a god” in an absolute sense, but only, because of his commission as God’s representative to the Egyptian tyrant, “a god to Pharaoh.” With respect to the single person of Pharaoh, and with respect to the limited role of being the Almighty’s messenger and representative before the king of Egypt, and with respect to the limited time of his acting as ambassador from the Lord of all to the king, Moses was “made” or appointed “a god,” that is, God’s spokesman to Pharaoh, delivering the Word and will of God to the king. No single fallen angel is called “a god” without any qualifiers. No individual unfallen angel, such as Michael or Gabriel, is called “a god” without qualifiers. Neither the qualified title given to Satan, nor the qualified title given to Moses, provide any justification whatsoever to the idea that any particular powerful being can be called “a god” without any qualifiers.

Fourth, even apart from such considerations, Scripture specifically distinguishes Christ from the category of such “gods,” identifying Him as Jehovah and the object of worship of all such beings. Hebrews 1:6 reads, “And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.” The Lord Jesus is here identified as the object of worship for all the angels. Furthermore, the text refers to Psalm 97:7, 9:³⁰⁸ “Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast

³⁰⁸ The reference in Hebrews 1:6 is not to the mistranslation of Deuteronomy 32:43 found in the modern copies of the LXX, where the “sons of God” are said to worship the Lord and the “angels of God” strengthen themselves in Him (εὐφράνθητε οὐρανοὶ ἅμα αὐτῷ καὶ προσκυνησάτωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες υἱοὶ θεοῦ εὐφράνθητε ἔθνη μετὰ τοῦ λαοῦ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐνισχυσάτωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες ἄγγελοι θεοῦ ὅτι τὸ αἷμα τῶν υἱῶν αὐτοῦ ἐκδικᾶται καὶ ἐκδικήσει καὶ ἀνταποδώσει δίκην τοῖς ἐχθροῖς καὶ τοῖς μισοῦσιν ἀνταποδώσει καὶ ἐκκαθαριεῖ κύριος τὴν γῆν τοῦ λαοῦ αὐτοῦ), for nothing of the sort is stated or implied in the Hebrew text of Deuteronomy 32:43, and the Hebrew, with its “jots” and “tittles,” was the ultimate authority for the New Testament Christians (Matthew 5:18), not any Greek translation thereof. Indeed, it is likely that the corruption of Deuteronomy 32:43 found its way into copies of the LXX because of the influence of Hebrews 1:6. John Owen wrote: “[T]here are two considerations that put it beyond all

themselves of idols: worship him, all *ye* gods. . . . For thou, LORD, *art* high above all the earth: thou art exalted far above all gods.”³⁰⁹ By referencing the command in Psalm 97 that all “gods” worship Jehovah, Paul identifies Christ in Hebrews 1:6 as the Almighty God and the object of worship for all such “gods.” The Lord Jesus is so far from being in the category of such “gods” that He is distinguished from them all as the object of their worship. God’s eternal Son is not some sort of secondary true god, but is Jehovah Himself, who alone is worthy of worship from all angels and men.

Thus, in every one of the rare instances where the word “god” is used and the reference is not to the one true and living Almighty God, the Scriptures make unmistakable distinctions that leave no room whatever for confusing God and such “gods.” References to false gods, to imaginary pagan idols as “gods” (cf. Jeremiah 16:20) or to individual powerless chunks of wood or stone, such as Baal, as “a god” (Judges 6:31; 1 Kings 18:27),³¹⁰

pretensions that the words are not taken from this place [Deuteronomy 32:43] of the LXX[.] 1.) Because indeed there are no such words in the original text, nor any thing spoken that might give occasion to the sense expressed in them; but the whole verse is inserted in the Greek version quite beside the scope of the place. Now, though it may perhaps be safely granted that the apostles, in citing the Scripture of the Old Testament, did sometimes use the words of the Greek translation then in use, yea, though not exact according to the original, whilst the sense and meaning of the Holy Ghost was retained in them: yet to cite that from the Scripture as the word and testimony of God which indeed is not therein, nor was ever spoken by God, but by human failure and corruption crept into the Greek version, is not to be imputed unto them. And indeed I no way question but that this addition unto the Greek text in that place was made after the apostle had used this testimony [in Hebrews 1:6]. For it is not unlikely but that some considering of it, and not considering from whence it was taken [in Psalm 97:7] . . . inserted it into that place of Moses, amidst other words of an alike sound, and somewhat of an alike importance, such as immediately precede and follow the clause inserted. 2.) The Holy Ghost is not treating in that place [Deuteronomy 32:43] about the introduction of the first-born into the world, but of quite another matter, as is evident upon the first view of the text: so that this testimony is evidently not taken from this place; nor would nor could the apostle make use of a testimony liable unto such just exceptions. Later expositors generally agree that the words are taken out of Psalm 97:7, where the original is rendered by the LXX, προσκυνήσατε αὐτῷ πάντες οἱ ἄγγελοι αὐτοῦ: which, with a very small variation in the words, and none at all in the sense, is [in Hebrews 1:6] expressed by the apostle, ‘And let all the angels of God worship him.’” (*Exposition of Hebrews*, on Hebrews 1:6, by John Owen. Elec. acc. Christian Library Series vol. 9, John Owen Collection. Rio, WI: AGES Digital Software, 2005)

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יְבֹשֶׁתִּי אֲשֶׁר בְּלִבִּי לֹא יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לְאֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים . . . כִּי אֵתְּהָה יְהוָה עֲלֵי
עַל-כֵּן אֲדַבֵּר מִן-הַיָּם וְעַד-הַיָּם לְאֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים:

αἰσχυρθήτωσαν πάντες οἱ προσκυνούντες τοῖς γλυπτοῖς οἱ ἐγκαυχώμενοι ἐν τοῖς εἰδώλοις αὐτῶν προσκυνήσατε αὐτῷ πάντες οἱ ἄγγελοι αὐτοῦ . . . ὅτι σὺ εἶ κύριος ὁ ὕψιστος ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν σφόδρα ὑπερυψώθης ὑπὲρ πάντα τοὺς θεοὺς. (Psalm 96:7, 9 LXX). Note the great similarity between the προσκυνήσατε αὐτῷ πάντες οἱ ἄγγελοι αὐτοῦ of the Greek Old Testament and the προσκυνήσατωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες ἄγγελοι Θεοῦ of Hebrews 1:6.

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The verses above are the only ones where a particular idol is called אֱלֹהִים, and in both references the title is employed with the sharpest irony and mockery of the powerless nature of the imaginary deity. The overwhelming majority of the other 2,600+ references in the Old Testament to the word *Eloheim* refer to the

plainly are entirely unsupportive of the Arian affirmation that there are two true Gods, an Almighty God and a secondary true god, Christ. The false gods of Scripture are abominations, but Arianism affirms that there is a second true god who is good, not abominable. The references to angels and judges as “gods” because of their commission from God are distinguished from references to the Almighty as God because of their plural form and the connection of their title of *gods* with their office as messengers. Such uses of the plural form *gods* do not establish that one can speak of an individual creature as being by nature “a god,” especially since the title *gods* relates to judges and angels in their office as messengers and representatives of God, not to themselves considered absolutely in their nature or essence. Neither do the two references where Moses and Satan respectively are called, for a limited period of time in reference to a specific situation, a “god of something” or “god to someone” provide any support for the idea that any created being can properly and by nature be called “a god.” Among the thousands of references to the word *God* in the Bible, not a single one refers to any being other than the true God as being, by nature or essence, God. Furthermore, the Lord Jesus Christ is specifically identified in Scripture as Jehovah and the rightful recipient of worship from all other “gods.” There are no references to any created being possessing the nature of “a god” by essence, because such a notion is polytheism, pure and simple, and the Bible from Genesis to Revelation teaches monotheism. Arians may ask, “Does saying that Jesus Christ is “a god” conflict with the Bible’s teaching

one living and true God. No reference ever ascribes the title אֱלֹהִים to idols or anything other than a pejorative way (cf. Joshua 22:22). Apart from these texts, in Isaiah 44:10, 15, 17; 45:20; 46:6 the word אֱל (not אֱלֹהִים) is employed for idols (cf. Deuteronomy 32:12; Ezekiel 28:9; Daniel 11:36; Malachi 2:11), again with powerful condemnation of such “gods” as those that are “profitable for nothing” (Isaiah 44:10; cf. Psalm 29:1; 89:6, texts comparable to the use of אֱלֹהִים in Psalm 82.). The rest of the 236 references to אֱל in the Old Testament refer to the true God. Daniel 11:37-39 refers to a false or strange god (11:38-39; cf. Deuteronomy 32:12; Psalm 44:20; 81:9; Isaiah 43:12; Malachi 2:11) with the word אֱלֹהֵי, and the worshipper of the idol is said to come to a miserable end (11:45). Apart from other references to false gods and their abominable character (2 Kings 17:31; 2 Chronicles 32:15; Habakkuk 1:11), the rest of the 58 uses of this word refer to the true God alone. Finally, in Acts 7:40; 12:22; 14:11; 19:26; 28:6, pagans offer worship to idols or humans whom they affirm are gods (θεός/θεοί), and Acts makes the foolishness and wickedness of their actions very evident (cf. Acts 12:23; 14:15), since they are “no gods, which are made with hands” (19:26). Paul refers to “idols” there are merely “called gods,” are “nothing in this world,” since “there is none other God but one” (1 Corinthians 8:4-6). Such “by nature are no gods” (Galatians 4:6). All of the other nearly 1,400 references to the word Θεός in the New Testament refer to the one living and true God.

None of the references with these words gives any support whatsoever to the idea that there is, in an absolute sense, a second true god that is good but is subordinate to another more powerful God.

that there is only one God?” and answer the question “No,”³¹¹ but the actual answer is an unquestionable “Yes!” There is only one Being who is by nature God—He who said, “Is there a God beside me? yea, *there is* no God; I know not *any*” (Isaiah 44:8)—and all the angels and created beings in the universe properly render worship to the Lord Jesus Christ as One who is not a god, but the one God Himself (Psalm 97:7, 9; Hebrews 1:6).

All Arian attempts to support their doctrine from Scripture absolutely fail. They may confound the Trinity with tritheism and refute the notion that there are three gods; they may confound the Trinity with modalism and refute the notion that the Father, Son, and Spirit are the same Person; they may ignore the duality of natures in Christ and prove that the Lord Jesus is fully human; and they may advance various other objections to the Trinity, but none of their objections has any objective value. There are no verses whatever that establish the Arian doctrine of God, and vast numbers of passages that contradict it. On the other hand, there is overwhelming positive evidence from many, many verses for the Trinitarian doctrine of God, but there are no verses whatsoever that contradict it. The one only living and true God, who has given mankind knowledge of Himself through the Bible, is Triune. Recognizing Him as such is essential for the lost if they wish to gain eternal life (John 17:3), and knowing Him as such is a great portion of the glory and joy of the saints on earth and the saints in heaven.

VII. 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

³¹¹ As in the quoted portion from pg. 28 of *Should You Believe In the Trinity?* in the section, “What About Trinity ‘Proof Texts?’” mentioned above.

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.³¹²

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).³¹³

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).
 - 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.³¹⁴
 - x.) Texts that mention the Father and the Son often do not mention the Holy Spirit, so He is not a separate Person.³¹⁵

³¹² Chapter 13, *The Oneness of God*, David Bernard.

³¹³ 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>.

³¹⁴ 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.

³¹⁵ 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).

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)

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.”³¹⁶ Indeed, the Lord Jesus speaks in dozens of texts of “my Father,”³¹⁷ but Christ never even once spoke of “my Son.” Many times the Lord Jesus said He was sent by the Father,³¹⁸ 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.

³¹⁶ 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.

³¹⁷ 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.

³¹⁸ 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.

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[.] . . . 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).³¹⁹ 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:

³¹⁹

Note the exposition of this passage above.

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.³²⁰ (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)
 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

³²⁰ Acts 3:13, 26 employ *παῖς* instead of *υἱός*.

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).³²¹

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

³²¹ 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.

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 become 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 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).³²² In Psalm 2:7-12, King David sets forth the Son of

³²² The phrase בְּרֵאֲלֹהִים 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 בֶּרֶךְ 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”

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

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 אֱלֹהֵינָא 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 אֱלֹהֵינָא 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 אֱלֹהֵינָא in the Old Testament refer to “gods,” rather than to “God” (again, on the assumption that רִוּחַ אֱלֹהֵינָא is “the spirit of the gods” rather than “the Spirit of God,”—yet see Genesis 41:38—the רִוּחַ 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 אֱלֹהֵינָא 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 אֱלֹהֵינָא 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 אֱלֹהֵינָא 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 אֱלֹהֵינָא, “God/gods” in Daniel 3:25, can be used in the plural of the one God of Israel (אֱלֹהֵינָא, 2bδ). Fifth, ancient translational evidence supports the rendering “the Son of God.” The LXX translated Daniel 3:25 with the singular ἀγγελου 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 υἱὸν 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*. Furthermore, “in Akkadian the equivalent plural [to the Aramaic אֱלֹהֵינָא] 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” (אֱלֹהֵינָא עֲלִיָּא) 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 בֶּר 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.

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 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*.³²³

³²³ 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

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 relationship³²⁴ such as that described in v. 18 as being the “Son . . . in the bosom of the 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

χάρις καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐγένετο. 18 Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακε πώποτε· ὁ μονογενὴς υἱός, ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς, ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο.

³²⁴ 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) 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*).

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 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.³²⁵ Consequently, the Son 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

³²⁵ 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 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.

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.³²⁶

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1 Ταῦτα ἐλάλησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς, καὶ ἐπῆρε 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 ὃν 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 τετηρήκασι. 7 νῦν ἔγνωκαν ὅτι πάντα ὅσα δέδωκάς μοι, παρὰ σοῦ ἐστὶν· 8 ὅτι τὰ ῥήματα ἃ δέδωκάς μοι, δέδωκα αὐτοῖς· καὶ αὐτοὶ ἔλαβον, καὶ ἔγνωσαν ἀληθῶς ὅτι παρὰ σοῦ ἐξῆλθον, καὶ ἐπίστευσαν ὅτι σύ με ἀπέστειλας. 9 ἐγὼ περὶ αὐτῶν ἐρωτῶ· οὐ περὶ τοῦ κόσμου ἐρωτῶ, ἀλλὰ περὶ ὧν δέδωκάς μοι ὅτι σοὶ εἰσι· 10 καὶ τὰ ἐμὰ πάντα σὰ ἐστὶ, καὶ τὰ σὰ ἐμὰ· καὶ δεδόξασμαι ἐν αὐτοῖς. 11 καὶ οὐκέτι εἰμὶ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, καὶ οὗτοι ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ εἰσὶ, καὶ ἐγὼ πρὸς σε ἔρχομαι. Πάτερ ἅγιε, τήρησον αὐτοὺς ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου, οὓς δέδωκας μοι, ἵνα ὧσιν ἐν, 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 εἰσὶν ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου, καθὼς ἐγὼ οὐκ εἰμὶ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου. 15 οὐκ ἐρωτῶ ἵνα ἄρῃς αὐτοὺς ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου, ἀλλ' ἵνα τηρήσῃς αὐτοὺς ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ. 16 ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου οὐκ εἰσὶ. καθὼς ἐγὼ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου οὐκ εἰμὶ. 17 ἀγίασον αὐτοὺς ἐν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ σου· ὁ λόγος ὁ σὸς ἀλήθεια ἐστὶ. 18 καθὼς ἐμὲ ἀπέστειλας εἰς τὸν κόσμον, καὶ ἐγὼ ἀπέστειλα αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸν κόσμον. 19 καὶ ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν ἐγὼ ἀγιάζω ἑμαυτόν, ἵνα καὶ αὐτοὶ ὧσιν 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 ἐγὼ ἐν σοί, ἵνα καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἡμῖν ἐν ὧσιν· ἵνα ὁ κόσμος πιστεύσῃ ὅτι σύ με ἀπέστειλας. 22 καὶ ἐγὼ τὴν δόξαν ἣν δέδωκάς μοι, δέδωκα αὐτοῖς, ἵνα ὧσιν ἐν, καθὼς ἡμεῖς ἐν ἐσμεν. 23 ἐγὼ ἐν αὐτοῖς, καὶ σὺ ἐν ἐμοί, ἵνα ὧσι τετελειωμένοι εἰς ἐν, καὶ ἵνα γινώσκῃ ὁ κόσμος ὅτι σύ με ἀπέστειλας, καὶ ἠγάπησας αὐτούς, καθὼς ἐμὲ ἠγάπησας. 24 πάτερ, οὓς δέδωκάς μοι, θέλω ἵνα ὅπου εἰμὶ ἐγὼ, κάκεινοι ὧσι μετ' ἐμοῦ· ἵνα θεωρῶσιν τὴν δόξαν τὴν ἐμὴν, ἣν ἔδωκάς μοι, ὅτι ἠγάπησάς με πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου. 25 πάτερ δίκαιε, 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 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.³²⁷

ὁ κόσμος σε οὐκ ἔγνω, ἐγὼ δέ σε ἔγνω, καὶ οὗτοι ἔγνωσαν ὅτι σύ με ἀπέστειλας· 26 καὶ ἐγνώρισά αὐτοῖς τὸ ὄνομά σου, καὶ γνώρισω ἵνα ἡ ἀγάπη, ἣν ἠγάπησας με, ἐν αὐτοῖς ἦ, καὶ ἐγὼ ἐν αὐτοῖς.

³²⁷ 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 σκοτοῦς, 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

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 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).³²⁸

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.³²⁹

πάσης κτίσεως· 16 ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα, τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, τὰ ὄρατὰ 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.

³²⁸ 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).

³²⁹ 5 τοῦτο γὰρ φρονεῖσθω ἐν ὑμῖν ὃ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ· 6 ὃς ἐν μορφῇ Θεοῦ ὑπάρχων, οὐχ ἀρπαγμὸν ἠγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα Θεῷ, 7 ἀλλ’ ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσε, μορφὴν δούλου λαβὼν, ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος· 8 καὶ σχήματι εὔρεθεῖς ὡς ἄνθρωπος, ἐταπείνωσεν ἐαυτόν,

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).³³⁰ Consequently, the 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 modalists³³¹ 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.”³³² Nor can the exaltation described in v. 9-11 be referred to Christ’s human nature—rather, Jesus Christ’s

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 ἐξομολογήσῃται ὅτι Κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, εἰς δόξαν Θεοῦ πατρὸς.

³³⁰ The participle ὑπάρχων indicates concession and contemporaneous time, depending on the verb ἡγήσατο; “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 εὔρεθεις 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.

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.

³³¹ 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).

³³² Unsurprisingly, the modalist idea that “equal with” in Philippians 2 really means “the same Person as” receives no support from Greek lexica, 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).

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 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?³³³

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 whom³³⁴ the Father “made the worlds.” The Son is the Agent of the

³³³ 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 χαρακτὴρ 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 τίνι γὰρ εἶπέ ποτε τῶν ἀγγέλων, Υἱός 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 πρὸς 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 ἀγαλλιάσεως 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;

³³⁴ 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-existent Son, but that the Father made the world by or through the instrumentality 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 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.

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’ ἧν 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*.

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*,³³⁵ 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

³³⁵ ὀρφανός.

the rest of our lives just like children deprived of their father [*orphanos*].”³³⁶ 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.”

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”

³³⁶

BDAG, ὀρφανός.

(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,³³⁷ 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 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 gender³³⁸ 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,

³³⁷ This teaching has been explained above.

³³⁸ That is, the text reads ἐγὼ καὶ ὁ πατήρ εἶς ἐσμεν, not ἐγὼ καὶ ὁ πατήρ εἶς ἐσμεν.

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.³³⁹ 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 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

³³⁹ In 1 John 3:2, “appear” is φανερώω. 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).

6:16). Third, in the forty-two verses where the word “throne”³⁴⁰ 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 an 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 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 *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

³⁴⁰ 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.

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 Christ³⁴¹ are

³⁴¹ 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

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 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).³⁴² 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.

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.

³⁴² 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.

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.³⁴³

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 Trinitarians believe that 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.³⁴⁴

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

³⁴³ 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.

³⁴⁴ 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).

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)

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.³⁴⁵ The

³⁴⁵ 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

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.³⁴⁶ Careful study will demonstrate that Peter does not assert baptism 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 usually³⁴⁷ 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 1,767³⁴⁸ times. As one might

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.”

³⁴⁶ 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?

³⁴⁷ 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.

³⁴⁸ 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:

expect with a word this common, *eis* has a great variety of meanings in different contexts— as does the English word “for.”³⁴⁹ 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 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”³⁵⁰ or “with respect to” is clearly found in Scripture. This sense of *eis* represents Acts 2:38 as “Repent, and be baptized

Zondervan, 1996).

³⁴⁹ 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.

³⁵⁰ “*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 aphasin 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).

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”³⁵¹ forgiveness. The verse can easily convey a meaning perfectly harmonious with justification by faith before baptism.³⁵²

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.³⁵³ 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.³⁵⁴ For example, John the Baptist preached, “I indeed

³⁵¹ 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.

³⁵² 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 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 aphesin 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.”

³⁵³ 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.”

³⁵⁴ 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

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!³⁵⁵ The affirmation that 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),³⁵⁶ controls a

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).

³⁵⁵ 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 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 Christianity 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?

³⁵⁶ 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”

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 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).³⁵⁷ The call to baptism was only for the “every one of you”³⁵⁸ that had already

(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.

³⁵⁷ Peter’s use of *kathos kai*, “even as,” in Acts 10:47; 15:8 provides further support for the fact that the

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.³⁵⁹ The connection in Acts 2:38 between the receipt of the Holy Spirit and 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

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).

³⁵⁸ “of you” (*hupon*), 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.

³⁵⁹ Ephesians 4:26-27 is an example:

Be ye angry (2nd person plural imperative)
 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).

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.

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.³⁶⁰ Furthermore, even before the gift of tongues, the miraculous ability to speak in known foreign languages, ceased,³⁶¹ 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"³⁶² is dependent upon the aorist verb "received,"³⁶³ and the verse indicates that Paul assumed³⁶⁴ 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."³⁶⁵ 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

³⁶⁰ E. g., 1 John 5:7; Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; John 1:1-18.

³⁶¹ 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.

³⁶² *pisteusantes*.

³⁶³ *elabete*.

³⁶⁴ Consider also the use of *ei* in the question.

³⁶⁵ Pg. 624, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, Daniel Wallace.

Holy Ghost when ye believed?”³⁶⁶ The post-believing coming of the Spirit in miraculous power recorded in Acts 19:6 employs a different Greek word³⁶⁷ than that generally used for the simple receipt of the Spirit as in verse 2.³⁶⁸ 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 epistles.³⁶⁹ 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”³⁷⁰ 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

³⁶⁶ *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.

³⁶⁷ *erchomai*.

³⁶⁸ *lambano*.

³⁶⁹ Romans 8:15; 1 Corinthians 2:12; 2 Corinthians 11:4; Galatians 3:2, 14, cf. the prediction in John 7:39.

³⁷⁰ Chapter 6, “Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,” *The Oneness of God*, David K. Bernard. Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 1995.

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, 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.”³⁷¹ “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.’”³⁷² Some decades later, declarations like the following are found: “For the law of baptizing has been 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.’”³⁷³ 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.

³⁷¹ Didache 7:1.

³⁷² Chapter 9, Ignatius to the Philadelphians.

³⁷³ Chapter 13, *On Baptism*, Tertullian.

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. 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).