

Professor Thomas D. Ross, Th. M.
<http://faithsaves.net>
trkjvbaptist@gmail.com

Trinitarianism Syllabus

List of Documents in the Syllabus:

Course Outline and Assignments

The Triune God of the Bible

Sanctification and Faith in the Trinity in John's Gospel

Mormonism: A Testimony

Watchman Nee, Witness Lee, and the Modalism of the Church of the Recovery Cult

Did the Trinity Come from Paganism?

Does the Son of God Receive Worship?

Should You Believe in the Trinity? (Cult pamphlet of the Watchtower Society filled with Scripture-twisting and lies. We will refute its contents in class.)

An Illustration of Ancient Arian Persecution, Torture, and Slaughter of Anabaptists and all other Trinitarians

Selected Texts Where the Deity of Christ is Attacked or Denied in Modern Bible Versions Because of Corruptions in the Greek Critical Text, with a Brief Defense of the Received Text Readings in These Texts

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

A Scriptural Analysis of the Charismatic Movement

William Branham's Bogus Healings

Will I Be Saved if I Ask Jesus to Come into my Heart or Repeat the "Sinner's Prayer"?

Are You Worshipping Jehovah?

Images and Pictures of Jesus Christ Forbidden by Scripture

Ought we to Pray to the Person of the Holy Spirit? Part 1 & 2

John Owen on Communion with the Triune God

Spirit Baptism: A Completed Historical Event

Reasons Why the Filioque Should Be Maintained

Review Questions for Exams

Hymns Praising the Triune God

Course Outline and Assignments

Required Texts:

The Triunity of God: vol. 4. Of Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725, Richard A. Muller. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003.

The Trinity: Evidence and Issues, Robert Morey. Iowa Falls, IA: Word Bible Publishers, 1996.

Communion with God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, John Owen. Lafayette, IN: Sovereign Grace Publishers, 2001; either the original version or the updated version *Communion with the Triune God*, John Owen, ed. Kelly M. Kapic & Justin Taylor. Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 2007. (The version edited by Kapic and Taylor has quite a number of helpful features that will make the work significantly easier for you to understand; it is recommended unless you are very good at reading English. Owen's unedited version is available free on my website, <http://faithsaves.net>.)

"Should You Believe in the Trinity?" no author stated. Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Society, n. d.

Homework assignments are due on the dates listed.

There is *no paper assigned for this class* because the amount of reading required (Morey, 494 pgs.; portions of Muller, 238 pgs.; Owen, ed. Kapic, 426 pgs. = c. 1158 pgs (and a few handouts). The reading is basically all that is required in terms of homework for the entire course. To show that you understand the reading and are interacting with it, take notes in the margin of the books as you read them, underline what is important, make marginal comments, etc. You will turn in your copy of Morey with your midterm exam (which will cover only the lectures up through that time and the material in Morey), and you will turn in your copy of Muller & Owen (which will cover lectures from after the midterm exam and the material in Muller & Owen, as well as questions found on the midterm exam). You will get the books back after the professor examines your notes in them. You will also need to turn in your reading sheet when you turn in your copies of Morey, Muller, and Owen, respectively. You can read the unassigned portions of Muller and Morey for extra credit. Along with some useful material, there are elements of neo-evangelicalism to watch out for in the first 57 pages of Morey that were not assigned.

You should have the textbooks available with you when we have class, unless specifically instructed otherwise, for we will be discussing material in the textbooks in class time at different points, and helping you to understand some of the more complicated material (which is found in Muller and Owen).

Session #1: Introduction to Trinitarianism & the Definition of the Trinity (handouts: Course Outline and Objections to the Trinity Answered work); Hymns Praising the Trinity from Isaac Watts' hymnal.

Session #2: The Sanctifying Power of Knowing the Trinity & the Definition of the Trinity continued (handout: Sanctifying faith in John's Gospel)

Session #3: Definition of the Trinity Concluded & the Definition of Anti-Trinitarian positions

Session #4: The Revisionist History of Trinitarianism presented by Anti-Trinitarians and the Actual Historical Development of Trinitarianism (handout: Did the Trinity come from Paganism? & "Should You Believe in the Trinity?" by the Watchtower Society; "The Worship of Christ in the NT and early patristic writings")

Session #5: Actual Historical Development of Trinitarianism continued

Session #6: Actual Historical Development of Trinitarianism concluded (handout: Review Questions for Midterm—mention that they could be useful to look through from the first class session)

Session #7: Textual Variants Impacting Trinitarianism & The Exegetical Basis for the Son's being eternally begotten and the Spirit's eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son. Handout: Texts where the Deity of Christ is affected by the modern versions

Session #8: Review for Midterm Exam & Introduction to the Examination of Modern Modalism/Oneness Pentecostalism

Session #9: The Trinity of Persons Defended Against Modern Modalism/Oneness Pentecostalism

Session #10: Modern Modalism/Oneness Pentecostal "Proof-texts" Examined

Session #11: The Old Testament Evidence for the Deity of Christ

Lecture #12, The Old Testament Evidence for the Deity of Christ Concluded and the New Testament Texts where Christ is called "God"

November 3: Morey, pgs. 58-84 (part 1, Chapters 4-6)

November 10: Morey, pgs. 85-164 (part 2, Chapters 7-9)

December 1: Morey, pgs. 165-204 (part 2, Chapters 10-13)

December 8: Morey, pgs. 204-238 (part 3, Chapter 14)

December 15: Morey, pgs. 238-272 (part 4, Chaps. 15-16)

January 12: Morey, pgs. 273-447 (part 4, Chaps. 17-19)

January 19: Morey, pgs 448-541 (part 5 & 6); Midterm exam available; due by February 2

January 26: Muller, pgs. 143-196, The Trinity Defined

February 2: Muller, pgs. 197-274, The Persons in their Unity and Distinction & the Deity and Person of the Father

February 16: Muller, pgs. 275-333, The Person and Deity of the Son

February 23: Muller, pgs. 333-381, The Deity and Person of the Holy Spirit

March 9: "The Triune God of the Bible" handout, by Thomas Ross, and "Should You Believe in the Trinity?" by the Watchtower Society

March 16: Owen, Introduction by Kavic & outline pgs. 53-81 (please do read the outline) in Kavic's ed.

March 30: Owen, part 1 (On Communion with the Father), pgs. 84-134 in ed. of Kavic

April 6: Owen, part 2 (On Communion with the Son) part 1, pgs. 135-228 in ed. of Kavic

April 13: Owen, part 2 sec. 2, pgs. 229-354 in ed. of Kavic

April 27: Owen, part 3 (On Communion with the Holy Ghost), pgs. 355-427 in ed. of Kavic.

May 4: Final exam available; due by May 20th.

Grading scale:

Reading: 25%

Notes on Reading: 25%

Midterm Exam: 20%

Final Exam: 30%

Notes on Morey:

While Robert Morey's book is valuable, there are a variety of shortcomings that students should be aware of. 1.) Morey is a neo-evangelical, not a separatist Baptist. He is also a Calvinist, as are the other two authors of our class texts, although the Calvinism does not negatively impact their Trinitarianism very much, as traditional Baptists and traditional Reformed authors are in at least almost identical agreement on the doctrine of the Trinity. 2.) Morey consistently uses corrupt modern Bible versions, which negatively impacts his conclusions at times. Furthermore, a statement such as "none of the English translations do justice to the Greek text" (pg. 296) is highly dubious—the KJV does do justice to the Greek text. 3.) At times, Morey oversimplifies or mischaracterizes certain matters, or at least misspeaks. For example, on pg. 306, Morey writes: "By 'pre-existence' we mean that while the body of Jesus began with its conception in the womb, the mind or soul of Jesus existed before the conception of His fleshly body. Jesus is, thus, unique in that He was the only man whose soul pre-existed his conception in the womb of his mother." This is extremely poorly stated, and, if Morey actually meant what he said—which I highly doubt that he did—it would be seriously heretical. The human soul and body of the Lord Jesus both came into existence at the incarnation, and did not exist before that time, and Christ as God did not have a human soul. Nor did the Deity replace the human soul of Christ so that He was merely a body indwelt by God so that the Logos replaced the soul. Morey means to say that the Son of God preexisted the incarnation, but he should by no means have said it the way he did. As another example, defending the corrupt critical text reading *monogenes theos* in John 1:18 ("only begotten god/God") instead of the inspired and preserved reading *monogenes Huios* ("only begotten Son,"), Morey states: "The only ones who do not admit that *monogenes theos* is the true reading of the Greek text are Arian cults who still depend almost exclusively on nineteenth century anti-Trinitarian writers." (pg. 326). The fact is that there are countless thousands of godly men who reject the critical text and are not in "Arian cults" who think that one does well to receive the KJV reading "only begotten Son," which is in 99% of Greek manuscripts, while the reading Morey follows is in 0.3% of Greek manuscripts. 4.) Morey rejects the classical Trinitarian doctrine that the Son is eternally begotten of the Father and the Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son. He believes that the Father, Son, and Spirit are eternal, but along with much of weak modern evangelicalism, he rejects the classical Trinitarian formulation of the personal properties of the three Persons. This is a very serious error. 5.) Morey states: "it is important to point out that the word 'Jehovah' first appeared in Europe in the late Middle Ages as an erroneous translation of YHWH" (pg. 484). This is false—see below.

While Morey's book has value, the warnings above should be kept in mind.

The correct pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton is "Jehovah," not "Yahweh," as the following article demonstrates:

The vowels of the Tetragrammaton יהוה, that is, *Yehowah* or *Jehovah* (Exodus 6:3; Psalm 83:18; Isaiah 12:2; 26:4)¹ are not a late addition, but represent the original and

¹ The *MTR* fully points the Tetragrammaton as *Yehowah* (יהוה), while the Hebrew critical text based on the Leningrad MS (codex L) omits the *cholem* (יְהוָה), leaving *Yeh-wah*, which, as it obviously is

true pronunciation of the profoundly significant² Divine Name.³ The commonly repeated modern idea that the pronunciation *Jehovah* is a late and incorrect invention, while

missing a vowel, is more open to critical emendation to an alternative pronunciation. For one who maintains Biblical presuppositions, it is inconceivable that God would allow the correct pronunciation of His Name to be lost (cf. Exodus 3:15, Psalm 9:10, Proverbs 18:10, Joel 2:32), so the pointing actually in the Hebrew text must represent the correct pronunciation, *Yehowah* or *Jehovah*. The difference between the Old Testament *Textus Receptus*, the 1524-5 Rabbinic Bible edited by Ben Chayyim, which “has been printed thousands of times in many countries” (pg. 32, Revell, E. J., trans. & ed., *Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah*, Israel Yeivin, Chico, CA: Scholar’s Press, 1980), and the current critical Hebrew OT, adopted in 1937 and the standard for modern Bible versions, is explained on pgs. 27-28, *Defending the King James Bible*, D. A. Waite, Collingswood, NJ: Bible For Today Press, 1999. It should be noted that, strictly speaking, both the Hebrew *Textus Receptus* and modern critical text are editions of the Ben Asher (as opposed to the Ben Naphtali) Masoretic Text, a point not clearly brought out in the source here listed. The *MTR* is printed today by the Trinitarian Bible Society (*Holy Bible: The Holy Scriptures in the Original Languages: תורה נביאים כתובים*, 1894/1998, Bomberg/Ginsburg ed. *H KAINH ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ*, Beza/Scrivener, 1894. London, England: Tyndale House/Trinitarian Bible Society, 1894/1998) while the critical Hebrew text is available in the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (ed. K. Elliger & W. Rudolph. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1977). The Hebrew critical text contains “many erasures . . . mostly of *ga’ya*, but also of letters and accents[.] . . . The Masora of L occasionally contradicts the text” (pg. 19, Revell, E. J., trans. & ed., *Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah*, Israel Yeivin, Chico, CA: Scholar’s Press, 1980). Furthermore, there are places where ancient evidence supports the *MTR* against the critical Hebrew text. For instance, in Deuteronomy 32:18, the *MTR* contains the word *תִּשִׁי* with a small *yod*, while in codex L the *yod* is of normal size. However, “in *Wayyiqra Rabba*, a midrash compiled before the close of the Talmudic period, it is said *בקרית כוותיה יוד זעיר ולית בקריא כוותיה* (in *Wayyiqra Rabba* 23:13, ed. Margoliouth, p. 548, cf. *Bemidbar Rabba* 9:1). This midrash states that *תִּשִׁי* in Dt 32:18 has a small *yod*, and bases a homily on this fact. Not only this, but the text states in characteristic masoretic terminology that this small *yod* is unique (i. e. it includes enumeration) . . . [H]owever . . . [in codices] such as A and L, this *yod* is written normally, not small, in clear contradiction of the midrashic statement” (pgs. 135-136, *Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah*, trans. & ed. E. J. Revell). Thus, not only does the full pointing of the Divine Name and the providence of God in the preservation of Scripture demonstrate the superiority of the *MTR* to codex L and the modern critical Hebrew text, ancient evidence is also extant that supports the *MTR* against the critical text.

It is possible that the form *יהוה* is a result of considering of the Tetragram as a *qere perpetuum* that possesses the vowels of the Aramaic *שְׁמָא*, “the Name.” It is noteworthy that the actual vowels of the word *Lord*, *אֲדֹנָי*, are never found underneath the Tetragrammaton in any Hebrew text. See pgs. 192-193, *The Name of God YeHoWaH, which is Pronounced as it is Written, I_Eh_oU_Ah: Its Story*, Gérard Gertoux. One note as well that “the Samaritans . . . in reading the Pentateuch substituted for Jehovah (*שְׁמָא*, *shema*) ‘the name,’ at the same time perpetuating the practice in their alphabetical poems and later writings” (“Jehovah,” *Dictionary of the Bible*, William Smith, rev. & ed. H. B. Hackett. Newton Center: 1863. Elec. acc. *Online Bible for Mac*, Ken Hamel).

²

Wilhemus á Brakel expressed the common classical view of the significance of *יהוה*:

[I]t has pleased the Lord to give Himself a name by which He wishes to be called—a name which would indicate His essence, the manner of His existence, and the plurality of divine Persons. The name which is indicative of His essence is *יהוה* or *Jehovah*, it being abbreviated as *יה* or *Jah*. The name which is indicative of the trinity of Persons is *אֱלֹהִים* or *Elohim*. Often there is a coalescence of these two words resulting in *יהוה* or *Jehovi*. The consonants of this word constitute the name *Jehovah*, whereas the vowel marks produce the name *Elohim*. Very frequently these two names are placed side by side in the following manner: *Jehovah Elohim*, to reveal that God is one in essence and three in His Persons.

The Jews do not pronounce the name *Jehovah*. This practice of not using the name *Jehovah* initially was perhaps an expression of reverence, but later became superstitious in nature. In its place they use the name *אֲדֹנָי* or *Adonai*, a name by which the Lord is frequently called in His Word. Its meaning is “Lord.” When this word is used in reference to men, it is written with the letter *patach*, which is the short “a” vowel.

Yahweh is the true pronunciation of the Name,⁴ is false. No known Hebrew MSS on earth actually is vocalized as *Yahweh*. On the other hand, the form *Jehovah* is found in a variety of locations in the oldest Hebrew MSS, such as the Aleppo codex and a variety of “biblical fragments dated between 700 and 900,”⁵ as well as being the universal pointing in the *MTR*. Jewish scholars such as Maimonides (1138-1204) affirmed that the Tetragrammaton was pronounced according to its letters⁶ as *YeHoWaH*. Were, as the common modern notion⁷ affirms, the vowels of the Divine Name simply lifted from אֲדֹנָי, *Adonai*, the ך of the Tetragram would have a *hateph pathach* underneath it, not a *shewa*.⁸

When it is used in reference to the Lord, however, the letter *kametz* is used, which is the long “a” vowel. As a result all the vowels of the name *Jehovah* are present. To accomplish this the vowel “e” is changed into a *chatef-patach* which is the shortest “a” vowel, referred to as the guttural letter *aleph*. Our translators, to give expression to the name *Jehovah*, use the name Lord, which is similar to the Greek word κύριος (*kurios*), the latter being a translation of *Adonai* rather than *Jehovah*. In Rev 1:4 and 16:5 the apostle John translates the name *Jehovah* as follows: “Him which is, and which was, and which is to come.” This one word has reference primarily to being or essence, while having the chronological connotation of past, present, and future. In this way this name refers to an eternal being, and therefore the translation of the name *Jehovah* in the French Bible is *l’Eternel*, that is, the Eternal One.

The name *Jehovah* is not to be found at all in the New Testament, which certainly would have been the case if it had been a prerequisite to preserve the name *Jehovah* in all languages. . . . Even though the transliteration of Hebrew words would conflict with the common elegance of the Greek language, it is nevertheless not impossible. Since they can pronounce the names Jesus, Hosanna, Levi, Abraham, and Hallelujah, they are obviously capable of pronouncing the name *Jehovah*. . . . *Jehovah* is not a common name, such as “angel” or “man”—names which can be assigned to many by virtue of being of equal status. On the contrary, it is a proper Name which uniquely belongs to God and thus to no one else, as is true of the name of every creature, each of which has his own name. (pgs. 84-85, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*, vol. 1)

³ Note the connection made between the Tetragrammaton and the incarnation on pg. 8, *The Doctrines of Grace*, George S. Bishop (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1977).

⁴ The theologically modernistic *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (ed. Karen Van Der Toorn, Bob Becking & Pieter W. Van Der Horst. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999. 2nd rev. ed. pg. 910) states, “Yahweh is the name of the official [G]od of Israel, both in the northern kingdom and in Judah. . . . [T]he correct pronunciation of the tetragrammaton was gradually lost: the Masoretic form ‘Jehovah’ is in reality a combination of the consonants of the tetragrammaton with the vowels of ‘*adonay*.’”

⁵ Pg. 144, *The Name of God YeHoWaH*, Gertoux. It should be noted that יהוה is not by any means uniformly found in the Aleppo Codex; the form in the Leningrad Codex, יהוה, is found with significantly greater frequency. However, even the Leningrad Codex does have a small number of יהוה forms, in, e. g., Psalm 15:1.

⁶ Pgs. 147ff., 214ff., *The Name of God YeHoWaH*, Gertoux.

⁷ In the Reformation era, the pronunciation *Jehovah* obtained general agreement. See pgs. 165-177, *The Name of God YeHoWaH*, Gertoux. It also “found its place in an overwhelming majority of Bibles from 1500 to 1900” (pg. 183, *ibid*; see pgs. 175-183). However, “Louis Cappel (1585-1658),” the first Protestant exponent of the *TMT* position, “maintained that the first syllable [of the Tetragrammaton] was certainly *Iah-*,” supporting the vocalization *Yahweh* (see pg. 210, *The Name of God YeHoWaH*, Gertoux).

⁸ Note pgs. 218-219 in Whitfield, *A Dissertation on the Hebrew Vowel-Points*, for an explanation of the vocalization when *Eloheim* is employed in connection with *Jehovah* and is appropriately rendered in the English Bible as Lord GOD. The vocalization as יהוה (2 Samuel 7:18, etc. *MTR*) for this combination undermines the idea that the simple presence of the *yod* in יהוה explains presence of *hateph pathach* instead of *shewa*, since יהוה retains all the vowels of אֲדֹנָי. However, the Leningrad Codex does read יהוה in certain texts (Deuteronomy 3:24) and יהוה in others (Genesis 15:2).

Furthermore, all the names in Scripture that begin with portions of the Tetragrammaton possess the vowels of *Jehovah*, not of *Yahweh*.⁹ If one wanted to maintain that the vocalization of God's Name had been corrupted in Scripture, contrary to His declarations that nothing of the kind would happen (Psalm 12:6-7; Matthew 5:18), one would also need to maintain that every name in the Bible that begins with part of the Tetragrammaton has also been corrupted. Consider the following table:¹⁰

Jehoadah (1 Chron 8:36)	יְהוָה עָדָה	<i>Jehovah has adorned</i>
Jehoaddan (2 Chron 25:1)	יְהוָה עֲדָן	<i>Jehovah delights</i>
Jehoahaz (2 Kings 10:35)	יְהוָה אָחָז	<i>Jehovah has grasped</i>
Jehoash (2 Kings 11:21)	יְהוָה אָשׁ	<i>Jehovah is strong</i>
Jehohanan (1 Chron 26:3)	יְהוָה חַנָּן	<i>Jehovah has been gracious</i>
Jehoiachin (2 Kings 24:6)	יְהוָה יָכִין	<i>Jehovah appoints</i>
Jehoiada (2 Samuel 8:18)	יְהוָה יָדַע	<i>Jehovah knows</i>
Jehoiakim (2 Kings 23:34)	יְהוָה יָקָם	<i>Jehovah raises up</i>
Jehoiarib (1 Chron 9:10)	יְהוָה יָרִיב	<i>Jehovah contends</i>

Benjamin Davidson in his *Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992), although approaching the pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton on *TMT* presuppositions, still writes, "The punctuators seem to intimate the originality of the vowels of יְהוָה by not pointing *Yod* with *Chateph-Patah* (יֶהוָה) to indicate the reading of אֶרְגִּי just as they point it with *Chateph-Segol* to indicate the reading of אֶלֶהִים. We could, moreover, not account for the abbreviated forms יְהוּ, יָ prefixed to so many proper names, unless we consider the vowels of יְהוָה original."

⁹ "[A]ccording to the Masoretic text, theophoric names, which have a part of the Tetragram integrated at the beginning of the name, were, at that time, all pronounced YeHÔ-, *without exception*. Consequently, because the Tetragram is the theophoric name par excellence (arguing otherwise would be absurd), and since it is spelled YHW-H, its reading must be YeHÔ-aH in order to conform to all other theophoric names" (pg. 215, *The Name of God YeHoWaH*, Gertoux).

¹⁰ Compare the excellent article "Jehovah," by Scott Jones, which includes a similar table, and is available at <http://www.lamblion.net/Articles/ScottJones/jehovah1.htm>. Only a single verse reference for each of the *Jehovah* names listed above is included, but the list above is intended to include every *Jeho*-name in Scripture. Most of the names listed above also have shorter forms with the ה omitted (e. g., יְהוָה, 2 Kings 14:1; יְהוָה, Judges 6:1; יְהוָה, 1 Chronicles 12:20) to avoid an accidental or improper use of the Divine Name. "There are . . . a number of compound names in the Bible into the composition of which three out of the four letters of the Incommunicable Name have entered. Moreover, these letters which begin the names in question are actually pointed יְהוּ, *Jeho*, as the Tetragrammaton itself and hence in a pause at the reading of the first part of the name it sounded as if the reader was pronouncing the Ineffable Name. To guard against [this] . . . the letter *He* ה [was omitted] so that the first part of the names in question [was] altered from *Jeho* (יְהוּ) into *Jo* (יֹ)" (pg. 369, *Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible*, Christian D. Ginsburg. New York, NY: Ktav Publishing, 1966 (orig. pub. 1897)). "[T]he pronunciation Yehova . . . [is] in agreement with the beginning of all theophoric names, [and is] the authentic pronunciation, contrary to the form Yahvé of Samaritan origin. . . . [A]ll theophoric names in the Masoretic text follow the phonetic pattern 'Yehô-a.'" (pgs. 174, 189 *The Name of God, YeHoWaH*, Gertoux; cf. pg. 210). Note also Thomas Strouse, "Who is this Deity Named Yahweh?" <http://www.deanburgonsociety.org/CriticalTexts/yahweh.htm>.

Jehonadab (2 Kings 10:15)	יְהוֹנָדָב	<i>Jehovah is noble</i>
Jehonathan (1 Chron 27:25)	יְהוֹנָתָן	<i>Jehovah has given</i>
Jehoram (1 Kings 22:50)	יְהוֹרָם	<i>Jehovah is exalted</i>
Jehoseph (Psalm 81:5/6)	יְהוֹסֵף	<i>Jehovah has increased</i>
Jehoshabeath (2 Chr 22:11)	יְהוֹשָׁבֵעַת	<i>Jehovah is an oath</i>
Jehoshaphat (2 Sam 8:16)	יְהוֹשָׁפָט	<i>Jehovah has judged</i>
Jehosheba (2 Kings 11:2)	יְהוֹשֶׁבַע	<i>Jehovah has sworn</i>
Jehoshua (Num 13:16) ¹¹	יְהוֹשֻׁעַ	<i>Jehovah is salvation</i>
Jehozabad (2 Kings 12:21)	יְהוֹזָבָד	<i>Jehovah hath bestowed</i>
Jehozadak (1 Chron 6:14)	יְהוֹזָדָק	<i>Jehovah is righteous</i>

Thus, it is very evident that the first section of the Divine Name is pronounced as it is written, *Jehovah*, not *Yahweh*.¹²

Names of people and places that end with the Divine Name likewise evidence that *Jehovah* is correct, rather than *Yahweh*. Consider the following examples:¹³

Abiah (1 Samuel 8:2)	אֲבִיָּה	<i>Jehovah is (my) father</i>
Ahiah (1 Samuel 14:3)	אֲחִיָּה	<i>brother of Jehovah</i>
Amaziah (2 Kings 12:21)	אֲמַצְיָה	<i>Jehovah is mighty</i>
Athaliah (2 Kings 11:3)	עֲתָלְיָה	<i>afflicted of Jehovah</i>

¹¹ *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Ludwig Koehler & Walter Baumgartner, trans. & ed. M.E.J. Richardson. Leiden, The Netherlands: 2000) states that “Joshua [is] the first name in OT containing [Jehovah]” (though it then mentions as prior the shortened name יֹשֻׁעַ, found in Exodus 6:20; Numbers 26:59; the names Aliah (עֲלִיָּה) in 1 Chronicles 1:51 and Beriah (בְּרִיָּה) in Genesis 46:17 are not theophoric). It is noteworthy that this theophoric name was specifically chosen by Moses for the man formerly named simply Oshea (הוֹשֵׁעַ, Numbers 13:16), and the name taken by the Messiah and Son of God, the Lord Jesus (Heb. Joshua; cf. Hebrews 4:8). However, Koehler & Baumgartner neglect the earlier theophoric name *Joseph*, יוֹסֵף (Genesis 30:24; cf. Genesis 22:2, בְּרִיָּה). However, it is true that *Joshua/Jehoshua* is the first theophoric name which contains the unabbreviated *Jeho-*, which is not found in יֹשֻׁעַ or יוֹסֵף. Note that *Jehoshua/Joshua* can be written as יְהוֹשֻׁעַ (Exodus 17:9) as well as יְהוֹשֻׁעַ.

¹² A consistent advocate of the pronunciation *Yahweh* should insist upon changing all these Biblical names from, e. g., Jehoahaz to Yahwahaz, Jehoshaphat to Yahweshapaht, Jehoshua to Yahweshua, and so on.

¹³ Unlike the *Jeho-* names, the list above is only representative, not comprehensive. Like the list of *Jeho-* names, only one reference where a name is found is listed. There are many names that end in יָה (iah) that are not included, for there are a great many more of such names in Scripture than there are *Jeho-* names. The English letter *i* appears on these names, not because a Hebrew *chireq* uniformly precedes the יָה, but because the ך is transliterated as *i* instead of as *y*. An examination of the names above in Hebrew will validate that no single vowel uniformly precedes the יָה. Furthermore, it should be noted that very many of the *iah* names also have forms ending in יָהוּ. For example, equivalents to the first three names (אֲבִיָּה, אֲחִיָּה, אֲמַצְיָה) are found in 2 Chronicles 13:20 (אֲבִיָּהוּ), 1 Kings 14:4 (אֲחִיָּהוּ), and 2 Kings 14:1 (אֲמַצְיָהוּ).

Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:1)	חֶזְקִיָּה	<i>Jehovah is my strength</i>
Hilkiah (2 Kings 18:37)	חִלְקִיָּה	<i>My portion is Jehovah</i>
Jedidiah (2 Samuel 12:25)	יְדִידְיָה	<i>beloved of Jehovah</i>
Jesaiah (1 Chron 3:21)	יֵשַׁעְיָה	<i>Jehovah has saved</i>
Jeremiah (Jeremiah 27:1)	יֵרֵמְיָה	<i>Jehovah has founded</i>
Josiah (1 Kings 13:2)	יֹאשָׁיָה	<i>whom Jehovah heals</i>
Micaiah (2 Kings 22:12)	מִיכָיָה	<i>Who is like Jehovah?</i>
Moriah (Genesis 22:2)	מֹרְיָה	<i>chosen by Jehovah</i>
Obadiah (1 Chron 3:21)	עֲבַדְיָה	<i>servant of Jehovah</i>
Pekahiah (2 Kings 15:22)	פִּקְחִיָּה	<i>Jehovah sees</i>
Seraiah (2 Samuel 8:17)	שֶׁרְיָה	<i>Jehovah is ruler</i>
Shemaiah (1 Kings 12:22)	שְׁמַעְיָה	<i>heard by Jehovah</i>
Uriah (2 Samuel 11:3)	אוּרְיָה	<i>Jehovah is my light</i>
Uzziah (2 Kings 12:21)	אֲמִצְיָה	<i>Jehovah is mighty</i>
Zachariah (2 Kings 14:29)	זַכְרְיָה	<i>Jehovah remembers</i>
Zedekiah (1 Kings 22:11)	צִדְקִיָּה	<i>Jehovah is righteous</i>

These names evidence that *Jehovah* is the correct ending for the Tetragrammaton, not *Yahweh*. They employ the shortened form of *Jehovah*, *Jah* (Psalm 68:4, יָהּ),¹⁴ which combines the first letter of the Name (י) with the ה at the end, validating that *ah*, not *eh* or some other vocalization, properly ends the Tetragram.¹⁵ Both the *Jehovah* names ending in *ah* and the shortened form *Jah* itself validate that the final syllable of the Name is *ah*, not *eh*. No theophoric names anywhere in Scripture end with an *eh*, the expected ending were the Name pronounced *Yahweh*. Similarly, the word *Hallelujah* (Psalm 104:35; 105:45; 106:1, 48; הַלְלֵי־יְהוָה/הַלְלֵי יְהוָה) and the Greek *Alleluia* (Revelation 19:1-6; ἁλληλουῖα) validate the *ah* at the end of the Divine Name.

¹⁴ Note the use of *Jah* and *Jehovah* together in Isaiah 12:2; 26:4.

¹⁵ The advocate of the pronunciation *Yahweh* could argue that יָהּ does not combine the beginning and ending of the longer יְהוָה, but rather constitutes the first portion of the Name, thus supporting an initial syllable of *Yah* instead of *Yeh/Jeh*. However, the fact that all the theophoric names that clearly do contain the initial portion of the Tetragram read as *Yeho* not as *Yah* makes this idea unlikely. Furthermore, the *mappiq* in יָהּ is expected only if the ה is a final consonant, which also suggests that the ה represents the concluding portion of the Tetragrammaton. Note that certain theophoric names, such as 2 Samuel 12:25's יְדִידְיָהּ, also contain the *mappiq*. Thus, when theophoric names end with the Name, it is reasonable to think that the final portion of the name, the ה of *Jehovah*, is combined with the initial consonant י.

Furthermore, the Mishna states that the Name was pronounced as it was written, that is, as יהוה, *Jehovah*.¹⁶ This pronunciation is also consistent with Talmudic evidence.¹⁷ The plain evidence of what the vowels on the Name actually are, other theophoric names, the Mishna, and a variety of other evidences demonstrate that the Tetragrammaton is correctly pronounced *Jehovah*.

In contrast to the strong evidence in favor of the pronunciation *Jehovah*, very little favors the pronunciation *Yahweh*. Since this latter pronunciation is not favored by any evidence in the Hebrew of the Bible, nor in other ancient Jewish documents, its advocates must look outside of Scripture and Jewish texts for evidence in its favor. This they find in the late patristic writers “Theodoret . . . and Epiphanius . . . [who] give Ιαβε” as the pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton, although “the former distinguish[es] it as the pronunciation of the Samaritans.”¹⁸ These statements constitute the most substantive and

¹⁶ Thus, the Mishna records, “In the sanctuary they would pronounce the [divine] name as it is written, and in the provinces, by an epithet” (*Tamid* 7:2: וּבְמִדְיָנָה בְּכִנְיֹוֹ (בְּמִקְדָּשׁ). It should be noted that the idea that the Jews always forbade the pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton is false. In addition to the quotation above, the Mishna speaks of the “voice of the high priest when he made mention of the Divine name on the Day of Atonement” (*Tamid* 3:8: בְּיוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים). Likewise, the Talmud affirms that the Tetragram was pronounced. It declares that, on the Day of Atonement, “Ten times that day [the High Priest] pronounced the Divine Name, three in the first confession, three in the second confession, three in connection with the he-goat that is sent away, and one in connection with the lots” (*Yoma* 39A, *Babylonian Talmud*, trans. Neusner). Likewise, *Yoma* 69B reads, “‘And Ezra blessed, the Lord, the great God’ (Nehemiah 8:6). What is the meaning here of ‘great’? Said R. Joseph said Rab, ‘It means that he magnified him by using the Ineffable Name of God. . . . [A]nd Ezra praised the great God’ (Nehemiah 8:4-6) . . . [S]aid R. Giddal, ‘It means that he magnified him by using the Ineffable Name of God.’”

While “the pronunciation of the Name became forbidden . . . at the time of Abba Shaül in the second century . . . before the priesthood of Simon the Just (3rd century [B. C.]) . . . the name was used even outside of the Temple” (pg. 214, *The Name of God YeHoWaH*, Gertoux). The Name was known and pronounced by Adam and Eve (Genesis 4:1) and their descendants, such as Abraham (Genesis 13:4). It was known and pronounced in Israel (Exodus 7:16), and known and pronounced by Gentiles (2 Chronicles 2:11). A simple study of the Tetragram in Scripture testifies to its common use. Archeology evidences that the Tetragrammaton was pronounced commonly enough in Israel that it was known to the surrounding nations, as is evidenced, for example, by the presence of the Name on the Moabite Mesha Stone (850 B. C.; note the translation of the Stone in the article “Yahweh,” *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*). The practice of pronouncing the Tetragrammaton continued until after the completion of the canon. A prohibition of saying *Jehovah* is not only dangerous because it is entirely absent from Scripture, but the connection between the God one names and the Deity one worships (Exodus 23:13; Joshua 23:7; Jeremiah 10:25; Joel 2:32; Romans 10:13) makes a prohibition the more unbiblical.

¹⁷ The declaration of *Sotah* 10b, 36b, that the name *Judah*, יהודה, contains the name of God (“To . . . Judah, who sanctified the name of Heaven in public, they gave the entire name of the Holy One, blessed be he.” *Sotah* 36b; cf. “Judah . . . had . . . the entire set of letters of the name of the Holy One, blessed be he . . . [in] his name”, *Sotah* 10b, trans. Neusner) supports the translation *Jehovah*. The entire vocalization (except for the ו) of יהוה are in the name יהודה; *Yahweh* does not have any of the vowels of יהוה.

¹⁸ “Jehovah,” *Dictionary of the Bible*, William Smith, rev. & ed. H. B. Hackett. The article also mentions that others writers speculated that the pronunciation was Ιαω, Ιεω, Ιαου, or Ιαουε. (The pronunciation Ιαουε, which is in some manuscripts of 2 and 3 Clement, and is also somewhat close to

strongest argument in favor of the pronunciation *Yahweh*.¹⁹ Also, papyri involving pagan magic, and “which . . . are not to be conceived of as transcriptions of the Tetragrammaton . . . [and in which] every possible and impossible designation of deities, Greek, Egyptian and Semitic, is found in profuse variety, just as, in general, this whole class of literature is characterized by a peculiar syncretism of Greek, Egyptian and Semitic ideas”²⁰ contain invocations that sound like the word *Yahweh*.²¹ To use the speculations of two patristic

Yahweh, has as a textual variant Ιαου, so it is not certain that Ιαουε exists at all as a patristic pronunciation. See the table in Deismann, *Bible Studies*, pg. 317.) The dictionary concludes, “even if these writers were entitled to speak with authority, their evidence only tends to show in how many different ways the four letters of the word יהוה could be represented in Greek characters, and throws no light either upon its real pronunciation or its punctuation. . . . In the absence, therefore, of anything satisfactory from these sources, there is plainly left a wide field for conjecture.”

¹⁹ The (ed. Karen Van Der Toorn; article “Yahweh,” pgs. 910-919, note 910-924) provides no other arguments in its extensive article in favor of the *Yahweh* pronunciation than the references by Ephiphanius and Theodoret and a textually suspect reading of Clement of Alexandria (cf. the previous footnote), omitting the fact that Theodoret said that Ιαβε was a Samaritan pronunciation rejected by the Jews and the textual problems in Clement’s alleged Ιαουε. The evidence in favor of the pronunciation *Jehovah* is likewise entirely omitted. While omitting all the evidence in favor of *Jehovah* and omitting the problems with the pronunciation *Yahweh*, the *Dictionary* had plenty of room for detailed descriptions of the most ridiculous and blasphemous modernistic speculations on the origin and development of the worship of Jehovah in Israel.

Other arguments in favor of the form *Yahweh* are certainly made at times; the examination below is not comprehensive, and, in light of the tremendous amount of speculation and discussion about the pronunciation of the Name, exhaustive analysis would be beyond the scope of this sketch. Let it be sufficient that other arguments against *Jehovah* and in favor of *Yahweh*, such as that the latter pronunciation “was common to religions other than Israel’s . . . having been found in Babylonian inscriptions[,] [and] Ammonite, Arabic and Egyptian names appear . . . to contain it” (“God, Names of,” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, James Orr, gen. ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1939, elec. acc. *Online Bible for Mac*), are not especially convincing to one with Christian presuppositions, and the conclusions advanced by the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* given above are disputed (cf. “Yahweh,” *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*). Uncertain evidence that pagan religions worshipped a god called *Yahweh* certainly does not prove that the one God of Israel would receive such a name. For a history of the discussion of the pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton (albeit with certain unbiblical biases—note the anti-Trinitarianism on pgs. 218-222), see *The Name of God YeHoWaH, which is Pronounced as it is Written, I_Eh_oU_Ah: Its Story*, Gérard Gertoux. Other treatises on the pronunciation of the Tetragram are mentioned by Smith and others, and an extensive bibliography is found in the *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*.

²⁰ Pg. 323-324, Deismann, *Bible Studies*.

²¹ Deismann (*Bible Studies*, pg. 324ff.) records the following forms (among others) that he thinks could possibly sound like the Tetragrammaton, all of which are invoked in these pagan papyri: ιαω; ιαωαι; ια; ιαωια; ιαη (which Deismann admits occurs in the midst of “other meaningless permutations of . . . vowels,” pg. 325); αη; αϊα; ιαωτ; ιαωθ; ιαουε; ιαωουη; ιηουοει; ιαωουη; ιαωουη; ιεουαηω; ηηουιαω; ιαβε; ιαβοε; ιαβα; ιαβαωθ; ιαβας. Discussing some of these forms, he writes, “We must first of all investigate whether the said forms do not belong to the manifold permutations of the seven vowels, which are all but universally considered to be capricious and meaningless, mocking every possible attempt at explanation, and which can therefore, now less than ever, yield a basis for etymological conjectures. . . . [O]ther [names] again appear to have no special meaning, for . . . magical formulae are formed from the seven vowels αηιουω and their permutations and combinations . . . in all probability there were magic formulae formed from the consonants also, now Hebraising, now Egyptianising, now Graecising, and without any definite meaning. . . . The value of the vocalic transcriptions . . . for the

writers—one of whom even specifies that *Yahweh* was a Samaritan pronunciation, and that the Jews used something else²²—to overthrow the vocalization of the Name in the *MTR*, *Jehovah*, is entirely unjustifiable. To use a name found in some pagan papyri that are invoking numberless idols and demons to reject *Jehovah* is even worse. The evidence for the pronunciation *Yahweh* is very poor, and totally insufficient to overthrow the powerful and numerous evidences in favor of the pronunciation *Jehovah*.

Thus, it is evident that *Jehovah* is the correct pronunciation of the Name of God.²³ *Jehovah* has not allowed the pronunciation of His Name to be lost.²⁴

determination of [the Tetragrammaton's] true pronunciation appears to us, by reason of the diffuse and capricious usage of the vowels which we find throughout the Magic Literature, to be at most very small. The very great uncertainty of the traditional texts must also be urged as an objection to [these papyri] being so employed. Nowhere could copyists' errors be more easily made, nowhere are errors in reading by editors more possible, than in these texts. Let any one but attempt to copy half a page of such magic formulae for himself: the eye will be continually losing its way because there is no fixed point amidst the confusion of meaningless vowels by which it can right itself" (pg. 329-330, *Bible Studies*). To take the fact that a word that sounds like *Yahweh* is found within lists of meaningless jabber and countless permutations of vowels and consonants designed to assist one in performing pagan magic is about as valid a method of determining the vocalization of the Tetragrammaton as concluding that whatever sounds pop into one's head after asking Merlin the Wizard for help and saying *Abra Cadabra* provide evidence for the proper pronunciation of God's holy Name.

²² Theodore affirmed that the Jews said ΑΙΩ, according to the article "Jehovah," *Dictionary of the Bible*, William Smith, rev. & ed. H. B. Hackett—but other MSS of Theodore affirm he said the Jews call God ΙΩ (see pg. 326, Deismann, *Bible Studies*), which, since it sounds like the actual Biblical designation *Jah* (יָה), is quite likely what his actual affirmation was.

²³ Deismann records that "J. M. Gesner . . . believed that he had discovered the Divine name *Jehovah* in the vowel series [found in Greek texts of] ΙΕΗΩΟΥΑ" (pg. 328, *Bible Studies: Contributions Chiefly from Papyri and Inscriptions to the History of the Language, the Literature, and the Religion of Hellenistic Judaism and Primitive Christianity*, G. Adolf Deismann, trans. Alexander Grieve, (3rd ed., Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1923, orig. pub. 1901, citing *De laude dei per septem vocales* in the *Commentationes Soc. Reg. Scient. Götting.*, i. (1751), p. 245 ff.), a noteworthy fact, although Deismann did not agree with Gesner. Smith also dissents from Gesner in "Jehovah," *Dictionary of the Bible*, William Smith, rev. & ed. H. B. Hackett. One would need to exercise great care to verify the correctness of Gesner's thesis before employing it as legitimate evidence.

²⁴ If the pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton had been lost, then the promise, "this *is* my name for ever, and this *is* my memorial unto all generations" (Exodus 3:15) has failed. This idea also runs contrary to many other verses, such as: "And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee" (Psalm 9:10); "The name of the LORD *is* a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe" (Proverbs 18:10); "And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered" (Joel 2:32); "The LORD hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee . . . Some *trust* in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God" (Psalm 20:1, 7); "Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name. . . . Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake" (Psalm 79:6, 9); "And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God; and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth" (Micah 5:4). The Messiah receives the name *Jehovah* as well (Jeremiah 23:5-6).

Consistency would seem to require that one who affirmed that the Tetragrammaton never be pronounced also abstain from employing words such as *Hallelujah*, since both the unabridged *Jehovah* and the shortened form *Jah*, found in *Hallelujah*, are considered the Name (Psalm 68:4; 83:18).

One notes as well that the inspired explanation of the significance of the Tetragrammaton is “I AM THAT I AM” and “I AM” (אֲנִי אֶהְיֶה . . . אֲנִי אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה) as in the Authorized Version in Exodus 3:14. “I will be what I will be” or some other future significance, is inferior to the view that gives the imperfect verb אֶהְיֶה a gnomic significance expressing the true God’s self-existence and eternity. “I AM” is supported by the Lord Jesus’ declaration that He is the very “I AM” (ἐγώ εἰμι, John 8:58) and by the LXX rendition of Exodus 3:14 as ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὢν . . . ὁ ὢν. Note also Revelation 1:4, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος. The idea that Exodus 3 specifies the Name as a Hiphil form possessing the idea of “causing to be” is invalid, since “the causative form of the verb ‘to become, to be’ does not exist in Hebrew and it has never existed” (pg. 211, *The Name of God YeHoWah*, Gertoux). Nor does אֲנִי signify “I AM,” as does אֶהְיֶה. In the words of the Moses Maimonides, “God taught Moses how to teach them and how to establish amongst them the belief in the existence of Himself, namely, by saying *Ehyeh asher Ehyeh*, a name derived from the verb *hayah* in the sense of ‘existing,’ for the verb *hayah* denotes ‘to be,’ and in Hebrew no difference is made between the verbs ‘to be’ and ‘to exist.’ The principle point in this phrase is that the same word which denotes ‘existence’ is repeated as an attribute. . . . This is, therefore, the expression of the idea that God exists, but not in the ordinary sense of the term; or in other words, He is ‘the existing being which is the existing Being,’ that is to say, the Being whose existence is absolute” (*The Guide for the Perplexed*, Moses Maimonides, trans. M. Friedlaender (London: George Routledge, 1956) pgs. 94-5. Cited pgs. 50-51, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 3: *The Divine Essence and Attributes*, Richard A. Muller. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003.).

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,²⁵ are rejected (Revelation 22:18-19;

²⁵

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

Ephesians 2:20; 1 Corinthians 13:8). These 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,

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 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: תורה נביאים כתובים*, 1894/1998; Η ΚΑΙΝΗ ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ, Beza/Scrivener, 1894, etc.). It should be noted that the Hebrew *Textus Receptus*, employed in this work, fully points the Tetragrammaton, unlike the Lenningrad Codex.

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 Godhead²⁶ would be, “One God in essence²⁷ who eternally exists in three distinct Persons,²⁸ the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”²⁹ A

²⁶ 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.

²⁷ 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, ὄν . . . [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 Triunity 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 Triunity 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.).

²⁸ 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 Triunity 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 form 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

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 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.”³⁰ An ancient classical definition,³¹ which deals both with the nature of the relations of the three in the Triune God³² and with the incarnation of the Son, the change that took place when He became man, states:

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 Triunity of God*, vol. 4, Richard A. Muller).

²⁹ 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).

³⁰ *The London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, 2:1, 3.

³¹ 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.

³² 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) Spiritation 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.).

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 with³³ 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.³⁴ He was 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,³⁵ 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; consubstantial³⁶ 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,³⁷ but the peculiarity of each nature being maintained,

³³ Greek *homoousios*, of the same *ousia* as the Father.

³⁴ 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 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).

³⁵ See Excursus #1 below for more detail on the hypostatic union.

³⁶ Greek *homoousios*.

³⁷ 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

and both concurring in one person and hupostasis.³⁸ 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.³⁹

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.⁴⁰ For there is one person of the Father: another of the Son: another of the Holy Ghost.⁴¹ 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:

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*.

³⁸ Greek *hupostasis*.

³⁹ 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 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.

⁴⁰ 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*.)

⁴¹ *Holy Ghost* and *Holy Spirit* are identical phrases, both representing the Greek *Pneuma Hagion* (cf. Mark 13:11; Luke 11:13).

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 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.⁴²

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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*

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;⁴³

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.

⁴³ "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 "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.'

one altogether; not by 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 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 worded⁴⁴ and thought out⁴⁵ definitions.⁴⁶ They have

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).

⁴⁴ 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,

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 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

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).

⁴⁵ 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.

⁴⁶ 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.

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 to-day, 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*, *phusis*, *natura*). Father, Son, and Spirit are one in essence, or consubstantial (*homousioi*). 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* (*phusis*) . . . 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.⁴⁷ The word *person* is in reality only a make-shift, in 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 filiation*), 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,⁴⁸ mutually interpenetrate, and form a perpetual *intercommunication* and *motion* within the divine essence; as the Lord says: "I

⁴⁷ 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).

⁴⁸ 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)—

am in the Father, and the Father in me;” and “the Father . . . dwelleth in me” [John 14:10-11; cf. John 10:38].⁴⁹ This perfect indwelling and vital communion was afterwards designated (by John of Damascus and the scholastics) by such terms as *enuparxis*, *perichoresis*, *inexistentia*, *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-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,

A(5). Elec. acc. *Systematic Theologies*, vol. 17, Christian Library Series, Rio, WI: AGES Digital Software Library, 2006.).

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Note in John 14:10 that the correct text is ὁ δὲ πατὴρ 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.

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 characteristical 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;

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.⁵⁰

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,⁵¹ 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

⁵⁰ 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 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).

⁵¹ 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.

of Victor Paul Wierwille.⁵² All religions that fall outside of Christendom also reject the

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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 eternal 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 prophetess, 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 “prophetess” 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 possessed 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 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

Lord Jesus' unique Deity, including Islam, modern Judaism, the various forms of Buddhism and Hinduism, Sikhism, other Eastern religions, Masonry, and Scientology.⁵³ 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,"⁵⁴ 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."⁵⁵ Having denied

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?

⁵³ See pgs. 688ff, *Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions*, John Ankerberg & John Weldon, Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publications, 1999, for documentation.

⁵⁴ 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.

⁵⁵ 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

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.⁵⁶ The most prominent and zealous representative of contemporary Bible-affirming Unitarianism is the Watchtower Society, otherwise known as Jehovah's Witnesses.⁵⁷ 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,⁵⁸ and the Spirit is the

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?")

⁵⁶ 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.

⁵⁷ 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.

⁵⁸ 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 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?

impersonal⁵⁹ “active force” of the Father.⁶⁰ A rejection of the Trinitarian affirmation that

⁵⁹ 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. 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).

⁶⁰ 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 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

the Father, Son, 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).

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),⁶¹ 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, ontological⁶² and personal distinctions, the modalist believes Father, Son, and Spirit are

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.

⁶¹ 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.

⁶² *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

designations for the same Person,⁶³ emphasizing only different modes, manifestations, or functions of the one, solitary Person of God.⁶⁴ They deny that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are three essential and eternal distinctions in the one God.⁶⁵ Modalism takes

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.

⁶³ Some modalists reject the use of the word Person (Greek *hupostasis*) for God.

⁶⁴ “[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).

⁶⁵ 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 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

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 economic⁶⁶ 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, 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.⁶⁷ The fundamental heresy of all modalists is the rejection of the three eternal, personal distinctions in the one being of God.⁶⁸

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."

⁶⁶ *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.

⁶⁷ 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).

⁶⁸ 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

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

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 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 (μόναξ), 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).

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 universe, and all the people currently on the earth are the product of sexual union between a father god and a mother god.⁶⁹ 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

⁶⁹ 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.

Trinitarianism that have any even apparent plausibility⁷⁰ for those committed to the sole authority of the Bible.

IV. Biblical Proof for the Doctrine of the Trinity

⁷⁰ 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 . . . 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.

(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 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. [the section with this objection has been moved to a separate section of the syllabus.]

Arian arguments against the Trinity that involve verses of Scripture may be divided into four major categories.⁷¹ 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.⁷² 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

⁷¹ 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.

⁷² These terms are defined in footnote #21.

“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 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,⁷³ 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 Trinity 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.⁷⁴ . . . 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

⁷³ 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.

⁷⁴ 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).

no equal.”⁷⁵

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 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.⁷⁶ 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 eternals; 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: . . . [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.”⁷⁷ 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.

⁷⁵ 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.

⁷⁶ 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.

⁷⁷ 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.”

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).⁷⁸ 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.⁷⁹ 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

⁷⁸ 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 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).

⁷⁹ 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.

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 to the Church, no doubt. But this very idea . . . marked them out as idolaters.”⁸⁰ 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.”⁸¹ 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.”⁸² Modern Arians agree with their ancient counterparts that the Son can get “worship” as “a god.”⁸³ 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

⁸⁰ 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.

⁸¹ 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.

⁸² 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

⁸³ The *Watchtower*, 15 Feb 1983, pg. 18.

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.

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?⁸⁴ . . . 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.⁸⁵

Verses mentioned by Arians to support the fact that the Father, Son, and Spirit⁸⁶ 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

⁸⁴ See footnote #45 for the misrepresentation involved here.

⁸⁵ *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.

⁸⁶ 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.

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 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.”⁸⁷ Trinitarians reject modalism, and modern modalistic groups, such as Oneness Pentecostalism, vehemently reject the Trinity.⁸⁸ 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

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 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).

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, a Son god, and a Holy Spirit god, then to argue that someone who is “with another person cannot also be that other person”⁸⁹ 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.⁹⁰ 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.⁹¹ 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.

⁸⁹ 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.

⁹⁰ Note that both arguments are repeatedly and strongly urged in the piece of Arian literature produced by the Watchtower society quoted above.

⁹¹ 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.

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 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.⁹² However, John 1:18 defines the “God” whom nobody has seen at any time as “the Father,” who “the only begotten Son” has “declared.”⁹³ 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

⁹² “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).

⁹³ The fact that the Son can “declare” the Father requires His Divinity. The word is ἐξηγήσατο, an aorist middle indicative of ἐξηγέομαι, 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 ἐξηγέομαι 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 (ἐξηγέομαι) 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).

major problems for the Unitarian⁹⁴ 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.

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.”⁹⁵ 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).⁹⁶ Christ was temptable because

⁹⁴ 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).

⁹⁵ *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* section “What Does the Bible Say About God and Jesus?” pgs. 14-15.

⁹⁶ 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?

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:

He was human. This Unitarian argument 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 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.”⁹⁷ 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.⁹⁸ The Arian argument from the Lord Jesus’ death involves the invalid

Systematic Theologies, AGES Library, Rio, WI: 2006). Shedd’s entire discussion of Impeccability is tremendous.

⁹⁷ *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* section “Is God Always Superior to Jesus?” pg. 18.

⁹⁸ 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*

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,”⁹⁹ it would be entirely irrelevant as an anti-Trinitarian text. The Unitarian argument, when stated

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.

⁹⁹ 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’lô’ attâ miqqedem Y’hōwāh ’lōhay? Q’ḏōšî lō’ nāmût.* The verb נִמּוּת 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 ἀποθάνωμεν, “we shall not die,” as do Symmachus and the text of Habakkuk found at Qumran. The *tiqqun sopherim*, הִיָּה רֹאֵי תִּמּוּת אֵלֶּה שְׂכִינָה 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).

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 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?¹⁰⁰

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.*”

¹⁰⁰ *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?”

([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?¹⁰¹

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 . . . 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.”¹⁰² 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.¹⁰³ Since the Lord Jesus is fully human, Trinitarians unhesitatingly affirm

¹⁰¹ “Who Is The Only True God?” *Awake!* Magazine, April 22, 2005.

¹⁰² 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.

¹⁰³ 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];

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). 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).¹⁰⁴ 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

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].”

¹⁰⁴ 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.

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, seem¹⁰⁵ different from that of his Father?¹⁰⁶ 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'¹⁰⁷ (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."¹⁰⁸ The answer to such questions is very simple, and very Trinitarian. Jesus Christ was not lower than the angels as God, but as man.¹⁰⁹ As He has two natures, so He has two wills, one

¹⁰⁵ 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.

¹⁰⁶ "Who Is The Only True God?" *Awake!* Magazine, April 22, 2005.

¹⁰⁷ The NWT's "exalted him to a superior position" does not correctly represent the Greek; the KJV literally and correctly translates the verse.

¹⁰⁸ *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* section "Is God Always Superior to Jesus?" pg. 19

¹⁰⁹ 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

human and one Divine.¹¹⁰ The Lord Jesus was not exalted to the right hand of God¹¹¹ 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).¹¹² 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.

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).

¹¹⁰ See footnote #9 for the classic Trinitarian statement of this doctrine.

¹¹¹ 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.

¹¹² 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.

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 part¹¹³ 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 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.¹¹⁴

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

¹¹³ 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.

¹¹⁴ *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!

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.).¹¹⁵ 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).¹¹⁶ Every single thing 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."¹¹⁷ 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.¹¹⁸ The three Persons who possess the one Divine essence are

¹¹⁵ 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.

¹¹⁶ 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).

¹¹⁷ 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.

¹¹⁸ 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

omniscient¹¹⁹—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.¹²⁰ Not only does Mark 13:32 itself indicate that *Son* in the verse means *Son*

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).

¹¹⁹ 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.

¹²⁰ 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

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.¹²¹ The Arian

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 (μία φύσις σεσαρκωμένη). 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 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."

¹²¹ 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

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,¹²² 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 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.¹²³ 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

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.).

¹²² 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).

¹²³ 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 (ὁν υἱός), 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?

to obey and then finally figured it out,¹²⁴ 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, disastrously 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 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”),¹²⁵ not Christ having knowledge revealed to Him.¹²⁶ The very next clauses

¹²⁴ 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.

¹²⁵ Consider Lightfoot’s comment on this verse in footnote #86.

¹²⁶ 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.

manifest the true interpretation of the verse. It is a revelation from Jesus Christ (and also about Jesus Christ)¹²⁷ 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.

In John 14:28, the Lord Jesus said, “my¹²⁸ 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.¹²⁹

Does John 14:28 establish an ontological¹³⁰ subordination,¹³¹ an inferiority of being,¹³² of

¹²⁷ 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.

¹²⁸ ὁ πατήρ μου μείζων μου ἐστίν. 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 **S**), 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.

¹²⁹ *Should You Believe In the Trinity?* section “Is God Always Superior to Jesus?” pg. 20.

¹³⁰ See footnotes #24, 26 for the definition of ontology.

¹³¹ 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.

the Son of God to the Father? It cannot do so, because other texts¹³³ 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.¹³⁴ It fits 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.”¹³⁵

¹³² 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.

¹³³ See these verses analyzed in an earlier section of this work.

¹³⁴ 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 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).

¹³⁵ 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

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.¹³⁶ The Father who sent Him is greater 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.¹³⁷ Indeed, the Son of man was lower even than the angels during His earthly

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.

¹³⁶ 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 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.

¹³⁷ 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

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, are “in Christ.”¹³⁸ 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 is¹³⁹ “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)¹⁴⁰ 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

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.”

¹³⁸ 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.

¹³⁹ 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.

¹⁴⁰ “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.”

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).¹⁴¹ 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 man is the generic term for the human race,¹⁴² 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

¹⁴¹ *Should You Believe In The Trinity?* section, “Is God Always Superior to Jesus?” pg. 20.

¹⁴² *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.

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.¹⁴³ 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 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.¹⁴⁴

Many modalists also use 1 Corinthians 15:28 to attack the eternal equality of the Son of God with His Father.¹⁴⁵ 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

¹⁴³ 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).

¹⁴⁴ Pg. 19-20, *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* section, “Is God Always Superior to Jesus?”

¹⁴⁵ 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.

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 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 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)?¹⁴⁶ 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

¹⁴⁶ 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).

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 15:24-28¹⁴⁷ deals with the mediatorial kingdom¹⁴⁸ of Christ, a rulership that concerns the Son as the God-man or *Theanthropos*,¹⁴⁹ which He fully assumed at His ascension, and which will have its manner of administration altered markedly¹⁵⁰ at the consumation of time spoken of in 1 Corinthians 15:24-28. The

¹⁴⁷ 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

¹⁴⁸ "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 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.

¹⁴⁹ 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).

¹⁵⁰ "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

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 evil is finally and utterly destroyed and the eternal state commences (v. 28).¹⁵¹ As God, the Son reigns

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).

¹⁵¹ 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.

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 subordinate¹⁵² to the One who bestowed this mediatorial kingdom upon Him.¹⁵³ The Christ's enemies will

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).”

¹⁵² 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 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).

¹⁵³ 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

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.¹⁵⁴ 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 will be the blessed state of eternity future.¹⁵⁵ All things

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).”

¹⁵⁴ Note the analysis of *hupotasso* below.

¹⁵⁵ 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

will be in harmony in the eternal 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,¹⁵⁶ who will reign eternally¹⁵⁷ as the “all in all.”¹⁵⁸

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 αὐτός 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 deliver it up. And God as God will reign supreme. The phrase here used, τὰ πάντα . . . ἐν αὐτῷ, *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).

¹⁵⁶ Note the single throne of God and the Lamb in Revelation 22:3.

¹⁵⁷ “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).

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 (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*

¹⁵⁸ *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).

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.’”¹⁵⁹ 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 15:28,¹⁶⁰ 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.¹⁶¹ Conclusively, *hupotasso* is used many times 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.¹⁶² 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

¹⁵⁹ *Greek English Lexicon*, Joseph Henry Thayer, elec. acc. in Hamel, Ken, *The Online Bible for Mac*, version 3.0.

¹⁶⁰ ὑποταγήσεται.

¹⁶¹ 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.

¹⁶² 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.

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 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.¹⁶³

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

¹⁶³ Pg. 14, “What Does the Bible Say About God and Jesus?” in *Should You Believe In the Trinity?*

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.”¹⁶⁴ Indeed, the very reason He is firstborn (v. 15) is that He is not created, but the Creator (v. 16-17)!¹⁶⁵ Furthermore, the Greek language has a specific word for “first-created” (*protoktistos*);¹⁶⁶ why would Paul use “firstborn” (*prototokos*)¹⁶⁷ instead, if he really wished to convey the idea that the Son was

¹⁶⁴ 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 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*.

¹⁶⁵ 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.”

¹⁶⁶ πρωτόκτιστος, “first created,” Liddell, H. G. & Scott, R. *Greek-English Lexicon*.

¹⁶⁷ πρωτότοκος.

the first creature God made out of nothing?¹⁶⁸ 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”¹⁶⁹ 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 (1 Chronicles 3:5; 28:5) and transferred the authority of the firstborn.¹⁷⁰ 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.¹⁷¹ 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

¹⁶⁸ “[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).

¹⁶⁹ The בְּכֹרֶה (cf. Genesis 25:34; 1 Chronicles 5:2), related to the Hebrew word *firstborn*, בְּכוֹר (cf. πρωτοτόκια, *birthright*, Hebrews 12:16, in relation to πρωτότοκος, *firstborn*, and πρωτοτόκευω, “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,” הַבְּכֹרֶה בְּכֹרֶהוּ, (Genesis 43:33).

¹⁷⁰ 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.

¹⁷¹ “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.

“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.”¹⁷² 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”¹⁷³ 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 the designation of the Son of God as “firstborn.”¹⁷⁴

The word “firstborn” in Colossians 1:15, rather than teaching that the Son was part of creation, emphasizes His authority over¹⁷⁵ the created order.¹⁷⁶ The term signifies

¹⁷² 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.

¹⁷³ יִכְלֵל לְבָכִיר

¹⁷⁴ 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 χειρὲς μοι ἐν τῷ βασιλεῖ καὶ πρωτότοκος ἐγὼ ἢ σύ καὶ 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 λέγῃ μήτε ἀνάστασιν μήτε κρίσιν, οὗτος πρωτότοκός ἐστι τοῦ σατανᾶ, Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians 7:1; also Εἰγινώσκω, ἐπιγινώσκω τὸν πρωτότοκον τοῦ σατανᾶ, Martyrdom of Polycarp 23:3.

¹⁷⁵ 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 Ἰσραὴλ); 2

“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

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*).

¹⁷⁶ 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 מְבִרָּא 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 κτίσεως jede einzelne Creatur bezeichnet, so kann der Genii. nur comparativ genommen werden, und nur besagen, dass er im Vergleich mit jeder Creatur der Erstgeborene 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*.

entire creation, as the Creator Himself (cf. Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2).¹⁷⁷ 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. On the contrary, Psalm 89:27 validates His Lordship and true Divinity.¹⁷⁸

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

¹⁷⁷ “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. Gaebelin, ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990, elec. acc. in an *Accordance Bible Software* module from OakTree Software, Inc.).

¹⁷⁸ The word “higher” (יָרֵבָּ), 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.).

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.¹⁷⁹ 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.¹⁸⁰

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

¹⁷⁹ 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*).

¹⁸⁰ *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* section, “What Does the Bible Say About God and Jesus?” pgs. 15-16.

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.”¹⁸¹

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”¹⁸² 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,¹⁸³ the Unitarian assertion is that eternal generation, as affirmed by Trinitarians, is not literal, and 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

¹⁸¹ The classical Arian doctrine.

¹⁸² *The London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, 2:1, 3.

¹⁸³ 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.

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.¹⁸⁴ 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 angles—and thus angels are only “sons of God” if Christ is God, which is the

¹⁸⁴ “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.

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 creation¹⁸⁵ (as they must the uniquely Divine prerogative of worship,¹⁸⁶ and even the title *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

¹⁸⁵ The Hebrew verb “to create” (סָבַד) 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, 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.

¹⁸⁶ Scripture condemns those who worship creatures rather than God the Creator (Romans 1:25) as idolaters.

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.).¹⁸⁷ 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,¹⁸⁸ there are myriads upon myriads of beings in heaven whose existence contradicts 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.

¹⁸⁷ 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.

¹⁸⁸ 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 חֵיֵל; Acts 17:28, γένος . . . 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.”

Nobody could honestly read the gospels and conclude that Christ's "my Father"¹⁸⁹ 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 equality¹⁹⁰ 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, and the adoptive sonship of believers¹⁹¹ is apparent in the careful Biblical distinction between Christ's "my Father" and the "our"¹⁹² or "your Father"¹⁹³ of the redeemed. The Lord Jesus never equates His Sonship with that

¹⁸⁹ 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.

¹⁹⁰ "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).

¹⁹¹ 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.

¹⁹² 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.

¹⁹³ 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.

of God's people by uniting Himself with them in a common "our Father."¹⁹⁴ 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*¹⁹⁵ Son of God,¹⁹⁶ *the* Person of *the* Son¹⁹⁷ in the Trinity,¹⁹⁸ the unique

¹⁹⁴ 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).

¹⁹⁵ 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 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

beloved of the Father,¹⁹⁹ 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,²⁰⁰ the true God (Hebrews 1:8).

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.

¹⁹⁶ ὁ υἱός 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.

¹⁹⁷ 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.

¹⁹⁸ Matthew 28:19 shows that He is *the* Son in His Divine *hupostasis* or Person, as *the* Father and *the* Holy Spirit are.

¹⁹⁹ 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 υἱός τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος).

²⁰⁰ 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 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.

The eternal generation of the Person of the Son by the Person of the Father²⁰¹ 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.²⁰² Second, the fact that both the Father and the Son are equally eternal and

²⁰¹ “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 [*(γc/θc)*] 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).

²⁰² 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 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

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,”²⁰³ supports the

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.”

²⁰³ 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 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

doctrine of eternal generation. 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 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

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).

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)²⁰⁴ 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.”²⁰⁵ 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,²⁰⁶ because Isaac was entirely and absolutely equal in his humanity to Abraham.

²⁰⁴ 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.

²⁰⁵ *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* section, “What Does the Bible Say About God and Jesus?” pg. 15-16.

²⁰⁶ 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 than the superior position or role the husband has in the marital relation establishes that he is

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,²⁰⁷ 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”²⁰⁸ 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.²⁰⁹

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*.²¹⁰ It reduces to “Abraham

somehow more human or superior in nature to his wife. Cf. the discussion of the Unitarian argument from 1 Corinthians 11:3.

²⁰⁷ 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.

²⁰⁸ 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*?

²⁰⁹ 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[?]”).

²¹⁰ “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).

was born 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)?²¹¹ How then can Isaac be Abraham's "only son" (Genesis 22:2, 12, 16)²¹²? 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*²¹³ title.²¹⁴ 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,

²¹¹ 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?

²¹² His ܡܝܬܝܢܐ; note that this word is used of Christ in Zechariah 12:10.

²¹³ 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, τούτου πρεσβύτερος ἐκ τῆς Ἑλένης γενόμενος ἄλλοι τε παῖδες ἐξ ἐτέρων γυναικῶν τὴν μέντοι πᾶσαν εὖνοιαν ὥς εἰς μονογενὴ τὸν Ἰζάτην ἔχων φανερός ἦν φθόνος δὲ τοῦντεῦθεν τῷ παιδί παρὰ τῶν ὁμοπατρίων ἀδελφῶν ἐφύετο καὶ τούτου μῖσος ἠϋξετο λυπομένων πάντων ὅτι τὸν Ἰζάτην αὐτῶν ὁ πατὴρ προτιμῶν).

²¹⁴ "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).

incarnate, is the One in whom all the “all the promises of God . . . are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God” (2 Corinthians 1:20).

Just about the only²¹⁵ serious attempt a Unitarian could make to find a Biblical basis for the contention that the Son was the first created being as the only begotten would rest upon Proverbs 8:22,²¹⁶ which, in the LXX, reads, “The Lord made [or “created”]²¹⁷ me [Wisdom] the beginning of his ways for his works.” Since Proverbs eight speaks of the Divine wisdom, and Christ is the Wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24; cf. Colossians 2:2-3),²¹⁸ Proverbs 8:22 is set forth as proof that the Son was begotten or (as Arians contend) created as the first (and only) being made by the Father Himself.

This Arian attempt to support the doctrine of the Son’s creation is demolished by the fact that the Hebrew text simply does not say “created,” as the Greek translation does, but “possessed,” *qanah*.²¹⁹ No Hebrew manuscript reads “created” (*bara*)²²⁰ in Proverbs 8:22. The semantic range of *qanah* in the OT includes “acquire,” “buy,” and “possess,”

²¹⁵ Revelation 3:14 is also advanced in favor of this position. The verse is examined below.

²¹⁶ The phrase in Hebrews 3:1-2, Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν, πιστὸν ὄντα τῷ ποιήσαντι αὐτόν, ὡς καὶ Μωσῆς ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ οἴκῳ αὐτοῦ, “Christ Jesus; who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house,” could potentially also be alleged by an Arian to teach Christ is a creature, since ποιέω is regularly translated “made,” and thus the verse could be (mis)used to argue that the Son was “made” or created by the Father. However, it is perfectly clear that Christ’s office and work as *Theanthropos*, as incarnate Man and Mediator, not His essence or nature as the eternal Son, are in view in this passage. Furthermore, in Hebrews 3:2 ποιέω is used in the sense of “appoint,” as it is in Hebrews 1:2, ὃν ἔθηκε κληρονόμον πάντων, “whom [God] hath appointed heir of all things,” or Acts 2:36, Κύριον καὶ Χριστὸν αὐτόν ὃ Θεὸς ἐποίησε, τοῦτον τὸν Ἰησοῦν ὃν ὑμεῖς ἐσταυρώσατε, “God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.” Consider also 1 Samuel 12:6, which treats of Moses’ office as alluded to in Hebrews 3:2: “It is the LORD that advanced Moses and Aaron,” יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה אֶת-מֹשֶׁה אֶת-אַהֲרֹן, κύριος ὁ ποιήσας τὸν Μωϋσῆν καὶ τὸν Ααρων (LXX).

²¹⁷ ἔκτισέν, from κτίζω, to create.

²¹⁸ “Proverbs 8:22, 23 [refers to the] personal Wisdom (חֵכֶם). . . . That this is not a personified attribute is proved, 1. By the length of the description, and the large number of details. Personification is brief, and does not go into particulars. 2. By the ascription of personal actions, and a personal utterance of them: ‘I was by him; I was daily his delight; when he prepared the heavens, I was there; my delights were with the sons of men; now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children; blessed is the man that heareth me.’ A personification occurs, generally, in the midst of a narrative. But this occurs in the midst of maxims and didactic utterances. ‘In this passage,’ says Nitzsch, ‘we have an unmistakable germ of the ontological self-distinction of the Godhead’” (“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). Note also that Christ apparently indicates His identity with the Wisdom of Proverbs 8:22ff through His use, in Revelation 3:14 (cf. 1:8; 21:6; 22:13), of the descriptive ἀρχή (ἀρχὴν ὁδῶν [κυριοῦ] εἰς ἔργα αὐτοῦ, Proverbs 8:22, LXX).

²¹⁹ “The LORD possessed me,” יְהוָה קָנָה מְנִי, from the verb קָנָה.

²²⁰ בָּרָא.

but it never means “create” in any of its 85 appearances in 75 OT verses.²²¹ It is possible that the rather unusual²²² mistranslation of Proverbs 8:22 in current copies of the LXX is a scribal error²²³ 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.”²²⁴ Origen’s Hexapla²²⁵ gives strong evidence for the Hebrew “possessed” instead of “created.” The Greek word *ektesato*,²²⁶ the correct translation for the Hebrew *qanah*, “possessed,” is the translation given by the Greek versions of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotian,²²⁷ and therefore appears in every column of the Hexapla²²⁸ except that for that of the Seventy.²²⁹ Origen also takes the unusual step of commenting on the LXX

²²¹ 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.

²²² The rendition of קָנָה as $\kappa\tau\acute{\iota}\zeta\omega$ is also a unique or at least unusual mistranslation in the LXX—the other 66 times $\kappa\tau\acute{\iota}\zeta\omega$ 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 $\delta\varsigma \acute{\epsilon}\kappa\tau\iota\sigma\epsilon\nu$, [He] who created”; the other 28 (or 64 total in the LXX) times $\kappa\tau\acute{\iota}\zeta\omega$ appears it does not bear any relation to קָנָה at all. The most common translation of קָנָה is a form of $\kappa\tau\acute{\alpha}\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$, to get/acquire/possess, the word that should also have been used in Proverbs 8:22.

²²³ 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.

²²⁴ $\pi\rho\acute{o}\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \alpha\iota\omega\nu\omicron\varsigma\ \acute{\alpha}\pi'\ \acute{\alpha}\rho\chi\eta\varsigma\ \acute{\epsilon}\kappa\tau\iota\sigma\epsilon\nu\ \mu\epsilon\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \acute{\epsilon}\omega\varsigma\ \alpha\iota\omega\nu\omicron\varsigma\ \omicron\upsilon\ \mu\grave{\eta}\ \acute{\epsilon}\kappa\lambda\acute{\iota}\pi\omega.$

²²⁵ Cited from Fridericus Field, *Origenis Hexaplorum : quae supersunt sive veterum interpretum graecorum in totus Vetus Testamentum fragmenta*, vol. 2. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1875.

²²⁶ $\acute{\epsilon}\kappa\tau\acute{\eta}\sigma\alpha\tau\omicron$, from $\kappa\tau\acute{\alpha}\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$, 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.”

²²⁷ Cf. the Latin Vulgate, *Dominus possedit me*.

²²⁸ 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).

²²⁹ That is, columns A, Σ, and Θ all read $\acute{\epsilon}\kappa\tau\acute{\eta}\sigma\alpha\tau\omicron$, not $\acute{\epsilon}\kappa\tau\iota\sigma\epsilon\nu$.

translation *ektise*, “created,” that the Hebrew has *qanah*, supporting the view that he also knew that *create* was a mistranslation in the LXX of his day.²³⁰ The inspired text of Scripture simply does not say that the Son was “created” in Proverbs 8:22.²³¹

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 eternality. He was already “possessed” by the Father “in the beginning of his way,”²³² 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,”²³³ from the beginning,²³⁴ or ever the earth was” (v. 23). He was with the

²³⁰ That is, column O reads, κύριος ἐκτίσέ με (Ἐβρ. ἀδωναὶ κανανὶ) ἀρχὴν ὁδῶν αὐτοῦ εἰς ἔργα αὐτοῦ.

²³¹ 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.

²³² The beginning of the Father’s way is eternity past, “before” the creation, the “works of old.”

²³³ 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

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”²³⁵ (v. 24, 25). The verb in this Hebrew tense²³⁶ signifies “to be brought forth

ever (מִן־הָעוֹלָם 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 (מִיְּעוֹלָם וְעַד־עוֹלָם)” (1 Chronicles 29:10); “Then the Levites, Jeshua, 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 (מִיְּעוֹלָם)” (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 מִיְּעוֹלָם הָמָּה)” (Psalm 25:6); “Blessed *be* the LORD God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting (מִיְּעוֹלָם 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 (מִיְּעוֹלָם עַד־עוֹלָם), thou *art* God” (Psalm 90:2); “Thy throne *is* established of old: thou *art* from everlasting (מִיְּעוֹלָם)” (Psalm 93:2); “But the mercy of the LORD *is* from everlasting to everlasting (מִיְּעוֹלָם וְעַד־עוֹלָם) 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 (מִיְּעוֹלָם | וְעַד־הָעוֹלָם): and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the LORD” (Psalm 106:48).

²³⁴ When מִיְּעוֹלָם 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 מִיְּעוֹלָם and מִיְּרֵאשׁ 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).

²³⁵ “‘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 חוללתי is used of

through labour pains.”²³⁷ Psalm 51:5a and Job 15:7b, the only other comparable references,²³⁸ both also speak of the begetting or bearing process.²³⁹ 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”²⁴⁰ *have been* from of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2)—from before the origin of time, the Son existed (Isaiah 48:16);²⁴¹ 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,

generation, Job 15:7 Ps 51:5. Christ is the firstborn of every creature, begotten, born, and brought forth before any creature was 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).

²³⁶ הוֹלִלְתִּי, Polal perfect 1 common singular of הִלֵּל, both in v. 24 and v. 25.

²³⁷ KB.

²³⁸ Both verses also have a polal perfect 1 common singular verb. No other references to הִלֵּל in the Polal are found in the Old Testament.

²³⁹ 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.

²⁴⁰ The *hapax legomenon* מוֹצֵאֵה, “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 מוֹצֵאֵה, מוֹצֵאִים, used of a singular act in Ezekiel 12:4.

The LXX has the plural ἔξοδοι, from ἔξοδος, for מוֹצֵאֵה 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.

²⁴¹ מֵעַתָּה הָיִיתִּי 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).

Trinitarian 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.²⁴²

Thus, Arians use the reference to Christ as “the beginning of the creation of God”²⁴³ 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,”²⁴⁴ 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 give unto every one of you according to your works” (Revelation 2:23)—but

²⁴² *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* section “What Does the Bible Teach About God and Jesus?”

pg. 14.

²⁴³ ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ Θεοῦ.

²⁴⁴ ἀρχή.

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.²⁴⁵ Since Jesus Christ affirms His Deity (at least) three times²⁴⁶ 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,

²⁴⁵ 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).

²⁴⁶ 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.

origin,”²⁴⁷ or “beginning, origin . . . one with whom a process begins, beginning . . . the first cause, the beginning,”²⁴⁸ or “beginning, origin . . . source,”²⁴⁹ or “beginning, origin . . . the person . . . that commences . . . that by which anything begins to be, the origin, the active cause.”²⁵⁰ 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.²⁵¹ The phrase “the beginning of the creation of God”²⁵² is an objective genitive followed by a subjective genitive, signifying “the beginner/originator of God’s creation.”²⁵³ 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

²⁴⁷ *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, Johannes P. Louw & Eugene A. Nida (LN), 89:16.

²⁴⁸ Danker, Frederick William (ed.), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd. ed. (BDAG).

²⁴⁹ Liddell, H. G. & Scott, R. *Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed.

²⁵⁰ *Greek English Lexicon*, Joseph Henry Thayer, elec. acc. in Hamel, Ken, *The Online Bible for Mac*, version 3.0.

²⁵¹ 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.

²⁵² τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ Θεοῦ.

²⁵³ 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.

(see v. 7, 17-18),²⁵⁴ declares “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning [*arche*] and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.”²⁵⁵ 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.”²⁵⁶ In Revelation 21:6, God²⁵⁷ 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,

²⁵⁴ “Is the spokesman [of v. 8] God the Father or God the Son? Persuasive evidence has been advanced in favor of the latter identification. ἐγὼ 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). . . . ‘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).

²⁵⁵ 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.

²⁵⁶ 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 ἀρχή 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.

²⁵⁷ 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.

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.

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 anaphoric²⁵⁸ article²⁵⁹ 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.²⁶⁰ 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 nearby²⁶¹ 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.²⁶² The Christological declaration in Colossians 1:15ff²⁶³ 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

²⁵⁸ "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*).

²⁵⁹ ἡ ἀρχή.

²⁶⁰ 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.

²⁶¹ Only c. 20 miles separated the cities of Colossae and Laodicea.

²⁶² 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.

²⁶³ Compare the discussion of Colossians 1:15, and Christ's position as firstborn, above.

the Originator and Source of creation.²⁶⁴ In 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,²⁶⁵ founder, sustainer (John 1:35-37; 3:29; Matthew 16:18),²⁶⁶ and life-giver²⁶⁷ for the church, is of right her head²⁶⁸ 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

²⁶⁴ “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 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).

²⁶⁵ 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.

²⁶⁶ 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.

²⁶⁷ 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).

²⁶⁸ 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).

“in all *things* . . . the preeminence” (v. 18e).²⁶⁹ 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 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.”²⁷⁰ 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.²⁷¹ 1 John 1:1 likewise affirms that the Son

²⁶⁹ 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.

²⁷⁰ *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* section “What Does the Bible Teach About God and Jesus?” pg. 14.

²⁷¹ 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).

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.²⁷²

The uses of this common word²⁷³ 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,”²⁷⁴ 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 Jehovah²⁷⁵ 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.

²⁷² 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 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.

²⁷³ 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.

²⁷⁴ *Should You Believe In the Trinity?* section “What Does the Bible Say About God and Jesus?” pg.

16.

²⁷⁵ See footnote #164.

The Greek Old Testament²⁷⁶ validates the use of *arche* as “source” or “origin,”²⁷⁷ supporting the Trinitarian interpretation of Revelation 3:14. Numerous verses²⁷⁸ validate this sense of *beginning*: “For the worshipping of idols not to be named is the beginning [*arche*], the cause, and the end, of all evil.”²⁷⁹ “Reason is the beginning [*arche*] of every work, and counsel precedes every undertaking.”²⁸⁰ “The fear of the Lord is the beginning [*arche*] of wisdom.”²⁸¹ “For pride is the beginning [*arche*] of sin, and he that hath it shall pour out abomination.”²⁸² “For the devising of idols was the beginning [*arche*] of spiritual fornication, and the invention of them the corruption of life.”²⁸³ 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).²⁸⁴ 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*²⁸⁵ are also found in apostolic patristic

²⁷⁶ 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.

²⁷⁷ 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.

²⁷⁸ 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.

²⁷⁹ 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.

²⁸⁰ Sirach 37:16 (RSV Apocrypha). ἀρχὴ παντὸς ἔργου λόγος καὶ πρὸ πάσης πράξεως βουλή.

²⁸¹ Psalm 110:10 (ἀρχὴ σοφίας φόβος κυρίου). Also Proverbs 1:7; 9:10; Sirach 1:14.

²⁸² 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).

²⁸³ Wisdom 14:12 (ἀρχὴ γὰρ πορνείας ἐπίνοια εἰδώλων εὗρεσις δὲ αὐτῶν φθορὰ ζωῆς).

²⁸⁴ τίς ἐνήργησεν καὶ ἐποίησεν ταῦτα ἐκάλεσεν αὐτὴν ὁ καλῶν αὐτὴν ἀπὸ γενεῶν ἀρχῆς ἐγὼ θεὸς πρῶτος καὶ εἰς τὰ ἐπερχόμενα ἐγὼ εἰμι.

²⁸⁵ 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 κἄν λόγου

writers who are almost contemporary with the composition of the book of the Revelation: “Flee from divisions, as the beginning [*arche*] of evils.”²⁸⁶ “The love of money is the beginning [*arche*] of all troubles.”²⁸⁷ 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 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.”²⁸⁸ 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.

ἡξίωσα. δεδιδάγμεθα γὰρ ἀρχαῖς καὶ ἐξουσίαις ὑπὸ θεοῦ τεταγμέναις τιμὴν κατὰ τὸ προσήκον τὴν μὴ βλάπτουσάν ἡμᾶς, ἀπονέμειν· ἐκείνους δὲ οὐκ ἄξιους ἡγοῦμαι τοῦ ἀπολογεῖσθαι αὐτοῖς).

²⁸⁶ Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans 8:1 (Τοὺς δὲ μερισμοὺς φεύγετε, ὡς ἀρχὴν κακῶν).

²⁸⁷ 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.

²⁸⁸ The Epistle to Diognetus 11:4-5 (οὗτος ὁ ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς, ὁ καινὸς φανεῖς καὶ παλαιὸς εὖρεθεις καὶ πάντοτε νέος ἐν ἀγίῳ καρδίαις γεννώμενος. οὗτος ὁ ἀεὶ, ὁ σήμερον υἱὸς λογισθεῖς, δι’ οὗ πλουτίζεται ἡ ἐκκλησία καὶ χάρις ἀπλουμένη ἐν ἀγίοις πληθύνεται, παρέχουσα νοῦν, φανεροῦσα μυστήρια, διαγγέλλουσα καιροῦς, χαίρουσα ἐπὶ πιστοῖς, ἐπιζητοῦσι δωρουμένη).

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 82:1-6) 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.”²⁸⁹

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

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

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 of you *are* children of the most High.”²⁹⁰ 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).²⁹¹ 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,”²⁹² and the scripture cannot be

²⁹⁰ Psalm 82:6: אֲנִי־אֵמַרְתִּי אֱלֹהִים אַתֶּם וּבְנֵי עֲלִי־יִן כְּלֶכֶם :
LXX (81:6): ἐγὼ εἶπα θεοὶ ἐστε καὶ υἱοὶ ὑψίστου πάντες.

²⁹¹ Note Exodus 21:6, “Then his master shall bring him unto the judges [הַיָּדֵי]; 22:8, “If the thief be not found, then the master of the house shall be brought unto the judges [הַיָּדֵי]; 22:28, “Thou shalt not revile the gods [אֱלֹהִים; LXX θεοὺς], 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 θεοὶ or אֱלֹהִים, include Exodus 4:16; Deuteronomy 1:17; 19:17; 2 Chronicles 19:6-7.

²⁹² 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.

broken” (John 10:35). Based on this statement, Christ argues *a minori ad majus*,²⁹³ from the lesser to the greater: since men, 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?”²⁹⁴ Your accusation of blasphemy is

²⁹³ 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 Sacra* 146:584 (Oct 89) 405-420. Phillips’ study has been helpful for other material in the discussion of John 10:34-36 above.

²⁹⁴ 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

ridiculous.” Christ did not in any way deny His true Deity in John 10:34-36. Rather, He employed Psalm 82²⁹⁵ to refute the Jewish attempt to call Him a blasphemer and reaffirmed the legitimacy of His claim.²⁹⁶ John 10:34-36 provides no support whatsoever

Υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ in John 10:36. The Jews considered an affirmation that one was nonarticular of Υἱὸς 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.”

²⁹⁵ 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).
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 *a 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.

²⁹⁶ 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*).

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 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

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).”

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.²⁹⁷ 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 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

²⁹⁷ 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).

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 firstborn 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, 9:²⁹⁸ “Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that

²⁹⁸ 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 προσκυνήσάτωσαν 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 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

boast themselves of idols: worship him, all *ye* gods. . . . For thou, LORD, *art* high above all the earth: thou art exalted far above all gods.”²⁹⁹ 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),³⁰⁰ plainly are entirely unsupportive of the Arian affirmation

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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יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לְפָנָיו כָּל־אֱלֹהִים . . . כִּי־אַתָּה יְהוָה עֶלְיוֹן
עַל־כָּל־הָאֱלֹהִים מֵאֵד נִשְׁלִיחַ עַל־כָּל־אֱלֹהִים:

αἰσχυνθήτωσαν πάντες οἱ προσκυνοῦντες τοῖς γλυπτοῖς οἱ ἐγκυχόμενοι ἐν τοῖς εἰδώλοις αὐτῶν προσκυνήσατε αὐτῷ πάντες οἱ ἄγγελοι αὐτοῦ . . . ὅτι σὺ εἰ κύριος ὁ ὑψιστος ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν σφόδρα ὑπερυψώθης ὑπὲρ πάντας τοὺς θεούς. (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.

³⁰⁰ 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 one living and true God. No reference ever ascribes the title אֱלֹהִים to idols in 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 אֱלֹהִים (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 אֱלֹהִים 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 אֱלֹהִים, 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.

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 that there is only one God?” and answer the question “No,”³⁰¹ 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

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.

³⁰¹ 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.

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.

Sanctification and Faith in the Trinity in John's Gospel

John's Gospel teaches that believers have their faith strengthened and deepened through the believing reception of greater revelations through the Word (John 2:22)³⁰² of the Triune God in His ontology and economy,³⁰³ particularly as seen in Christ the Mediator,³⁰⁴ and through their response, enabled by grace, of fuller surrender to and entrusting of themselves to Him. Even the smallest degree of true confidence in, coming to, and cleaving to Christ will bring union with Him, and consequently justification,

³⁰² In John 2:22, both the Old Testament Scripture and Christ's audible speech during His earthly ministry are the Word of God (ἐπίστευσαν τῇ γραφῇ, καὶ τῷ λόγῳ ᾧ εἶπεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς), which the disciples believe in regard to His resurrection (2:18-22).

³⁰³ The "ontological Trinity [refers to] the internal, intratrinitarian distinctions *ad intra* or within the Godhead itself," while the "economic Trinity [refers to] the offices or functions performed by each of the three members of the Trinity. The economic Trinity concerns the roles that each member performs in terms of the created order *ad extra* or outside of himself" (pgs. 954, 959, *Dogmatic Theology*, W. G. T. Shedd, 3rd ed. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2003). That is, the ontological Trinity is God as He is in Himself, while the economic Trinity is God as He is towards us.

³⁰⁴ Brian Kay, in setting forth the Trinitarian spirituality of John Owen, effectively explains the connection between meditation on the Trinity and on Christ the Mediator:

[W]hat exactly is the connection between meditating on the Trinity in action and actual growth towards Christian maturity? The best way to understand this may come by examining . . . another related question which is more specific: how is meditating on Christ transformative for the believer? These are related questions, of course, because . . . the prime *ad extra* act of the Trinity is to communicate Christ to the believer[.] . . . Thus, to meditate on the glory of Christ as Redeemer is to meditate on the most important work of the Trinity. . . . [A]pprehending Christ in his glory is not only the remedy for spiritual decays, but our apprehension of this glory is the spring of all our obedience and is also the controlling object of Christian affection because of Christ's consuming beauty. How is this contemplation so effective? Two reasons . . . rise to the surface. The first is that since the Spirit's work is to fashion believers into the image of Christ's human nature, the believer's own transformation begins as he fills his mind with thoughts of the now glorified human nature of Christ [and other elements of His Theanthropic glory]. In other words, one slowly becomes what one fills one's mind with . . . one becomes what one apprehends or gazes upon. The connection between beholding and transformation comes also in the scriptural language "we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord[.]" . . .

More deeply, a consideration by the worshipper of the very hypostatic union by which Christ's human nature is united to [the] divine nature is especially powerful. On one hand, diligently inspecting the Son of God's condescension to take on human nature impresses the believer's mind with the prototype of all Christian self-denial, for human obedience is similarly acting in self-denying submission to the will of the Father. On the other hand, the hypostatic union presents to the mind a glorious mystery that exalts God's ineffable wisdom in salvation. . . . [C]ontemplating . . . Christ as fully God and fully man . . . raises the human mind to new heights of both delight in God and progress in sanctification. Somehow, such lofty thoughts of such an inexplicable union, yet a union made real by the Godhead as an act of love for those who would be saved because of it, moves the soul to humble worship and new sensations of appreciative delight. . . . [E]njoyment [is] the language of . . . meditating on Christ[.] . . . In the last analysis, the enjoyment of Christ is what drives out the enjoyment of sin, for the former causes the believer to lose his appetite for the latter. The late-born Puritan Thomas Chalmers would express the same idea with the title of a sermon on the secret of dislodging fleshly appetites, "The Expulsive Power of a new Affection." (pgs. 70-71, *Trinitarian Spirituality*, Brian Kay. Some quotation marks have been removed and the traditional English generic pronoun restored.)

sanctification, and all the other blessings of salvation, but one can cleave to Christ more closely, grow in confidence in Him, surrender more fully to Him, and entrust oneself more fully to Him. Such a greater degree of trust in the Person of the Redeemer and in the Triune God, which is associated in Scripture with receipt of a fuller revelation of His nature and work through the Word, is growth in faith. Through such an increase of faith the saints partake of an increase of spiritual life and fellowship with God. Christ's exercise of creative power in transforming water into the fruit of the vine in John 2 was a manifestation of His glory, in response to which His disciples, those who had already exercised saving faith, believed on Him in a deeper way (John 2:11).³⁰⁵ His miracle, both an exercise of creative power such as pertained only to the eternal Jehovah and a manifestation of His grace and lovingkindness as the Provider for and Redeemer of His people, showed forth Christ's glory as both the eternal Son of God and as the incarnate God-Man, and the faith of His disciples was directed towards Him³⁰⁶ as all He was in Himself and on their behalf in a greater way as a consequence. Furthermore, through the display of the Divine glory manifested by the incarnate Christ through His raising of Lazarus from the dead, His disciples were led to believe in Him in a deeper way (John 11:15). Christ was revealed as One who, weeping over Lazarus' death, could perfectly identify with human sorrow, and was filled to the fullest extent with perfect human love and sympathy (John 11:35-36), while He was also revealed as God the Word and the Father's only begotten Son, as One who was Himself the Resurrection and the Life, and who, out of His infinite Divine love, could and would exercise the Almighty power of God to redeem His beloved ones from even that last enemy, death (John 11:25-27). While revelation of the glory of God in Christ leads His people to deeper faith (John 2:11; 11:15), at the same time their response of faith to His Word is a condition of and a means to a greater revelation of His glory (John 11:40).³⁰⁷ Christ reveals Himself to His chosen ones, so that love that contemplates Him, faith that trusts in Him, and obedience that follows Him, is aroused the more in them. To such faith, love, and obedience, Christ in turn responds by revealing Himself in yet clearer and clearer ways. Christ also predicted His betrayal to strengthen His disciples' faith in Him as the Messiah and as

³⁰⁵ ταύτην ἐποίησε τὴν ἀρχὴν τῶν σημείων ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐν Κανᾷ τῆς Γαλιλαίας, καὶ ἐφανερώσε τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ· καὶ ἐπίστευσαν εἰς αὐτὸν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ. The specific manifestation of Christ's glory in the miracle at the wedding feast in Cana, and the specific belief in Him as a response to this particular manifestation of His glory, is specified by the aorists ἐφανερώσε and ἐπίστευσαν. Note that John 11:15, 40; 13:19; 19:35; 20:8, 25, 29, 31; 1 John 3:23 also contain aorists.

³⁰⁶ πιστεύω + εἰς.

³⁰⁷ ἐὰν πιστεύσης, ὄψει τὴν δόξαν τοῦ Θεοῦ. While all present in John 11 saw the physical miracle of the raising of Lazarus, only those with spiritual sight could see the glory of God in Christ revealed by the miracle.

Jehovah, the I AM (John 13:19).³⁰⁸ In John 14:1, Christ addressed His disciples: “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.”³⁰⁹ His disciples had already believed, and were believing, in God, and already had come to saving faith in Christ, but the Lord exhorts them to a deeper faith in Himself as the One who is going to go away and come again to receive them to Himself, to a faith that clearly respects His humiliation, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and mediatorial office (John 14:6, 29³¹⁰), to be added to their already extant justifying faith. The Lord Jesus exhorts His disciples to a deeper faith in His Person in John 14:1, but does not there exhort His disciples to a deeper faith in the Father in particular, because the first Person of the Trinity is not the One who they would see in such a radically different light or have difficulty recognizing in light of the cross.³¹¹ Christ then proceeds to lead His disciples to a stronger faith in the Trinitarian perichoresis³¹² (cf. John 10:30, 38) and to Himself as the One in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily on account of His Word and works (John 14:10-12).³¹³ As a result of the discourse of John 14-16, the disciples, who had already come to saving faith in Christ with all of its permanent results, and consequently loved Him and were loved by the Father (John 16:27),³¹⁴ declared that they were now believing in a deeper way in Christ (John 16:30),³¹⁵ although the Lord warned them that their faith was still weak enough that it would not keep them from forsaking

³⁰⁸ ἀπ’ ἄρτι λέγω ὑμῖν πρὸ τοῦ γενέσθαι, ἵνα, ὅταν γένηται, πιστεύσητε ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι.

³⁰⁹ Μὴ ταρασσέσθω ὑμῶν ἡ καρδία· πιστεύετε εἰς τὸν Θεόν, καὶ εἰς ἐμὲ πιστεύετε. As in the Authorized Version, the first πιστεύετε is an indicative, while the second is an imperative; cf. *Non turbetur cor vestrum. Creditis in Deum, et in me credite* (Vulgate). Support for taking πιστεύετε in 14:1b as an imperative is also found in the present imperative πιστεύετε in 14:11 and the exhortation to πιστεύω in 14:10.

³¹⁰ The πιστεύσητε of John 14:29 is a specific and deeper faith in Christ as all He has revealed Himself to be in John 14, specifically in Christ as the soon to be crucified and ascended Redeemer who would send the Spirit, and come again.

³¹¹ The πιστεύετε, both the indicative and the imperative, are in the present tense. As the disciples were already believing in God, so they were to believe ever the more deeply in Christ as His saving work on their behalf was revealed to them in the Word and fulfilled in history.

³¹² “[T]he Greek *perichōrēsis* (περιχώρησις), or *emperichōrēsis* . . . [is] used as a synonym of . . . *circumincessio*: circumincession or coinherence. . . . *Circumincessio* refers primarily to the coinherence of the persons of the Trinity in the divine essence and in each other, but it can also indicate the coinherence of Christ’s divine and human natures in their communion or personal union. (pgs. 67-68, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology*, Richard A. Muller. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1985). The fact that the fulness of the Godhead is in the *Theanthropos* is the natural consequence in salvation-history of the ontological trinitarian circumincession.

³¹³ The question “Believest thou not[?]” (οὐ πιστεύεις) of 14:10 expects a positive answer. Note that 14:11 subordinates belief based on Christ’s miracles to belief based on His Word.

³¹⁴ The disciples already had a perfect tense faith (πεπιστεύκατε ὅτι ἐγὼ παρὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐξῆλθον, John 16:27), one which began at the moment of their regeneration and which had abiding results.

³¹⁵ νῦν . . . πιστεύομεν ὅτι ἀπὸ Θεοῦ ἐξῆλθες.

Him when He was betrayed (John 16:31-32),³¹⁶ for stronger faith leads to a more decided stand for Christ against the world and to all other fruits of righteousness. Unbelievers are exhorted to trust in the crucified Christ, and believers exhorted to a closer embrace of Christ in faith,³¹⁷ because of the revelation of His saving work, as predicted in the Old Testament, grounded in His substitutionary death, and producing justification and sanctification for those in union with Him (John 19:34-37). Men should follow the pattern of a believing response to the Divine saving self-revelation in the crucifixion and resurrection by entrusting themselves to Christ as their own Lord and God (John 20:28-31) and becoming people who are believingly faithful (John 20:27). Such a response of faith appeared in the Apostle John when, in light of the empty tomb, he “saw, and believed” (John 20:8), and in the Apostle Thomas when he saw and believed (John 20:29)³¹⁸ and was consequently no longer on the path to faithlessness, but was believing (John 20:27, 25), although in truth “blessed *are* they that have not seen, and *yet* have believed” (John 20:29).³¹⁹ All believers are in such a state of blessedness, for they have come to saving faith in the crucified and resurrected Christ³²⁰ and have consequently

³¹⁶ “Ἀρτι πιστεύετε; ἰδοὺ, ἔρχεται ὥρα καὶ νῦν ἐλήλυθεν, ἵνα σκορπισθῇτε ἕκαστος εἰς τὰ ἴδια, καὶ ἐμὲ μόνον ἀφῆτε. Their faith was deeper, but it still was far weaker than it should have been.

³¹⁷ πιστεύσητε, John 19:35. The audience of the “that ye might believe” is the same as the audience of the gospel of John as a whole, 20:30-31.

³¹⁸ Οτι ἐώρακας με, Θωμᾶ, πεπίστευκας.

³¹⁹ By means of Christ’s exhortation to Thomas to not become faithless and unbelieving, but faithful and believing (μὴ γίνου ἄπιστος, ἀλλὰ πιστός, John 20:27), accompanied by His effectual grace and power, Thomas was brought into a state of believing, having passed out of his position as one on the road to faithlessness to a state of faith and consequent faithfulness (πεπίστευκας, 20:29, so that Thomas was now πιστός, not one on the path to ἄπιστος, 20:27). John 20:27 contains the only references to the adjectives πιστός and ἄπιστος in the Gospel; the noun πίστις does not appear in John’s Gospel. A comparison with the Johannine epistles and Revelation, supported also by the context of John 20, indicates that the emphasis of πιστός/ἄπιστος in John 20:27 is faithfulness (1 John 1:9; 3 John 1:5; Revelation 1:5; 2:10, 13; 3:14; 17:14; 19:11; 21:5; 22:6 & Revelation 21:8) although, of course, such faithfulness is impossible without faith (3 John 5; Revelation 2:10, 13; 17:14; 21:8). Thomas is exhorted to embrace the truth of the resurrection, with all that it involves about the Person and Office of Christ, and consequently become one who is faithful, not faithless (note the present imperative in μὴ γίνου ἄπιστος, ἀλλὰ πιστός; cf. γίνου πιστὸς ἄχρι θανάτου, Revelation 2:10, and the discussion on pgs.121ff. of *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, vol. 1, J. H. Moulton). As Christ’s exhortation is accompanied by His Almighty power, Thomas does indeed respond in faith to Christ’s self-revelation, confess Him as Lord and God, and become one who is believing and faithful (πεπίστευκας, 20:29). The believing response in the Apostle Thomas is a paradigm of the faith of the normal Christian, the one who has not seen, and yet has believed, and so is blessed (μακάριοι οἱ μὴ ἰδόντες, καὶ πιστεύσαντες, John 20:29); such a believing response is the purpose of the Gospel (John 20:30-31).

³²⁰ Thomas’s faith-response to the revelation of Christ is set forth as a pattern by John for the response of faith in the conversion of the lost and for the continuing faith-response to greater revelations of the Person and work of Christ by the Christian, although, in light of 1 Corinthians 15, the specific doubt about the bodily resurrection of Christ by Thomas is not possible for the child of God in the fully inaugurated dispensation of grace as it was for the disciples in the pre-resurrection and ascension period.

become believing and faithful people. The record of Thomas's response of faith to the crucified and resurrected Son of God as Redeemer, Lord, and God, contained as it is within the climax of the Gospel of John in chapter twenty,³²¹ is set forth as a pattern for all men—those who are unconverted need to make a comparable faith response in Christ to enter into life, and those who are already converted need to continue to embrace Christ in faith ever the more fully, that they might experientially possess spiritual life in an ever higher degree, such earthly spiritual life being a sweet foretaste of the blessed fullness of life in the coming eschatological glory. John's Gospel is written "that ye might believe³²² that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing³²³ ye might have life through his name" (John 20:31). The revelation of the glory and salvation of Christ and God through the signs recorded in the Gospel are written so that people might come to initial saving faith, and that those who are believers might through a continuing and ever deeper entrustment of themselves to Christ experientially possess a greater fullness of *life* in all its senses—that is, "that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly" (John 10:10)—for *life* is not bare existence, or simply a future state of joy instead of pain, but knowing the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent (John 17:3). It is impossible for the unbeliever to possess any saving knowledge of God and Christ, while all believers possess such cognitive and experiential knowledge, but the believer's knowledge, and thus his experience of spiritual and eternal life, can be deepened through repeated, stronger, and fuller responses to the revelation of his God and Savior in the Word.

The Apostle John similarly taught in his first epistle that unbelievers are to come to faith in Christ and, through the receipt of a new nature, become people of love who also are to exercise particular acts of faith in Christ (1 John 3:23),³²⁴ while believers,

Indeed, John 20, in its context, clearly teaches that rejecting the resurrection is an act of the unregenerate, and Christ prevents Thomas from reaching that point through His command, accompanied by His effectual grace, in 20:27.

³²¹ For a helpful outline of John's Gospel, its themes, purpose, and plan, see "The Purpose of the Fourth Gospel, Part I" and "The Plan of the Fourth Gospel, Part II," by W. H. Griffith Thomas, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 125:499 (July 1968) 254-263 & 125:500 (October 1968) 313-324.

³²² ἵνα πιστεύσητε, "that ye might come to initial saving faith in Christ," the first purpose of the Gospel of John, a fact supported by the aorist tense verb. (The aorist, found in the *Textus Receptus* and 99.5% of Greek MSS, is indubitably the correct reading.)

³²³ ἵνα πιστεύοντες ζῶν ἔχητε ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ, "that you might through continuing deeper and fuller entrusting of and surrender to Christ, be having life in ever greater spiritual fullness through Christ's name," the second purpose of the Gospel of John, a fact supported by the present tense verbs.

³²⁴ πιστεύσωμεν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, leading to continuing love, a fruit of regeneration (ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους). The first person plural "we should believe," and the fact

those who have exercised saving faith and become believing ones,³²⁵ should, by obtaining assurance of their salvation, believe more deeply. Their growth in faith is associated with their disbelief in false teachers (1 John 4:1)³²⁶ because of the failure of such teachers to fit the criteria set forth by the Apostolic faith in the Word (1 John 4:1-6). Concluding his epistle, John stated: “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God” (1 John 5:13).³²⁷ The verse indicates that John writes his epistle to those who are believers³²⁸ in the Son of God. He wants them to enjoy the knowledge that they currently possess eternal life.³²⁹ By possessing assurance, and growing in their assurance of their personal salvation, they will believe the more deeply and exercise ever greater faith in the Son of God,³³⁰ resulting in full joy (1 John 1:4) and holy living (1 John 2:1).

In agreement with the teaching of the Old Testament,³³¹ John makes it clear that communion with the Father and the Son by the Spirit through the revelation of the Triune

that the audience of 1 John is believers, indicates that the πιστεύσωμεν is not limited to the conversion of the unbeliever. God also commands the regenerate to exercise particular acts of faith in Christ.

³²⁵ 1 John 4:16; 5:1, 5, 10, 13; ἡμεῖς ἐγνώκαμεν καὶ πεπιστεύκαμεν τὴν ἀγάπην ἣν ἔχει ὁ Θεὸς ἐν ἡμῖν, through which the Christian now is ὁ πιστεύων, 1 John 5:1, 5, 10, 13, while the unbeliever is ὁ μὴ πιστεύων because οὐ πεπίστευκεν, 5:10. Those who enter into perfect tense faith possess present tense faith.

³²⁶ μὴ παντὶ πνεύματι πιστεύετε.

³²⁷ Ταῦτα ἔγραψα ὑμῖν τοῖς πιστεύουσιν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἵνα εἰδῆτε ὅτι ζῶν ἔχετε αἰώνιον, καὶ ἵνα πιστεύητε εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ.

³²⁸ τοῖς πιστεύουσιν.

³²⁹ εἰδῆτε ὅτι ζῶν ἔχετε αἰώνιον. Since εἰδῆτε is from οἶδα the perfect functions as does the present ἔχετε. It is unfortunate that the critical Greek New Testament follows a tiny minority of Greek MSS to corrupt both the purpose statement of 1 John in 5:13 and the purpose statement of the Gospel of John (20:31).

³³⁰ ἵνα πιστεύητε εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ.

³³¹ Moses knew the value of greater experiential knowledge of God and of the holy graces that flowed from such knowledge, and consequently prayed in Exodus 33:13 that because he had found grace, the Jehovah of the Theophany, the eternal Son of God (John 1:18), would reveal Himself to him, that he might have the more grace, based on Jehovah's redeeming covenants with His people: כִּי עָשִׂיתָ לִּי חֲסִדִּים וְעַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יִפְעַל עִמָּנוּ כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ לְעַמְּךָ מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל וְעַתָּה יִפְעַל עִמָּנוּ כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ לְעַמְּךָ מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל. “Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation *is* thy people.” The presence of experiential knowledge and communion in the text was recognized by the LXX translator (although the last clause of the verse is mistranslated): εἰ οὖν εὗρηκα χάριν ἐναντίον σου, ἐμφάνισόν μοι σεαυτόν· γνωστῶς ἴδω σε, ὅπως ἂν ὧ εὗρηκώς χάριν ἐναντίον σου, καὶ ἵνα γινώσκῃς ὅτι λαός σου τὸ ἔθνος τὸ μέγα τοῦτο. “If then I have found favour in thy sight, reveal thyself to me, that I may evidently see thee; that I may find favour in thy sight, and that I may know that this great nation *is* thy people.”

David recorded the Messiah's promise to His Father that as the Risen Redeemer He would reveal the Father to His people after His crucifixion and resurrection: “I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.” : אֶפְתָּח פִּי וְאֵלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ יִפְתָּח לָנוּ פֶּה וְאֵלֹהֵינוּ יִפְתָּח לָנוּ פֶּה Psalm 22:22, cf. 22:1-21 & Hebrews 2:12, Ἀπαγγελῶ τὸ ὄνομά σου τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς μου, ἐν μέσῳ ἐκκλησίας

God in His ontology and economy to His beloved people will result in ever greater degrees of Christ-conformity in the ever more deeply believing believer. The saints are the possessors of a real relationship with, sharing in, association and fellowship with³³² Jehovah; they can say: “truly our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3). The saint who is right with God has Christ’s promise: “I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Revelation 3:20).³³³ The Lord Jesus does not leave His purchased ones alone, but promises: “I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you” (John 14:18).³³⁴ They love Christ and keep His commandments, and are those whom the Son and His Father love, and to whom they manifest themselves in a manner of which the unconverted world can know nothing, so that the Divine Persons come to dwell in and with them, that their closeness and sweet fellowship might grow the more as the Triune Presence is the more manifest. The Lord Jesus explained:

He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? 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.³³⁵

As their Theanthropic Mediator, Christ makes known to His people by the Holy Spirit the revelation the Father gave Him for them.³³⁶ Through the Spirit and mediated by the Son,

ὁμνήσω σε, “I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.”

The intertestamental Jews also knew that the Lord revealed Himself to those who believed in Him: Ἀγαπήσατε δικαιοσύνην, οἱ κρίνοντες τὴν γῆν, φρονήσατε περὶ τοῦ κυρίου ἐν ἀγαθότητι καὶ ἐν ἀπλότητι καρδίας ζητήσατε αὐτόν. ὅτι εὐρίσκεται τοῖς μὴ πειράζουσιν αὐτόν, ἐμφανίζεται δὲ τοῖς μὴ ἀπιστοῦσιν αὐτῷ. “Love righteousness, ye that be judges of the earth: think of the Lord with a good heart, and in simplicity of heart seek him. For he will be found of them that tempt him not; and manifests himself to such as are not disbelieving in him” (Wisdom 1:1-2).

³³² That is, κοινωνία.

³³³ Revelation 3:20 has absolutely nothing to do with an unsaved person asking Jesus to come into his heart in order to be saved. The unregenerate need to repent and believe, not ask Jesus to come into their hearts.

³³⁴ οὐκ ἀφήσω ὑμᾶς ὀρφανούς· ἔρχομαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς. The Lord Jesus will not leave His own “without the aid and comfort of one who serves as associate and friend, *orphaned*” (BDAG on ὀρφανός; cf. KJV margin, “comfortless: or, orphans.”)

³³⁵ John 14:21-23, ὁ ἔχων τὰς ἐντολάς μου καὶ τηρῶν αὐτάς, ἐκεῖνός ἐστιν ὁ ἀγαπῶν με· ὁ δὲ ἀγαπῶν με, ἀγαπηθήσεται ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς μου καὶ ἐγὼ ἀγαπήσω αὐτόν, καὶ ἐμφανίσω αὐτῷ ἑμαυτόν. λέγει αὐτῷ Ἰουδᾶς, οὐχ ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης, Κύριε, τί γέγονεν ὅτι ἡμῖν μέλλεις ἐμφανίζειν σεαυτόν, καὶ οὐχὶ τῷ κόσμῳ; ἀπεκρίθη ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ, Ἐάν τις ἀγαπᾷ με, τὸν λόγον μου τηρήσει, καὶ ὁ πατήρ μου ἀγαπήσει αὐτόν, καὶ πρὸς αὐτόν ἐλευσόμεθα, καὶ μονὴν παρ’ αὐτῷ ποιήσομεν. The verb ἐμφανίζω is to “lay open to view, *make visible* . . . to provide information, *make clear, explain, inform, make a report* . . . of matters that transcend physical sight or mere verbal statement *reveal, make known* . . . ἐμφανίσω αὐτῷ ἑμαυτόν *I will reveal myself to that person* J 14:21” (BDAG). Compare the use of ἐμφανίζω in Exodus 33:13 (LXX) and the evidence of inter-testamental Judaism in the use in Wisdom 1:2.

³³⁶ John 15:15; 16:13-14, “[A]ll things that I [Christ] have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. . . . [T]he Spirit of truth . . . shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew *it* unto

they have the Father's glory revealed to them, and are transformed by this vision of God's glory and brought into ever closer union with the Triune God through the God-Man. Such a revelation of the Father was the eternal Divine purpose on the heart of God, as appears in the covenant of redemption among the Divine Persons and the covenant of grace³³⁷ through which the Father would save the elect by the Son through the Spirit, for this revelation of God, which takes place through the Word, is at the heart of what is involved in the possession of eternal life:

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. . . . 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. . . . For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. . . . I have given them thy word . . . sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. . . . And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: 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. 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. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have

you,” πάντα ἃ ἤκουσα παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς μου ἐγνώρισα ὑμῖν. . . . τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας . . . ἐκεῖνος ἐμὲ δοξάσει, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ ἐμοῦ λήψεται, καὶ ἀναγγελεῖ ὑμῖν. Note that the order of the working in the economic Trinity reflects the eternal order in the ontological Trinity; the Son who is eternally begotten by the Father is, in time, sent by the Father and is the Agent for the revelation of the Father, and the Holy Spirit, who eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son as from a single principle, is in time sent by the Father and the Son to reveal to the saints what has been given by the Father to the God-Man Mediator. Compare also Matthew 11:27; Luke 10:22; John 1:18; 14:6-9.

³³⁷ The *covenant of redemption* or *pactum salutis* is “the pretemporal, intratrinitarian agreement of the Father and the Son concerning the covenant of grace and its ratification in and through the work of the Son incarnate. The Son covenants with the Father, in the unity of the Godhead, to be the temporal *sponsor* of the Father’s *testamentum* in and through the work of the Mediator. In that work, the Son fulfills his *sponsio* or *fideiussio*, i.e., his guarantee of payment of the debt of sin in ratification of the Father’s *testamentum*. . . . [T]he idea of the *pactum salutis* is to emphasize the eternal, inviolable, and trinitarian foundation of the temporal *foedus gratiae* much in the way that the eternal decree underlies and guarantees the *ordo salutis*. . . . [The] *foedus gratiae* [or] *covenant of grace*; also *foedus gratiae gratuitum*: *gracious or graciously given covenant of grace*; and *foedus gratiae evangelicum*: *covenant of grace concerning the gospel or evangelical covenant of grace*; considered, first, as a *foedus monopleuron*, or one-sided covenant, the covenant of grace is the pact (*pactum, pactio*) made by God beginning with the *protevangelium*, confirmed and revealed more fully in Abraham, and finally fulfilled in Christ. It is a *foedus monopleuron* because it stands as a gracious promise of salvation given to fallen man apart from any consideration of man’s ability to respond to it or fulfill it and apart from any human initiative. Human beings are drawn into covenant by the grace of God alone. Once they enter covenant, however, and become parties to the divine offer of salvation, they take on responsibilities, under the covenant, before God. The *foedus gratiae*, therefore, also appears as a mutual pact and agreement between God and man, a *foedus dipleuron*” (pgs. 120-121, 217, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms*, Richard Muller).

It should be noted that recognition of the fact that the ideas of a covenant of redemption and covenant of grace have Scriptural support does not deny the clear Biblical covenantal distinctions affirmed by classical dispensationalism, nor does the use of such a terminology constitute either an endorsement of Reformed covenant theology or a rejection of dispensationalism, any more than the acceptance of the covenant of redemption and of grace by Lewis Sperry Chafer constitutes a repudiation of his own theological system by that outstanding dispensationalist (cf. pg. 42, vol. 1, pgs. 163-165, 232, vol. 4, etc., *Systematic Theology*, Chafer).

known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. 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.³³⁸

The supernatural revelation and manifestation of God's name, character, and glory through Christ by the Spirit in the Scriptures to the saints results in their sanctification, in a greater degree of God's presence in and with them, and in their possession and manifestation of all the communicable Divine attributes, so that as they are filled with the Divine presence they are also filled with Divine love and all other holy attributes, including faith and faithfulness.

Both the Old and New Testaments teach that the just—those who receive the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, and who consequently have lives characterized by justice—will live. They possess spiritual life and fellowship with God on earth and are certain of eternal life in Christ's everlasting kingdom. This life came to them through the instrumentality of faith. At the moment they believingly embraced Christ, they were justified. Their Christian growth is associated with greater and stronger entrustings of themselves to the Lord Jesus in faith as He draws closer to them and they draw closer to Him. In this manner their spiritual life is carried on by faith until the completion of their earthly pilgrimage and their entry into that glorious realm of sight where faith and hope are done away and charity only remains.

Application

Do you wish for your faith to grow? John's Gospel teaches that your faith is strengthened and deepened through the exercise of believing receipt of greater revelations through the Word of the Triune God in His ontology and economy and through your response, enabled by grace, of fuller surrender to and entrusting of yourself to Him. Therefore, while unbelievers refuse, to their eternal ruin, to see the Lord Jesus in the

³³⁸ John 17:3, 6, 8, 14, 17, 22-26. αὕτη δὲ ἐστὶν ἡ αἰώνιος ζωὴ, ἵνα γινώσκωσί σε τὸν μόνον ἀληθινὸν Θεόν, καὶ ὃν ἀπέστειλας Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν. . . . ἐφανερώσά σου τὸ ὄνομα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις οὓς δέδωκάς μοι ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου· σοὶ ἦσαν, καὶ ἐμοὶ αὐτοὺς δέδωκας· καὶ τὸν λόγον σου τετηρήκασι. . . . ὅτι τὰ ῥήματα ἃ δέδωκάς μοι, δέδωκα αὐτοῖς· καὶ αὐτοὶ ἔλαβον, καὶ ἔγνωσαν ἀληθῶς ὅτι παρὰ σοῦ ἐξηλθον, καὶ ἐπίστευσαν ὅτι σύ με ἀπέστειλας. . . . ἐγὼ δέδωκα αὐτοῖς τὸν λόγον σου. . . . ἀγίασον αὐτοὺς ἐν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ σου· ὁ λόγος ὁ σὸς ἀλήθεια ἐστὶ. . . . καὶ ἐγὼ τὴν δόξαν ἣν δέδωκάς μοι, δέδωκα αὐτοῖς, ἵνα ὧσιν ἐν, καθὼς ἡμεῖς ἐν ἐσμεν. 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. πάτερ, οὓς δέδωκάς μοι, θέλω ἵνα ὅπου εἰμὶ ἐγώ, κἀκεῖνοι ὧσι μετ' ἐμοῦ· ἵνα θεωρῶσι τὴν δόξαν τὴν ἐμήν, ἣν ἔδωκάς μοι, ὅτι ἠγάπησάς με πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου. πάτερ δίκαιε, καὶ ὁ κόσμος σε οὐκ ἔγνω, ἐγὼ δέ σε ἔγνω, καὶ οὗτοι ἔγνωσαν ὅτι σύ με ἀπέστειλας· καὶ ἐγνώρισά αὐτοῖς τὸ ὄνομά σου, καὶ γνωρίσω ἵνα ἡ ἀγάπη, ἣν ἠγάπησας με, ἐν αὐτοῖς ᾗ, καὶ ἐγὼ ἐν αὐτοῖς.

Word and entrust themselves to Him at all, you must seek to see more and more of Christ and the entire Triune Godhead in the Word, and entrust yourself to Him in an ever greater way as the revelation of Him in the Scripture is illuminated to your soul, through the supernatural grace decreed by the Father for your good by Christ the Mediator through the applicatory work of God the Holy Spirit. See ever the more of the glory of the Lord Jesus' Divine Person. Wonder ever the more at the condescending love manifested in His incarnation. Meditate upon all the aspects of His glorious saving work. Think in amazement about His exercise of all the Divine attributes towards you for your good. Rejoice with exceeding joy at His exercise of all the attributes of His glorified human nature towards you for your good. Fill yourself up with these things. You will be worshipping and praising your Triune God through your precious Lord Jesus for them for all eternity.

Specifically:

1.) *Passionately desire that God the Spirit will illumine to you the revelation of the Triune Jehovah, and of Christ the Blessed Mediator, in the Word.* How necessary it is that God reveals Himself to you! Left to yourself, you are utterly unable to discover Him. You will not know whether to turn to the right hand or the left. Furthermore, your heart contains such corruption and wickedness within it that God would be perfectly just to immediately thrust you into the depths of hell, separated from His blessed face for all eternity. Is the infinite King of glory obliged to show Himself to such a worm? God forbid! Recognize that both the initial bestowal of faith upon you, and the increase of faith in its exercise in you, are supernatural gifts from God, not autonomous products of your fallen will, and look to the Lord to perform in you what you cannot perform yourself. Without the free, gracious, and sovereign work of the Spirit in revealing Christ to you, you will never find Him. How necessary it is, then, that God takes the initiative and reveals Himself to your soul!

You certainly should have no such expectation of a gracious revelation, and you will not be looking to the Lord and seeking for God to reveal Himself to you in Christ, if you are not upright in heart—if you are wilfully choosing sin over Christ, you evidence that you do not desire a part in any of this glory, as you prefer your sinful abominations to that knowledge of and communion with God that is the greatest treasure of eternity.

2.) *Diligently apply yourself to the reading, study, memorization of, and meditation on the Word, praying for the illumination of the Spirit, depending on His sovereign grace alone, hungering and thirsting after knowledge of God in Christ.* The Bible is the very Word of God, the infallible, inerrant, revelatory speech of the Most High to man. It is a

more sure Word than even the audible testimony of the Father to Christ as heard on the Mount of Transfiguration (2 Peter 1:16-21). It is the perfect, unbreakably authoritative revelation of the Father to you through Christ by the Spirit. Oh, the sureness, the power, the infinite value of the Scriptures! Here is a sure anchor for your faith. Here is pure knowledge of God. Here is a genuine revelation, each jot and tittle of which is more sure and more lasting than the heavens and the earth. Here is the spring from whence the waters of life flow. Here is the love-letter of the Most High to His blood-bought people. The Bible is the instrument that the Spirit uses to show God in Christ to those who cry out for knowledge of Him. Do you treat the Bible as the invaluable treasure that it is? Does your use of time reflect such a view of God's Word? What is your attitude when you read and study it? "[T]o this *man* will I look . . . saith the LORD . . . *even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word*" (Isaiah 66:2). Furthermore, read, study, memorize, and meditate upon the Word with the expectation that God will work. He has promised that if you draw nigh to Him, He will draw nigh to you. He both supernaturally produces initial saving faith and supernaturally strengthens faith through the instrumentality of the Word (Romans 10:17). If you hunger and thirst after Him, He will certainly satisfy your longings for Him and will sup with you, and you with Him—for He Himself, in His gracious love, has placed those desires within you. He will shine in your heart the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Seek, then, oh Christian—seek your God in His Word!

3.) Indeed, *the believer should seek for the highest intellectual knowledge of Christ's Person, of his Triune God, and of the specific character of all their works.* Careful, detailed, and taxing theological work and careful study contributes to, rather than detracts from, affective appreciation of God in Christ. Carelessness or disinterest in careful thought about God is not piety, but ungodliness. Do you love the truth represented by the Nicene *homousios*? Do you love the truth represented by the Chalcedonian definition of Christ's Person and natures? Throughout John's Gospel, learning and understanding more about Christ led to greater faith in Him. Do you long to learn and understand more about the Lord Jesus Christ? While the intellectual apprehension of facts is not enough—committal to Him, based on those facts, must follow (John 2:23-3:3)—unknowing determinations of the will without knowledge are also insufficient (John 9:1-34 vs. 35-

41).³³⁹ The embrace of faith requires a properly known and apprehended object. Do you seek God with your mind, as well as your will and affections?

Furthermore, since the Biblical Christ is a real Person—the Creator and Redeemer of the world, and the only begotten Son of God—believing fellowship with Jesus Christ is both a product of and a means to a greater knowledge of Him, and leads to a holy abhorrence of every counterfeit “Jesus” (2 Corinthians 11:4) set forth by the world, the flesh, and the devil. Love for the living Christ and views of His glory will lead to a love of holy and spiritual worship and a rejection of the fleshly worship of fleshly “Jesus”; a love for the Redeemer who boldly and plainly rebuked the false doctrines of the Pharisees and Saducees will lead the Christian to reject the ecumenical “Jesus” that unites false doctrine with the true; knowledge of the true Christ will lead one to reject the fanaticism of the charismatic “Jesus,” the annihilationist “Jesus” of sundry cults, the Arian or Sabellian “Jesus” of others, the wafer “Jesus” of Romanism, and all other false Christs.

4.) *Behold in the Word the glory of God in Christ.*

a.) Behold the glory of Jesus Christ as the eternal Son of God. He has existed from eternity with His Father, rejoicing always before Him, participating in the ineffable communion of love and delight of the three Persons in the undivided Trinity. Before the beginning, now, and to all eternity, He possesses in full the undivided Divine essence. He is God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, eternally begotten of the Father. His throne, as God, is for ever and ever, and the scepter of His kingdom is a righteous sceptre. He is the I AM, who was, and is, and is to come, the Almighty. He is self-existent, immeasurable, and eternal. He is the Creator and Sovereign of the Universe—all things were made by Him, all things consist by Him, and all things are of Him, through Him, and unto Him. He fully possesses the infinite Divine glory, and will receive, with His Father and the Holy Spirit, the worship and adoration of the entire redeemed creation, for ever and ever.

b.) Behold the glory of Jesus Christ in His Mediatorial office. Behold, in the eternal counsel of peace, the Father giving the elect to the Son, the Son agreeing to redeem them, and the Spirit determining to regenerate them. Behold, and wonder at the mystery of godliness: God manifest in the flesh. See the condescension of the Father’s

³³⁹ That is, those in John 2:23-25 knew that Christ did miracles and had intellectual apprehension of various facts about Him, but did not commit themselves to Him, and were thus still unconverted (3:1-3). The blind man Christ healed in John 9 was willing to get cast out of the synagogue for His sake, yet he did not know that the Lord Jesus was the Son of God (9:36), or that He was not a sinner (9:25), and was only converted at the end of the chapter when he found out the proper knowledge of the Person of Christ (9:35-41).

express Image tabernacling among men, He who was always consubstantial with the Father as to His Godhead becoming consubstantial with humanity as to His manhood, uniting in His one Person the Divine nature and a true human nature. Behold the eternal Word conceived in the womb of Mary, being born in a manger. See the fulness of the Godhead embodied in a true Child who grew in wisdom and stature, and favor with God and man. Behold Him in His human identification with the sinful and desperately needy race He came to redeem. See Him growing weary with a journey, and sitting on Jacob's well to rest. See Him weeping at the grave of Lazarus—and raising his beloved friend from the dead. See His tender friendship with the Apostle John, the disciple whom Jesus loved. See Him sorrowful and very heavy in light of His coming cross, agonizing in prayer to the Father, betrayed by a familiar friend and deserted and denied by the rest. See Him unjustly condemned, mocked, spat upon, whipped, and crucified. See Him saving the soul and bringing to Paradise the repentant thief crucified next to Him. See Him bearing the sins of the world in His body, perfectly satisfying the demands of Divine justice through His one offering. See Him rising from the dead and so destroying the power of death, and ascending to the right hand of His Father, being crowned with glory and honor, and having all power in heaven and earth given into His hand. See Him interceding for His people as their Priest and Advocate, and by His omnipotent power preserving every one of them to everlasting glory. See Him, with the Father, sending the Holy Spirit, reflecting the Spirit's eternal procession from the Father and the Son in His temporal mission to indwell the church. See the union His elect have with Him in His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. See Him completing the work of His humiliation, and uniting to His immutable Divine perfections the human perfections that make Him the perfect and all-sufficient Savior of all who will come to Him. See Him ruling over the church in the world, preparing mansions for His beloved people, and coming again to bring them to Himself. See Him sitting on the throne of David and manifesting the righteous rule of God over the earth in the Millennial kingdom. See Him as the Light of the New Jerusalem, and His people singing the praises of redeeming love and serving Him before the throne of God and the Lamb for ever and ever. See Christ's glory in John's Gospel as the bread of life, the light of the world, the door to eternal life, the good shepherd who gives His life for the sheep, the resurrection and the life, the way, the truth, and the life, and the true vine, the source of all grace, the font of spiritual and eternal life for all those brought into union with Him. See the glory of the Lord Jesus in all Scripture, in type and in antitype, in promise and in fulfillment, and embrace Him, cleave to Him ever the more in all that He is and in all that He does. The glory of God in Christ is an inexhaustible theme, the delight and glory of the saints to all eternity. A few

lines of application certainly cannot even begin to compass it in its beauty and glory.³⁴⁰ Oh Christian, set in motion the work of eternity now—through the Scripture, behold the glory of God in Christ! In so doing, He will reveal Himself to you, you will partake in ever greater levels of spiritual life, and you will be transformed into the moral likeness of your incarnate Head.

5.) Consider also that *the more true intellectual and experiential knowledge of God in Christ the Christian has, the more he longs for more such knowledge, and the more he hates his fleshly feebleness in seeking after it.* Does your heart and flesh, all the faculties of your whole renewed person, cry out for God, the living God, as your own God? What an awful evil is this faintness, this feebleness, in seeking after God your Father, His Son, and His Spirit? How does believing meditation on Gethsemane, and on the cross, affect the heart! For seeing the Lord Jesus in His glory enflames the believer's soul with love for Him, with true sanctification as a result. And yet the disciples failed to watch and pray, but slept while the Lord wept His infinitely precious tears of blood, and forsook the Lord when He went to the cross. How often do I follow their faithless and criminal example, and fail to draw nigh to the Lord when He has come nigh to me? My God, oh for grace to love and know Thee more!

6.) Consider *the great privilege believers, and in particular ministers, have, in proclaiming the mystery of God in Christ.* Oh Christian, you have the privilege and the duty to give the gospel to the unconverted, and to set forth the Lord Jesus before believers in all His glory and grace to stir up their holy affections for Him. How much time do you spend proclaiming the gospel? How many doors have you knocked on this week? Is not Jesus Christ worthy of being known by all men? Furthermore, Hebrews 10:24-25 commands you to provoke others in the church to love and to good works. How better to do this than to set God in Christ before them? Do you talk of your Father, and of His Son your Redeemer, on the Lord's Day? "Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard *it*, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make

³⁴⁰ For what is arguably the preeminent treatment of this theme, see *ΧΡΙΣΤΟΛΟΓΙΑ: or, a Declaration of the Glorious Mystery of the Person of Christ, and Meditations and Discourses on the Glory of Christ, in His Person, Office, and Grace: With the Differences Between Faith and Sight: Applied unto the Use of Them that Believe & Applied unto Unconverted Sinners and Saints Under Spiritual Decays*, by John Owen.

up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not” (Malachi 3:16-18).

Furthermore, pastor, evangelist, and Christian preacher, you have the privilege and duty of setting forth the most stupendous of all truths in the proclamation of the Triune God and the incarnate, crucified, and risen Christ. Am *I* to proclaim the “mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh”? Who is sufficient for these things? Employ the great privileges that God has given you and set forth the truth, and all the truth, with nothing added or taken away, with holy boldness and passion, and with holy fear and trembling over the fact that the Lord has chosen and commanded you so to do. Earnestly contend for the faith, that nothing whatever of the glory of God revealed in Christ through the Scriptures, and committed to you for bold and public proclamation everywhere to all men, be lost.

7.) Do not turn aside from the full proclamation of God in Christ, as set forth from Genesis to Revelation, to any other and lesser message. Do not turn from Christ to a merely “practical” message or mere moralism. Doubtless the people of God must, and will, adorn their knowledge of God with good works. Indeed, the greater their true spiritual fellowship with Christ, the greater will be their outward manifestations of practical holiness. However, to take knowledge of the Lord Jesus away to focus exclusively upon what is “practical” is to rip out the soul from true religion and leave a lifeless corpse. Any “piety” that does not lead men to behold, believe on, receive, and know Jesus Christ is false, fleshly, and devilish.

What is more, as you strive against specific sins, do not let the Lord Jesus be removed from your view. It is certainly proper to set yourself mightily against particular lusts and products of the old man and to strive to utterly put to death specific manifestations of indwelling sin (Romans 8:13; Colossians 3:5). But do not remove the glory of God in Christ from its central place in your heart and mind. Sweet fellowship with Him causes the vain allurements of sin to quickly fade. Yes, your specific sins are awful, and a terrible problem—fight them with all your might. But make sure that in your warfare you have the Captain of the hosts of the Lord with you—without Him you can do nothing. Closer communion with Christ will end many a seemingly intractable battle with besetting sins.

Also, you should expect God’s blessing to the conversion of sinners and the spiritual strengthening of saints when Christ is preached and plainly set forth. Proper preaching of the Lord Jesus will have supernatural efficacy to produce spiritual results,

while the employment of humanly devised marketing or salesmanship techniques will only detract from a real focus on the revealed glory of God in the incarnate Redeemer. What is the chaff to the wheat?

Indeed, in the instituted services of the church, the worship of the Triune God through Christ must not be removed from its proper central place. Since God's own instituted worship is the best means of His own revelation, the Regulative Principle of worship must be consistently practiced. What is more, in whatever music is employed, not only must all fleshly sounds be rejected, but even proper melody and harmony must not be allowed to overshadow the spiritual worship of God. *He* must always remain the focus—let not the elements of worship, and especially the circumstances, attract attention to themselves and become ends in themselves.

MORMONISM: A TESTIMONY

A Mormon Church Translator for 15 Years and Her High Councilman Husband tell their story.

About us: Dennis grew up in a LDS family. He was a sixth generation Mormon. His parents were always active, temple going Mormons and the same was expected of him. He never had a problem believing the Mormon story and he was very happy when he was called on a mission to Finland. He served faithfully there two and a half years. After his mission, he married Rauni in the Salt Lake LDS Temple and started serving in the ward and stake. He was called to be an Elders Quorum president when he was still in his early 20's and he held teaching and leadership positions from there on. He was only in his early 30's when he was ordained a High Priest and called to serve on the Stake High Council. Being busy in the Church and its activities, doing a lot of temple work in addition to his ward and stake positions, took all the free time he had. It was Rauni who started to point out that there were problems with Mormon claims and that they should check them out.

Rauni was a convert to the LDS Church in Finland where she also served a full time mission before coming to the States. She started working as a translator for the Finnish language in the Church Offices almost immediately after her arrival in Salt Lake City. This translation work gave her an opportunity to study Mormon history from many books not generally available to the membership of the Church. She started to wonder, because she saw so many changes in the Church doctrines and contradictions between its scriptures and writings of the prophets and the high leadership of the Church. She was concerned, because it was obvious to her, that the Church was hiding a lot of important information from its membership. She worked as a translator for the Church almost fifteen years. She had teaching positions both in Sunday School and in Relief Society. She also served on the Stake Relief Society Board. But when these problems in the Church doctrine became too much for her to accept, she suggested to Dennis, that they should check them out once and for all and compare Mormon doctrine to the doctrine of the Bible to see if they matched.

This was a serious question, because IF Mormonism was not the truth, then their eternal life and salvation was in danger.

Below we present briefly some of the problems we found that caused us to eventually separate ourselves from the LDS Church.

President Joseph Fielding Smith (President of LDS Church in the early 1970's) stated:

"Mormonism must stand or fall on the story of Joseph Smith. He was either a Prophet of God, divinely called, properly appointed and commissioned or he was one of the biggest frauds this world has ever seen. There is no middle ground. If Joseph was a deceiver, who

willfully attempted to mislead people, then he should be exposed, his claims should be refuted, and his doctrines shown to be false..." ("Doctrines of Salvation," vol. 1 pp. 188-189.)

When one reads the above statement, an investigation - through a study of the pertinent documentation - is called for. Historically, the Mormon story is a young one and for that reason alone is relatively easy to investigate.

So let's begin in the year 1820.

Joseph Smith claimed he had a visit from God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, in 1820. He said that they told him that all churches were wrong and were an abomination to God and that he should not join any of them. He said that when he told his community about God's visit, that it initiated his fierce persecution. Later he said that he received visits from the angel Moroni, who Joseph Smith said was a resurrected being who had died close to Smith's area in New York state about 1400 years earlier. Moroni, Joseph Smith asserted, had buried in New York in the Hill Cumorah a record of his people who had lived on the American continent from about 600 B.C. to about 421 A.D. That record, Joseph Smith was told, would be given to him to translate. Then, a few years later Joseph Smith said that he received the record, written on gold plates in "reformed Egyptian" language that no one but he could understand. He was also told not to show these gold plates to anyone, but that some time later a few selected people would be given the privilege to view them. He said that he then translated the plates and published the material as the "Book of Mormon" and gave the gold plates back to the angel Moroni.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints claims that the name of the Church was given to Joseph Smith by revelation. However, when Smith first organized the Church in 1830, it was called the "Church of Christ," then four years later the name was changed to the "Church of Latter-day Saints," then in 1838, it was changed again, this time to the "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints", as it is known today. Joseph Smith claimed that he received many revelations from God, and he began to introduce many new doctrines to his new Church; one of the doctrines was polygamy, a practice that Smith denied publicly but practiced secretly. That doctrine was the obvious downfall of Joseph Smith, and he was killed in 1844 as a result of the polygamy controversy.

Now let's go back and look at this above information a little closer and in detail.

Joseph Smith claimed that after he had seen a vision of God the Father and Jesus Christ, he said that he told it first to a Methodist preacher and that it started the entire community, "all men of high standing" and "the great ones of the most popular sects," to persecute him bitterly, him being only a boy of 14 years of age. Wouldn't you think that kind of commotion would have caused someone somewhere to write about it? - At least the Palmyra Newspaper would have written something, since Joseph Smith claimed that "all men" were united to bring a "bitter and reviling persecution" against him. Not many important events took place in that little town, and even unimportant gossip was printed. But one searches in vain from 1820 on to find an account about a young boy's vision or

persecution, or to find a story regarding the revival excitement that Smith later claimed was the reason why he went to the grove to seek God in prayer and received this fantastic vision. Joseph Smith said that he was told twice in this vision not to join any of the religions (see "Pearl of Great Price" 2:5-26), but it is interesting to note that in 1823, Joseph's mother, sister and two brothers joined the Presbyterian Church, and later Joseph himself sought membership in the Methodist Church, where his wife was a member. Records show that Joseph was expelled in 1828, because of his belief in magic and also because of his "money-digging activities."

Joseph's newly organized church started to publish its history as events took place. This publication was called the "Messenger and Advocate." Oliver Cowdery was the main writer and its accuracy was checked by Joseph Smith himself. In this publication Joseph tells how, after his brother Alvin's death, and after his mother, sister and two brothers had joined the Presbyterian Church, he started to seek religion and pray "if some Supreme Being existed" (vol. 1 p. 79). IF HE HAD HAD A VISION OF GOD THE FATHER AND HIS SON, JESUS CHRIST IN 1820, HE MOST CERTAINLY WOULD HAVE KNOWN BY 1823 OR 1824 THAT A SUPREME BEING EXISTED. By reading diaries, records, newspapers, etc., one seeks in vain to find any mention of this so-called "First Vision" story until 1842, when it was published in "Times and Seasons," 22 years after this vision supposedly took place. It becomes quite obvious that this report was an after-thought, since the Vision story talks about two separate gods and the Book of Mormon says that there is only one God; and that Jesus, God the Father and Holy Ghost are this one God. Examples: Alma 11:26-33; 18:26-28; Mosiah 15:1, 2, 5, etc. "The Book of Commandments" (now called "Doctrine and Covenants") was published in 1835 and it included lectures given in the School of the Prophets. Lecture 5 says God is a Spirit, and the Son only has the body of flesh and bones. (The lectures have later been removed from the "D&C" but they are available as a separate small book.) There is now an added footnote to this lecture 5, which says that Joseph received further light and knowledge in 1843 and THEN knew that God the Father also had a body of flesh and bones. That statement alone tells that there was no vision of the Father and the Son in 1820. Had there been a vision, he wouldn't have needed this "further light and knowledge" about the Father having a body of flesh and bones. It was not until 1844, that Joseph started to preach about a god who was once a man and progressed into godhood, and how men can also become gods. (See "Teachings by Prophet Joseph Smith" pp. 345-347). Thus, there is absolutely no evidence for the first vision as it appears in the Pearl of Great Price, or that the vision was known to Mormons or non-Mormons prior to 1842 or thereabouts. It was not until the 1880's that this story was accepted by the Church. Prior to that time, we were able only to read denials about it. For example, in "Journal of Discourses," vol. 2, p. 171, in 1855, Brigham Young preached a sermon in which he said:

"LORD DID NOT COME TO JOSEPH SMITH, BUT SENT HIS ANGEL TO INFORM HIM THAT HE SHOULD NOT JOIN ANY RELIGIOUS SECT OF THE DAY, FOR THEY WERE ALL WRONG..."

John Taylor later said the same thing, see J. of D. vol. 20, page 167, on March 2, 1879. Heber C. Kimball in vol. 6, page 29, said:

"DO YOU SUPPOSE THAT GOD IN PERSON CALLED UPON JOSEPH SMITH, OUR PROPHET? GOD CALLED UPON HIM, BUT DID NOT COME HIMSELF..."

George A. Smith told the same story in the Journal of Discourses, vol. 12, pp. 333-334. One wouldn't really even have to dig deeper than that to find out that the claims of the Church today regarding Joseph Smith's so-called First Vision are not true, according to documentary evidence of the time, and Joseph Smith should - and these facts should - be exposed, just as Joseph Fielding Smith said they should.

Now let's look at the Book of Mormon. Early Mormon apostle Orson Pratt made a statement concerning the Book of Mormon:

" 'The Book of Mormon' must be either true or false. If true, it is one of the most important messages ever sent from God... If False, it is one of the most cunning, wicked, bold, deep-laid impositions ever palmed upon the world, calculated to deceive and ruin millions... The nature of the "Book of Mormon" is such, that if true, no one can possibly be saved and reject it; If false, no one can possibly be saved and receive it... If, after a rigid examination, it be found imposition, it should be extensively published to the world as such; the evidences and arguments on which the imposture was detected, should be clearly and logically stated, that those who have been sincerely yet unfortunately deceived, may perceive the nature of deception, and to be reclaimed, and that those who continue to publish the delusion may be exposed and silenced... by strong and powerful arguments - by evidences adduced from scripture and reason..." (Orson Pratt's Works, "Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon": Liverpool, 1851, pp. 1, 2.)

We hope to show clearly and logically, even though very briefly in this letter, that the Book of Mormon is not a divinely inspired record, but a 19th century product. Joseph Smith claimed that after he translated the gold plates, he returned them to an angel - so there is no way to inspect them or check the accuracy of the translation. Mormons often refer to the witnesses of the Book of Mormon. Most of these men left the Church, but claims are also made that even though they did, they never denied that they had seen an angel who showed them "the plates of the Book of Mormon." However, in the Journal of Discourses, vol. 7, page 164, Brigham Young stated:

"...witnesses of the Book of Mormon who handled the plates and conversed with the angels of God were afterwards left to doubt and to disbelieve that they had ever seen an angel."

Joseph Smith himself called these men wicked and liars and by many other demeaning names. In the Journal of Discourses, vol. 7, pages 114-115, George A. Smith witnesses of the Book of Mormon. Martin Harris later claimed that he had a better testimony of "the Shakers Book" than he ever had of the Book of Mormon. Reading about these witnesses, one is drawn to the conclusion that they were unstable men and easily convinced; for example, Martin Harris changed his religion at least eight times. Some of the others started their own religions later.

Let's now look at the Book of Mormon itself. The Book of Mormon presents problems that cannot be explained away. Regarding language: 1 Ne. 1:2, etc., states that Hebrews who left Jerusalem and came to the Americas spoke Egyptian. It is a known fact that Hebrews spoke Hebrew, and their records were kept in Hebrew. Egyptians were their enemies. It is as absurd to think that Hebrews would have written their sacred history in Egyptian as to think that American History would have been written in Russian. In Mormon 9:32, 34, it states that the language was "reformed Egyptian" and that no other people knew their language. There is no known language called "reformed Egyptian." 1 Ne. 17:5 talks about fruit and wild honey being products of Sinai desert (called Bountiful). Not possible! 1 Ne. 18:1 talks about ample timber that Jews used to make a ship. There is not ample timber in that area. It was a desert; it still is a desert. 1 Ne. 2:6-9 mentions a river named Laman that flows into the Red Sea. There is no river there and there has not been since the Pleistocene era. Botanical problems are many in the Book of Mormon. Wheat, barley, olives, etc., are mentioned, but none of these were in the Americas at that time. North America had no cows, asses, horses, oxen, etc. Europeans brought them hundreds and hundreds of years later. North America had no lions, leopards, nor sheep at that time. Honey bees were brought here by Europeans much later. Ether 9:18, 19, lists domestic cattle, cows and oxen as separate species! They did not even exist in the Americas at that time. The Book of Mormon also mentions swine as being useful to man. Maybe, but Jews would not think of swine as being useful or good; swine were forbidden, unclean animals to the Jews. Horses, asses, and elephants were not here either. And what on earth are "cureloms" and "cumoms"? No such animals have ever been identified anywhere. Domestic animals that are thought to be "useful" would hardly become extinct. Ether 9:30-34 talks about poisonous snakes driving sheep to the south. The Book of Mormon tells that the people ate the snake-killed animals, all of them! (v. 34). Jewish people could not have eaten animals that were killed that way, since Mosaic law forbids it! Chickens and dogs did not exist here at that time either. 3 Ne. 20:16 and 21:12 talk about lions as "beasts of the forests." Lions do not live in forests or jungles, and they never lived in the Americas. No silk and wool clothing (nor moths) existed, as 1 Ne. 13:7; Alma 4:6; Ether 9:17 and 10:24 indicate, at that time either. Butter is also mentioned, but it could not possibly exist, since no milk-producing animals were found in the Americas at that time.

Ether 15:30-31 says that after Shiz was beheaded, he raised up and struggled for breath!!! In Ether, chapter 6, we learn that furious winds propelled the barges to the promised land for 344 days! Even if the winds were not "furious," but, for example, blew only 10 miles per hour, the distance traveled in 344 days would have been 82,560 miles, or more than three times around the world. Absurdity, to say the least! And why would the Lord instruct Jared to make a hole on top and bottom of each barge? (Ether 2:20.) When Lehi left Jerusalem, according to the Book of Mormon, his group consisted of fewer than 20 people. Yet 19 years later the people had so prospered and multiplied in the promised land that they built a temple which "manner of construction was like unto the temple of Solomon: and the workmanship thereof was exceeding fine" (2. Ne. 5:16). Looking at what the Bible says about the construction of Solomon's temple, we find that it took thirty thousand Israelites, a hundred and fifty thousand hewers of stone and carriers, three

thousand three hundred supervisors (I Kings 5:13-16) and about seven years to build it. (See also I Kings 6.) And how many people could Lehi have had in his group after 19 years? The book further tells that in less than 30 years after arriving on this continent, they had multiplied so rapidly that they even divided into two great nations. Even the most rapid human reproduction could only have a few dozen in that brief time, and most of them still would be infants and children and about one-third older people.

Not only did they divide into "two great nations," but throughout the book, about every three or four years, they had devastating wars that killed thousands (i.e., Alma 28:2). Starting after the first 19 years or so, Laman and Lemuel and their descendants and followers (!) turned dark skinned because of their disobedience (2 Ne. 5:21). According to the Book of Mormon, dark skin color was a curse from God! This change of skin color is happening throughout the book. In 2 Ne. 30:6 we read that if Lamanites accepted the true gospel, they became "white and delightsome" (and since 1981 printing of the Book of Mormon, they become "pure") but if they left this true gospel, they became "dark and loathsome." People's skin color does not change if they believe or do not believe! Nor is the skin color a curse! The Book of Mormon teaches that Indians originated from these Jewish settlers. Indians are distinctly Mongoloid - they have the "Mongoloid" blue spot, specific blood traits, and their facial features are of typical Asian origin, not Semitic at all. In Ether 7:8, 9, we read of steel and breakable windows (2:23) back in Abraham's time! Try to explain that to an archaeologist! Steel was not even developed until about 1400 years later. At the end of the Book of Mormon, Moroni tells about a great battle that took place on the Hill Cumorah. Over two hundred thousand people, armed to their teeth, were killed on that hill. The story tells about their weapons, breastplates, helmets, swords, etc. Nothing has ever been found on that hill or anywhere else in this continent, as a matter of fact. Metal, helmets, swords, etc., do not disappear in a mere 1400 years. Before the LDS Church purchased the Hill Cumorah, it was literally dug full of holes and even caves, but nothing was ever found. (Joseph Smith even told about a cave inside of Hill Cumorah and how they - he and Oliver - went in and out of it. It supposedly had wagon loads of gold plates, Laban sword, etc.). When people dig for worms in the Holy Land, they make discoveries. The Bible has been proven by archaeology, cities, places, coins, clothing, swords, etc., have been found, but not one single place mentioned in the Book of Mormon has ever been identified. There are still people in the LDS Church who believe that archaeology has proven, at least to a degree, the Book of Mormon. Some missionaries are still using slide presentations of ruins from Mexico and South America, implying that they prove the Book of Mormon. But they are from an entirely different time period. They are ruins of idolworshippers who offered human sacrifices.

In the mid 1970's, President Spencer W. Kimball made a statement that should have stopped these "faith promoting rumors." The Church News published it and it said to "stop looking for archaeological evidences for the Book of Mormon, for there is none," he said. Perhaps he finally realized that it was too embarrassing to insist on Book of Mormon archaeology since professors in the Church's own University had started to publicly deny that there was any truth to it. Professor Dee Green, in "Dialogue," summer of 1969, pp. 74-78, wrote: "The first myth we need to eliminate is that the Book of Mormon archaeology exists. Titles of books full of archaeological half-truths, dilettante

on peripheries of American archaeology calling themselves Book of Mormon archaeologists regardless of their education, and a Department of Archaeology at BYU devoted to the production of Book of Mormon archaeologists do not insure that Book of Mormon archaeology really exists... no Book of Mormon location is known... Biblical archaeology can be studied, because we know where Jerusalem and Jericho were and are, but we do not know where Zarahemla and Bountiful (or any location for that matter) were or are..." Many Mormon scholars have faced the truth and fully agree with Professor Green, but sadly enough, this "myth of the Book of Mormon archaeology" still surfaces from the general membership, who are not updated on these issues. Thomas S. Ferguson was a firm believer and he was sure that archaeology would prove the Book of Mormon. He was an attorney and believed that he knew how to weigh the evidence, once it was found. And a lot of "evidence" was found, but unfortunately for the LDS Church, the evidence did not have any connection to the Book of Mormon story. Thomas S. Ferguson spent hundreds of thousands of dollars and 25 years of his life as a head of "The New World Archaeological Foundation," funded by the Church. But in spite of all the efforts, by 1970, he had come to the conclusion that all had been in vain and that Joseph Smith was not a prophet and that Mormonism was not true. Here was a man who had devoted his entire life, even before starting this foundation, to Mormonism. He had written a book called "One Fold and One Shepherd" in defense of Mormonism, but later he had to admit that the case against Joseph Smith was absolutely devastating and could not be explained away. "The Book of Abraham" was perhaps the final straw for him, as well as for many others who were more aware of the problems in Mormonism.

But there were others, i.e. B. H. Roberts, noted scholar in the Mormon Church and a General Authority, whose secret manuscript has only fairly recently been published, and who had come to question the Book of Mormon quite some time before Ferguson did. B. H. Roberts had written a typewritten manuscript "Book of Mormon Difficulties" of over 400 pages, sometime between 1922-1933, and in it he admitted that the Book of Mormon is in conflict with what is now known from 20th century archaeological investigation about the early inhabitants of America. After going into a lengthy explanation of impossibilities in the Book of Mormon he also says that he has come to discover things he didn't know earlier in his life, for instance, that Joseph Smith did have access to a number of books that could have assisted him and given him ideas for the Book of Mormon. Roberts tells how Joseph's mother wrote in her book, "History of Joseph Smith," that long before Joseph had received the gold plates, he gave:

"...most amazing recitals... he would describe the ancient inhabitants of this continent, their dress, their mode of traveling, and the animals upon which they rode; their cities, their buildings, with every particular; their mode of warfare, and also their religious worship. This he would do with much ease, seemingly, as if he had spent his whole life among them." (Quoted from B. H. Roberts's manuscript, page 280.)

Roberts then goes on to say that Joseph could have gotten his information from "knowledge" that existed in the community, because of the books like Ethan Smith's "View of the Hebrews" (published nearby in 1823) and Josiah Priest's book, "The Wonders of Nature and Providence," published only 20 miles away, about one year later.

That book had lots to say about the Hebrew origin of American Indians and their advanced culture and civilization. Roberts then asks:

"...Whence comes the young prophet's ability to give these descriptions 'with as much ease as if he had spent his whole life' with these ancient inhabitants of America? Not from the Book of Mormon, which is as yet, a sealed book to him... These evening recitals could come from no other source than the vivid, constructive imagination of Joseph Smith, a remarkable power which attended him through all his life. It was as strong and varied as Shakespeare's and no more to be accounted for than the English Bard's." (From B. H. Roberts' typewritten manuscript, page 281.)

Prior to this, B. H. Roberts was known as a great defender of Mormonism, and he is still considered one of the greatest scholars the LDS Church has ever had. He wrote the six volume book "Comprehensive History of the Church," and many other works as well. "Book of Mormon Difficulties, a Study" is now available in bookstores. There would be much, much more to say why the Book of Mormon is not an ancient record but an obvious production of a very intelligent and creative person, Joseph Smith, who used a number of books, including the Bible, to create this book. Interestingly enough though, not any of the important Mormon doctrines of today are in the book that the Church claims "contains the fullness of the everlasting Gospel." (According to the General Authorities of the Church, "fullness of the Gospel" means that all doctrines leading to salvation in the celestial kingdom are in that book, and one wouldn't even need any other books to find information for salvation.) The Book of Mormon teaches against today's Mormon doctrine, for example, polygamy: Jacob 1:15, 2:22-27; 3:5; Mosiah 11:2; Ether 10:5; (polygamy is not practiced by the mainstream Church today, but it remains as a doctrine of the Church, see D&C 132); eternal progression (that God could have progressed from man to God): Alma 41:8, 3 Ne. 24:6; Mormon 9:9, 10, 19; Moroni 8:18, 23; secret combinations or oaths (temples): Mormon 8:27; 2 Ne. 9:9; 2 Ne. 26:22; Alma 34:36; 37:23, 31. IT TEACHES: that God created the heaven and the earth by His word: Mormon 9:17; Jacob 4:9; that there is only one God: Mosiah 7:27; 13:34; 15:1-5; 16:15; Alma 11:26-33, 38, 39, 44; and no work for the dead: Alma 34:32-33. Doctrines like temple or eternal marriage, priesthoods, etc., are not in the Book of Mormon, and, as we have already mentioned, one can see that this book speaks against polygamy, work for the dead, oaths (temple), men becoming gods, that there is more than one God, etc. It becomes quite obvious to an investigator of Mormonism, that Joseph Smith changed his mind about who God is after 1842 or so. He contradicted the Book of Mormon with the Doctrine and Covenants, i.e.: Alma 34:36, "And this I know, because the Lord hath said he dwelleth not in unholy temples, but in the hearts of the righteous doth he dwell..." and D&C 130:3, "...the idea that the Father and the Son dwell in a man's heart is an old sectarian notion, and is false"; and the Book of Mormon, Jacob 4:9 "For behold, by the power of his word man came upon the face of the earth, which earth was created by the power of his word. Wherefore, if God being able to speak and the world was, and to speak and man was created...", and "the Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith," page 350: "...men who are preaching salvation, say that God created the heavens and earth out of nothing? The reason is, that they are unlearned in the things of God... God never had

the power to create the spirit of man at all." He then started to teach that his God had once been a mere mortal man, etc.

In November, 1967, when discovered Egyptian Papyri was given back by the Metropolitan Museum to the Mormon Church, it brought a great amount of excitement into the hearts of Mormons. Finally there was something concrete that an "angel didn't take away" that could once and for all prove to the doubting people that Joseph Smith really was a prophet of God and had a God-given gift or ability to translate. We read from the Pearl of Great Price the following introduction to the Book of Abraham.

"TRANSLATED FROM THE PAPYRUS BY JOSEPH SMITH. A TRANSLATION OF SOME ANCIENT RECORDS, THAT HAVE FALLEN INTO OUR HANDS FROM THE CATACOMBS OF EGYPT - THE WRITINGS OF ABRAHAM WHILE HE WAS IN EGYPT, CALLED THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM, WRITTEN BY HIS OWN HAND, UPON PAPYRUS." This papyri was written in Egyptian language and this would prove that if Joseph Smith's translation of papyri was correct, it would be possible that he could have translated the Book of Mormon from "reformed Egyptian." But problems started to surface very soon after the First Presidency had given the papyri to Professor Hugh Nibley of BYU to translate it or to find a translator capable to do so. (By the way, why not the current prophet of the Church? Shouldn't he have done it?) Now, if this papyri was written by Abraham "by his own hand," as Joseph Smith had said, it should be at least about 4000 years old. After this papyri was evaluated, even Professor Nibley had to agree that it was a production of not older than the first century A.D. Thus Abraham couldn't have written it. That was the first blow. The second was that after it was given to several qualified Egyptologists, it was clearly shown not to be what the Book of Abraham said it was. Expectations of the Church members' had been high. Dr. Sidney B. Sperry, one of the most noted scholars, had said:

"The little volume of Scripture known as the Book of Abraham will someday be recognized as one of the most remarkable documents in existence. It is evident that writings of Abraham while he was in Egypt, of which our printed Book of Abraham is a copy, must of necessity be older than original text of Genesis..." (Dr. Sidney B. Sperry, "Ancient Records Testify in Papyrus and Stone" 1938, page 39.)

Now that the papyri had been located and proven by the leaders of the Church and its scholars to be the very one Joseph Smith had translated, the question was: does it read the same as what Joseph Smith's translation said? It was very quickly discovered to be nothing more than a pagan burial record, called the "Book of Breathings," a short portion of the "Book of the Dead." Egyptologist, James Henry Breasted, tells that the Book of the Dead is chiefly a book of magical charms. It was written by a very superstitious people and is quite different from the religion taught in the Bible. Mormon writers have admitted that this is the case. (From his book, "Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt," New York, 1969, p. 308.) "There has been a lot of things written and suggestions made trying to justify the fact that not one mention of Abraham, not his name, not his faith, nothing at all is on this papyri, only pagan beliefs and instructions on afterlife as believed in Egypt." LDS doctrine on blacks and the priesthood is (was) based on this

Book of Abraham. The Utah Mormon Church has not removed this book from their scriptures, but it is interesting to note that the RLDS Church that is directed by the direct descendants of Joseph Smith made this statement in "The New York Times" on May 3, 1970, "...it may be helpful to suggest, that the Book of Abraham represents simply the product of Joseph Smith's imagination..." The RLDS Church removed the book from among their scriptures. The only thing that the Utah Mormon Church did, was to allow blacks (1978) to have the priesthood. But all in all, thinking people started to see that a huge shadow was now cast also on the Book of Mormon.

Mormon writer, Klaus Hansen, made some remarks in "Dialogue A Journal of Mormon Thought," summer 1970, p. 110:

"...To a professional historian, for example, the recent translation of the Joseph Smith papyri may well present the potentially most damaging case against Mormonism since its foundation. Yet the 'Powers That Be' at the Church Historian's Office should take comfort in the fact that almost total lack of response to this translation is an uncanny proof of Frank Kermode's observation that even the most devastating acts of disconfirmation will have no effect whatever on true believers. Perhaps an even more telling response is that of the 'liberals,' or cultural Mormons. After the Joseph Smith's papyri affair, one might have well expected a mass exodus of these people from the Church. Yet none has occurred. Why? Because cultural Mormons, of course, do not believe in the historical authenticity of Mormon scriptures in the first place. So there is nothing to disconfirm."

Polygamy, as we have mentioned at the beginning, was the issue that led to the killing of Joseph Smith. Investigation of the records shows that Joseph Smith practiced polygamy from the early 1830's on. William Clayton was Joseph Smith's personal secretary and scribe until his death. William Clayton's diary has been a source for many revelations published in the Doctrine and Covenants. Clayton's diary tells also how the "revelation" on polygamy came to be. Stated briefly, it came as a result of a discussion between Joseph, his brother Hyrum, and William Clayton, who wrote it down. Emma, Joseph's wife, had been suspecting Joseph of having affairs with other women, i.e., Fanny Alger about 1831 and from then on. Family life was not very happy and calm. Joseph was relating this to his brother Hyrum and William Clayton. Hyrum suggested that Joseph would write a "revelation" where God gives instructions for Joseph to have other wives. Joseph doubted Emma would believe that. However, William Clayton wrote it down and Hyrum took it to Emma. EMMA DID NOT BELIEVE IT. Later on, Joseph somehow convinced Emma to accept it, which she did for a short time, but after Joseph's death, Emma went into a total denial of polygamy as if it had never happened. Many thought that her reasons were to protect her children and their memory of their father. Utah LDS Church's historian, Andrew Jensen, in 1887, taking from the enormous files of then secret manuscript material in the Salt Lake City Church Library, compiled the first list of 27 wives of Joseph Smith. Genealogical Archives were used to add another 21. Nauvoo Temple records were the main source. Fanny Alger was his first plural wife, married to Joseph in 1834. If one looks at the D&C from 1890, it says that revelation was GIVEN July 12, 1843. "History of the Church," vol. 5. pages 500-501, also says that it was GIVEN that day, but now D&C section 132 says that it was RECORDED July 12, 1843 -

implying that it could have been given at an earlier date. This kind of altering of the records of the Church can be noticed quite often by comparing the earlier printings with the more recent ones. Obvious attempts were thus made to save some integrity, since Joseph Smith had made a number of public denials of even knowing anything about polygamy. He and the Church leaders denied it publicly, but practiced it secretly. In the first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, printed in 1835, in Section 101:4, there is denial of polygamy, calling it a "crime of fornication..." This remained in the D&C until 1876, when it was removed, and Section 132 added about God commanding the practice of polygamy.

Joseph Smith (and later Brigham Young, also) were even married to women who, at the time of marriage, were still other men's wives. Historical Records of these strange marriages are available. A few examples might be proper to take here: Prescinda Hunginton Buell, wife of Norman Buell, later also a wife of Heber C. Kimball. She had married Norman Buell in 1827 and they had two children. Joseph married her in the fall of 1838 and had a child by her. She continued to be married to Buell also. Nancy Marinda Johnson Hyde, wife of Orson Hyde, was also one of Joseph's wives. That caused Orson Hyde to leave the Church for a while, but he came back later. Genealogical Archives in Salt Lake City show that Nancy Hyde was later sealed to Joseph Smith on July 30, 1857, years after Joseph Smith's death. Zina Diantha Huntington Jacobs, later wife of Brigham Young, was married to Henry Jacobs on March 7, 1841, and seven and one-half months later, to Joseph Smith, on October 27, 1841. Zina never divorced her husband Henry Jacobs, but after Joseph's death, Brigham publicly told Jacobs: "The woman you claim for a wife does not belong to you. She is a spiritual wife of brother Joseph, sealed to him. I am his proxy, and she, in his behalf, with her children, are my property. You can go where you please and get another..." Jacobs obviously accepted Brigham's decision for he stood as a witness when in the Nauvoo Temple, in January 1846, Zina was sealed to Brigham Young for time, and Joseph Smith for eternity. Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, wife of Adam Lightner, claimed later that Joseph had told her that an angel came to him with drawn sword, and commanded Joseph in 1834 to take her as his wife. She was then only 17. In her diary, she wrote that she was sealed and married to Joseph in the Masonic Hall in Nauvoo and sealed again in the Nauvoo Temple by Heber C. Kimball. She later came to Salt Lake City and remained in the Church, even though her husband never joined the Church. The reason why Andrew Jensen, in 1887, did this research on polygamy, was to prove that Joseph Smith did practice polygamy, since RLDS Church was denying that he ever did.

When Oliver Cowdery in 1838 had accused Joseph of these adulterous affairs, Joseph had Oliver excommunicated. The controversy over polygamy was the underlying reason for the death of Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum. William Law's wife had confessed that she had an affair with Joseph. William Law left the Church and started a publication called "Nauvoo Expositor." One issue was published and the second one was going to print when Joseph found out that William Law was going to print his wife's confession in that issue. Joseph had the press destroyed and the building burned. That caused his arrest and, consequently, his death. But he did not die as a martyr, as is claimed by the Church.

John Taylor, third president of the church, who was in the prison with Joseph and Hyrum at the time, tells the following in the "Gospel Kingdom," page 360:

"Joseph opened the door slightly, and snapped the pistol six successive times... afterwards (I) understood that two or three were wounded by these discharges, two of whom, I am informed, died."

The same account is also in the History of the Church, vol. 6, p. XLI and pages 617-618. It was too bad that Joseph Smith was thus killed, but he did not die like a martyr who went "as a lamb to the slaughter" as is claimed by the LDS Church. HE DIED IN A GUNFIGHT, and killed two people before he was shot. Joseph acted as a Mason at the time of his death. John Taylor tells also that Joseph went to the window and made a Masonic distress sign after his gun was empty, hoping that Masons, if there were any among this mob, would rescue him, according to the Masonic oath "to defend one another, right or wrong."

The Mormon Temple Ceremony compares quite exactly with the Masonic Ceremony, signs, tokens and penalties included. Joseph, Hyrum, Brigham, and others, were Masons. (Cult experts consider Masonic religion to be a Satanic Cult.) Six weeks after Joseph Smith and other Mormons were expelled from the Masonic order, Joseph Smith introduced the Masonic ceremony as the temple ceremony "received as a revelation from God." When Dr. Reed Durham, director of LDS Institute of Religion, made his discovery of this in 1974, and gave his speech on the subject of the Mormon-Mason connection in front of the Utah History Association on April 20, 1974, he was highly criticized for making this matter public. He also showed the Jupiter talisman and explained that Joseph had had it from 1826 (the same year he was convicted on money-digging charges and being a believer in magic), and that Joseph had this Jupiter talisman on him at the time of his death. The talisman contains symbols relating to astrology and magic. There were other magical items discovered at the same time that belonged to Hyrum Smith. The Patriarch of the Church, Eldridge Smith, supposedly has them in his possession. (And by the way, what has become of Patriarch Eldridge Smith?)

Teachings of the LDS Church became even stranger after Brigham led the Mormons to the Salt Lake Valley. Now they thought they were free to practice what had been illegal elsewhere... i.e., polygamy and blood atonement.

Brigham Young made polygamy public from 1852 on in Utah, even though they still denied it outside of Utah. From this same year on, he started to teach that "Adam is God and Father and the only God with whom we have to do" and that Adam was the father of human spirits as well as Jesus' physical father. (For these, see the Journal of Discourses, vol. 1, pp. 50-51; vol. 4, p. 1; vol. 5, pp. 331-332, etc.) The LDS Church has issued denials saying that Adam-God doctrine was never taught, but records clearly show that Brigham Young taught it, not only by mentioning it once or twice, but that he taught it from 1852 until his death in 1877. Let's look at some of his statements:

"Now hear it, O inhabitants of the earth, Jew and Gentile, Saint and sinner! When our father Adam came into the garden of Eden, he came into it with a celestial body, and brought Eve, one of his wives, with him. He helped to make and organize the world. He is Michael, the Arc-angel, the Ancient of Days! about whom holy men have written and spoken - HE IS OUR FATHER AND OUR GOD, AND THE ONLY GOD WITH WHOM WE HAVE TO DO. Every man upon the earth, professing Christians or non-professing, must hear it, and will know it sooner or later... the earth was organized by three distinct characters, namely, Eloheim, Yahovah, and Michael, these three forming a quorum, as in heavenly bodies, and in organizing element, perfectly represented in the Deity, as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." Journal of Discourses, vol. 1, pp. 50-51.

This teaching was repeated and carried on in the other Church's writings throughout the years. For example, in the Millenial Star, vol. 17, page 195, we read:

"... every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that he (Adam) is God of the whole earth. Then will the words of the prophet Brigham Young, WHEN SPEAKING OF ADAM, be fully realized - 'HE IS OUR FATHER AND OUR GOD, AND THE ONLY GOD WITH WHOM WE HAVE TO DO.'"

Further in the Millenial Star, vol. 16, page 530, we read the counsel by James A. Little: "I believe in the principal of obedience; and if I am told that Adam is our Father and our God, I just believe it." The records show that there were only two leaders in the Church who had difficulty with this doctrine, namely apostles Orson Pratt and Amasa Lyman. In one of Brigham's sermons, printed in the "Deseret News," June 14, 1873, Brigham declared:

"How much unbelief exists in the minds of the Latter-day Saints in regard to one particular doctrine which I revealed to them, and WHICH GOD REVEALED TO ME - namely that ADAM IS OUR FATHER AND GOD... Our Father Adam helped to make this earth, it was created expressly for him. He brought one of his wives with him. Who is he? He is Michael... He was the first man on the earth, and its framer and maker. He with the help of his brethren brought it into existence."

"Then he (Adam) said: 'I WANT MY CHILDREN THAT WERE BORN TO ME IN THE SPIRIT WORLD TO COME HERE AND TAKE TABERNACLES OF FLESH THAT THEIR SPIRITS MAY HAVE A HOUSE, A TABERNACLE, OR A DWELLING PLACE AS MINE HAS' and where is the mystery?" Brigham Young clearly taught for over 20 years as a doctrine the following:

- 1) "ADAM NOT MADE OF THE DUST OF THIS EARTH" (Journal of Discourses, vol. 2, p. 6);
- 2) "ADAM IS THE ONLY GOD WITH WHOM WE HAVE TO DO," (Journal of Discourses, vol. 1, p. 50);
- 3) "ADAM IS THE FATHER OF OUR SPIRITS" (Deseret News, 14. June 1873;
- 4) ADAM, THE FATHER OF JESUS CHRIST (Journal of Discourses, vol. 1, pp. 50-51).

Heber C. Kimball, the First Counselor to Brigham Young, also taught:

"I have learned by experience that there is but one God that pertains to this people, and he is the God that pertains to this earth - THE FIRST MAN. THAT FIRST MAN SENT HIS OWN SON TO REDEEM THE WORLD..." (Journal of Discourses, vol. 4, p. 1.)

Brigham Young had claimed that God Himself had revealed this doctrine to him. Brigham also had claimed that his sermons were "as good as scripture" (J. of D., vol. 13, p. 166). If that is so, then how can the LDS Church today logically reject his teachings that he said came from his God? - (Who was Brigham's God? Joseph Smith had said: "Some revelations are from God: some revelations are of man: and some are of the devil..." - "Address to All Believers in Christ", p. 31. - Who determines the source of the revelations, the followers or the prophet?) - Further, if Brigham Young was wrong, how can the modern Church accept him as an authority from God? The LDS Church teaches that there must be an unbroken link of true prophets after the restoration, otherwise the authority would be lost. Contradicting Brigham Young now only proves the incredibility of both the modern Church and Brigham Young, and breaks the link.

One could go on and on about these teachings that clearly show the non-Christian nature of the LDS Church. But let's look now at some of the LDS Church's teachings of today about Adam: In the Doctrine and Covenants 27:11, Adam is referred to as the Ancient of Days, spoken by Daniel the prophet (in Daniel 7:9-14.) But the Ancient of Days is one of the names of GOD ALMIGHTY in the Bible, not Adam. There is absolutely no question about that! There is also no question that the LDS Church believes and teaches that Adam is that one, the Ancient of Days, who will judge the world. Apostle Bruce R. McConkie, in his book, "Mormon Doctrine," page 34 says:

"Adam is known as the Ancient of Days... In this capacity he will yet sit in formal judgment upon 'ten thousand times ten thousand'..."

In the Temple ceremony, Michael, the Archangel, is one of the creators of the world and he then "becomes" Adam. According to Mormonism, "GODS" created the world, (see Pearl of Great Price, Abraham 4 and 5), Adam being one of them, one of three gods. It is clearly implied that he is God. There are more writings and documented evidence to this fact.

What does the LDS Church teach about Jesus Christ? First of all, it is already documented above that Brigham Young taught that he (Jesus) was a spirit child of Adam and spirit brother of all human kind, as well as a brother of angels, spirit beings, even the fallen ones, i.e., Jesus being a brother of Lucifer. Brigham further taught that he (Jesus) was also physically a son of Adam, who, as an exalted, resurrected being, came to Mary and fathered Jesus. Brigham has emphasized that Jesus was not begotten by the Holy Ghost, as the Bible says. This teaching shows that Jesus of the LDS Church is not "Emmanuel," "God with us;" God, who, according to the Bible (Matt. 1:23), became a man for us, to be our Redeemer. Jesus of the LDS Church is a created being, who also had to be redeemed... But, Jesus of the Bible is The Creator - UNCREATED GOD who

created everything, including Lucifer (John 1:3; Col.1:16). Let's look at the modern teachings of the LDS Church: President Ezra Taft Benson said, in his book, "Come unto Christ," page 4:

"...The body in which He performed His mission in the flesh was SIREN by that Holy Being we worship as God, our Eternal Father. Jesus was not the son of Joseph, nor was He begotten by the Holy Ghost. He is the Son of the Eternal Father."

Bruce R. McConkie, in his book, Mormon Doctrine, on page 742, says:

"God the Father is a perfected, glorified, holy Man, an immortal Personage. And Christ was born into the world as the literal Son of this Holy Being; he was born in the same personal, real, and literal sense that any mortal son is born to a mortal father. There is nothing figurative about this paternity; he was BEGOTTEN, CONCEIVED and born in the normal and natural course of events, for he is the Son of God, and that designation means what it says." McConkie, in the same book, pages 546-547, says further, under the heading "ONLY BEGOTTEN SON": "...Each word is to be understood literally. Only means only; Begotten means begotten; and Son means son. Christ was begotten by an Immortal Father in the SAME WAY THAT MORTAL MEN ARE BEGOTTEN BY THEIR MORTAL FATHERS."

This is not what the Bible says. The Bible tells that a Virgin will conceive and bring forth a Son, who is called Emmanuel, meaning "God with us" (not a brother with us!) (Matt. 1:18-23) Mary of the LDS Church was not a Virgin who brought forth a son, but a "wife" of the heavenly Father, whom Brigham declared to be Adam. Orson Pratt, an apostle, told in his doctrinal book entitled, "The Seer," page 158: "...The fleshly body of Jesus required a Mother as well as a Father. Therefore, the Father and Mother of Jesus, according to the flesh, must have been associated together in the capacity of Husband and Wife; hence the Virgin Mary must have been, for the time being, the lawful wife of God the Father. Inasmuch as God was the first HUSBAND TO HER (Mary), it may be that He only gave her to be the wife of Joseph while in this mortal state, and that He intended after the resurrection to again take her as one of his own wives to raise up immortal spirits in eternity..."

The leaders of the LDS Church have also taught that their Jesus was married and had children, and that he was even a polygamist. Apostle Orson Pratt, in his book, The Seer, page 172, says:

"...the great Messiah who was the founder of the Christian religion was a Polygamist...the Messiah chose to take upon himself his seed; and by marrying many honorable wives himself, show to all future generations that he approved the plurality of Wives under Christian dispensation... The son followed the example of his Father, and became the great Bridegroom to whom kings' daughters and many of the honorable Wives were to be married. We have also proved that both God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ inherit their wives in eternity as well as in time..."

Joseph Fielding Smith, who was the president of the LDS Church in 1970's, said, in an answer to a question: "Was Jesus married?" - "Yes, but do not throw pearls to the swine!" We can clearly see that the LDS church still believes that Jesus was married, but doesn't want to "throw pearls to the swine" or to reveal this to the non-Mormons.

Bernard P. Brockbank, in the LDS Church's 147th General Conference, said that the CHRIST FOLLOWED BY THE MORMONS IS NOT THE CHRIST FOLLOWED BY TRADITIONAL CHRISTIANITY; he said:

"... It is true that many of the Christian churches worship A DIFFERENT JESUS CHRIST than is worshipped by the Mormons..." ("The Ensign," May 1977, p. 26.)

In summary, Jesus of the LDS Church is not Jesus of the Bible. God of the LDS Church is not God of the Bible. Joseph Smith said that there is "A GOD ABOVE THE FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST..." and in Mormon Doctrine, pages 332-323, we read: "...If Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and ... God the Father of Jesus Christ had a Father, you may suppose that he had a Father also. Where was there ever a son without a father? ...Hence if Jesus had a Father, can we not believe that he had a Father also?" Joseph Smith, in 1844, as recorded in the Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, pages 344-347, first told the audience that: "...every man has a natural, and, in our country, a constitutional right to be a FALSE PROPHET, as well as a true one..." Then on the next page, he says: "...I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea and take away the veil, so that you may see." He tells that "...God himself was once as we are now... and you got to learn how to be Gods yourselves... the same as all Gods have done before you..."

The God of the Bible says: "...Is there a God beside me? Yea, there is no God; I KNOW NOT ANY." (Isa. 44:10) If God had a father and he had a father and so on, God of the Bible surely would know that! In the Bible, God calls us to "know," to "believe" and to "understand" who He is. He says: "Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may KNOW and BELIEVE me, and UNDERSTAND that I am he: BEFORE ME THERE WAS NO GOD FORMED, NEITHER SHALL THERE BE AFTER ME." (Isaiah 43:10) To Joseph Smith and to all Mormons, that simply means: THEY WILL NOT BECOME GODS! They cannot "learn" how to become gods! God of the Bible says so! God says: "I AM THE LORD, AND THERE IS NONE ELSE, THERE IS NO GOD BESIDE ME..." (Isa. 45:5) God tells what happens to the false prophets who try to lead people after other gods: "If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or the dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him. AND THAT PROPHET, OR THAT DREAMER OF DREAMS, SHALL BE PUT TO DEATH; BECAUSE HE HAD SPOKEN TO

TURN YOU AWAY FROM THE LORD YOUR GOD..." (Deut. 13:1-5) It is interesting to note that about six weeks after Joseph Smith had preached this sermon (in April 1844), that men will and can become gods and that God was not God from all eternity, Joseph was killed!! Coincidence?? (Orthodox Jews have a saying: "Coincidence is not a kosher word!")

The Bible tells that God is God "from everlasting to everlasting" (Ps. 90:2), and when speaking about Messiah, GOD BECOMING A MAN (not a man becoming God!) it says: "For unto us a child is born, unto us the son is given:.. and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, THE EVERLASING FATHER, THE PRINCE OF PEACE" (Isa. 9:6), and "Art thou not from EVERLASTING, O LORD MY GOD, MINE HOLY ONE?" (Hab. 1:12) To the believers of the God of the Bible are given these comforting words: "THE ETERNAL GOD IS THY REFUGE, AND UNDERNEATH ARE THE EVERLASTING ARMS..." (Deut. 33:27) To the followers of Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and today's LDS prophets, we would like to say, as Joshua said to Israel: "...choose you this day whom ye will serve... but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." (Joshua 24:15)

In the English Bible (KJV), whenever the word LORD is in all capital letters, in Hebrew it is a name of God, represented by consonants JHWH (Hebrews didn't dare to pronounce it) and it is translated both LORD or GOD. When God spoke to Moses, He declared Himself to be God, the Great I AM, and He told that by His name JHWH (JE-HO-VAH) he was not known to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This was the first time that He revealed His name (Exodus 6:3).

Throughout the Bible, the words "I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD" (i.e., Ex. 6:7) or "I THE LORD GOD" are used by God to tell the prophet who is speaking. The word LORD (JHWH) and the word GOD (ELOHYIM) (Eloheim) are used as in the example above: I, THE LORD GOD, (not we, like Mormon doctrine teaches). Speaking of the Godhead, "Mormon Doctrine," page 576, says: "...As each of these persons is a God, it is evident, from this standpoint alone, that a plurality of Gods exists." In Hebrew, the word EL means God, word Eloheim is plural form of the word (similarly, the word Cherub is singular and the word Cherubim is plural). When we read in our English Bible: "I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD," if we put it back into Hebrew, it would read: "I am JHWH your Eloheim." One doesn't get two gods from it - but only one God. Trinity is not mentioned in the Bible as a word, but plurality of persons in ONE GOD is clearly demonstrated throughout the Bible. The Bible came to us through Israel. To the Jew there is but one God, JHWH. Deut. 6:4 is what Jews repeat daily and with their dying breath say: "Hear, O Israel, LORD our GOD is one LORD" or in Hebrew: "Hear, O Israel, JHWH our Eloheim is JHWH." Most people agree that Father is God. The Bible teaches that Jesus is God (i.e., John 1:1, 14; 20:28), and that Holy Ghost is God (comp. Acts 5:3 and 4, and 1 Cor. 3:17 with 6:19), but the Bible also teaches that THERE IS ONLY ONE GOD. In Isa. 45, verses 5, 6, 14, 18, 21, 22, God says that there is no other God or Lord. Other examples: Deut. 4:35 and 39; 32:39; I Sam. 2:2; II Sam. 7:22; 22:32, I Kings 8:60; Ps. 18:31; Jer. 10:10; Gal. 3:20; Eph. 4:6; Mark 12:32 and 34. In James 2:19, it tells that even demons know that there is only one God. Why is it that the LDS Church doesn't

know that? The LDS Church often says that there is more than one god, because God, in Gen. 1:26, says: "And God said, let us make man in our image..." Note that there is only one image, and the next verse clears it by saying: "So God created man in HIS own image... in the image of God created HE them: (Not WE!) The word Eloheim (GOD) refers to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, but the verb is in the singular in every case where plural form Eloheim appears. Examples of what God says about Himself: "I, the Lord God" (I JHWH Eloheim), not "we", (JHWH and Eloheim) or "I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD," not, "we are" JHWH and Eloheim.

Since the Bible declares itself as being God's word, it doesn't "argue" about God. The Bible clearly tells that His ways and thoughts are far above our thoughts, but that through the Holy Spirit we will learn to understand what He has done for us and how great His love is towards us. God has given us a simple way, one way, narrow way. Let no one confuse you of that. Jesus said: "I am the way, the truth and the life." He said, in John 17:3: "...this is eternal life to know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Just because you may have believed previously false teachings of the LDS Church, it doesn't mean that you cannot now accept the truth from God's Word, the Bible.

Dennis & Rauni Higley

Please read on and accept what the Bible says about salvation. We can trust what the Bible says because God inspired every single Word of it.

“For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, ‘This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’ And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake [as they were] moved by the Holy Ghost. (2 Peter 1:16-21).

Notice that Peter here says that the Bible is a more sure word than the audible voice of God (cf. Mt 17:1-9) and that it did not come by the will of man, but the Holy Spirit so moved the human writers that the very Words of the Bible were God’s Words (Ps 12:6, 119:89, etc.) Furthermore, God has preserved every single Word that He inspired– not one has been lost. Jesus declared that heaven and earth would pass away before one word, or even part of one letter, of the Scriptures would be lost (Mt 5:18, 24:35; cf. Is. 40:8, 1Pe 1:23,25, etc.). Consequently, we can rest assured that the Bible contains absolutely everything necessary for salvation and righteous living (2Ti 3:15-17), and consider with trembling awe the warning God placed as a stamp upon the complete, perfect, and finished canon of His Word for those who would add to it or detract from it:

“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.” (Revelation 22:18-19).

1.) To be saved, you must know the true God. There is only one God (Is 44:6), and He is a jealous God who hates all other (by definition false) gods (Ex 34:14). He is all-knowing (1Jo 3:20), all-powerful (Job 42:2), and everywhere-present (Jer 23:23,24). He is a Spirit (Jn 4:24). He has always existed (Ps 90:2), and is both in three distinct personalities (Mt 28:19), and one in essence (Deu 6:4). The Father is called both Jehovah (LORD) and Eloheim (God) (Is 63:16; Ps 68:5), the Son is Jehovah and Eloheim (Is 50:1,6; Ps 45:6-7+Heb 1:8-9), the Holy Spirit is Jehovah and Eloheim (Jer 31:31-34+Heb 10:15-17; Ps 95:6-11+Heb 3:7-12), but there is only one Being Who is both Jehovah and Eloheim (Ps 118:27, 1Ki 8:60). Jesus Christ, God the Son from all eternity past, became a Man (Jn 1:1-3, 14) and shed His blood on the cross to pay for all the sins of every person in the world (Heb 10:10-14, Jn 3:16), reconciling to the Father all who will trust in Christ. He rose bodily from the grave (1Co 15:3-4, Jn 2:18-22) and ascended to Heaven, where He enjoys once again the infinite glory He had with the Father before His incarnation (Jn 17:5). He is coming again (1Th 4:13-18, Rev 19:11-15). He is the only One in the Trinity who has a body of flesh and bones, and neither He nor His Father ever became gods because they have always been the one true God (Is 44:8, 1Jo 5:20). This one true Triune God created the universe and all in it out of nothing, including the bodies, souls, and spirits of mankind (Ac 17:24,25; Col 1:16-17; Ge 1:1; Is 42:5). He is perfectly righteous and holy (Lev 19:2) and consequently demands perfect sinlessness for entry into Heaven.

“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” (Mt 5:48)

“And there shall in no wise enter into [Heaven] any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.” (Rev 21:27)

2.) You must admit that you are a sinner who falls far short of God's perfect, holy standard and consequently deserve eternal damnation in Hell (cf. Lu 5:32, 1Jn 1:8, 10).

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” (Ro 3:23)

“As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” (Ro 3:10-12)

“For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.” (Ecc 7:20)

“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.” (Jam 2:10)

“But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” (Isa 64:6)

“For the wages of sin is death.” (Ro 6:23a)

“And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” (Rev 20:14-15)

3.) You must recognize that Jesus Christ took the penalty for your sins upon Himself on the cross that He might offer you His perfect righteousness. God testified to the adequacy of His sacrifice by raising Him from the dead. To be saved, your sins must be paid for by the blood of Christ, so that when God looks at you He sees His Son's perfect righteousness, rather than the miserable filthy rags of your own good deeds or "righteousness."

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." (Isa 53:6)

"For [God] hath made [Jesus] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2Co 5:21)

"[Jesus] was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." (Ro 4:25)

"Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand." (Isa 53:10)

"By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all... For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." (Heb 10:10, 14)

4.) You must understand that God offers Christ's righteousness to sinners as a free gift received by faith alone apart from baptism, church membership, and all other works or ceremonies. Just as a corpse is utterly unable to do anything to make itself alive, so you are dead in your sins and cannot do anything to save or help save yourself (Eph 2:1-9). Just as you cannot change your human parents, so you are born a child of the devil (Ps 51:5, Jn 8:44) and no amount of good works can make you worthy of adoption into God's family (Jn 1:12,13). The blood of Christ is sufficient to cleanse you in the sight of God without your help.

"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Heb 7:25)

"[T]he gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Ro 6:23b)

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." (Eph 2:8-9)

"And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work." (Ro 11:6)

"But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." (Ro 4:5)

5.) You must rely upon Christ alone for your salvation. The moment you do this, believing that the blood He shed on the cross can and will cleanse all your sins on its own without your adding anything to it, trusting Jesus as your Savior and Lord, He saves you forever. At that moment God gives you everlasting life. Since it is impossible to possess something everlasting for only a short time, and since Christ has then already paid for your sins so that you will never need to pay for them, you may know beyond the shadow

of a doubt (1Jo 5:13) that you will go to Heaven when Christ returns or you die, since neither your getting saved nor your staying saved has a particle of your own works in it. True salvation is based upon the sure promise of God that all who will believe on Jesus and His perfect work are saved, not upon human merit. The Bible teaches that you should do good works out of love after you have been saved, not in order to get saved or stay saved (2Co 5:14-15, 2Tim 1:9).

“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.” (Jn 3:16)

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” (Jn 5:24)

“He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” (Jn 3:18)

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” (Ac 16:31)

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life.” (Jn 6:47)

I urge you to trust Christ for salvation this very moment. The options are clear:

“Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” (Lu 13:3)

Faith in Christ alone is the only means through which God bestows salvation (Jn 14:6). His promise to cast you into Hell if you refuse to repent, that is, to turn from your works, false gods, rituals, church, sins, and all else to trust in Jesus alone, is as sure as His promise that you will go to Heaven if you receive, empty handed, the salvation He purchased through the agonies of His Son and now offers you freely.

“For the scripture saith, ‘Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.’” (Ro 10:11)

If you will believe on him, you will not be ashamed! Won’t you turn to and trust in Him this very moment and receive His free gift of salvation? Do not put off this matter of everlasting importance!

“Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, ‘To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts...’) take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.” (Heb 3:7-12)

“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation[?]” (Heb 2:3a)

“[B]ehold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” (2Co 6:2b)

If you have now believed Jesus for salvation, the Bible offers you this precious promise:

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” (2Co 5:17). You are now a new creation in Christ, your sins are forgiven, and you have the power to live for God as you never could before! You should get baptized as soon as possible as a testimony of what God has already done in saving you (Ro 6:3-5), join a good, Bible preaching, Independent Baptist church (Heb 10:25), read the Word of God and pray daily (2Ti 3:16-17, 1Th 5:17), and share the gospel with others (Ac 1:8). You can now enjoy sweet fellowship with God without fear of condemnation, and He is preparing a mansion for you in Heaven, your new eternal

home (Jn 14:2)! Let us rejoice with you and help you with your new life in Christ. Please contact:

Faithsaves.net has special resources dealing with evidence for the Bible and for creation to help atheists, agnostics, and others skeptical about Scripture, as well as material specifically for Catholics, Lutherans, Presbyterians and other Reformed believers, Muslims, Jews, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses and other non-Trinitarians, Seventh-Day Adventists and other Sabbatarians, Pentecostals, Evangelicals, and members of other religions.

Watchman Nee, Witness Lee, and the Modalism of the Church of the Recovery Cult

Watchman Nee³⁴¹ was born on November 4, 1903, and died on c. June 1, 1972 in a Chinese communist prison camp. He founded the Little Flock, Local Church, or Church of the Recovery denomination³⁴² and was an influential proponent of Keswick theology in China.³⁴³ His “name has become a household word among Christians all over the world”³⁴⁴ as millions have read his books, which have been translated into many languages,³⁴⁵ and he is among “the most influential Chinese Christians” that have ever lived.³⁴⁶ Nee learned most of his doctrine from woman preachers and authors of his day

³⁴¹ The most substantial biographies of Nee in English are *Against the Tide*, by Angus Kinnear (Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1973), and *Watchman Nee: A Seer of Divine Revelation in the Present Age* (Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministry, 1991), by Witness Lee. Kinnear came to know Nee in England in 1938 (pgs. ix, 151, *Against the Tide*). He “edited the first work by Nee to become widely known in English, *The Normal Christian Life* . . . [and] also edited five other volumes of Nee’s writings” (pg. 140, “The Story of Watchman Nee,” Bernard Earling. *Lutheran Quarterly* 28 (May 1976) 140-155). Witness Lee was Nee’s denominational successor. Both Kinnear and Lee are very sympathetic to Nee; Lee’s work is hagiographical. A sympathetic but more critical work is *Secrets of Watchman Nee* by Dana Roberts (Gainesville, FL: Bridge-Logos, 2005). Roberts’ perspective is seen in his affirmation that Nee, upon his death, was “‘transferred’ to the church triumphant,” and that Roberts, had he met him personally, would have said: “Thanks. Thanks for helping us in our faith. Now, my Brother Nee, I want to share with you some of the words and blessings of God that you may have missed” (pg. xi, *Secrets of Watchman Nee*).

Nee was originally named Nga Shu-jeo or Ni Shu-tsu. Later he called himself Ching-fu, but then, adopting an idea of his mother, he became Ni To-sheng, which in English is “Watchman Nee” (pg. 21, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear).

³⁴² Nee’s religious organization, by absorbing into itself those who had joined other Christian groups, by some estimates became the largest Protestant denomination in China (pg. 264, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear).

³⁴³ Earling mentions only Keswick writers for Nee’s devotional reading, namely, “Andrew Murray, F. B. Meyer, Otto Stockmayer, and Jessie Penn-Lewis.” Devotional works by non-Keswick writers, at least for the period of Nee’s life discussed by Earling at that point, are entirely absent. For “accounts of . . . revivals,” only “Charles G. Finney and Evan Roberts” are mentioned (pg. 142, “The Story of Watchman Nee,” Bernard Earling. *Lutheran Quarterly* 28 (May 1976) 140-155).

³⁴⁴ Pg. ix, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear. However, this spread of his writings took place largely after the Communist Party imprisoned him, so that his name became a rallying point for prayer for persecuted Chinese Christians in general. He was not, in all probability, aware of the translation and widespread multiplication of his works (cf. pgs. 232, 239, *ibid*). The “spread of his devotional writings in the West . . . during the [1960’s] . . . was quite new . . . [and was] disconcerting [when] compare[d] with the suspicion he had earlier aroused in those mission circles” in China where ministers had actually interacted with his denomination (pg. 239, *ibid*).

³⁴⁵ cf. pg. 140, “The Story of Watchman Nee,” Bernard Earling. *Lutheran Quarterly* 28 (May 1976) 140-155.

³⁴⁶ Pg. 241, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

and earlier, since “close association with women evangelists and teachers was characteristic of his early career.”³⁴⁷ Nee’s professed conversion took place through the preaching of the “famous woman evangelist . . . Dora Yu,”³⁴⁸ after Miss Yu’s preaching in the Methodist Tien-An Chapel had led Nee’s mother, Nee Ho-P’ing, to conviction of sin about her failure in parenting him in a particular area. Nee’s mother went on to become “a well-known Methodist preacher, whose speaking tours included her native China” and abroad;³⁴⁹ Nee’s wife was the daughter of a Chinese Christian and Missionary Alliance pastor. Nee publicly proclaimed his profession of Christianity at one of Miss Yu’s services by going forward at the invitation. He then “longed to be trained by Dora Yu in Shanghai. His mother agreed, and Dora Yu accepted him into her Bible school,”³⁵⁰ since Miss Yu not only “traveled widely among missions in northern China and Korea” but, as a Methodist minister, had “establish[ed] her own Bible seminary in Shanghai.”³⁵¹ He consequently attended the Bible school led by Miss Yu in Shanghai in 1920-21, although he was expelled because of disobedience to the school’s discipline. At Miss Yu’s suggestion, he then went to Miss Margaret E. Barber. She, along with Miss L. S. Ballard and the Chinese woman preacher Li Ai-ming, had a center where they preached to men and women and taught and prepared Chinese natives for church leadership.³⁵² Nee there learned Keswick theology and was influenced by the literature of the Welsh holiness revival, writing to and reading the writings of Jessie Penn-Lewis³⁵³ and the *Overcomer* magazine which she edited, and through which Nee became familiar with Roman Catholic mystical quietists such as Madame Guyon, who “deeply influenced” and “greatly moved” Nee and “was to have a strong influence on his future thinking.”³⁵⁴ “The mystical leanings in . . . Lee [and] Nee . . . are traceable to . . . teachers such as Jessie Penn-Lewis . . . and Madame Guyon.”³⁵⁵ Keswick and mystical influences such as these were the more important in light of Nee’s “self-imposed

³⁴⁷ “Nee, Watchman,” *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998.

³⁴⁸ Pgs. 11-16, 94, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee; pgs. 28, 41-48, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

³⁴⁹ Pg. 9, *Understanding Watchman Nee*, Dana Roberts; pgs. 52, 83, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

³⁵⁰ Pg. 15, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee.

³⁵¹ Pg. 41, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

³⁵² Pg. 50, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

³⁵³ Pg. 65, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

³⁵⁴ “Watchman Nee (1903-1972): A Biographical Study,” by Huelon Mountfort. Elec. acc. <http://thirdmill.org/watchman-nee-1903-1972-a-biographical-study>; pgs. 62, 242, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

³⁵⁵ Pg. 13, “We Were Wrong: A Reassessment of the ‘Local Church’ Movement of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee,” *Christian Research Journal* 32:06 (2009).

limitation [on] formal studies.”³⁵⁶ Nee “testified publicly that he had learned many important spiritual truths from the Overcomer Movement via Jessie Penn-Lewis’s teachings. . . . Miss Barber . . . took back to China Jessie’s permission to publish the most useful *Overcomer* essays. The work was undertaken by Watchman Nee, who printed them in his *Rising Again* magazine, and expounded them and presented their essential teachings in his later books.”³⁵⁷ Indeed, “the format of . . . [the] four different Christian magazines . . . Nee edited . . . was by and large modeled after Jessie Penn-Lewis’s *The Overcomer* and T. Austin Sparks’s *A Witness and A Testimony*.”³⁵⁸ Nee quoted Penn-Lewis with some frequency,³⁵⁹ indeed, “*The Spiritual Man* was based mainly upon the writings and experience of Evan Roberts and Jessie Penn-Lewis,” whose works Nee had devoured when he wrote *The Spiritual Man* at the age of twenty-four,³⁶⁰ although Madame Guyon was also influential.³⁶¹ Nee’s book, rejecting *sola Scriptura* for truth based on both “the Word and experience,”³⁶² leans heavily upon Penn-Lewis and Roberts³⁶³ for its views on spiritual warfare and other topics,³⁶⁴ as he “delved into . . . Jessie Penn-Lewis on the questions of soul and spirit and of triumph over Satanic power.”³⁶⁵ The book Nee’s “Little Flock” denomination was thus birthed in connection with the ministry of Miss Barber, her students, and theology learned from other women.³⁶⁶ Nee continued to seek Miss Barber’s advice and counsel until shortly before her death in 1930, and he acknowledged her as a powerful influence in his own life. Her

³⁵⁶ Pg. 156, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

³⁵⁷ Pg. 240-243, *The Trials and Triumphs of Mrs. Jessie Penn-Lewis*, Brynmor Pierce Jones.

³⁵⁸ Pgs. 53-54, *Secrets of Watchman Nee*, Dana Roberts. Sparks himself was influenced by Penn-Lewis (pg. 105, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear).

³⁵⁹ For examples, see *The Spiritual Man*, Watchman Nee, comb. ed., pgs. 588, 589, 601, 609, 610, 630, etc.

³⁶⁰ Pgs. 102-103, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear. It is noteworthy that *The Spiritual Man* was “the first and last book [Nee] ever sat down and wrote, the rest of his publications all being transcriptions of his preaching and teaching,” and that Nee also thought his book “will not be reprinted,” a view he affirmed at various times to his coworkers (pgs. 103, 251-252, *ibid.*).

³⁶¹ Pg. 149, “The Story of Watchman Nee,” Bernard Earling. *Lutheran Quarterly* 28 (May 1976) 140-155. A few other Keswick writers are also mentioned.

³⁶² Pg. 149, “The Story of Watchman Nee,” Bernard Earling. *Lutheran Quarterly* 28 (May 1976) 140-155. “[E]very point of” *The Spiritual Man* could “be experimentally proven,” even if it could not be proven from the Bible (pg. 149, *ibid.*; cf. *The Spiritual Man* 1:7-20).

³⁶³ Evan Roberts himself was profoundly influenced by Jessie Penn-Lewis.

³⁶⁴ Pg. 255, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee.

³⁶⁵ Pg. 86, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

³⁶⁶ Interestingly, by the 1940s Nee’s “spiritual emphasis . . . catered . . . to a taste among the dedicated women missionaries who had rejoined him from the West and who . . . constituted a growing body of foreign sympathizers. Some . . . resigned from their missions to attach themselves to Nee’s work . . . [certain] ladies were unquestionably carried away with adulation of Nee as . . . the only person in China through whom they might discover God’s will” (pgs. 161-162, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear).

affection for him was evident in her leaving him her most prized possession, her Bible.³⁶⁷

“No single person is more responsible for the development of Nee’s theology than Miss Barber.”³⁶⁸ “[T]he main influences upon [Nee were] so often . . . women—Dora Yu, his mother, Margaret Barber, Ruth Lee, [and] Elizabeth Fischbacher[.]”³⁶⁹ In summary:

Whenever [Nee] had a problem or needed spiritual instruction or strengthening, he would go to . . . Margaret E. Barber . . . an Anglican missionary[.] . . . [He testified that] [e]very Saturday [he] went to Ma-Kiang, Fukien, to listen to Miss Margaret Barber’s preaching. . . . [H]e said that he scarcely found one person in the Western world who could compare with Margaret Barber. It was through this sister that he obtained the foundation of the spiritual life. He frequently told others that it was through a sister [Dora Yu] that he was saved and that it was also through a sister [Margaret Barber] that he was edified. . . . Through Margaret Barber he became familiar with the books of [writers such as] Jessie Penn-Lewis . . . [who taught him about] the subjective aspect of Christ’s death[.] . . . spiritual warfare[.] . . . [and] the three parts of man. . . . Watchman Nee received a clear vision of what it means to be an overcomer by . . . reading the writings of Jessie Penn-Lewis. . . . Madame Guyon’s biography . . . and the writings of other mystics helped him in the matter of life. . . . Mary McDonough’s book . . . was a great help . . . [c]oncerning God’s plan of redemption.³⁷⁰

Under the influence of his mother and with the assistance of Miss Barber and Dora Yu, Nee rejected infant baptism for believer’s immersion.³⁷¹ He consequently sought out Miss Barber to be baptized, receiving a heavenly sign at the time of the ceremony that indicated the smile of supernatural power upon these proceedings.³⁷² Nee learned his evangelistic practices from “Miss Groves[,] Margaret Barber’s co-worker.”³⁷³ Women taught Nee his doctrines of Spirit filling, applying the blood of Christ, living without financial support, crucifixion with Christ, overcoming, spiritual life, and many of his other distinctive beliefs.³⁷⁴ “Four sisters were vital to Watchman Nee in his life and work. He was saved through the preaching of Dora Yu, perfected under Margaret Barber, and sustained by two elderly co-workers, Ruth Lee and Peace Wang,”³⁷⁵ who were themselves important woman preachers.³⁷⁶ Nee accepted the unscriptural³⁷⁷

³⁶⁷ Pg. 113, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

³⁶⁸ Pg. 15, *Secrets of Watchman Nee*, Roberts.

³⁶⁹ Pg. 156, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

³⁷⁰ Pgs. 11-18, 25-26, 70, 81, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee.

³⁷¹ Pg. 36, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee.

³⁷² Pgs. 54-55, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

³⁷³ Pg. 45, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee.

³⁷⁴ See pgs. 45-46, 55-56, 59-60, 69-70, 73, 75, 81, 85, 127, 138, 141, 143, 148, 310-311, etc., *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee.

³⁷⁵ Pg. 101, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee.

³⁷⁶ Ruth Lee’s “fiery preaching” to men and women influenced many, and her one-time pupil, Peace Wang, was also an “independent evangelist.” (pgs. 57, 101-102, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear). After Nee’s coming to a conviction that was less than favorable to such matters, “the existence of gifted women preachers seems to have created a problem.” One attempt at a solution took place in a “Canonton meeting [where] . . . men suspend[ed] a large white sheet across the width of the hall. . . . Ruth Lee and Peace Wang

ministry of the woman evangelist Ruth Lee because of a dream,³⁷⁸ and she became the acting editor of newsletters, papers, and books that Nee's denomination put out.³⁷⁹ She also edited and prepared for the press works by Nee such as his *The Spiritual Man*, composed under Ruth Lee's "literary tutelage."³⁸⁰ As Nee's new denomination was being born, the ordinance of communion was celebrated for the first time in Peace Wang's home with Wang, Nee, Ruth Lee, and one other person present.³⁸¹ Witness Lee also ascribed the greatest influence upon his life, after Nee, to Peace Wang, the woman minister whose "preaching was so convincing and prevailing that many denominations invited her to hold meetings."³⁸² Although Nee eventually came to a position that did not endorse women preachers of this sort,³⁸³ he continued to believe that women should sometimes lead the congregation in prayer in prayer meetings.³⁸⁴ Nee translated works by Jessie Penn-Lewis into Chinese, and had his co-workers translate works by Madame Guyon, Mrs. C. A. McDonough and Mrs. C. E. Cowman.³⁸⁵ In particular, Miss Barber not only "tutored Nee in the Keswick approach to spiritual dynamics, [but also] assuredly taught him a partial rapture theory,"³⁸⁶ since Miss Barber was sent out as an independent missionary from Surry Chapel, Norwich, England, where the founder of the partial Rapture theory, Robert Govett (1813-1901),³⁸⁷ was the minister. Nee admits that his exposition of the book of Revelation, *Come Lord Jesus*, is dependent upon Govett's *The*

were visiting the local church. Since they must not preach to men, the brothers would therefore sit behind the sheet and listen to their messages from there!" (pg. 179, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.).

³⁷⁷ 1 Corinthians 14:34-37; 1 Timothy 2:11-15.

³⁷⁸ Pgs. 103-104, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee.

³⁷⁹ Pg. 300, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee; pg. 148, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

³⁸⁰ Pgs. 98-99, 101, 210, 262-263, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

³⁸¹ Pg. 102, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

³⁸² Pgs. 109-110, 113 *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee.

³⁸³ Pgs. 104-105, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

³⁸⁴ Pg. 179, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee.

³⁸⁵ Pgs. 261-262, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee.

³⁸⁶ Pg. 162, *Secrets of Watchman Nee*, by Dana Roberts.

³⁸⁷ "The modern theory of partial rapture seems to have originated in the writings of Robert Govett who published a book setting forth the theory as early as 1853. In this work he expounds his view that participation in the kingdom is conditional and depends upon worthy conduct. . . . Others have made a significant contribution to the propagation of the theory. D. M. Panton, as editor of *The Dawn* (London), uses his publication to promote this teaching. Such writers as Ira E. David, Sarah Foulkes Moore, William Leask, and C. G. A. Gibson-Smith contribute to *The Dawn* articles in support of this theory. For the most part, however, the view is limited to a few adherents who are generally treated as heterodox by other pretribulationists" (pgs. 193-194, "Premillennialism and the Tribulation, Part V: Partial Rapture Theory," John F. Walvoord. *Bibliotheca Sacra* 112:447 (Jul 55) 193-209).

Apocalypse Expounded (1920).³⁸⁸ Nee was teaching the partial Rapture error by at least 1924, confirmed not only by Miss Barber, but also by the *Overcomer* literature of Jessie Penn-Lewis and Evan Roberts.³⁸⁹ He wrote:

There is evidence in the Bible to show that . . . believers will be Raptured after the Tribulation, [but] that does not mean that all believers will be Raptured after the Tribulation . . . some will be Raptured before the Tribulation. . . . [O]nly a small number (one-seventh) can be raptured before the tribulation[.] . . . [N]ot all, but only a portion, of the church will be raptured before the tribulation. . . . Not all those who are regenerated can be raptured. One must pray always. . . . Some believers will be raptured before the tribulation, and another group of believers will remain until after the tribulation. The latter will suffer the trial of the tribulation.³⁹⁰

In 1935 Nee became involved with Pentecostalism through Miss Elizabeth Fischbacher of the China Inland Mission.³⁹¹ He had “overcome his reservations about women preachers sufficiently to attend her meetings,” and, in line with his Keswick continuationism, “acknowledged the Holy Spirit’s . . . gifts to the church of healing and of speaking with and interpretation of tongues.”³⁹² Nee “found peace and spiritual blessing in her message and some experiences associated with her Pentecostal

³⁸⁸ “This study [*Come, Lord Jesus*] was given by Mr. Watchman Nee in the early years of his ministry. . . . In the study of prophecy our brother followed the approach of such people as G. H. Pember, Robert Govett and D. M. Panton[.]” (“Translator’s Preface,” in *Come Lord Jesus: A Study of the Book of Revelation*, Watchman Nee. New York, NY: Christian Fellowship Publishers, 1976). “Robert Govett, D. M. Panton, and G. H. Pember . . . [a]ll . . . hold to a ‘selective rapture’ position, that only the faithful believer will be resurrected or raptured to enter the millennial kingdom” (pg. 77, *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* 1:1 (Autumn 1988)). Nee thus clearly leaned upon earlier partial-Rapturists, although, of course, he also added in his own ideas to the doctrinal mix.

³⁸⁹ Thus, Nee spoke of the “rapture of the overcomers,” who in his mind were only an elite subset of all believers, already in his preaching in that year (pgs. 34 & preface, *The Latent Power of the Soul*, Nee). See also pgs. 199-200, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee; cf. pg. 83, *God’s Plan and the Overcomers*, Nee, as an example of the partial Rapture theology Nee held in 1934 (preface, *ibid*). See also “Rapture,” by Watchman Nee, elec. acc. http://www3.telus.net/trbrooks/Partial_rapture.htm.

³⁹⁰ Chapter 25, *Study on Matthew*, in *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, Set 1 Vol. 15, Watchman Nee. Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministry, n. d. ISBN: 0-87083-589-0. Part of the above quotation is the title to the chapter; capitalization has been changed for that portion of the quotation. See also “Rapture,” by Watchman Nee, elec. acc. http://www3.telus.net/trbrooks/Partial_rapture.htm.

³⁹¹ In light of the heavy Keswick influence (pg. 85, *The Keswick Story: The Authorized History of the Keswick Convention*, Polluck) and the interdenominationalism of Hudson Taylor’s China Inland Mission, it is not surprising that Pentecostalism permeated the organization almost immediately after the inception of the tongues movement. Cecil Polhill, one of the “Cambridge Seven,” is a clear example. In 1909, he was elected president of the Pentecostal Missionary Union, a position he retained until the Union merged with the Assemblies of God in 1925. “Mr. Polhill had visited the [Pentecostal] outpouring of the Spirit at Los Angeles, and had received the baptism of the Holy Ghost with signs following . . . there. He quickly became friendly with Alexander Boddy, and for the first ten years of the Pentecostal Movement in the British Isles these two men were the most outstanding figures.” At the same time, already before 1909 Polhill was on the Council of the China Inland Mission, a leadership position he held until his death in 1938. The fact he could lead both the China Inland Mission and the Pentecostal Missionary Union clearly illustrates the openness of the CIM to the charismatic movement (pgs. 46-49; *The Pentecostal Movement*, Donald Gee; pgs. 252-253, *The Making of the Modern Church*, Worrall).

³⁹² Pg. 145, “The Story of Watchman Nee,” Bernard Earling. *Lutheran Quarterly* 28 (May 1976) 140-155.

theology.”³⁹³ Miss Fischbacher, who translated various items for the Little Flock into English,³⁹⁴ accompanied Nee to the 1938 Keswick convention;³⁹⁵ the addresses in Nee’s *The Normal Christian Life* were delivered on this trip to the West.³⁹⁶ On this trip Nee taught, after the manner of Pentecostalism, that “we must *expect* God to seal His Word with signs and wonders” such as “the gift of healing” and exorcism—indeed, Christians who do “not know how to cast out demons . . . avail . . . nothing,” Nee proclaimed.³⁹⁷ Watchman Nee was warmly received at Keswick, so that his leading the Convention in prayer was considered “the crowning moment of vision” for those present,³⁹⁸ although at various periods up to this time sundry Chinese missionaries had rather bluntly declared that Nee was “a devil and a deceiver of many.”³⁹⁹ Nee was not only already publicly promulgating the continuation of the Apostolic sign gifts, but also such errors as opposition to the classical doctrine of the Trinity and a rejection of the eternal generation of the Son of God.⁴⁰⁰ Into later periods Nee continued to be assaulted for “serious error.”⁴⁰¹ Miss Fischbacher also recorded and translated into English Nee’s messages,⁴⁰²

³⁹³ Pg. 25, *Secrets of Watchman Nee*.

³⁹⁴ Cf. pgs. 137, 152-154, 254, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear; Nee’s book *Rethinking the Work* was translated by her, as an example.

³⁹⁵ Pgs. 148-149, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

³⁹⁶ Pgs. 151-152, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear. The title of Nee’s book echoes the teaching of Robert P. Smith at the Oxford Convention: “The *Higher* Christian Life . . . [which] so few were living . . . should be called . . . *the only normal Christian life*” (pg. 54, *Account of the Union Meeting for the Promotion of Scriptural Holiness, Held at Oxford, August 29 to September 7, 1874*. Chicago: Revell, 1874). Mr. Smith’s terminology of Higher Life victory as the “normal Christian life” became common in Keswick circles and was adopted by Nee.

³⁹⁷ Pgs. 178-182, *What Shall This Man Do?* Watchman Nee. Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1973. Italics in original.

³⁹⁸ Pg. 256, *Transforming Keswick: The Keswick Convention, Past, Present, and Future*, Price & Randall.

³⁹⁹ Pg. 74, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

⁴⁰⁰ Thus, in 1934 Nee could teach: “From eternity past up to the resurrection the Lord is the only begotten Son. . . . before death He is the only begotten Son.” Thus, Nee was already teaching that Jesus Christ was not the only begotten Son of God after His resurrection—“after He is raised from the dead He becomes the firstborn Son” (pg. 12, 24, *God’s Plan and the Overcomers*, Nee), an error that is related to Nee’s modalistic affirmation that the Son became the Holy Spirit after the resurrection. Watchman Nee by no means would agree with classical Trinitarianism as set forth in Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan, Chalcedonian, or Athanasian creeds, nor with a statement such as *The London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*: “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 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” (2:1, 3).

⁴⁰¹ Pg. 164, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

as she made “gifted versions and transcriptions . . . of the best of his preaching and writing.”⁴⁰³ Moved by women preachers, Nee adopted his partial Rapture and pro-Pentecostal errors, as well as errors on sanctification, other corruptions of soteriology, and further false doctrines. Nevertheless, Keswick welcomed him with open arms.

While Nee’s doctrine and practice were most heavily influenced by women preachers and teachers, he also, naturally, was influenced by some men. For example, Nee had compositions translated into Chinese of the Roman Catholic mystic Fenélon, the Catholic Carmelite hermit and mystic Brother Lawrence, and partial-Rapture promulgator Robert Govett.⁴⁰⁴ He “read . . . all he could of Charles G. Finney, and of Evan Roberts and the Welsh spiritual awakening of 1904-5.”⁴⁰⁵ Nee was also influenced by men such as Andrew Murray and F. B. Meyer, as well as John Darby and various other writers among the Plymouth Brethren, particularly a group of Brethren writers that held to serious Christological heresies.⁴⁰⁶ He did not sit at the feet of women alone to learn his distinctive errors.

402 Pg. 54, *Secrets of Watchman Nee*.

403 Pg. xii, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

404 Pg. 261, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*.

405 Pg. 85, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

406 A group known as the London Brethren, who were Exclusive, as opposed to the Open Brethren, invited Nee to England in 1933. Watchman Nee was “fully accredited as in fellowship” with them (pgs. 216-217, *The Recovery and Maintenance of the Truth*, A. J. Gardiner. Kingston on Thames, England: Stow Hill Bible and Tract Depot, 1951). Nee was happy to fellowship with them despite the fact that they believed in severe errors on the nature of God and Christ. The London Brethren denied the eternal Sonship of Christ: “When the Son of God is mentioned in Scripture . . . it . . . is . . . always in manhood . . . there is . . . not . . . eternal sonship . . . in Scripture . . . His sonship [is spoken of] only *after* He is said to have become flesh . . . it is only as having become incarnate that the Lord is spoken of as Son” (pgs. 202-206, *ibid*; italics in original). They rejected Biblical and Chalcedonian Christology; Christ as “‘perfect God and perfect Man’ is not scripture . . . [it] is derogatory and dishonoring the Son . . . [it is] contrary to the teaching of Scripture . . . [to affirm that] the truth of His Person consists in the union in Him of God and man” (pgs. 139, 145-146 *ibid*). Affirmations that smacked of modalism were also made: “[A]ll the Persons of the Trinity were expressed by the Man Christ Jesus” (pg. 145, *ibid*). Errors in soteriology were also held, such as that one does not receive eternal life as soon as one is born again, but only upon being sealed by the Spirit: “A man is born again, is enlightened by the gospel and is then sealed by the Spirit, and it is then that by the Spirit he enters into eternal life” (pg. 132, *ibid*). Nonetheless, Nee was happy to be influenced by these men and take the Lord’s Supper with them, carry on correspondence with them from China to learn of them, receive visits from them to China, and visit England to fellowship with and learn from them (pg. 216ff., *ibid*).

However, fellowship between Nee and the London Brethren was eventually broken—not because Nee rejected their heresies, but because Nee held to false doctrines beyond those which the Brethren supported. Nee was willing to take the Lord’s Supper with advocates of the partial Rapture error and held to it himself (pg. 217, 221, *ibid*). Nee taught: “We must distinguish between ‘sins’ (either morally or doctrinally) that hinder fellowship with God, and ‘sins’ which do not,” to which the London Brethren properly replied: “To suggest, as yo[u] . . . d[o], that there are sins which do not hinder, as you put it, ‘fellowship with God,’ is an affront to His holiness. Not only are the expressions you use in this connection quite unscriptural, but they disclose grave ignorance of the truth as to the presence and service of the Holy Spirit” (pgs. 218, 220, *ibid*.). Furthermore, the Brethren affirmed: “[Y]ou prefer to substitute

Nee taught, following Jessie Penn-Lewis, that only the human spirit is regenerated, and many have been influenced towards this error by his writings. Nee wrote:

After Adam fell, his spirit became dead. . . . The death of Adam began from his spirit. . . . The death in the spirit of the first man gradually spread to the realm of the body. . . . It continued to work in him until his spirit, soul, and body all became dead. . . . From that time on the spirit of Adam (as well as that of all his descendants) was suppressed by the soul. Soon after, through the soul's suppression, the spirit was merged into the soul, and the two parts became closely knit together. . . . Since the spirit became so closely knit to the soul, man began . . . to act according to his intellect or his feelings. At that time, the spirit had lost all its power and senses, and had become dormant . . . [that is, it had] fallen unconscious. Although it was still there, it was as if it were not there anymore. . . . The soul becomes subject to the demand of the senses and becomes their slave[.] . . . The flesh in the Bible refers to the life and nature of the soul and body of the unregenerated man. More often it refers to the sinful nature within the body. This flesh is the common nature which man shares with other animals. . . . The soul has replaced the spirit as the ruling [principle], and everything is independent and self-centered. . . . Not only are all the descendants of Adam dead in their spirits, but they are . . . fully under the control of the flesh and walk according to the soulish life and the carnal nature. Such people cannot have fellowship with God. . . . Now the spirit that was the highest, that ought to be joined to God, and that ought to rule over the soul and the body has become surrounded by the soul, whose motive and purpose are totally earthy. . . . This is why the Bible says that [the unregenerate] have no spirit. The result of such a fully soulish condition is to mock, to go on according to one's own lusts, and to make divisions. . . . Such persons are controlled by their souls and are suppressing their spirits. They are the opposite to [*sic*] the spiritual man. . . . [W]hen man is fleshly, not only is he under the rule of the soul, but his soul is actually joined to his body. Many times, the soul is even directed by the body to commit the vilest sins. . . . The authority of this body is so great that it causes the soul to become powerless to withstand it[;] [it can] only be its obedient slave. Man is divided into three parts: the spirit, the soul, and the body. God's original intention is that the spirit remain [*sic*] on top to rule over the soul. After man became soulish, the spirit was suppressed and became a servant to the soul. After man became carnal, the flesh, which occupied the lowest place, became the king. Man was changed from spirit-ruled to soul-ruled, and from soul-ruled to body-ruled. Step by step he became fallen, and the flesh took control. . . . Sin has killed the spirit, and now spiritual death has come to all men so that all men die in sin and transgressions. Sin has also caused the soul to become independent so that the soulish life now becomes an independent and selfish life. Furthermore, sin has empowered the body so that now the sinful nature reigns through the body. . . . Before man is regenerated, his spirit is far away from God and is dead. . . . The soul controls the whole man so that he lives either in his ideas or in excitement. The lusts and desires of the body bring the soul into subjection. Man's spirit became deadened; therefore, there is the need for the spirit to be resurrected. The rebirth which the Lord Jesus spoke about to Nicodemus is the rebirth of the spirit. To be born again is not a matter related to our body . . . nor is it a matter related to our soul[.] . . . We ought to especially emphasize that regeneration is the impartation of God's life into man's spirit. . . . Our being one with Christ's death and our initial step of obtaining His resurrection life are in our spirit. To be born again is completely a matter in the spirit; it has no relationship with the soul or the body. . . . According to the Bible, man's soul alone cannot form any relationship with God. Man's relationship with God is in his spirit. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must use their spirit. . . . only spirit can serve Spirit. . . . The regeneration in the Bible takes place in a part deeper than man's body and soul. It is in his spirit that the Holy Spirit imparts God's life to him. . . . Before regeneration, man's soul ruled over his spirit. His "self"

for the plain teaching of Scripture, your own professed experimental knowledge" (pgs. 220-221, *ibid*). Both the London Brethren and Watchman Nee were fine with severe errors on the doctrine of God and Christ, but the Brethren were not willing to join Nee in advocating a partial Rapture, open communion, sins that "do not hinder fellowship with God," and replacement of *sola Scriptura* for a priority upon mystical experience.

dominated his soul. His lust governed his body. The soul became the life of the spirit, the “self” became the life of the soul, and the lust became the life of the body. After man’s regeneration, the Holy Spirit rules his spirit, causing his spirit to govern his soul then through the soul to rule over his body. Now the Holy Spirit becomes the life of the spirit, and the spirit becomes the life of the entire being. At the time of regeneration the Holy Spirit revives the human spirit and renews it.⁴⁰⁷

Both our body and our spirit were originally dead. But after we believed in the Lord Jesus, we received Him within us to be our life. Christ, by means of the Holy Spirit, now dwells within the believers. . . . This is the very Christ who is our life. At the moment He entered into our inward part, He enlivened our spirit. . . . Originally our body and spirit were dead. Because we have received the indwelling Christ, our spirit is alive. The spirit and body were previously dead, but now the spirit is revived; only the body remains dead. This is the common condition of every believer—the spirit is alive and the body is dead. . . . Although sin has been cast out from the spirit and the will, the redemption of the body is still something in the future. Therefore, sin has not been cast out from the body. Since sin is still in the body, the body is dead. . . . In the meantime, our spirit is living, or more accurately stated, our spirit is life[.]⁴⁰⁸

If a man’s spirit is dead before God, he is totally useless in the eyes of God. The spirit must be regenerated. Thank the Lord that our spirit today is a new spirit, a regenerated spirit. This regenerated spirit is our inner man. Every Christian has received the same life from God in his spirit; there is no difference between him and others. The same Spirit who dwells in a weak brother also dwelt in Paul. As long as we are the Lord’s, the new creation in our spirit is the same as in others. . . . The mind, emotion, and will are the original and natural faculties of man. The Holy Spirit is within him, and his regenerated spirit has become the new man, the inner man. Yet he still has an outward man, the old man, the original man outside of him. This outward man belongs to sin. The old man has been dealt with on the cross, but the life of the old creation still remains. . . . In order for a saved and regenerated believer to live out the Lord’s life, there are two steps that he has to take. The first is believing, which is receiving the new life. The second is consecrating himself, which means committing his outward man to the Lord to allow the new life within to be expressed. . . . Many believers . . . are saved, but their outward man has never been dealt with.⁴⁰⁹

Throughout the ages God has been trying to give man His Spirit. However, man’s spirit was defiled, sin-ridden, dead, and fallen in the old creation. . . . Man has to receive a new spirit through regeneration before he can be in the position to receive God’s Spirit and before God can dwell in him. Once a new believer has a new spirit, the Spirit of God dwells in him.⁴¹⁰

Paul said, “He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit” (1 Cor 6:17), not one soul. The resurrected Lord is the life-giving Spirit (15:45); therefore, his union with the believers is His union with the believers’ spirit. The soul is only the personality of a man and is natural; it should only be used as a vessel to express the results of the union between the Lord and the spirit of the believer. In the believers’ soul there is nothing that matches the nature of the Lord’s life; only the spirit can have such union. Since the union is a union of the spirit, there is no place for the soul. If the soul and the spirit are still mixed, it will make the union impure. As long as our living has any trace of walking according to our own thoughts, of having our own opinion in anything, or of having our emotion stirred in any way, it is enough to weaken this union in our experience. . . . Mixture will not do. . . . This is a union of the spirit; anything of the soul cannot be allowed to be mixed in.⁴¹¹

In addition to other errors evident in these quotations, such as erroneous views of the depravity of man and of the Fall, Quietism, and many doctrinal affirmations that are

⁴⁰⁷ Pgs. 36-40, 47-49, 52, *The Spiritual Man*, Watchman Nee. Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministry, 1992.

⁴⁰⁸ pg. 660, *The Spiritual Man*, Watchman Nee.

⁴⁰⁹ pgs. 3-5, *How To Know God’s Will*, Watchman Nee. Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministry, 1998.

⁴¹⁰ pg. 5, *Seeking God’s Will*, Watchman Nee. Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministry, 2001.

⁴¹¹ pgs. 236-237, *The Spiritual Man*, Watchman Nee.

simply entirely absent from the Bible, Nee's view that sanctification pertains only to the human spirit, that "new birth is something which happens entirely within the spirit; it has no relation to soul or body,"⁴¹² is connected with Nee's adoption of anti-Trinitarian modalist idolatry. As at the Broadlands Conferences it was acceptable to preach that "Jesus Christ is . . . the Holy Spirit, Who will dwell in us,"⁴¹³ likewise Nee affirmed that 1 Corinthians 15:45 teaches that the Lord Jesus Christ became the Holy Spirit, who then regenerates the human spirit.⁴¹⁴ He wrote:

This is the ascension life. The believer is joined to the Lord who is at the right hand of God. . . . Just as a water hose connected to a fountain flows out living water, the believer's spirit, which is joined to the Spirit of the Lord, also gushes out life. This is because the Lord [that is, He who is at the right hand of God, Jesus Christ] is not only the Spirit but the "life-giving Spirit."⁴¹⁵

Not only is He the very Creator, He was also the Christ that put on the flesh. And now He is in us as the Holy Spirit. The Christ in the flesh is over! The Christ in the Spirit lives forever in us. . . . God has accomplished everything in Christ. He died and was resurrected, and He has been transformed into the Holy Spirit. He is now ready to come into you. All you need to do is believe. . . . After the Son of God passed through death and resurrection and became the Holy Spirit, He is no longer limited by time and space.⁴¹⁶ 1 Corinthians 15:45b says, "The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit." This enables all those who have received Christ to obtain a new life. . . . God . . . put Christ into the Holy Spirit[.]⁴¹⁷

Thou, Lord, the Father once wast called, [b]ut now the Holy Spirit art.⁴¹⁸

⁴¹² Pg. 61, *The Spiritual Man*, vol. 1.

⁴¹³ Pg. 170, *The Life that is Life Indeed: Reminiscences of the Broadlands Conferences*, Edna V. Jackson. London: James Nisbet & Co, 1910.

⁴¹⁴ Note, in addition to the quotations below, the already quoted statement by Nee from pgs. 236-237 of *The Spiritual Man* that "The resurrected Lord is the life-giving Spirit."

⁴¹⁵ pg. 238, *The Spiritual Man*.

⁴¹⁶ If, somehow, Nee did not affirm modalism with this statement, as it certainly appears he did, his words still involve a very aberrant Christology. The Divine Person of the Son of God has from all eternity unchangeably and immutably been omnipresent, and the human nature that He assumed in the incarnation has from the moment of Christ's conception been at one particular position in space. Since the Lord Jesus is truly human after His ascension, as He was before that time, His real human body is still not omnipresent; it is locally present in heaven, where He ascended, and from whence He will come again. To affirm that Christ's humanity became omnipresent is to destroy the reality of His human nature, because a true human nature cannot possess the incommunicable Divine attribute of omnipresence. First John 4:3 states: "And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh [ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθότα—perfect tense; He took to Himself a human nature in the point action of the incarnation, and the results of that assumption of humanity continue, a truth also taught in many other passages of Scripture] is not of God: and this is that *spirit* of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world." Denying that the Lord Jesus has a true human nature, both before and after His ascension to heaven, is very serious antichristian heresy. Watchman Nee's Christological statement about Christ becoming the Holy Spirit and no longer being limited by time and space thus appears to teach both the idolatry of modalism and also the heresy of antichrist that the Lord Jesus no longer has a true human nature.

⁴¹⁷ Pgs. 137-138, 141, 145, 155, *The Normal Christian Faith*, Watchman Nee (2nd ed.). Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministry, 1997.

⁴¹⁸ *Hymns*, #490, by Watchman Nee, cited on pg. 17, *Concerning the Triune God: The Father, the Son, and the Spirit*, Witness Lee. Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministry, 1973. The *Little Flock Hymnal* was put together when Nee was twenty-eight from hymns already being circulated in pamphlet form in his denomination (pg. 115, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear).

Thus, Nee believed, Jesus Christ became the Holy Spirit at the time of the resurrection, when He ceased to be the only begotten Son of God.⁴¹⁹ Eyewitnesses and hearers of Watchman Nee made statements such as:

At the beginning of 1938 . . . [t]he word the Lord spoke to me through Watchman Nee made a revolutionary impact on my life. The evening I heard him say that Jesus became the Spirit to dwell in us . . . the Holy Spirit . . . light dawned.⁴²⁰

Brother Watchman Nee . . . in Shanghai . . . was explaining . . . John 14:16-20 . . . to us, [and] he pointed out emphatically that “he” (the Holy Spirit) in verse 17 is the “I” (the Lord) in verse 18. The Lord said in effect, “When He comes I come. He is I; I am He.” The Holy Spirit is the Lord Jesus, and the Lord Jesus is the Holy Spirit. . . . the Son is the Father, and the Son is also the Spirit.⁴²¹

Nee’s teachings were summarized as including the following:

The crucified, resurrected, and ascended Christ is now . . . the Spirit of life . . . [t]he Holy Spirit is . . . the Spirit of life . . . Christ is life . . . and this life is the Spirit of life . . . [t]he Son [is] the embodiment of the Father . . . [t]he Spirit is the realization of the Son . . . [t]he resurrection of Christ . . . ma[de] Christ the life-giving Spirit . . . [t]he [Holy] Spirit [is] [t]he consummation of the Triune God . . . [t]he . . . Spirit [is the] . . . application of the Father in the Son . . . [t]he incarnation [was] of the Triune God [that is, not of the Person of the Son alone, but of] . . . God the Father . . . God the Son . . . [and] God the Spirit . . . believers [are] transformed . . . by Christ as the Spirit.”⁴²²

One would like to hope that Nee was simply sinfully and very dangerously careless in such modalistic language, or that he just didn’t know what he was talking about. One might perhaps also hope that Nee did not really believe or intend to teach that Jesus Christ was “transformed into the Holy Spirit” or that “the Son of God . . . became the Holy Spirit” and hope that those who heard him, including those closest to him, with whom he spent years, did not understand that Nee really did not mean what he said when they adopted modalist idolatry based on Nee’s teachings. Alternatively, one could

⁴¹⁹ Pgs. 12, 24, *God’s Plan and the Overcomers*, Nee.

⁴²⁰ The testimony of “Elizabeth P. Rademacher, A Western Missionary,” to Watchman Nee. <http://www.watchmannee.org/others-testimonies.html>. Further details about her, and this same modalist testimony to Nee, are found on pgs. 145ff. of *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation* by Lee.

⁴²¹ Pgs. 16-17, *Concerning the Triune God: The Father, the Son, and the Spirit*, Witness Lee. Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministry, 1973.

⁴²² Pgs. 158-161, 279-281, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee. Note that modalism was included among the teachings of even Nee’s earliest period, from 1920-1932. The lack of spiritual discernment about Nee in the Western Keswick movement is evident in that even while Nee was making modalistic statements and requiring everyone to leave their churches to join his new denomination, he still was welcomed with open arms at the 1938 Keswick convention:

[T]he chairman [of the Keswick Convention], who was also the chairman of the China Inland Mission . . . agreed with [Nee]. He told Brother Nee that what the Lord had commissioned him to do in China was exactly the burden of . . . the founder of the CIM, and that their missionaries in China were wrong in opposing him. Eventually, the chairman of the mission went to China and called all the missionaries of the CIM together in Shanghai and told them that they were wrong in opposing the work of Watchman Nee. He told them that what Watchman Nee was doing was exactly what they should be doing. He advised them never to do anything from that day forth to oppose him. (pgs. 176, 204, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee)

perhaps hope that his writings have been severely altered or mistranslated.⁴²³ However, such suppositions are extremely unlikely, making it morally certain that the damnable heresy of modalist idolatry was Nee's doctrine. It is certain that Watchman Nee's "most faithful co-worker,"⁴²⁴ "senior worker in Shanghai and Taiwan,"⁴²⁵ and successor⁴²⁶ in the Little Flock movement, Witness Lee, did indeed reject Biblical Trinitarianism for a form of modalism that affirmed that the second Person in the Godhead became the third Person.⁴²⁷ Lee wrote: "Hence, to say that the Lord Jesus is also the Holy Spirit is according to the Bible's clear revelation. Therefore, it is clear. The Lord Jesus is the

⁴²³ This possibility, which would save Nee personally from damnation as an idolater, involves the supposition that Lee and others in Nee's movement interpolated Nee's writings with their own modalist heresy while Nee never spoke out against or condemned Lee for his modalist idolatry or for corrupting his own writings. One should note that even if this very unlikely hypothesis is indulged, it still leaves Nee's writings, as presently extant, corrupted with damnable idolatry and thus very dangerous and unreliable. However, it is far more likely that the Christian Research Institute is correct: "[T]here have always been some who have denied legitimacy to Lee's leadership and who have, in fact, disagreed strongly with Lee's understanding of Nee's teachings. We have examined these alternative interpretations and developments of Nee's teachings and do not believe that there is significant difference between Nee and Lee, nor any compelling evidence that Nee and Lee represent different teachings or different expressions of the church" (pg. 5, "We Were Wrong: A Reassessment of the 'Local Church' Movement of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee," *Christian Research Journal* 32:06 [2009]).

⁴²⁴ Pg. 156, *Secrets of Watchman Nee*, by Dana Roberts. Gainesville, FL: Bridge-Logos, 2005.

⁴²⁵ Pg. xv, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

⁴²⁶ Lee knew Nee for decades; their first interaction took place in 1925. At the time of their first personal meeting, Lee baptized someone into Nee's new denomination (pg. 289, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee). Lee testified: "Those days with Watchman affected my pathway in the Lord throughout all the following fifty-nine years" (pg. 288, *ibid.*) Lee became convinced that Nee was "a person wholly with the Lord . . . [and] a man of God" so that he "had to follow him and work with him," not because of Scripture, but because of an experience Nee had where he felt burdened about Lee and wrote him a letter (pg. 292, *ibid.*) Lee thus became Nee's full-time coworker in 1933. He was the best man at Nee's wedding (pgs. 307, 343, *ibid.* See pgs. 283-344 for a detailed discussion of Nee and Lee's work together). Lee also spearheaded the restoration of Nee to eldership after the elders at Shanghai had removed him for a time (pgs. 182, 187, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear). The Local Church cult received its name from Nee's doctrine, perpetuated by Lee, that each city could have only one church within it and all Christians must join that one "Local Church." Nee, when he decided to remain in China despite the invasion of Mao's communist armies, appointed Witness Lee over the work outside China in the late 1940s as the communists were advancing on the Chinese mainland (pgs. 193ff., *Against the Tide*, Kinnear). Nee was imprisoned by the communists in 1952 and would not oversee his denomination again. He died in 1972. Lee wrote:

I feel no shame whatsoever in saying that I followed a man [Watchman Nee]—a man that was the unique gift and the seer of the divine visions in this age. I am more than grateful to the Lord that immediately after being saved I was brought into such a profitable relationship with Watchman Nee and put into the closest relationship with him in the work of His recovery through so many events over a long period of time. The revelations concerning Christ, the church, the spirit, and life which I saw through Watchman Nee, the infusions of life which I received from him, and the things concerning the work and the church which I learned from him will require eternity to evaluate their true worth. (<http://www.watchmannee.org/others-testimonies.html>)

Witness Lee, whose modalism is blatant and undeniable, thus claimed very strongly to have received his doctrines from Watchman Nee. There is no evidence to the contrary. See also pg. 117, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

⁴²⁷ Lee also affirms many other dangerous and damnable heresies and errors.

Father, the Son, and the Spirit, the very God and the Lord.”⁴²⁸ Lee’s position is advocated by the Church of Recovery/Local Church cult that publishes and zealously promulgates both modalism and the writings of both Nee and Lee through its publishing arm, Living Stream Ministry. Tying sanctification in with the human spirit alone is also related to the strange error of Nee and Lee, developed from a trajectory of Jessie Penn-Lewis’s thought,⁴²⁹ that the Holy Spirit “mingles” with and so becomes indistinguishable

⁴²⁸ pgs. 8-9, *The Truth Concerning The Trinity: Two Answers By Witness Lee*. Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1976. Lee affirms such blasphemy and idolatry many times in many of his writings. Representative examples are found in *Witness Lee and the Local Church*, by Cal Beisner & Robert & Gretchen Passantino. San Juan Capistrano, CA: Christian Research Institute, 1978.

⁴²⁹ Penn-Lewis, as a precursor to Nee and Lee’s doctrines of the mingled spirit and of the breaking of the outer man, wrote:

The believer must not only apprehend the negative side of God’s dealing as depicted in Hebrews 4:12—the dividing of “soul” from “spirit”—but the positive side . . . as the God of Peace . . . taking possession of and working through the spirit, and seeing that the soul and body fulfil their proper functions. “He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit” (1 Corinthians 6:7), wrote the Apostle. “Ye also were made dead to the law through the body of Christ; that ye should be joined to another, even to Him Who was raised from the dead” (Romans 7:4, R.V.). Here is set forth clearly the “joining” or union with Christ in the spirit, which is the purpose and outcome of the work of the Cross. This union with the Risen and Ascended Lord can be only in spirit, and EXPERIMENTALLY REALIZED as the SPIRIT OF THE BELIEVER IS SEPARATED FROM THE ENWRAPPING OF THE SOUL; for, as Stockmayer observes, the Risen Lord cannot be said to be the Bridegroom of the soul; the soul—the personality of the man—can only be the vessel through which the Lord manifests His own life, bringing forth, in union with the believer’s spirit, “fruit unto God.” The “spiritual” man, therefore, is one in whom, through the dividing of soul and spirit by the Word of God, the SPIRIT HAS BEEN FREED from the entanglement of the “soul” . . . raised out of its “embrace” and joined to the Lord in union of essence—spirit with spirit—one spirit—so that the soul and body may serve as vehicles for the expression of the will, and life, and love of the Lord Himself through the believer. (Chapter 5, *Soul & Spirit*, Jessie Penn-Lewis. Capitalization present in the original. Note the rest of the chapter as well.)

Consider also that Penn-Lewis, in line with earlier heretical mystical writers, states that the believer has a “union of essence” with God, an affirmation that also provides background for the deification heresy Nee and Lee developed out of their mingled spirit doctrine, and which is also a precursor of the Word-Faith “little gods” doctrine. Penn-Lewis’s affirmation of a union of essence with God was not simply a dangerous and idolatrous but mistaken slip of her pen; for example, she stated elsewhere:

The spiritual man . . . is perfected into one spirit with others in Christ. . . . John 17 . . . [states] . . . “As Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in us . . . that they may be one, even as We are one; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected into one[.]” . . . The essential union which exists between Father and Son[,] the Union of essence in spirit with spirit—is the union of the believer each with the other who is IN God. The language of the Lord is unmistakable. He said, “That they may be one, even as WE are ONE!” This means Father and Son, dwelling in the spirit of the believer, by the Holy Ghost, in perfect—or complete—union; and of necessity it means also the same union of spirit with other believers. The “spiritual” man is therefore . . . one with Christ in God. (*Soul & Spirit*, Jessie Penn-Lewis, Chapter 5; cf. Chapter 8, “[T]he gilded bait offered to Eve in the temptation in Eden was ‘Ye shall be as God’—which was the very purpose in the heart of God in His creation of man.”)

Penn-Lewis is idolatrous and greatly mistaken exegetically, although well within her Keswick and Quaker theological trajectory, when she affirms that the union of essence in the Trinity between the Divine Person of the Father and of the Son is shared by men (an error she is followed in by Word-Faith teachers who also misuse John 17:21-23; e. g., Paul Crouch; see pg. 333, *Charismatic Chaos*, John MacArthur). John 17:21-23 speaks of the union of the elect with Christ as the Divine-human Mediator, as *Theanthropos*, and of their union with God through Christ by the Spirit. The union of the incarnate Son of Man with the Godhead and the union of the elect with the incarnate Son are not the same as the ontological and absolutely incommunicable unity of the three Persons of the Trinity, even apart from the exegetical point that the “even as” (καθώς) of John 17:22 can well be understood as an affirmation concerning the equal truth of the union of the elect with Christ and of Christ with the Father, rather than an affirmation that both unions

from the human spirit,⁴³⁰ a false doctrine that is related to Lee's heretical confusion about the fact that in the incarnation⁴³¹ Jesus Christ united His true and distinct Divine nature with a true and distinct human nature in the unity of His single Person.⁴³² Lee's spirit-mingling heresy also lends itself to the heresy of deification—the Satanic blasphemy that man becomes God (Genesis 3:5)—strenuously promulgated by Lee and the Church of the Recovery cult as a legitimate trajectory of the teaching of Watchman Nee⁴³³ and in

are of the same kind or nature (cf. Section 1.70, "Of the Union Between Christ and the Saints," in Treatise 1, *Of Domestic Duties*, William Gouge, elec. acc. *Encyclopedia Puritannica Project*, CD Version 3.0.). Nee took seriously and developed Penn-Lewis's error, and Lee expanded Nee's mystical doctrine of deification and developed all its vile and idolatrous implications.

⁴³⁰ "One rather remarkable thing is that God does not mean to distinguish between His Spirit and our spirit. . . . It is simply impossible to distinguish. When in regeneration we receive our new spirit, we receive God's Spirit too. The moment our human spirit is raised from the state of death, we receive the Holy Spirit. We often say that the Holy Spirit dwells in our spirit, but we find it hard to discern which is the Holy Spirit and which is our own spirit. The Holy Spirit and our spirit have become so mingled; while each is unique they are not easily distinguished. . . . Since the Holy Spirit and our spirit are joined into one (1 Cor. 6:17), they can be distinguished only in name, not in fact" (pgs. 20-21, *The Release of the Spirit*, Watchman Nee. Sure Foundation: 1965).

⁴³¹ Lee evidenced further severe incarnational confusion and heresy by affirming that as "Christ is the embodiment of God . . . sin is the embodiment of Satan . . . Satan wrought himself into man . . . [so] God became incarnated as a man" (pgs. 114-115 *The Economy of God*, by Witness Lee. Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministries, 2005). Satan is a real, personal being, not an impersonal entity like sin, nor did Satan ever become embodied or incarnate in man like the Lord Jesus Christ did.

⁴³² The Biblical doctrine of the natures of Christ, taught in passages such as Philippians 2:6-7, was expounded by the Council of Chalcedon:

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; 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; 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, but the peculiarity of each nature being maintained, and both concurring in one person and hypostasis. 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.

Rather than affirming this foundational Christological truth, Lee affirms that the Divine and human were "mingled" in Christ: "Christ's incarnation was the mingling of His divine nature with the human nature" (pg. 13, *The Economy of God*, Witness Lee). In "the incarnation a dispensation began in which God and man, man and God were blended into one. . . . What took place at Bethlehem was the birth of One who had a dual nature" (pgs. 4-5, *The God of Resurrection*, by Witness Lee. Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministry, 1997). Lee's doctrine is aberrant Christology, despite a subsequent reference to "two natures" on pg. 5; however, his error here may be motivated more by his mysticism and rejection of Bible study than a definite and deliberate rejection of Biblical and Chalcedonian Christology.

⁴³³ Of course, Word-Faith theology likewise teaches that man becomes god. Watchman Nee probably adopted his concept of deification out of the pantheistic mysticism and Faith and Mind Cure background that undergirds Higher Life theology, a background that led, for example, E. W. Kenyon similarly to affirm: "God impart[s] His own nature to the human spirit God becomes a part of our very consciousness" (pgs. 74, 137, *The Hidden Man: An Unveiling of the Subconscious Mind*, Kenyon; note that Kenyon employs in context the same sort of argumentation as Nee and Penn-Lewis about only the spirit being regenerated) in this manner "espousing deification . . . the metaphysical view that salvation entails man becoming a god" (pg. 44, *A Different Gospel*, McConnell, commenting on these very quotes

accordance with the position of the spiritualist originator of the Keswick movement, Lord Mount Temple.⁴³⁴ Watchman taught that the Church is Christ, and Christ is God, so the church is deified. Nee proclaimed:

[T]he church as the Body of Christ was simply the enlargement, expansion, and expression of the resurrected Christ. . . . Christ in resurrection was the . . . content of the church . . . [Nee] frequently emphasized that anything which is not Christ in resurrection is not the church . . . the church is Christ. . . . [t]he genuine oneness of the church . . . is the Spirit Himself. . . . [T]he Holy Spirit . . . reconstitute[s] us within with the divine element. . . . Christ is both the content of the church and the reality of the church. . . . the [idea that the] Body of Christ . . . express[es] Christ corporately in each locality . . . was the goal of [Nee's] entire ministry, and he held to this goal to the day he died. . . . God and His redeemed . . . [will] express the processed Triune God forever. . . . [Salvation] bring[s] God into man, making God one with man as a God-man. . . . [T]he resurrection of Christ . . . [bring[s] man into God."⁴³⁵

Nee, as a natural development of his mysticism,⁴³⁶ regularly taught this heresy of deification, and affirmations concerning it fill his writings:

Christ the Head and the Church His body . . . Christ *and* His Church, make up together His one new Man—"the Christ."⁴³⁷ The goal of God was to establish not just the individual Christ, but also the corporate Christ. This corporate Christ is the church.⁴³⁸ [T]he corporate Christ . . . is the composite of the personal Christ and the church. . . . [T]he term Christ . . . refers to the church.⁴³⁹ "The church is simultaneously fully Christ in its state and not fully Christ in its status. . . . The corporate Christ . . . is the personal Christ and the church . . . in the *eschaton* . . . the church [will] experience the full status of the personal exalted Christ."⁴⁴⁰ Everything of Eve was out of Adam, and everything of the church is out of Christ. . . . The fact that Eve was made from Adam signifies that the church is made from Christ. Eve was made with Adam's rib. Since Eve came out from Adam, she was still Adam. Then what is the church? The church is another form of Christ, just as Eve was another form of Adam. The church is just Christ. . . . The church is . . . taken out of Christ. In other words, it is the man which God has made by using Christ as the material. . . . The material of the church is Christ. . . . Only that which is out of Christ can return to Christ. The material for the building of such a bride [as the church] is Christ Himself.⁴⁴¹ There is a portion in

from Kenyon). However, deification is a false doctrine that Satan has doubtlessly conveyed to many unregenerate people directly throughout the course of history (cf. Genesis 3:5).

⁴³⁴ Mr. Mount-Temple prayed: "My Lord Jesus, as Thou didst take my humanity, I pray Thee impart to me Thy Divinity," and he stated that, as with the confession of Christ as one Person with a true Divine and a true human nature at Chalcedon: "I have to record my thanks . . . for deep Churchism at our Conferences . . . [and] for the knowledge that we are all two in one—two natures in one person . . . the Divine and the human" (pg. 183, *Memorials [of William Francis Cowper-Temple, Baron Mount-Temple]*, Georgina Cowper-Temple. London: Printed for private circulation, 1890).

⁴³⁵ Pgs. 80, 163, 164, 166, 196-197, 271, 279-280, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee.

⁴³⁶ B. B. Warfield wisely noted: "The history of mysticism only too clearly shows that he who begins by seeking God within himself may end by confusing himself with God" (pg. 661, *Studies in Theology: The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield*, vol. 9, B. B. Warfield. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008).

⁴³⁷ Pg. 14, *What Shall This Man Do?* Nee.

⁴³⁸ Pg. 7, *The Assembly Life*, by Watchman Nee. Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministry, 1995. cf. pg. 265, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation* by Lee.

⁴³⁹ Pgs. 14, 48, 79, *God's Plan and the Overcomers*, Nee.

⁴⁴⁰ Pgs. 151-152, *Secrets of Watchman Nee*, Dana Roberts, citing *Christ the Sum*, pg. 59, & *Love One Another*, pg. 194, by Watchman Nee.

⁴⁴¹ Chapters 2, 3, *The Glorious Church*, Watchman Nee.

us which is out of Christ and which is Christ Himself. . . . There is a life within us which has nothing to do with sin and which requires no redemption. That life in us is from Christ and it is Christ Himself.⁴⁴² God is added to man. . . . [I]n the New Jerusalem . . . the Creator mingles with the creature . . . God and man will become one.⁴⁴³ When . . . a sinner, the old man, hears the gospel and believes in Christ and is saved, he becomes a new man. Not only has he become a new man individually; he is joined to all other Christians to become one corporate new man as well. . . . The church . . . is the new man . . . The new man is simply Christ. The nature of the new man is Christ. . . . We can even venture to say that Christ is the church and the church is Christ . . . [t]he constitution of the new man is nothing less than Christ Himself. Since the nature of the new man—the church—is Christ, we can say that the church is Christ. . . . The constitution of the new man is Christ Himself . . . the church is Christ. . . . He would release His life on the earth to all those who would believe in Him so that they would be regenerated and receive God’s life. . . . the church . . . is . . . the corporate Christ. . . . Formerly, Christ was expressed individually; now He is expressed corporately. . . . Only the church as the corporate Christ can fulfill God’s goal and plan.⁴⁴⁴

Nee’s mystical doctrine of deification was faithfully expounded also in Witness Lee’s works and other writings in their denomination. Lee forthrightly taught modalism and deification:

[T]he Son must be the Father . . . the entire Godhead, the Triune God, became flesh. . . . The traditional explanation of the Trinity is grossly inadequate and borders on tritheism . . . the Son is the Father, and the Son is also the Spirit . . . Christ is of two natures, the human and the divine, and we are the same: we are of the human nature, but covered with the divine. He is the God-man, and we are the God-men. . . . In number we are different, but in nature we are exactly the same. . . . God’s economy and plan is to make Himself man and to make us, His created beings, “God,” so that He is “man-ized” and we are “God-ized.” In the end, He and we, we and He, all become God-men. . . . Because the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are all one with the Body of Christ, we may say that the Triune God is now the “‘four-in-one’ God.” These four are the Father, the Son, the Spirit, and the Body.⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴² Chapters 2, 5, *The Glorious Church*, Watchman Nee.

⁴⁴³ Chapter 5, *The Glorious Church*, Watchman Nee.

⁴⁴⁴ Pgs. 7-9, 15-16, *The Mystery of Christ: Knowing Christ in the Church & as the Church*, by Watchman Nee. Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministry, 1997.

⁴⁴⁵ See “An Open Letter To the Leadership of Living Stream Ministry and the ‘Local Churches’” (<http://www.open-letter.org/>), signed by more than seventy evangelical scholars at institutions such as Dallas Theological Seminary, Knox Theological Seminary, Liberty Theological Seminary, Southern Evangelical Seminary, Denver Seminary, Western Seminary, and many Southern Baptist seminaries, where extensive evidence is given of Witness Lee’s modalism and deification heresies.

Very regrettably, the Christian Research Institute (CRI) of Hank Hanegraaff reversed its formerly correct position on the cultic character of the Church of the Recovery in “We Were Wrong: A Reassessment of the ‘Local Church’ Movement of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee,” *Christian Research Journal* 32:06 (2009). Hanegraaff wrote: “[T]he Christian Research Institute has concluded that the local churches [of Nee and Lee] are a genuine expression of authentic New Testament Christianity . . . *not a cult*” (pg. 62; italics in original). This note is not the place to conduct a complete critique of the errors involved in CRI’s reversal. However, the following points deserve mention. In relation to CRI’s justification of the modalism of the Local Church (LC), the CRI is dangerously wrong when it argues that the revelation of the ontological Trinity in the economic Trinity appears like modalism, yet this error is alleged as a fact that is to explain Witness Lee’s many modalistic statements (pgs. 16, 19, 22). God does not deceive people in His self-revelation in the economic Trinity—while all three Persons concur in the external Trinitarian works, so that the *opera ad extra sunt indivisa*, the economy nevertheless clearly reveals three distinct Persons and points to the true trinity in the ontological Trinity. An economic modalism would reveal an ontological modalism, not an ontological Trinity, so little has actually been gained by relegating Lee’s modalistic language to an alleged merely economic modalism that undergirds an alleged ontological Trinitarianism.

Furthermore, CRI's recording that Lee condemns one form of modalism (pgs. 16-17) does not constitute a condemnation of all forms of modalism—particularly that form to which both he and his denomination hold. Finally, the fact remains that Witness Lee regularly employs grossly modalistic language, language of a sort entirely absent in Scripture, and he has never repudiated any of it. CRI can attempt to explain it away, but Lee's statements that "[t]he Lord Jesus is the Father, the Son, and the Spirit" (pg. 15) remain utterly unjustifiable.

In relation to the Local Church's doctrine of deification, the core of CRI's argument is that deification was also taught by "ancient Greek church fathers and Eastern Orthodox theologians," so it is "within the pale of orthodoxy" (pg. 25). Even if one grants CRI's very questionable premise that Eastern Orthodoxy teaches deification in the manner that Witness Lee does, it would not justify Lee—rather, it would supply another of the many reasons, from image worship to sacramental works salvation, that Eastern Orthodoxy is heresy. The severe problems with CRI's argument, and the organization's own extreme lack of doctrinal discernment, is evident in their argument that if one is to criticize the Church of the Recovery for teaching deification, then:

[W]hy not go after the Episcopalians for their doctrine of baptismal regeneration, or the Lutherans for their belief in the "real presence" of the body and blood of Christ "in, with, and under" the Eucharist, or the Nazarenes for their belief in a "Second Blessing"? If . . . [we ought to] tolerate doctrinal distinctives of groups such as these . . . why is the LC not treated with the same consideration? (pg. 29)

CRI's assumption that one ought to tolerate damnable heresies such as baptismal regeneration, and severe errors such as the Second Blessing, and therefore the deification heresy of the LC ought to be extended the like toleration, is not evidence of the LC's orthodoxy, but of the CRI's openness to heresy. CRI's recognition of other unconverted heretics such as James D. G. Dunn (pg. 18), its denial that Roman Catholicism is a cult and affirmation that many devout Catholics are true Christians (cf. "The Christian Research Institute and Rome," <http://www.wayoflife.org/database/criandrome.html>), its unwillingness to label Seventh Day Adventism a cult (<http://www.equip.org/articles/seventh-day-adventism/>), are all further evidences of its lack of doctrinal health. CRI's doctrinal and practical blindness is also evident in its affirmation that LC practices such as "pray-reading" are not dangerous but have "much to offer Western Christianity" (pg. 62).

CRI also notes that members of the LC have endured persecution in China (pgs. 29-30), but this hardly proves that they are true Christians—members of the Watchtower Society, Sikhs, and even many of the Communist atheists that fought to successfully take over China endured great persecution at the hands of others, but were hardly true Christians. This argument, like the body of the others in CRI's blessing upon the LC, is clearly fallacious.

While CRI reversed its position on the cultic status of the LC, very many of the signers of the "Open Letter To the Leadership of Living Stream Ministry and the 'Local Churches'" continue to recognize the serious deficit of Christian orthodoxy in the organization. The Church of the Recovery continues to be "a movement the vast majority of Christian apologists and theologians consider to be a cult of Christianity" (<http://www.apologeticsindex.org/1154-christian-research-institute-cri-descends-deeper-into-error-and-controversy>). See "A Response to the *Christian Research Journal's* Recent Defense of the 'Local Church' Movement," Norm Geisler & Ron Rhodes, http://www.open-letter.org/pdf/Geisler_Rhodes_Response_to_CRI.pdf; "Five Christian apologists [E. Calvin Beisner, James Bjornstad, Darrell L. Bock, Norman L. Geisler, Gordon R. Lewis] evaluate the teachings of Witness Lee and The Local Church," <http://www.apologeticsindex.org/846-apologetics-examine-local-church-witness-lee>; "Why the Local Church was included in the Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions," <http://www.apologeticsindex.org/379-local-church-encyclopedia-of-cults-and-new-religions>; and many other articles at www.apologeticsindex.org. See also "The False Gospel of Witness Lee and the Living Stream Ministries," <http://contrast2.wordpress.com/2010/09/25/the-false-gospel-of-witness-lee-and-the-living-stream-ministries/>.

The compromise, doctrinal weakness, and spiritual confusion propagated by the Christian Research Institute's endorsement of the Church of the Recovery cult illustrates the fact that proper spiritual discernment is found only through careful study of Scripture within the pillar and ground of the truth, the local and visible Baptist congregation (1 Timothy 3:15). Parachurch countercult ministries may have some valuable material, but believers should not expect them to be soundly trustworthy, as they exist outside of the authority of the sole institution ordained of God for the teaching of truth, the immersionist assembly Christ started in the first century and preserved by His Almighty power to this present day.

The denomination's theological journal, *Affirmation and Critique*, a publication of Living Stream Ministry, had an issue entitled "Deification,"⁴⁴⁶ which included articles entitled: "Becoming God," "Can Human Beings Become God?" "Deification by Participation in God's Divinity," "The Gospel of the Promised Seed: Deification according to the Organic Pattern in Romans 8 and Philippians 2," "Creation, Sanctification, Regeneration, Deification," "Regeneration for Deification, Regeneration as Deification," "Deified to Be the Bride of Christ," and "Aspects of the New Jerusalem: Deification." The titles of the articles indicate all that must be said. Affirmations are made such as:

The time for silence and shrinking back out of fear of being labeled heretical, cultic, or unorthodox must come to an end . . . The believers in Christ become God in and through their organic union with Christ; the believers in Christ become God through regeneration; the believers in Christ become God through organic salvation; the believers in Christ become God by eating God; the believers in Christ become God by loving God; the believers in Christ become God through the function of the law of life.⁴⁴⁷

Indeed, the modalistic "trinity" of the Church of the Recovery becomes, by faith and baptism, a quaternity—the Father, Son, Spirit, and the church: "[T]he three Persons of the Godhead . . . [which are not eternal in any case but simply] three [modalistic] stages . . . are now four in one: the Father, the Son, the Spirit, and the Body . . . by faith and baptism."⁴⁴⁸ Nee and his denomination's revolting and blasphemous dogma⁴⁴⁹ perpetuates the original lie of Satan: "And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:4-5).

The Church of the Recovery ties in closely the mingled-spirit doctrine developed by Watchman Nee with its affirmations of modalism and deification.⁴⁵⁰ Thus Lee and the Church of the Recovery followed Nee and taught:

⁴⁴⁶ Vol. 7:2 (October 2002).

⁴⁴⁷ Pgs. 143-144, Vol. 7:2 (October 2002).

⁴⁴⁸ Pgs. 8-9, 42, *The Practical Expression of the Church*, by Witness Lee. Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministry, 1970.

⁴⁴⁹ The deification doctrine of Nee, Lee, and the Church of the Recovery cannot be redeemed by a reference to deification language in patristics such as Athanasius, for, although such uninspired and generally later patristic speech was certainly improper and unbiblical, nonetheless when an Athanasius spoke of "the deification of man . . . it is obvious that he was not thinking in terms of an ontological change, but of the reintegration of the divine image of man's creation through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit conforming the redeemed into the likeness of Christ, and also of the believer's transition from mortality to immortality so that he is enabled to participate in the eternal bliss and glory of the kingdom of God. . . . It is not the obliteration of the ontological distinction between Creator and creature but the establishment at last of intimate and uninterrupted personal communion between them" (pgs. 281, 286, *The True Image*, Philip E. Hughes).

⁴⁵⁰ One should note that the cult, desiring to deceive the orthodox, retains the word *Trinity* while gutting the word of its content; defends its own form of modalism but repudiates the word *modalism* by denying the successive form of that heresy; and teaches that believers become God but restricts the word *Godhead* to its modalistic Father, Son, and Spirit. In this manner, it seeks to make its abominable idolatry

Jesus is the everlasting Father. . . . the Son is the Father. . . . [I]n resurrection this incarnate Christ became a life-giving Spirit. To say that this life-giving Spirit is not the Holy Spirit is wrong, because there is not another Spirit who gives life besides the Holy Spirit. Christ is the Spirit who gives life[.] . . . The Son would come as the Spirit to abide in the disciples. . . . Christ the Lord is the Spirit who gives life, the life-giving Spirit . . . [t]he Father, the Son, and the Spirit. . . . The Son prayed that all of us would be one, but what kind of oneness is this? It is the oneness of the Divine Trinity, a oneness of coinherence. . . . We are to be one as the Triune God is one. . . . [T]he oneness of the Divine Trinity [is] a oneness of coinherence which was meant for the believers' participation. . . . [T]he Triune God c[ame] out of eternity into time, with His divinity into humanity, to pass through a marvelous human living, an all-inclusive death, and an all-surpassing resurrection to become the life-giving Spirit to enter into man . . . we become exactly like Him in life, nature, and appearance.⁴⁵¹

After His resurrection the Spirit of God became the Spirit of the incarnated, crucified, and resurrected Christ. . . . the incarnate Christ died and resurrected to become the pneumatic Christ, the life-giving Spirit, so that He could dispense Himself into us to organically save us in His life[.] . . . The indwelling, pneumatic Christ is not for our objective study but for our subjective experience. This experience begins in our human spirit which is . . . regenerated by the divine Spirit. As such, our human spirit is now a mingled spirit . . . [o]ut from this mingled spirit, our experience of the pneumatic Christ will issue.⁴⁵²

Watchman Nee and Witness Lee were not Christians. They were idolaters. Their worship was directed to the devil, not to true God. The Church of the Recovery they founded is an idolatrous cult, not a Christian denomination. Nevertheless, Watchman Nee is one of the leading writers in Keswick circles today.

Watchman Nee (and Lee and the Church of the Recovery) also promulgated the existence of a kind of Protestant purgatory, an eschatological error associated with their

sound orthodox. Furthermore, both Watchman Nee and Witness Lee employed the word *Trinity* and affirmed that the word represented truth, although the particular form of modalism that claims that the Son becomes the Spirit is never repudiated. For example: "Though the Bible never says plainly that God is triune, there are nonetheless plenty of proofs and hints in it to support this truth. The doctrine of the Trinity is a major teaching of the holy Scriptures which we need not question" (pg. 55, *The Mystery of Creation*, Watchman Nee). Nee is speaking of the "us" in Genesis 1:26 as evidence for the position that "in the Godhead there is more than one person." The statement of Nee here is consistent with orthodoxy, although it does not eliminate Lee's form of modalism, where the Son becomes the Spirit in connection with the resurrection—Lee can affirm what Nee wrote here without renouncing his modalistic deity. Note also pg. 151, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, by Lee.

Note also that when the cult fails to deceive the orthodox, it sues them. It sued the Spiritual Counterfeits Project and drove the countercult ministry into bankruptcy. It sued Harvest House for \$136 million and would have driven this major Christian book publisher into bankruptcy had it won its lawsuit—thankfully, the Texas Supreme Court ruled against the cult—simply because the publisher included a mild page and a half critique of the cult in a book that was 731 pages long, *The Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions*, by Ankerberg & Weldon. In the mind of the Church of the Recovery, "[t]he accusation of being a 'cult' . . . is clearly outside the realm of doctrinal disputes" and is "properly the subject of legal recourse" (pg. 45, "We Were Wrong: A Reassessment of the 'Local Church' Movement of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee," *Christian Research Journal* 32:06 (2009))—they are willing to destroy Christian organizations simply because they use the word "cult" to describe their cult. Consequently, the Local Church also sued publishers such as Thomas Nelson and Moody Press and threatened lawsuits against publishers such as the Christian Literature Crusade for publishing material critical of their organization. (Compare 1 Corinthians 6:1-8.)

⁴⁵¹ "A Biblical Overview of the Triune God," Ed Marks. *Affirmation and Critique*, Vol. 1:1, January 1996, 23-31.

⁴⁵² Pg. 64, *Affirmation and Critique* Vol. 2:4, October 1997.

partial Rapture heresy. Believers who died with any unconfessed sin would have to suffer the eternal fires of hell—*Gehenna*—during the Millennium until the fires purified them and they could get out. “[O]ver some Christians hell still has its threat,”⁴⁵³ Nee taught. Other Christians would be cast into outer darkness. Finally, some Christians who had been good enough and who died free of any sins for which confession and restitution needed to be made before God and men, would enter the Millennial kingdom and receive levels of rewards—these would be limited almost exclusively⁴⁵⁴ to those who were members of the religious organization founded by Nee and who had achieved a high enough spiritual plane. However, other Christians, those who sinned against too much light, would not have the opportunity to repent if they fell into sin—for such, temporary torment in hell was inevitable. Nee taught:

There are many places in the Bible that mention God’s punishment for the defeated Christians in the millennial kingdom. We will take a look at these places now. . . . The Lord shows us that if Christians tolerate sin, they will suffer either the casting into the eternal fire with both hands and both feet, or the entering into life with one hand or one foot. This shows us clearly that there are those who deal with their sins and lusts in this age and who will enter into the kingdom with one hand or one foot. There are also those who will leave their lusts unchecked and will be cast into the eternal fire. The fire is an eternal fire, but it does not say that they will remain in the eternal fire forever. What the Lord Jesus did not say is as significant as what He did say. If a person has become a Christian but his hands or feet sin all the time, he will suffer the punishment of the eternal fire in the kingdom of the heavens. He will not suffer this punishment eternally, but will suffer it only in the age of the kingdom. . . . [W]e have to realize . . . that the person spoken of here must be a Christian, for only a Christian is clean in his body as a whole and can thus enter into life after dealing with his lust in a single member of his body. It would not be enough for the unbelievers to cut off a hand or a foot. Even if they were to cut off both hands and both feet, they would still have to go to hell. In order to enter the kingdom of the heavens, it is better for a Christian to have an incomplete body than to go into eternal fire because of incomplete dealing. . . . [I]f a saved person does not deal with his lust, he will not be able to enter into life, but will go into eternal fire. The eternal fire here is the *Gehenna* of fire. The Bible shows us that a Christian has the possibility of suffering the *Gehenna* of fire. Although he can suffer the *Gehenna* of fire, he cannot suffer it forever. He can only suffer it during the age of the kingdom. . . . [A] saved person, a brother, [if] he has reviled his brother . . . is liable to the *Gehenna* of fire. . . . The kingdom is very strict. . . .

No two brothers or two sisters who are at odds with each other can appear in the kingdom together. . . . If I am involved in an argument with a brother, and if the matter is not dealt with in

⁴⁵³ Pg. 211, *Come Lord Jesus*, Nee.

⁴⁵⁴ In addition to those in the denomination Nee founded, Watchman taught that certain spiritual members of the Brethren denomination might also enter the Millennium; everyone else would be cast out, because:

Nee presupposes that in the modern [period of the history of the] church only those who have experienced the historical recovery of the Philadelphia church [based on Nee’s spiritualized reading of Revelation chapters 2-3, a reading which has no sound exegetical basis in the text itself]—the spiritual Christians of the Brethren and local church [Little Flock] movements—will share in the heavenly millennial reign of Christ. (pg. 139, *Understanding Watchman Nee*, Dana Roberts; cf. pgs. 175, 258, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear)

Nee’s reading of Revelation 2-3 as representative of periods of church history neither fits the history of true churches—that is, the history of Baptists from the first century until modern times—nor the history of Christendom, whether interpreted from a Romanist or a Protestant perspective. See “The Historical Ages Interpretation of the Churches of Revelation Two and Three,” by Thomas Ross. Elec. acc. <http://faithsaves.net>.

this age, then in the future, either both of us will be barred from the kingdom, or only one of us will get in. It cannot be that both of us will enter in. It is not possible for us to have a problem with each other and yet reign at the same time in the millennium in the future. In the kingdom all the believers are in one accord. There are absolutely no barriers between any two persons. If while we are on earth today, we have some friction with any brother or sister, or if we cause a hindrance to any brother or sister, we have to be careful. Either we will go in and the other will be excluded, or the other will go in and we will be excluded, or both will be excluded. The Lord says that while you are with him on the way you have to be reconciled to him. That means that while you and he are alive and before the Lord Jesus comes back, you have to be reconciled to him. . . . Today we may harbor complaints about others very easily; but these complaints will either keep us outside, keep others outside, or keep both us and others outside the kingdom. . . . We are clear that there is no possibility for a Christian to perish eternally, but if a Christian has any unrepented of and unconfessed sins, which are not forgiven, he will suffer the Gehenna of fire. Christ told those who belonged to Him . . . [that if] they allow sin to develop in them, though they will not eternally perish, there is the possibility that they will “pass away into Gehenna.” . . . The Word of God is clear enough. It tells us, not once, but many times, that it is possible for a Christian to be “cast into Gehenna.” . . .

In the book of life the names of all the Christians are recorded. There will be many angels and many Christians. The Lord Jesus will also be there. One or more angels will then read off the names from the book of life, and the Lord Jesus will confess some of the names. Those whose names He confesses will then enter the kingdom. When the names of the others are read, the Lord will not say anything. In other words, He will not confess their names. The angels will then put a mark against these names. Hence, the overcomers’ names are clean in the book of life, while the defeated ones’ names are marked. As for the unsaved ones, their names do not appear in the book of life at all. One group does not have their names in the book. Another group has their names there, but their names are marked. And still a third group, by the time of the kingdom, has their names preserved in the same way as they were first written in the book. . . . [T]hose whose names are not recorded in the book of life will be eternally in the lake of fire. Those whose names do not appear in the book of life will be cast into the lake of fire. This is at the beginning of the new heaven and new earth. [As for those whose] names have been marked . . . God will cast us “into Gehenna” so that we may be punished temporarily. . . . If we tolerate sin, if we do not forgive others, if we commit adultery, if we revile the brothers, if we are afraid to suffer, to be ashamed, to be persecuted, and to confess the Lord, we have to be careful[.] . . . [D]efeated ones will suffer the hurt of the second death. Although they will not suffer the second death itself, they will suffer the hurt of the second death. Once a person is saved, he will not suffer the second death. But this does not guarantee that he will not suffer the hurt of the second death. We know that the time of the lake of fire and brimstone is the time when the new heaven and the new earth begins. . . . [A]t that time a man will be cast into the lake of fire if his name is not recorded in the book of life. That will be the time when unbelievers are officially put into the lake of fire. However, during the millennium, the defeated Christians will suffer the hurt of the second death . . . [but] not for eternity. If a Christian is joined to the world and if he loves the world and the things of the world, the Lord will allow him to go into corruption, to suffer a little of what the unbelievers will suffer. This is what being hurt by the second death . . . means, and this word is spoken to Christians. . . . The second death will cause pain for some. From the time of the great white throne on, there is the second death itself, which is the suffering for eternity in the lake of fire and of brimstone. But in the millennium there is only the hurt of the second death. If some Christians have not dealt with their sins, they will still suffer the hurt and pain of the second death. . . .

A saved person [who] . . . has seen the revealed God, the Only Begotten of the Father[.] [and] has known the love of God, and he has tasted the heavenly gift, the unique gift, Jesus Christ[.] [and] . . . has also become a partaker of the Holy Spirit . . . [and] has tasted the good word of God and the powers of the coming age . . . [i]f such a person leaves the word of the beginning of Christ today and slips and falls, there is no repentance for him. . . . He will not perish forever, but he will suffer the hurt of the second death and will suffer the Gehenna of fire in the kingdom. . . . If a Christian receives all these wonderful things but does not bear good fruit to God, but rather thorns and thistles, he will be burned. However this burning will only be for a while. Even an elementary school boy knows that if you burn a piece of land, the burning will stop after all the thorns are

burned up. The burning in the kingdom will go on at most for a thousand years. How long it will actually burn depends on you. If you have brought forth many thorns and thistles, then there will be more burning. If you have brought forth few thorns and thistles, then there will be less burning. How many things are there in us that are still not dealt with? How many things have not been cleansed away by the Lord's blood, and how many things are not yet confessed, dealt with, and settled with the brothers and sisters? [O]ne cannot go out from [Gehenna] until every quadrans is paid. All the debts have to be paid. When everything is burned away, all the debts will be paid. . . .

In John 15 . . . look at verse 6 . . . [s]ome branches will be thrown into the fire and burned. Some branches have sprouted and have borne green leaves, but do not have fruit. Though they have life inwardly, they do not have fruit outwardly. The Lord Jesus said that they would be cast out, dried up, and burned in the fire. Here we see clearly that Christians may have to pass through the fire. . . . [I]f a Christian does not take care of his sins properly, there will be punishment waiting for him. The Bible shows us clearly what kind of punishment this will be. It is not an ordinary kind of punishment but the punishment of the "Gehenna of fire." But it is the fire in the kingdom, not in eternity. . . .

What kind of sin will bring us into this state [of Gehenna]? Once a person is saved, it is important that he deal with his sins. . . . [T]here are many sins which will not be passed over. These are the sins that one regards in his heart. . . . Moreover, if we have a problem with another person that has not been solved, or if there are things that need to be forgiven but have not been forgiven, or if we have wronged others or the Lord, we have to deal with these things in a specific way . . . [or face] the coming judgment [of Gehenna].

Now let us summarize what we have seen. . . . In the age of the kingdom, some Christians will receive a reward in the kingdom. Some will receive a great reward; others will receive a small reward. Those who will not receive a reward are also divided into a few categories. One group will not enter into the kingdom at all. The Bible does not tell us where they will go. It only says that they will be kept outside the kingdom in the outer darkness. They will be left outside the glory of God. Second, there will be many who, in addition to not having worked well, have specific sins not yet dealt with. They are saved, but when they die, they still have sins which they have not repented of and dealt with. They still have the problem of sin with them. These ones will be temporarily put into the fire. They will come out only after they have paid all their debts. This will last at most until the end of the kingdom. I do not know how long this period will actually be. There are still many things which we are not clear about concerning the future, but the Bible has shown us enough. Although there are details which we have not yet seen, we do know what the children of God will face. Some will receive a reward; some will go into corruption. Some will be put into prison, and still some will be cast into the fire and be burned. . . . [I]f we do not allow the Holy Spirit to work the Lord Jesus into us, God will have to chastise us that we may receive the benefit and be counted worthy to be with Him.

I am happy in my heart because I can preach the "heresy" of God's Word and I can oppose the "truth" in man's teaching. . . . [A]ll heresies are not pure heresy; they are the truth plus a little error. Heresy is to add wrong things to right things. Add a little of man's thought to God's thought, and you will have heresy. . . . Because Catholicism does not fully know the truth in the Bible, it preaches the doctrine of purgatory. . . . You can say that it is heresy. In the Bible we see that God's discipline of the Christians happens in the millennium, but Catholics say that there is a purging going on today. . . . The Bible shows us that there will be the discipline in the kingdom in the future, but there is no purging in Hades today. . . . [O]nly after we know this will we be able to deal with the heresy in Protestantism. Today among the Protestants, two kinds of errors are being promulgated. First, one group of Protestant theologians proposes that since a man is "once saved, always saved," he can get away with anything in his conduct.⁴⁵⁵ . . . There is another group of

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Nee here misrepresents the orthodox doctrine that once one is saved he is always saved and claims it is a license to sin. He claims that to affirm that for the sinning Christian "[h]is greatest loss is confined to occupying a lower position in the kingdom. . . . is an excuse for looseness and licentiousness." Nee then mentions the error of Arminianism that believers can lose salvation, and presents his heretical view that believers can get tormented in Gehenna during the Millennium as the only other alternative. He makes a false trichotomy—believers getting tormented in a Protestant purgatory is not the only alternative to

Protestants who say that after a man believes, there is still the possibility that he will not be saved. Perhaps he can be saved and unsaved again three or four times within a day. . . . Both of these groups are too extreme, even though both have their scriptural basis. The Bible shows us clearly that when a man is saved, he is eternally saved. The Bible also shows us clearly that it is possible for a Christian to be “cast into Gehenna” temporarily. But the problem is that some brothers hold onto one side, insisting that salvation is eternal and that there is no such thing as discipline in the kingdom, while other brothers hold onto the other side, insisting that if we can be “cast into Gehenna,” eternal life is shaky, and therefore we can go into eternal perdition. But if we see the difference between the age of the kingdom and the eternal age and the difference between the temporary punishment of the millennium and eternal punishment, we will be clear that a Christian can receive punishment in the future, but at the same time, God has given His sheep eternal life, and they can never lose it. . . . [T]he matter of eternal salvation is solved because of the work of Jesus of Nazareth, but as for one’s situation in the kingdom, it is determined by the person himself.⁴⁵⁶

The doctrine developed by Nee and received by his followers of a Protestant purgatory, where some true believers will be tormented in purifying fires in hell, while others will suffer in outer darkness, is grossly heretical.

As, it seems, modalism, deification, and the belief that Christians who sin get purified in the fires of hell did not suffice as heresies, Watchman Nee and his successor Witness Lee also believed other false doctrines. They accepted the alleged tongues, visions, and binding and loosing⁴⁵⁷ doctrines of Pentecostalism and claimed to cast out demons from believers and unbelievers, as both the saved and unsaved could be possessed.⁴⁵⁸ Nee even adopted the characteristic Word-Faith heresy of commanding God—that is, the believer, based on Ephesians 1-2 as misinterpreted by John A. MacMillan,⁴⁵⁹ can employ “the prayer of command . . . [w]e may command God to do things.”⁴⁶⁰ Certainly, Nee taught, the believer can experience “supernatural revelations

lascivious living or to Arminianism. The Biblical position, that one who is saved is always saved from both sin’s penalty and power, so that there is no such thing as an unchanged, perpetually sinning Christian, is ignored.

⁴⁵⁶ *The Gospel of God*, Watchman Nee. vol. 2, chap. 24 (“How God Deals With The Believer’s Sins—The Gehenna Of Fire In The Kingdom,” Chap. 10 in vol. 2), Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministry, n. d. elec. acc. <http://www.ministrybooks.org/collected-works.cfm>. Published as *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, Set 2, Vol. 29: *The Gospel of God (2)*, Watchman Nee. ISBN 0-87083-590-4. See also pg. 96, *The Mystery of Creation*, Watchman Nee. Here Nee’s Keswick theology, which professes to value dependence upon God and His keeping power so greatly, leads him to affirm that one’s sanctification, and consequently one’s standing in the kingdom, does not depend upon the Father’s love, the Son’s work on the cross, and the keeping power and the Almighty strength of the Holy Spirit, but upon the man himself.

⁴⁵⁷ “The . . . church . . . is to maintain and demonstrate the victory of the cross of Christ by binding Satan in every place” (pgs. 54-55, cf. 72-77, *God’s Plan and the Overcomers*, Watchman Nee. (New York: Christian Fellowship Publishers, 1977). Nee was “influenced by Penn-Lewis, Simpson and Andrew Murray” in adopting the binding and loosing error (pgs. 62-63, *Binding and Loosing*, Foster & King).

⁴⁵⁸ Compare pg. 123, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear. An account of an exorcism is given on pg. 145-146, *What Shall This Man Do?* Watchman Nee. Jessie Penn-Lewis was important theological background for Nee and Lee’s affirmation that believers could be demon possessed.

⁴⁵⁹ Pgs. 74-75, *God’s Plan and the Overcomers*, Nee.

⁴⁶⁰ Pgs. 73-74, *God’s Plan and the Overcomers*, Nee.

[and] visions . . . [that] arise from the Holy Spirit” today.⁴⁶¹ While it cannot be proven that Nee personally spoke in tongues,⁴⁶² he “found peace and spiritual blessing in [the] message and some experiences associated with [the] Pentecostal theology”⁴⁶³ under the influence of Miss Elizabeth Fischbacher, Pentecostal missionary associated with the China Inland Mission, and mentor to Nee, so that Nee taught that “to say that speaking in tongues is dispensationally over is . . . wrong.”⁴⁶⁴ Thus, when “Miss Elizabeth Fischbacher,” who was “much in demand as one of the C. I. M.’s [China Inland Mission’s] gifted missionary speakers, was holding revival meetings,” Nee “attend[ed] her Chefoo meetings. She herself shared the . . . [beliefs of the] Spiritual Gifts . . . Movement . . . with . . . its uncontrolled emotionalism and extravagant methods of arousal . . . [and] ecstatic accompaniment of preaching and prayer,” so that “she would pray and sing in the Spirit in other tongues.” Through her “preaching . . . Watchman [found] . . . a quite new discovery of divine blessing,” so that he “brought a message of the outpouring of the Spirit of God . . . [and] the Victorious Life” and a “fresh emphasis on experiences” among “assemblies . . . that hitherto had . . . never allowed the Christians to forget the Bible in favor of mere subjectivism.” However, under Nee’s new Pentecostal unction, “license was given to jumping, clapping, laughter, unknown tongues that conveyed no message to hearers or even speaker, and a flood of dramatic healings . . . not a few mistaken,” so that “the loss of restraint,” expanding upon an already extant practice of ending “prayer meetings with a brief period of simultaneous prayer” by all in the congregation, brought on a period where Nee observed that “the gain has been rather trivial, the loss quite large.”⁴⁶⁵ When Nee found out his disciple and successor Witness Lee “took the initiative to contact the Pentecostal movement in Peking and began to speak in tongues, at the same time helping others to do the same,” Nee did not speak a word against it but simply reminded Lee that not everyone must speak in tongues because of 1 Corinthians 12:30.⁴⁶⁶ Nee “certainly believed in . . . healing, and speaking with and interpretation of tongues.” He stated the belief he held from very early in his ministry, which he propagated throughout its course: “Some ask me if I oppose speaking with

⁴⁶¹ Pg. 518, *The Spiritual Man*, Watchman Nee, comb. ed.

⁴⁶² Kinnear notes that Witness Lee thought Nee did not speak in tongues but that Lee’s belief is “in every sense an argument from silence” (pg. 140, *Against the Tide*).

⁴⁶³ Pg. 25, *Secrets of Watchman Nee*, Dana Roberts.

⁴⁶⁴ Pg. 12, *The Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, Witness Lee. Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministry, 1998.

⁴⁶⁵ Pgs. 117, 138-141, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

⁴⁶⁶ Pg. 311, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee. See also Nee’s book *The Latent Power of the Soul*, which was dependent upon Jessie Penn-Lewis’s *Soul and Spirit* and Andrew Murray’s *The Spirit of Christ* (cf. pgs. 12-13, 25ff., *The Latent Power of the Soul*, Nee).

tongues. Certainly not.”⁴⁶⁷ Nee believed that “wonders . . . instantaneous divine healing . . . tongues . . . visions and dreams” were “real miracles” for today, and concerning such “miracles,” he wrote, “I value them highly.” Indeed, he related his own experience of these matters: “As to visions and dreams, I too have seen great light. . . . I do not oppose visions and dreams; I myself have had some experience of them.”⁴⁶⁸

Furthermore, prepared by Keswick theology, Nee found so much validity in Pentecostal healing doctrine that he adopted the idea that believers can choose not to be sick and “claim healing over sickness,”⁴⁶⁹ although he himself endured very serious and chronic illnesses, such as fevers that incapacitated him and left him unable to write or even think, a chronic cough associated with wasting away of his body, sickness that left him unable to walk without a cane, heart trouble caused by “long illness,” “coronary ischemia” that left him unable to work and caused “great discomfort” as it became, he testified, “the chronic condition I have [that] is always with me. . . . The only variation is in its degree of activity, for there is no question of recovery.”⁴⁷⁰ Nonetheless, Nee taught that believers who live by faith will never experience any kind of debilitating sickness that hinders their ability to minister for God: “[T]he real meaning of the Holy Spirit giving life to our bodies is that: (1) He will restore us when we are sick and (2) He will preserve us if we are not sick. In a word, the Holy Spirit will strengthen our earthly tents so that we can meet the requirements of God’s work and walk in order that neither our life nor the kingdom of God will suffer through the weakness of the body. This is what God has provided for all His children.”⁴⁷¹ In addition to the failure of Nee’s doctrine in his own life, the Apostle Paul’s coworker Trophimus, who had a debilitating sickness of such severity that Paul had to leave him behind so that they could no longer minister together (2 Timothy 4:20; cf. Philippians 2:25-30), does not seem to have been aware of the Higher Life for the body. Furthermore, in direct opposition to the miraculous healings by the Lord Jesus and the apostles in the Bible, where all symptoms and evils

⁴⁶⁷ Pg. 54, *The Latent Power of the Soul*, Nee; also pg. 140, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear. Kinnear goes on to recount how Nee personally told him about one episode where supernatural tongues were used to reveal hidden facts. It is also noteworthy that, among those mission works outside his denomination, Nee considered the strongly continuationist Christian and Missionary Alliance the best (pg. 165, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear).

⁴⁶⁸ Pgs. 54-56, 65, 74-75, *The Latent Power of the Soul*, Watchman Nee. Nee connected these wonders with Spirit baptism (pgs. 55-56). This sort of continuationist preaching was set forth publicly by Nee by at least 1924 (preface, *ibid*). There is no evidence that Nee was ever a cessationist.

⁴⁶⁹ Pg. 98, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

⁴⁷⁰ Pgs. 81, 97-98, 103-106, 130, 234-235, 244-246, etc., *Against the Tide*, Kinnear; cf. pg. 148, “The Story of Watchman Nee,” Bernard Earling. *Lutheran Quarterly* 28 (May 1976) 140-155.

⁴⁷¹ Pgs. 644-645, *The Spiritual Man*, Watchman Nee, comb. ed.

from sickness were immediately, completely, and permanently removed (Mark 6:56; Luke 6:19), the “healings” Nee endorsed had to overlook obvious evidence that disease was still present. In a manner reminiscent of charismatic Word-Faith teaching,⁴⁷² and in line with the Higher Life healing leaders from Boardman to Simpson, Nee taught that someone could be “healed” but still have symptoms of his disease. However, if he simply denied that the symptom was really a symptom of the disease, everything would be fine. Nee commanded: “Do not accept the symptom,” for if “you continue to look at your sickness, God’s word loses its effectiveness” and the “healing” could then be lost. Thus, if one has been “healed” of a fever, he is to “laugh at the temperature. It doesn’t matter whether it is high or low.” If one is “healed” but continues to “vomi[t] blood,” or is in “acute pain,” this is not evidence that the “healing” is fake—rather, Nee commands: “Treat the symptom as a temptation and a lie.”⁴⁷³ It was very evident to Nee that if one had been “healed” but was vomiting blood and writhing in pain from disease, the problem was not that the healing was a lie, but that the symptoms were a lie.

Being consistent with his Keswick continuationism, Nee even taught, as did various Keswick writers before him,⁴⁷⁴ that believers do not need to die:

Since Christ has overcome death, believers need not feel that they must die, although they still may die. . . . Since it is a believer’s goal to be free from sin, it should also be his goal to be free from death. A believer should understand that as a consequence of the death and resurrection of Christ, his relationship with death is the same as his relationship with sin. He has overcome these completely in Christ; therefore, God is now calling him to overcome them in his experience. . . . Since the Lord Jesus has met and overcome death for us, He wants every one of us to overcome it in our present life. We should not ask God to grant us strength to bear the power of death; we should ask instead for the strength to overcome its authority. . . . Unless a believer is clear that his work is finished and that the Lord does not need him to remain on the earth any longer, he should not die; that is, he should always resist death. If the symptoms of death have gradually occurred in his body . . . a believer should completely deny these symptoms and refuse to die.⁴⁷⁵

Obedient believers, it seems, will never die in accidents, and will never die at other times, no matter what disease is doing to them, unless they choose to do so—they simply need to deny that they are dying and refuse to die, and they will stay alive as long as they wish, at least until the age of seventy, at which time they may end up dying, despite all the

⁴⁷² Compare pg. 151, *A Different Gospel*, McConnell.

⁴⁷³ Pgs. 136-139, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation in the Present Age*, Lee.

⁴⁷⁴ E. g., Evan Roberts: “It was our faith: ‘No “death” until my work is FINISHED.’ For we believe . . . that death cannot come to God’s worker until he has FINISHED HIS work; and . . . each believer who is spiritual can have the knowledge when he has finished his course of life, and work on earth” (pg. 180, *The Overcomer*, December 1914. Capitalization in the original.). Roberts, in the same article, made one of his false prophecies of the end of the world.

⁴⁷⁵ Pgs. 119-120, *The Spiritual Man*, vol. 3, by Watchman Nee. In fact, “Nee gives considerable attention in *The Spiritual Man* III:213-231 to the importance of Christians in this generation overcoming death in order to be raptured alive at Christ’s return” (pg. 154, “The Story of Watchman Nee,” Bernard Earling. *Lutheran Quarterly* 28 (May 1976) 140-155).

alleged promises that would keep them alive until their seventieth birthday: “Since the Bible takes seventy as a general standard for human life, we can hope to live until that time if we have faith.”⁴⁷⁶ Nee’s view that one should live until at least seventy if he had faith was “a commonly accepted teaching in the Higher Life/Keswick movements, with their connecting of health and holiness. . . . Murray and Simpson exemplify the teaching that it was not necessary to die of sickness and that a person might live in health until age seventy or eighty.”⁴⁷⁷ Similarly, the Word of Faith movement affirms that the “bare minimum . . . should be 70 years . . . after 70 years of life, a Christian then ‘chooses’ his time to die. The believer who dies before his 70 . . . years could have lived longer had he exercised faith in the promises of the Bible.”⁴⁷⁸ Nee was sixty-nine when he died.

Nee also promulgated “blended evangelical and liberal views of revelation and Scripture”⁴⁷⁹ and the idea that irrational inner voices or intuitions should be followed rather than the Bible as interpreted using the mind. He wrote:

Believers should not follow their soul, which means that they should not follow their thoughts, feelings, or preferences. These are all from the soul. God’s way for the believers is to walk according to the spirit. All other ways belong to the old creation and have no spiritual value at all. How, then, can we walk according to the spirit? Walking according to the spirit is walking according to the intuition in the spirit. . . intuition is also completely different from our mind. Our mind comes from our head and is rational. However, the intuition is not located in our head and quite frequently is irrational.⁴⁸⁰

Matching up with this emphasis upon mysticism, what Nee “cared for was not doctrine, but the release of the spirit,”⁴⁸¹ explicitly contradicting 1 Timothy 4:13, 16 and many other texts of Scripture, but following Jessie Penn-Lewis, who likewise taught the “priceless blessing of release [of the] spirit” but rejected the necessity of careful

⁴⁷⁶ Pg. 121, *The Spiritual Man*, vol. 3, by Watchman Nee.

⁴⁷⁷ Pg. 302, *Only Believe: Examining the Origin and Development of Classic and Contemporary Word of Faith Theologies*, Paul L. King.

⁴⁷⁸ Pgs. 156-157, *A Different Gospel*, McConnell.

⁴⁷⁹ *Calvary Contender*, ed. Jerry Huffman, Huntsville, AL, Sept. 15, 1994. Elec. acc. *Fundamental Baptist CD-ROM Library*, vers. 5.1. Port Huron, WA: Way of Life Literature, 2009.

⁴⁸⁰ Pgs. 40-41, *The Spiritual Man*, vol. 2, by Watchman Nee. Nee’s exaltation of the intuition and disparagement of logic is paralleled in the Word of Faith movement. “Your re-born spirit man can be developed to such an extent that you can hear from God exactly what He wants you to do. This is intuition” (pg. 92, *God’s Laws of Success*, Robert Tilton). “Believers are not to be led by logic. . . . Reasoning is based on the failure of the earth through Satan. . . . The ministry of Jesus was never governed by logic or reason. . . . Look at Jesus. He was not led by logic. He was not led by the mind” (pgs. 7-8, *The Force of Faith*, Kenneth Copeland).

⁴⁸¹ Pg. 118, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee. Nee’s doctrine of the “release of the spirit, described in his book, unsurprisingly named *The Release of the Spirit*, has antecedents in Jessie Penn-Lewis, who taught that Holy Ghost “Baptism [brings] the . . . influx of the Spirit of God into the believer’s spirit . . . evidence[d] in the release of the spirit” (Chapter 12, *War on the Saints*, Penn-Lewis; see also pg. 181, *The Overcomer*, December 1913). Such terminology is, of course, absent from Scripture, as is the doctrine of post-conversion Spirit baptism as a second blessing for the church today.

grammatical-historical interpretation of God's Word.⁴⁸² After all, Nee "was liable to make a telling point by pressing on beyond what was written" in his "excursions into allegory."⁴⁸³ Nee testified: "After completing *The Spiritual Man* . . . I realized that the task of expounding the Scriptures was not for me. . . . [neither] expounding the Scriptures, preaching the ordinary gospel, [nor] paying attention to prophecies [was for me]." Indeed, expounding the Scriptures was dangerous to Nee, so that to do so was a "temptation" he had "frequently" needed to resist.⁴⁸⁴ Thus, not the entire Bible as the objective voice of God, but, in a manner that brings to mind the reduction of inspiration in the heretical neo-orthodoxy of Barth and Brunner, only the portion of Scripture in which one has a special encounter with God has value: "Only the word which the Lord speaks to us is of any use."⁴⁸⁵ In fact, Nee thought, "[w]ords alone cannot be considered as God's Word."⁴⁸⁶ In line with the Quaker influence upon Keswick theology, Nee taught that neither the written Word nor the preached Word are sufficient to replace the mystical voice of God spoken directly to the heart: "[T]he written Scriptures . . . [and] the living human messenger . . . contribute to our Christian life . . . [b]ut . . . neither of these can take the place of the living voice of God to our hearts."⁴⁸⁷ One needs a mystical experience, described in an incoherent and bizarre way by Nee,⁴⁸⁸ to transform

⁴⁸² Pg. iii., *Jessie Penn-Lewis: A Memoir*, Mary N. Garrard, 2nd ed. preface by Theo. M Bamber.

⁴⁸³ Pgs. 73, 250, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

⁴⁸⁴ Nee's testimony at Kulangsu on October 20, 1936, recorded on pg. 226, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee.

⁴⁸⁵ Chapter 3, *The Glorious Church*, Watchman Nee.

⁴⁸⁶ Pg. 209, *The Ministry of God's Word*, Watchman Nee. New York, NY: Christian Fellowship Publishers, 1971.

⁴⁸⁷ Pg. 23, *What Shall This Man Do?* Watchman Nee.

⁴⁸⁸ Nee speaks of a "Holy Spirit memory" that will protect the minister from giving people what the Bible actually says. Incredibly, one is not to preach what Scripture actually says (2 Timothy 4:2), literally interpreted, but is to set forth an allegedly superior Word that God gives directly to the minister. "Holy Spirit memory is necessary . . . care should be exercised lest we be carried away by the truth we find in the New or in the Old Testament. Always keep in mind that our responsibility is to bring God's current words to men. We are not to teach the Bible and forget what God has shown us" (pg. 217, *Ministry of God's Word*, Nee). One is not to be protected by the truth of the Bible from being carried away by mystical experiences; rather, the truth of mystical experiences is to protect one from being carried away by the Bible. "Holy Spirit memory . . . enable[s]" the minister "to recall both the revelation and inward words God has given" to him (pg. 210, *ibid*), as these inward words are the true communications from God. Mystical power that is the key to the encounter that results in God's living Word is conveyed through the emotions: "The spirit flows through the channel of feeling . . . [t]he spirit flows through the channel of emotion . . . not so much on his will or on his mind as upon his emotions." Indeed, if the "feeling . . . is unusable, the spirit is stuck" (pgs. 219, 220, *ibid*). Of course, the Bible, literally interpreted, cannot validate Nee's ideas but they can be validated by an encounter with God's Word conveyed through mystical experience. Nee therefore evidences the validity of his mystical view of the Bible as follows: "Smelling is a most delicate act. It represents man's tender feeling. 'Nose' in the Scriptures stands for feeling." Therefore: "Every time a minister speaks he needs to mix his feeling with the words spoken" (pgs. 220-221, *ibid*). Clearly those who hold to a grammatical-historical interpretation of Scripture and that

the Bible into something that is useful and is God's living Word. Nee's deprecation of Scripture for mysticism led him to teach: "To the Christian there is no absolute right or wrong. . . . What is right or wrong depends upon the level of life [mystical experience] he has attained."⁴⁸⁹ Would writing a book about the truly spiritual man lead to a rejection of absolute right and wrong and the exposition of Scripture (cf. 2 Timothy 3:16-4:2; John 5:39; etc.)? Or is it rather true that if "any man teach otherwise" than "wholesome words, *even* the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and . . . the doctrine which is according to godliness," such a one is so far from being on a higher plane of spiritual life that he is "proud, knowing nothing," and from such a one the godly must obey the command: "from such withdraw thyself" (1 Timothy 6:2-5)? Nevertheless, despite 1 Timothy 6, Nee taught:

We have said emphatically before that the right way to follow God's leading is to depend on the intuition and not on the mind. This is very crucial, and we should not forget it. A believer should follow the revelation in the intuition and not the thoughts in the mind. Those who walk according to the mind are walking according to the flesh. This leads to the wrong way.⁴⁹⁰

Nee wrote further:

To know things in our intuition is what the Bible calls revelation. Revelation has no other meaning than that the Holy Spirit enables a believer to apprehend a particular matter by indicating the reality of it to his spirit. There is but one kind of knowledge concerning either the Bible or God, which is valuable, and that is the truth revealed to our spirit by God's spirit. . . . Revelation happens in the intuition—quietly, neither hastily nor slowly, soundless and yet with a message. . . . Searching with intellect never delivers men; revelation in the spirit alone gives true knowledge of God. . . . The Bible recognizes just one kind of knowledge, and that is the knowledge in the spirit's intuition. . . . He reveals Himself solely to man's spirit. . . . The revelation of God in our spirit is of two kinds: the direct and the sought. By direct revelation we mean that God, having a particular wish for the believer to do, draws nigh and reveals it to the latter's spirit. Upon receiving such a revelation in his intuition the believer acts accordingly. By sought revelation we mean that a believer, having a special need, approaches God with that need and seeks and waits for an answer through God's movement in his spirit. The revelation young believers receive is mostly the sought type; that of the more matured ones is chiefly the direct kind.⁴⁹¹

The dangerous error that following one's mind is sinful, that God does not work through the believer's mind, and that, instead, irrational intuitions which are Divine "revelation" should be followed, is directly contradicted by 2 Timothy 1:7; Romans 7:25; 12:1-2; and a host of other texts. However, if there is only one kind of valuable knowledge, and that is supernatural revelation to the human spirit that bypasses the mind, then the Bible cannot really be revelation at all, and its propositions are not valuable. Bible study, then,

the Bible itself is God's living Word, being literally God's speech, perfect, glorious, and entirely sufficient, will find Nee's argument a matter of scorn and a despicable misuse of the holy Scriptures. It seems, however, that one who has placed mystical encounter in the exalted place Nee gives it will find his argumentation not to be rubbish, but rather something worthy of putting into print and spreading worldwide.

⁴⁸⁹ Pg. 142, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee.

⁴⁹⁰ Pg. 11, *The Spiritual Man*, vol. 3, by Watchman Nee.

⁴⁹¹ Pgs. 301-304, *The Spiritual Man*, comb. ed., 1977.

becomes a waste of time and should be given up, despite verses such as John 5:39 and Acts 17:11. Indeed, Nee's doctrine of intuition led the Little Flock movement and Witness Lee to reject Bible study, as one could simply follow intuition. Lee wrote:

[S]criptural interpretation must . . . pass away for us. . . . we must learn to just turn to our spirit and say, O Lord!⁴⁹² This is the way to experience Him. . . . When I was young I did much searching and researching of the Bible. But, Hallelujah, today I have given it up[.]⁴⁹³ [S]imply pick up the Word and pray-read a few verses in the morning and in the evening. There is no need for you to exercise your mind . . . it is unnecessary to think over that you read. . . . It is better for us to close our mind! . . . There is no need to explain or expound the Word! . . . Forget about reading, researching, understanding, and learning the Word.⁴⁹⁴

Both the foundations of Pentecostalism in general, and Oneness Pentecostalism in particular,⁴⁹⁵ as well as the Word of Faith movement, likewise reject grammatical-historical interpretation of the Bible to get their messages by mystical "revelation knowledge,"⁴⁹⁶ a development of earlier Quaker, Higher Life, and Keswick hermeneutical subjectivism. Of course, if the mind is not involved in the discovery of any valuable knowledge, the fact that the Bible, interpreted grammatically and historically, actually denies Nee's doctrine is irrelevant, as are contradictions in Nee's own writings (such as his affirmations of the importance of activity in the mind elsewhere); such facts can be dismissed as the mere quibbles of an unspiritual intellect. One wonders, however, why those who follow Lee in Nee's Little Flock movement read the works of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee, for reading their books cannot provide any valuable knowledge to the mind if reading the Bible cannot do so—at least unless the writings of Nee and Lee are superior to the Bible and can convey truth in a way the Omnipotent cannot in His written revelation. In any case, if all that is of true value is directly and irrationally revealed to the human spirit, one wonders if valuable knowledge is conveyed by stop signs and other forms of writing that are utilized every day by members of the Little Flock movement, or if they follow irrational intuition to know when it is their turn to cross the street. Then again, perhaps such logical contradictions must themselves be dismissed in Nee and Lee's exaltation of the irrational and intuitive.

⁴⁹² This "O Lord" business relates to the heresy practiced in Nee and Lee's denomination in relation to salvation by the instrumentality of the "sinner's prayer," as explained below.

⁴⁹³ Pgs. 73, 94, *Christ vs. Religion*, Witness Lee. Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministry, 1971.

⁴⁹⁴ *Pray-Reading the Word*, Witness Lee, chap. 1, sec. 2, <http://www.ministrybooks.org>.

⁴⁹⁵ Pentecostal historians note:

Early pentecostals . . . believed in the subjective confirmation of biblical truth. While trinitarian pentecostals occasionally charge their oneness brethren for claiming a subjective revelation, it must be remembered that it was the same principle of interpretation that established the "initial evidence" teaching in pentecostalism just a few years earlier. . . . [T]he initial revelation [of modalism] at the 1913 camp meeting [where Oneness Pentecostalism originated] was . . . not in itself a radical departure from the spirit of early Pentecostalism. (pgs. 157-158, *Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic Origins*, ed. Vinson Synan)

⁴⁹⁶ Pg. 59, *A Different Gospel*, McConnell.

As already noted, Nee also promulgated the idea, following Jessie Penn-Lewis, that believers can be demon possessed. He wrote:

[E]vil spirits will seize the opportunity to take over the believer's mind. . . . If believers fulfill the condition for evil spirits to work, they will work [and] take over the believers. . . . Evil spirits rejoice exceedingly at all who fulfill [the spiritual] condition [that allows them entry] and immediately go to work. When a 'heathen' fulfills this condition, evil spirits will possess him; when a believer fulfills this condition, evil spirits will also come into him without any reservation. We need to realize that many believers are ignorant of the conditions whereby evil spirits work and the fact that once a person fulfills these conditions, evil spirits will work in an unrestricted way. Therefore, many have unconsciously become mediums for demons and have even become possessed by demons! . . . If we tell a believer that Christians can be possessed by demons (or evil spirits), he will be greatly surprised. An ordinary believer in China thinks that only heathens have the possibility of being possessed by demons and that it is not possible for Christians to have the same experience. . . . Believers realize that there is a possibility for them to be seduced, tempted, attacked, or deceived, but they do not realize that there is also a possibility for believers to be attached to—to be possessed—by demons. When they first believed, they received many wrong teachings; now they think that as long as a Christian has Christ, he will not be possessed by demons. . . . However, this teaching is not found in the Bible. Neither is it confirmed by the experience of the saints. God's children are very unclear that evil spirits can change their appearance and attach themselves to the believers' bodies. Today there is an unexpectedly great number of believers who are possessed by demons. The unalterable fact is that many believers are possessed by demons.⁴⁹⁷

Nee also followed Penn-Lewis in the affirmation that even believers “who are entirely consecrated . . . can be possessed by evil spirits.”⁴⁹⁸ It should be of deep concern that “many believers” in the Little Flock denomination “are possessed by demons,” according to their own spiritual leader.

Nee adopted the idea that each city could only have one church in it—one associated with his own denomination, of course. All other churches, whether Baptist, Catholic, or Protestant, were schismatic and in severe error. Each city must have only one church, he taught—“one city, one church, worldwide”⁴⁹⁹—and this assembly must simply be called “the church [in city X].” Nee adopted the idea that “to leave the denominations . . . require[s] our obedience” in the latter half of 1922, two years after his professed conversion in 1920 at the age of seventeen—from that point on, he viewed “the Presbyterian Church . . . the Methodist Church . . . the Baptist Church” and all other denominations are unscriptural. While Paul required a simple pastor not to be a novice (1 Timothy 3:6), only two years after Nee's professed conversion he was able to found a new denomination, which he affirmed was not a denomination, but a recovery of the true

⁴⁹⁷ Pgs. 12-13, 50-51, *The Spiritual Man*, vol. 3, Watchman Nee.

⁴⁹⁸ Pg. 51, *The Spiritual Man*, vol. 3, Watchman Nee.

⁴⁹⁹ Pg. 154, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear. Nee appears to have adopted this idea from the London Brethren that he had met in England in 1933 (pg. 128, *ibid*). However, while teaching that “each town or village would have but one church[,] [h]e did not wholly succeed . . . in defining how this principle should be applied in extremely large urban communities” (pg. 145, “The Story of Watchman Nee,” Bernard Earling. *Lutheran Quarterly* 28 (May 1976) 140-155).

church. The “church life . . . the truth of the Lord’s recovery . . . began to be practiced in Watchman’s home town in 1922,” and by “1926 he . . . established gatherings for the Lord’s recovery [his new denomination] in Amoy, Tung-An, and nearby places [in] . . . south Fukien.”⁵⁰⁰ For the rest of his life Nee continued to call on all men to leave Baptist churches and all Protestant groups to join his new denomination, as his religious organization made “unabashed efforts to prejudice members of established churches and divert even pastors if it could,” leading to “the rapid leakage of believers into their ranks from among the flourishing mission-related churches.”⁵⁰¹

Nee also came to believe many further ecclesiological doctrines that, while perhaps supported by his intuition, could not be found in Scripture. Pastors, as found in Baptist churches, are unscriptural. Rather, there must be a certain form of hierarchicalism employing Apostles,⁵⁰² since “the work is a matter of region or district.”⁵⁰³ Leadership must be unquestioningly obeyed and blindly followed, even if it is in error; Nee affirmed that it is impossible to ever disobey any leader in the Church of the Recovery and please God. He wrote:

People will perhaps argue, “What if the authority is wrong?” The answer is, If God dares to entrust His authority to men, then we can dare to obey. Whether the authority is right or wrong does not concern us, since he has to be responsible directly to God. The obedient needs only to obey; the Lord will not hold us responsible for any mistaken obedience, rather will He hold the delegated authority responsible for his erroneous act. . . . [I]f . . . the delegated authority erred, God would surely deal with him . . . [t]he [one under authority] was not held responsible. . . . Insubordination, however, is rebellion, and for this the one under authority must answer to God. . . . It is absolutely impossible for us to reject delegated authority and yet be subject directly to God; rejecting the first is the same as rejecting the second.⁵⁰⁴

Thus, one must obey human authorities unconditionally, a demonic idea both current in the Confucianism of Nee’s culture and acceptable to the depraved human hearts of powerful men. Even if what authorities command is sin, they must still be obeyed—the member of Nee’s cult will not be accountable if he sins in obeying his church authorities. Only those commanding the sin, not those performing it, will be liable, Nee explained;

⁵⁰⁰ Pgs. 41-43, 173-178, 201, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee.

⁵⁰¹ Pgs. 145-146, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear. One English Baptist noted a particular group that was led into the Little Flock by, in part, “read[ing] Madame Guyon” (pg. 146, *ibid.*).

⁵⁰² Pgs. 143-144, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear. By 1938 Nee had 128 Apostles engaged in full-time service.

⁵⁰³ Pgs. 166-167, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee; cf. pgs. 151-167, 203, 212-213, 216-217, 323-325.

⁵⁰⁴ Pgs. 71, 73, *Spiritual Authority*, Watchman Nee. New York: Christian Fellowship Publishers, 1972. Nee does mention Acts 5:29 on pg. 74, as some kind of “exception,” but he does not make it at all clear if he really intends to teach that somehow the “absolutely impossible” of pg. 73 is really not absolutely impossible.

for one under authority, performing a commanded sin is not sinful, but disobeying the authority's command to sin is sinful:

Whether or not the authority makes mistakes has nothing to do with us. In other words, whether the deputy authority is right or wrong is a matter for which he has to be responsible directly before the Lord. Those who submit to authority need only to submit absolutely. Even if they make a mistake through submission, the Lord will not reckon that as sin. The Lord will hold the deputy authority responsible for that sin. To disobey is to rebel. For this the submitting one has to be responsible before God. For this reason there is no human element involved in submission.⁵⁰⁵

Nee explained further that people should never think about what is good or evil, for such thinking is rebellion. Rather, one must blindly obey those in the cult with authority:

With us there should never be right or wrong, good or evil. . . . Submission is the first lesson for those who work. . . . We should never try to differentiate between good and evil. Rather, we should submit to authority. . . . Man . . . feels that this is good and that is not good. . . . This, however, is a condition of foolishness and the fall. This must be removed from us, for this is nothing but rebellion.⁵⁰⁶

The Church of the Recovery taught, consequently, that the greatest command is not to love God with all one's heart, and soul, and mind, as Jesus Christ declared (Matthew 22:36-38), but to obey authority: "God's greatest and highest demand in the entire Bible is the demand for submission to authority."⁵⁰⁷ Blind and unconditional obedience to those in authority, whether they command righteousness or sin, is tied to the nature of the Deity worshipped in Nee's cult. It was the Son's subordination and obedience to the Father that led the Father to choose to reward the Son with Lordship:

[T]he Father takes the place of the Head, and the Son responds with obedience. God becomes the emblem of authority, while Christ assumes the symbol of obedience. . . . [S]ince Christ was obedient . . . God has highly exalted Him. . . . He was exalted and rewarded by God to be Lord only after He . . . maintained the perfect role of obedience. As regards Himself, He is God; as regards reward, He is Lord. His Lordship did not exist originally in the Godhead.⁵⁰⁸

As, Nee claimed, the Son was not eternally Lord, but was rewarded by the Father with Lordship because of obedience, so those in Nee's denomination must practice obedience to their human authorities with the same kind of perfect, instant, and blind obedience that was rendered by the allegedly subordinate Son to God, and such blind obedience will be rewarded. Blind and cultic obedience is important, since in Nee's denomination communism or community of goods must be practiced. "[A]ll the believers in the Lord's recovery [are] to hand over not only themselves but all their possessions to the work" of

⁵⁰⁵ Chapter 7, *Spiritual Authority*, Watchman Nee.

⁵⁰⁶ Chapter 2, *Spiritual Authority*, Watchman Nee.

⁵⁰⁷ "Obsequious and Blind Obedience or Perfect and Unconditional Obedience and Submission according to the Bible?" (elec. acc. <http://www.healthyteaching.org/obsequious-and-blind-obedience-or-perfect-and-unconditional-obedience-and-submission-according-to-the-bible/>). This article, published by the Church of the Recovery, contains many other utterly unscriptural and cultic affirmations about unconditional obedience to sinful men.

⁵⁰⁸ Pgs. 46-47, *Spiritual Authority*, Watchman Nee.

the Little Flock/Church of the Recovery denomination.⁵⁰⁹ One may suppose that the idea that one needs to blindly and unconditionally follow denominational authorities even if their commands are sinful is helpful if these same authorities are seeking to acquire all of one's possessions and through tyranny to force on people other ecclesiological ideas absent from the Bible.

One reason that Nee and Lee's denomination could adopt so many grievous heresies and corruptions is that an extremely high percentage of those in it are unconverted—they are not truly sheep, so they do not hear the voice of Jesus Christ, the true Shepherd, speaking to them in Scripture, but follow false shepherds, thieves, and robbers, instead of fleeing from them (John 10:1-30). Nee and Lee, being unconverted themselves, were extremely confused about the nature of sin, the gospel, and salvation. Nee taught error about man's pre-Fall state, denying that man was holy before the Fall, instead affirming that he was "morally neutral—neither sinful nor holy."⁵¹⁰ Happily, in fact neither the first nor the second Adam were morally neutral, but the first was created holy and the second is forever holy (1 Corinthians 15:22, 45; Romans 5:12-19). Nee based his unscriptural practice of open communion⁵¹¹ rather than close or closed communion on a more fundamental error in the doctrines of sin and grace, the idea that some "'sins' . . . hinder fellowship with God and [other] 'sins' do not. . . . [While committing these] other 'sins' . . . fellowship with God is not hindered."⁵¹² Nee's doctrine of justification was also heretical. He taught that "[j]ustification is . . . showing that we have no sin because God declares us to be without sin . . . God pronounces us as being without sin and He thus justifies us,"⁵¹³ an insufficient and faulty view of justification, which is the doctrine that believers are declared, not merely without sin, but

⁵⁰⁹ Pgs. 166-167, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee; cf. pgs. 151-167, 203, 212-213, 216-217, 323-325; see also pgs. x, 188ff., 221, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear; pg. 146, "The Story of Watchman Nee," Bernard Earling. *Lutheran Quarterly* 28 (May 1976) 140-155.

⁵¹⁰ Pg. 114, *The Normal Christian Life*, Watchman Nee. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1977. Unfallen Adam, nevertheless, "possessed a hidden ability which made it possible for him to become like God . . . to become like Him morally," for Adam "was already like Him in outward appearance," so God, it seems, has an outward appearance, and this outward appearance was similar to what Adam looked like (pg. 18, *The Latent Power of the Soul*, Nee).

⁵¹¹ In addition to Nee's recommendation for the churches in his denomination, he practiced open communion when, for example, he partook of the elements of the Supper in the open communion service at the Keswick Convention he attended in 1938, "under the banner 'All one in Christ Jesus'" (pg. 149, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear).

⁵¹² Pg. 137, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear, quoting a letter from the Little Flock to the Exclusive Brethren in England from July 2, 1935, on the subject of communion. Open communion is unscriptural, for the Lord's supper is a church ordinance (1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:17-34), and the idea that some sins do not affect fellowship with God is also unscriptural.

⁵¹³ Pg. 122, *The Mystery of Creation*, Nee.

positively perfectly righteous, since not only does the blood of Christ remove all of a Christian's sins, but the righteousness of Christ is imputed to him, and the believer is legally viewed as if he had perfectly obeyed the Law as Christ did because of the Lord Jesus' substitutionary atonement. However, Nee also attacked the power of the blood of Christ,⁵¹⁴ perhaps making it more easy for him to attack justification also. Nee also believed and taught workers in his denomination that "[t]he great weakness of the present preaching of the Gospel is that we try to make people *understand* the plan of salvation."⁵¹⁵ Nee's astonishing affirmation that it is a great weakness to lead people to understand the gospel is based on his idea that "the sinner is not required," if he is to receive salvation, "to believe, or to repent, or to be conscious of sin, or even to know that Christ died. He is required only to approach the Lord with an honest heart."⁵¹⁶ Despite 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 and countless other texts, Nee taught that one simply needs to "touch" God in a mystical encounter to be saved, rather than believe the gospel; "it is clear . . . that salvation is not initially a question of knowledge but of 'touch.'" All who touch the Lord receive life."⁵¹⁷ One can "touch" God without even knowing the name of Jesus Christ, not to mention His character and saving work, despite John 8:24. Nee illustrated receiving salvation with the story of a Chinese boy who thought an idol was "too ugly and too dirty to be worshipped" and so "looked up to heaven" and prayed to God. Thirty years later he met Nee, and this Chinese man who thought an idol was dirty decades earlier testified, "I have met the Lord Jesus for the first time to-day, but this is the second time that I have touched God."⁵¹⁸ The man had, Nee taught, been saved decades earlier by "touching" God apart from Jesus Christ, despite Acts 4:12 and John 14:6. "[W]e go for salvation not to the foot of the Cross but to the Throne" where we mystically "touch" and encounter "the living Lord,"⁵¹⁹ for "salvation" is a "personal and subjective experience" which "may be said to rest rather upon the Lord's resurrection than upon His death."⁵²⁰ Those who do know who Jesus Christ is, as long as they pray and "touch" God, will be saved even if they do not want to repent and believe, as Nee illustrated with a man who "prayed, and told the Lord that he did not want to repent and be saved," but still "cried to Him for help." By means of this cry, Nee affirmed that the man repented

⁵¹⁴ "The Blood can wash away my sins, but it cannot wash away my 'old man'" (pgs. 19-20, *The Normal Christian Life*, Watchman Nee).

⁵¹⁵ Pg. 40, *What Shall This Man Do?* Watchman Nee. The italics are found in the original.

⁵¹⁶ Pg. 34, *What Shall This Man Do?* Nee.

⁵¹⁷ Pg. 40, *What Shall This Man Do?* Nee.

⁵¹⁸ Pg. 41, *What Shall This Man Do?* Nee.

⁵¹⁹ Pg. 41, *What Shall This Man Do?* Nee.

⁵²⁰ Pg. 42, *What Shall This Man Do?* Nee.

even though he had said that he did not want to, “and he got up a saved man.”⁵²¹ After all, “salvation is not . . . a question of understanding or will . . . [i]t does not matter if a man wants or does not want to be saved, it does not matter if he understands or does not understand,” since the “basic condition of a sinner’s salvation is not belief or repentance,”⁵²² but mystically encountering the Deity with a “touch.” The “initial touch . . . saves the sinner” even without “the sinner’s understanding of . . . the Gospel.”⁵²³ Therefore, what the members of Nee’s denomination must do is “encourage every sinner to kneel down with an honest heart and pray,” and even “prayers which . . . are not uttered in the name of Jesus . . . God will hear”⁵²⁴ and save the lost, even if they do not know who Jesus is, know what the gospel is, and have no desire whatever to repent and believe in Him. In fact, even if people know and hate Jesus Christ they will be saved if they pray to God. Nee illustrates how a woman was allegedly saved who hated Jesus Christ and simply wanted to be happy, and so prayed and allegedly was born again:

A striking example of one who came to God without even wanting to be saved is afforded by the experience of an English lady . . . She flung herself down and said, “O God, I have everything I want, wealth, popularity, beauty, youth—and yet I am absolutely miserable and unsatisfied. Christians would tell me that this is a proof that the world is empty and hollow, and that Jesus could save me and give me peace and joy and satisfaction. But I don’t want the satisfaction that He could give. I don’t want to be saved. I hate You and I hate Your peace and joy. But, O God, give me what I don’t want, and if You can, make me happy!” . . . [S]he got up from her knees a saved woman[.]⁵²⁵

After all, since Romans 10:13 says that “whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved,”⁵²⁶ therefore “[l]et there be but a cry from the heart to God, and *at that moment* the Spirit will enter” and save the sinner, whether he knows who Jesus Christ is or not, and even if he hates Jesus Christ and hates the salvation He offers. Witness Lee understood Nee’s point very well:

We have seen that to reach the unbelievers, no preaching is necessary. If we help them say ‘O Lord’ three times, they will be saved. If they open the window, the air will get in. All they have to do is to open their mouths and say, ‘O Lord, O Lord.’ Even if they have no intention of believing,

⁵²¹ Pg. 36, *What Shall This Man Do?* Nee.

⁵²² Pg. 42-3, *What Shall This Man Do?* Nee.

⁵²³ Pg. 44, *What Shall This Man Do?* Nee.

⁵²⁴ Pg. 44, *What Shall This Man Do?* Nee.

⁵²⁵ Pg. 44, *What Shall This Man Do?* Nee.

⁵²⁶ Nee and Lee’s denomination take the error of the modern “sinner’s prayer” methodology to its logical conclusion—the Church of the Recovery teaches that anyone who says the sinner’s prayer—or even just the words “O Lord” three times—really is going to heaven, whether or not he understands the gospel, since Romans 10:13, which in fact is not a verse about obtaining justification at all (cf. “An Exegesis and Application of Romans 10:9-14 for Soulwinning Churches and Christians,” by Thomas Ross, <http://faithsaves.net>), but about the prayers of the already justified, as Romans 10:14 proves, does say “whosoever shall call” receives the salvation mentioned, without any of the limitations that the large majority of evangelicals and fundamentalists who misinterpret the verse in evangelism employ to safeguard justification by repentant faith alone (cf. pg. 179, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear, etc.)

still they will be caught! Regardless of whether they have the intention or not, as long as they open the window, the air will get in. It is not a matter of teaching; it is a matter of touching the seven Spirits of God.⁵²⁷

By methodology of this sort, Nee personally led to salvation “many” who “did not in the first place repent or believe, or consciously desire to be saved.” Those “who won’t repent . . . who cannot believe . . . who have no desire for salvation . . . who are confused and cannot understand the Gospel . . . and who understand but will not acknowledge the claim of God upon them . . . *many* of them have been saved on the spot,”⁵²⁸ Nee testified, by saying the magic incantation. Nee’s disciples followed their leader’s example and led countless others to say the sinner’s prayer and experience the mystical “touch,” and so filled up their denomination with the unconverted children of hell and wrath who were utterly destitute of the new birth. However, Nee taught that the power of the sinner’s prayer went even beyond saving those who hated God, those who knew nothing of Jesus Christ, those who had no desire to repent or believe, and those who hated the Son of God and the Gospel. Even atheists can be saved by saying the sinner’s prayer: “[T]hose who do not believe there is a God at all . . . do not need first to substitute theism for atheism. They can be saved *as they are*, even without any belief in God at all.”⁵²⁹ It is not surprising that Nee’s disciples claim that the true way of “salvation . . . never became adequately clear to the Chinese Christians until Watchman Nee’s ministry was raised up.”⁵³⁰ Following just the Bible alone, without the writings of Watchman Nee, who would ever have guessed the true way of salvation—one that comes by means of an omnipotent sinner’s prayer, rather than by faith in the Omnipotent God and the cross of His Son Jesus Christ?

Nee also adopted other very serious heresies, errors, and bizarre beliefs. For example, he promoted the error of the Gap Theory instead of the truth of a literal six day recent creation of all things.⁵³¹ Examples of the bizarre include Nee’s affirmation that “we may not rate Adam’s power as being a *billion* times over ours, [but] we can nevertheless safely reckon it to be a *million* times over ours,”⁵³² from which he

⁵²⁷ Witness Lee, Stream Magazine, VIII: 1, Feb 1, 1970, 6, cited <http://www.bcbsr.com/topics/lc.html>.

⁵²⁸ Pg. 47, *What Shall This Man Do?* Nee. Italics in original.

⁵²⁹ Pg. 47, *What Shall This Man Do?* Nee. Italics in original.

⁵³⁰ Pg. 273, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee.

⁵³¹ “In the beginning God created a perfect heaven and earth. Later on—we do not know how long afterwards—the original beautiful earth became waste and void. However, God rose up and remade the world,” after destroying an entire “preadamic race” (pgs. 18, 34, cf. pgs. 4-39, *The Mystery of Creation*, Watchman Nee. New York, NY: Christian Fellowship Publishers, 1981). In *The Mystery of Creation*, Nee repeatedly quotes and follows pre-Adamite men advocate and partial Rapturist G. H. Pember, author of *Earth’s Earliest Ages* (as Nee does elsewhere also, e. g., pgs. 29-30, *The Latent Power of the Soul*, Nee).

⁵³² Pg. 15, *The Latent Power of the Soul*, Nee.

concluded, in connection with the adoption of the “soul-force” concept of Jessie Penn-Lewis,⁵³³ that people today can exercise the soul-force that is latent and “frozen” in their bodies to do what is a million times over regular human ability, make sick people well, make healthy people sick, predict the future, read other people’s minds, know great political events weeks and months before they come to pass so that newspapers are unnecessary, see, hear, and smell things thousands of miles away, penetrate all physical barriers, accelerate the growth of plants and quench fire, overturn governments, make physical objects come to them, materialize to distant people in a spiritual body that looks just like [one’s] physical body, walk over fire for long distances without being scorched, and perform countless other wonders, as the “soul power” is “an almost unlimited power.”⁵³⁴ Nee also adopted the curious notion that after the Millennium, in the eternal state, people will live on the “new earth . . . marry . . . and multiply as Adam did of old.”⁵³⁵ Nee’s errors seem to multiply without end, after the manner of his notion of what will take place in the eternal state on the new earth. Whether believers receive or reject his writings will determine to what extent his pernicious influence will continue to corrupt Christianity.

Applications from the Life and Teachings of Watchman Nee

The writings of Watchman Nee are extremely dangerous and unreliable. Those of Nee’s successor, Witness Lee, are even worse.⁵³⁶ Believers should be warned against

⁵³³ Compare *The Latent Power of the Soul*, Watchman Nee. (New York, NY: Christian Fellowship Publishers, 1972) with Penn-Lewis’ *Soul and Spirit*, which Nee frequently references and depends very heavily upon (cf. pgs. 25, 26, 27, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, etc.). Indeed, Nee’s book has far more quotations within it of Jessie Penn-Lewis than it does of the Bible.

Nee also, unsurprisingly, shares Penn-Lewis’s view of the impropriety of Christian use of soul-power, affirming the use of throne-power as the better alternative. Nee knew that a “preacher like Evan Roberts, God’s vessel in the Welsh Revival of 1904-5” knew how to have “his soul power . . . denied” to exercise throne-power instead (pg. 49, *The Latent Power of the Soul*, Nee).

⁵³⁴ Pgs. 19-25, 31, 38, 47-48, 58-59, 66, *The Latent Power of the Soul*, Nee.

⁵³⁵ Pgs. 235-236, *Come Lord Jesus*, Nee. Nee argued for this unscriptural notion from Exodus 20:6, the only verse he positively sets forth as proof for his position (he also argues against the obvious meaning of Matthew 22:30, employing a classical logical fallacy and some very faulty hermeneutics in his argument). Exodus 20:6 must bear the full weight of proof for the following affirmation: “Doubtless the inhabitants of the new earth will continue to be fruitful and to multiply” (pgs. 235-236, *Come Lord Jesus*, Nee). Such a verse for such a conclusion certainly fits into the category of both the curious and the bizarre.

⁵³⁶ In addition to expanding upon heresies already taught by Nee, Lee added his own distinctive contributions. For example: “Witness Lee demonstrates that the book of Revelation is a book of victory and that everything seen in it is considered by the Lord to have been accomplished already.” Even “the beast, the false prophet, death, and Hades [being cast] into the lake of fire (20:10, 14) . . . and the preparation of the holy city ‘as a bride adorned for her husband’ (21:2)” are descriptions of past events (“A

them, not encouraged to read them. They would be better used to kindle a fire in a wood stove than to kindle a fire for God in a believer's soul—and they have been an instrument to lead many to the everlasting fires of hell. Do you want your church to reject the true God and join a modalistic cult that denies the gospel, banishes believers to a Protestant purgatory, confuses and hinders Biblical sanctification, and rejects the study of Scripture for demonically produced mystical experiences? Then acquire Watchman Nee's writings and study them carefully, for by the study of his writings countless people have been brought into exactly this sort of apostasy. Vast numbers in China have rejected Christianity for the Church of the Recovery, and in the United States and elsewhere in the world the cult of Nee and Lee proselytizes by spreading the teachings and writings of their false prophets to as many in Christendom as show any interest. Is rejecting Jehovah for idolatry an intolerable and infinite evil? Then have nothing to do with Watchman Nee and Witness Lee, for they were not God's watchmen, nor true witnesses to Him.

Watchman Nee illustrates the danger of receiving teaching from women preachers. Since they are not God's plan, and the Bible indicates that women are more easily deceived by Satan (1 Timothy 2:14), it is not surprising that women preachers, whether Hannah W. Smith, Jessie Penn-Lewis, Madame Guyon, Mary B. Eddy, or Jezebel (Revelation 2:20) are often the devil's instrument to deceive mankind and to corrupt Divine truth. Nee should have learned his doctrine and practice through the faithful pulpit ministry of a sound Baptist church instead of sitting at the feet of unscriptural women preachers. Learn from Nee's bad example, obey Scripture on the qualifications of the pastoral office, and recognize how Nee's disobedient method of learning about God contributed to his being drowned in destruction and perdition.

Reject the false mysticism of the view of guidance advocated by Nee and Lee. God does truly guide His people today,⁵³⁷ but He does not do so through extrabiblical and mystical revelations. While God may, in His mercy, lead you into right paths despite adopting unbiblical views of guidance, you are in danger of making decisions that will harm the rest of your life on earth, and your reward for all eternity, if you trust in alleged personal revelations and other forms of leading that are not for today. Do not be a cessationist in theory who seeks Divine guidance the way a charismatic would.

Recognize the danger of Watchman Nee's cultic doctrine that one ought always to obey those in authority, even if they are wrong. Recognize also that Nee and Lee are also

Defense of Seventeen Quotations from the Ministry of Witness Lee," <http://www.lctestimony.org/Witness-Lee-Quotations.htm>).

⁵³⁷ *Steps for Guidance* by Peter Masters (London: Wakeman Trust, 1995) is a fine and balanced presentation of Biblical guidance.

promoting a cultic lie when they teach that God will not hold you accountable for what you do that is wrong if you are told to do so by authority. There is not the slightest doubt that the Holy One will hold you accountable. Many who have adopted this extremely dangerous error on authority have plumbed the depths of Satan. The unquestioning obedience Nee and Lee require of men belongs only to God and His Word, and absolute surrender to fallen men, to men who are still sinners, is a horrible recipe for the vilest sins. This teaching, on its own, is more than sufficient to prove that the Church of the Recovery is a cult, not a holy organization devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Rejoice in the pretribulational Rapture of all saints. If you are a true believer, Christ will keep you from the hour of temptation that will come on all the earth (Revelation 3:10). You do not need to worry that you will miss the Rapture to face the awful judgments of the Tribulation because you have not entered into the Higher Life or have failed to join Watchman Nee's religious organization. You certainly do not need to fear being cast into outer darkness or going to a Protestant purgatory to be tortured until you are somehow purified by suffering. No, the Lord Jesus has fully quaffed the cup of wrath for you, and there is no wrath left for you to endure. God has not appointed you to wrath, but to obtain salvation by your Lord, Jesus Christ, who died for you so that, whether alive or at rest with Him, you should live perpetually with Him (1 Thessalonians 5:9-10). Your Redeemer has perfectly accomplished His saving work (John 19:30), and His blood and righteousness have been applied to your account before God, giving you a perfect legal standing in His sight. The Father loves you, although a poor wretched worm, as He loves His incarnate Son (John 17:23). Soon your precious Jesus will return for you and bring you to a mansion He has been preparing for you (John 14:1-3). He has brought you into an unbreakable and unspeakably intimate union with Himself, and He will perfectly shield you from eschatological wrath and judgment, caring for you as a man cares for the apple of his eye. What a blessed comfort the truth of the pretribulational Rapture is! Do you long and look for the soon return of your blessed Savior? Then apply to your heart the words of the Apostle John: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:2-3).

Receive the true doctrine of your preconversion depravity and of your regenerated restoration. Before your conversion *you* were dead—not your spirit only, but your entire person in all your parts was separated from God. At the moment when you were supernaturally regenerated through the Almighty efficacy of the Spirit of God, *you* were made new in your entire being, body, soul, and spirit—your new birth was not limited to

the spirit. Be amazed at the extent of your inherited corruption; no part of you was exempt from the awful ravages of sin. Glory in the extent of your regeneration; no part of you is left unchanged and unrenewed by the Holy Ghost. For you who were formerly entirely in darkness, the Sun of righteousness has arisen with healing in His wings, His light leaving no part of you unaffected, and, through His continuing transforming power in progressive sanctification, shining more and more until the future day of your perfection in glory. How far superior is the Biblical doctrine of regeneration to the arrested and limited doctrine of Watchman Nee and Jessie Penn-Lewis, who would limit regeneration to the human spirit alone!

Reject with abhorrence the blasphemy of deification as nothing other than the repetition of the first lying hiss of the serpent, “ye shall be as gods” (Genesis 3:5). You never were God, you are not God now, and you never shall be God. If you think that you are God, you are an idolater, and you will curse your blasphemous folly for all eternity as you scream in everlasting punishment in the lake of fire. You will know, while you are being tormented with fire and brimstone, that you are not God. “Wilt thou yet say before him that slayeth thee, I am God? but thou shalt be a man, and no God, in the hand of him that slayeth thee. . . .They shall bring thee down to the pit” (Ezekiel 28:8-9). You will join Lucifer in being “brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit” (Isaiah 14:15). The more a Christian knows intellectually and experientially of his union with Christ, his glorious renewal into the moral likeness of the second Adam, and of the inestimable blessing of partaking of ever greater measures of the communicable Divine attributes, of God’s holiness, of His love, His faithfulness, His purity, His mercy, and all the rest, the more full he will grow of the deepest humility, and the more abominable the blasphemy of deification will appear to him. Those who believe that they become gods will join their god, Satan, in the lowest parts of hell, while believers will find it their ineffable blessedness to be conformed morally to Christ and to enjoy, to the uttermost extent possible for their finite beings, fellowship with Him and His glorious Divine presence. Choose, then, what you will have this day. Will it be deification and damnation, or Christ-likeness and heaven?

Rejoice in the Triune God, in the One who subsists eternally in the three eternal Persons of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Behold the beauty and glory of this Triune God, as revealed in Scripture, in His ontology and His economy. Entrust yourself fully to Him as your own Lord, God, and Savior, for He only is able to save you. His revelation of Himself in time is true—you can truly know the Father through the Son by the Spirit, for His economic manifestation provides real and substantial knowledge of His eternal being. Also, out of love for Him, reject the demonic deceit of modalism. The

modalistic god of the Church of the Recovery does not exist and so is incapable of saving you from your sin, answering your prayers, or doing anything at all—any confidence you place in such a deity is only confidence in the devils who are behind all idols. What is more, even if this modalistic god did exist, you could never learn anything about him from Scripture, as the Bible reveals a God who is a real Triunity—were modalism true, the “revelation” of Scripture would truly be a deception, and the god that was hidden behind his modalistic masks would remain actually unknown and unknowable. Only in the contradictory and confusing writings of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee could you hope to have any real knowledge of the modal deity hidden in the Bible—but since Nee and Lee contradict Scripture, God’s Word remains unshakably true, and the modalistic deity of Nee and Lee is nothing but a vanity among the almost innumerable vain idols of false religion.

While the “sinner’s prayer” practice of Nee and Lee is a terrible evil that produces countless unconverted people who have passed through the requisite ritual of saying a prayer and are in this manner prepared to join their religious organization, it is nonetheless consistent with the misinterpretation of Romans 10:9-14 adopted by many outside the Church of the Recovery cult who are less consistent in accepting the terrible fruits of their eisegesis. The more consistent one is with the “sinner’s prayer” gospel, the more people will be damned; the further one veers away from the “sinner’s prayer” gospel to the truth of justification received by the instrumentality of repentant faith alone, rather than faith and prayer together or faith mediated through prayer, the more people will come to true conversion and everlasting life. After all, if Romans 10:13 really is a statement explaining to the lost how they are to become Christians, then “whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” really does justify the Local Church doctrine that people who hate God, atheists, and whoever else can be manipulated into saying the magic prayer will be saved—are not they part of “whosoever”? And have they not “called” out in prayer—a hypocritical prayer rooted in a wicked heart, it is true, but is not the alleged promise truly to “whosoever shall call”? The qualifications made by many of those who are truly God’s people, and who thus hold to the true gospel along with a false view of Romans 10:9-14, are truly absent from the passage. The only truly safe route is a return to what the Apostle Paul really meant when he wrote Romans 10 by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The *confession* of Romans 10:9-10 is not the repetition of a sinner’s prayer, but public confession of Jesus Christ with one’s literal mouth before men (cf. Matthew 10:32), and it is not a prerequisite to justification but a mark of the regenerate, of those who will receive eschatological salvation (cf. Romans 5:9). “[W]ith the heart man believeth unto righteousness,” that is, instantly at the moment of saving

faith Christ's imputed righteousness is given, and then, after the moment of the new birth, "with the mouth confession is made unto salvation," that is, public testimony for Christ is made as an evidence of prior regeneration and a sign of certain future glorification or salvation. Consequently, "whosoever believeth" on Christ "shall not be ashamed" (Romans 10:11; Isaiah 28:16; 49:23), for all who simply trust in Christ will not be ashamed in the future day of judgment. Those who believe in Christ and are born again, and consequently confess Him publicly as a mark of their regenerate lifestyle, will all receive ultimate salvation, whether Jew or Gentile, for their new hearts will also lead them all to be calling on the Lord, regularly seeking God in prayer because of their renewed hearts (Romans 10:12), and all those who do such will also receive eschatological salvation (Romans 10:13). That is, those who love prayer and enter God's coming kingdom are those who are already born from above, and Romans 10:13 is a promise to such, not a promise to the unconverted that if they say and mean some special words they will be justified. As Joel 2:32 confirms, Romans 10:13 is not about the moment of justification or how to enter a justified state, but about the type of people who receive eschatological deliverance. Indeed, calling on the Lord, the prayer that is a mark of the regenerate, is impossible unless one has already exercised saving faith—people cannot call on the Lord until they have already believed (Romans 10:14).⁵³⁸ Scripture never promises that all who ask for salvation will be saved, nor that all who ask for it with certain added qualifications, such as "really meaning it" or other additions absent from Romans 10:13, will be saved. This fact explains the deafening silence of Christ and the Apostles in the Gospels and Acts about the "sinner's prayer" bringing justification. Rather, the entire Bible testifies that one who will in repentance believe on the crucified and risen Christ will be justified, regenerated, transformed, and ultimately glorified. Perhaps you are not as consistent as Watchman Nee and Witness Lee in your misinterpretation of Romans 10:13, so fewer people are eternally deluded and damned by you than were by them. However, if you hold to the modern misinterpretation that the passage is about the lost receiving justification by saying a sinner's prayer, it is time to abandon your eisegesis of the text. If the idea of presenting the gospel to the lost the way Christ and the Apostles did—not using Romans 10:13 and the "sinner's prayer" as the door into the kingdom of God—seems inconceivable to you, it is time to unlearn your false methodology and learn from Scripture how to properly counsel the unconverted and direct them to receive Christ by faith alone, rather than by saying and meaning the

⁵³⁸ For a detailed exposition of Romans 10:9-14 proving that the "sinner's prayer" to obtain justification is entirely absent from the passage, see "An Exegesis and Application of Romans 10:9-14 for Soulwinning Churches and Christians," Thomas Ross. Elec. acc. <http://faithsaves.net>.

sinner's prayer.⁵³⁹ Furthermore, if you are resting your hopes for eternal salvation upon the fact that you have prayed and meant a sinner's prayer or have asked Jesus to come into your heart, you will surely be damned unless you repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. If you are a true believer, you should neither place your confidence for assurance of salvation upon the fact that you have said a sinner's prayer nor doubt your salvation based on not saying a sinner's prayer. Repetition of such a prayer, or lack thereof, has nothing to do with assurance in the Bible. Rather, Biblical assurance comes from the objective promises of God to save those who come to Him (John 6:37), the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:16), and the evidences recorded in 1 John of the truly holy and spiritual life that are found in all genuine believers and in no others. The common misinterpretation of Romans 10:9-14 that makes the passage about the lost repeating a "sinner's prayer" to enter the kingdom of God has done tremendous damage to the cause of Christ by misleading many unconverted people and so keeping them from salvation while also leading many of the Savior's dear ones to doubt their salvation. The Church of the Recovery, by being more consistent in its abuse of Romans 10 and the "sinner's prayer" than the large majority of evangelicals and fundamentalists, has effectively set in relief the ravages wrought by this perversion of the gospel and made all the more clear the necessity for returning to the meaning intended by the Holy Ghost as understood by proper contextual and grammatical-historical interpretation of the chapter.

The abominable heresies of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee illustrate where the Keswick continuationism can lead—their cult is Keswick theology gone to seed. The rejection of grammatical-historical exegesis and literal interpretation for mystical and experiential hermeneutics fundamentally undergirds Keswick, Pentecostal, and Church of the Recovery doctrine; all these movements fall away, and classical orthodoxy on sanctification and other areas of Christianity is restored, when literal hermeneutics are reinstated and their implications rigorously applied. A proper recognition of *sola Scriptura*, and its robust application to all areas of theology, is the end of all continuationisms and Higher Life systems and the restoration of historic Baptist cessationism and spirituality. On the other hand, a failure to recognize the sole authority of Scripture and its corollary of literal hermeneutics allows the tares of all sorts of continuationism, Higher Life systems, mysticism, and fanaticism the soil they need to sprout and multiply. Some continuationists may end up in the Church of the Recovery

⁵³⁹ A helpful introduction to a more Biblical method of dealing with the lost is presented on pgs. 122-187 of *Today's Apostasy: How 'Decisionism' is Destroying our Churches*, Hymers & Cagan.

and others in the Word of Faith movement, but all end up in serious and deepening error, and the more consistently they employ their fundamental errors on authority and interpretation, the more error they descend into. For protection from sin and true holiness of life, it is essential that the truth of 2 Timothy 3:16-17 is recognized and embraced in all its implications, as enabled by the Holy Spirit: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

Did the Trinity Come 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, states, “‘New Testament research has been leading an increasing number of scholars to the conclusion that Jesus certainly never believed himself to be God.’—*Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*.”⁵⁴⁰ In fact, as “Yale University professor E. Washburn Hopkins affirmed: ‘To Jesus and Paul the doctrine of the trinity was apparently unknown; . . . they say nothing about it.’—*Origin and Evolution of Religion*.”⁵⁴¹ Why? “*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.’”⁵⁴² If, as Arians affirm, 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.’”⁵⁴³ In fact, these Unitarians affirm 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.’”⁵⁴⁴ 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 teach the doctrine of the

⁵⁴⁰ *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* pgs. 19, 20.

⁵⁴¹ *Should You Believe In the Trinity?* pg. 6.

⁵⁴² *Should You Believe In the Trinity?* pg. 6, in the section, “Is It Clearly a Bible Teaching?”

⁵⁴³ *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.

⁵⁴⁴ Pg. 11-12, *Should You Believe In the Trinity?*

trinity, but trinitarianism has its roots in paganism.”⁵⁴⁵ 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 another common anti-Trinitarian retort, 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 two objections are contradictory. 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 advance both allegations. For example, the Unitarian and modalist compositions quoted in the previous paragraph both employ the “the word ‘Trinity’ is not in the Bible” attack.⁵⁴⁶ 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 in *The Triune God of the Bible*,⁵⁴⁷ 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 some of the sources employed in the Watchtower’s *Should*

⁵⁴⁵ See *The Oneness of God*, David K. Bernard. Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, Chapter 11, sections “Pagan roots and parallels” and “Post-apostolic developments.”

⁵⁴⁶ ““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.”). Note, though, that the word “person” IS explicitly used of the Father as contrast with the Son, Heb 1:3! So this is a quibble about the “s” on “person(s)”!

⁵⁴⁷ see <http://faithalonesaves.googlepages.com/salvation>.

You Believe in the Trinity? quoted above will be evaluated as representative of much of the distortion and misinformation advanced in the anti-Trinitarian cause.

The Arian Watchtower Society, as referenced above, states, “‘New Testament research has been leading an increasing number of scholars to the conclusion that Jesus certainly never believed himself to be God.’ —Bulletin of the John Rylands Library.” The quote is prominently displayed in the exact middle of the page, set off in bold print within a special box.⁵⁴⁸ No author of the article, page number, or other information is provided. The quotation was deemed important enough to be made twice in this Arian publication, once in a special box on the side of a page highlighting its importance. One can with difficulty discover the very poorly referenced source of the quotation.⁵⁴⁹ Upon acquiring the periodical, one notices that the Watchtower left out, without any indication of the removal, the underlined words in the quotation: “New Testament research over, say, the last thirty or forty years has been leading an increasing number of reputable New Testament scholars to the conclusion that Jesus himself may not have claimed any of the Christological titles which the Gospels ascribe to him, not even the functional designation ‘Christ,’ and certainly never believed himself to be God.” The author of the article, G. H. Boobyer, is a radical Bible-rejector who denies that the Lord Jesus ever claimed to be the Christ, and thus rejected the idea of Scripture that He was God as well. While Boobyer will deny that Jesus is the Christ and that He is God, he will in his article reference the conclusion of another writer with approval that early “Christians might, in certain senses, have been willing to recognize the deity of the emperor.” Why such egregious misrepresentation of Boobyer’s claim—leaving out his claim that Jesus never said He was the Christ to quote only his rejection of the Scriptural testimony to His Deity? Is this the kind of “scholarship” that the Arians in the Watchtower society will employ—people

⁵⁴⁸ Pgs. 19, 20. *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* The second time, when not in a big, prominently displayed box, the quote reads, “The fact is that Jesus is not God and never claimed to be. This is being recognized by an increasing number of scholars. As the Rylands Bulletin states: ‘The fact has to be faced that New Testament research over, say, the last thirty or forty years has been leading an increasing number of reputable New Testament scholars to the conclusion that Jesus . . . certainly never believed himself to be God.’” Here, while the extremely misleading omission that this same article said Jesus never claimed to be the Messiah or Christ is retained, at least ellipses were included. It should be mentioned that someone who did not acquire the actual article would have no way of knowing that the two quotations are of the same sentence, since the first one is even more significantly corrupted and altered than the second quotation, and neither quote gives any information that makes it at all easy to determine the actual source of the quotation.

⁵⁴⁹ It is found in the article “‘Jesus As “Theos” In The New Testament,’ by G. H. Boobyer, *Bulletin of The John Rylands Library*, Vol. 50, (1967-68) pgs. 247-261.

who will say that Christians were willing to recognize the deity of the emperor, but will say that Jesus never said He was the Christ, and thus not God? And why will they rip the actual quotation of Boobyer into pieces, and leave out the parts that radically change his meaning?

The Watchtower also attempts to support its anti-Trinitarianism by affirming that “Yale University professor E. Washburn Hopkins affirmed: ‘To Jesus and Paul⁵⁵⁰ the doctrine of the trinity was apparently unknown; . . . they say nothing about it.’—*Origin and Evolution of Religion*. . . . [Therefore] the Christian Greek Scriptures provide . . . [no] teaching of the Trinity.”⁵⁵¹ Again, no publisher, page number, or other information is provided for the quotation. With considerable effort, one can discover the location of the quotation.⁵⁵² One begins to see why such incredibly poor citation of the source is made when one discovers that Hopkins, in the very sentence before the one reproduced by the Watchtower Society, states that “The beginning of the doctrine of the trinity appears already in John,” thus demonstrating that Hopkins recognized that Trinitarianism was found in the New Testament, and on the same page affirmed that “The early Church taught that Christ was the Logos and that the Logos was God,” while two pages after the quotation made by the Watchtower Hopkins affirms that “[T]he plain faith of the early church members . . . was just this and nothing more. Jesus is God. So proclaimed the first hymns, sung by the early Church.”⁵⁵³ Hopkins thus believed that early Christianity agreed with the New Testament in teaching the Deity of Jesus Christ. Of course, since these are exactly the opposite of the conclusion drawn by the Watchtower from its quotation from Hopkins’ book, it is clear why there was no great desire by this Arian organization for someone to look up the quotation and see what was on the very same

⁵⁵⁰ While Hopkins also said on the same page that the Watchtower took their quotation from that Paul did not specifically use the word *God* for Christ (an affirmation for which he provided no evidence, and which he is wrong about, Romans 9:5; Titus 2:13, etc.) and in his rejection of the inspiration of the Bible Hopkins claimed Paul confused Christ and the Holy Spirit, he nevertheless also stated that “Paul . . . applies to . . . Christ . . . words of the Old Testament used of God: ‘I am God and . . . unto me every knee shall bow’ (Is. 45:22, 23; Phil. 2:10),” an affirmation that modern Arians would generally be extremely uncomfortable with and one that is only consistent with a recognition of the absolute and full Deity of Christ.

⁵⁵¹ Pg. 6, *Should You Believe In the Trinity?*

⁵⁵² Pg. 336, *Origin and Evolution of Religion*, E. Washburn Hopkins. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1924.

⁵⁵³ Pg. 338, *ibid*.

page, and in the immediate context of the sentence from Hopkins so grossly taken out of context by the Watchtower.

In any case, Hopkins' book is not filled with Scriptural exegesis refuting the many passages in the gospels and Pauline epistles that teach Trinitarianism—nothing remotely like this is found anywhere in his book. Rather, Hopkins, because of his anti-Bible evolutionary philosophy, believed that the New Testament writings of the apostle John evolved a Trinitarianism that was not known to the Lord Jesus (who was not, Hopkins believed, the Son of God) or Paul (whose writings, Hopkins affirmed, were not inspired). Hopkins believed that “[e]very religion is a product of human evolution and has been conditioned by a social environment. Since man has developed from a state even lower than savagery and was once intellectually a mere animal, it is reasonable to attribute to him in that state no more religious consciousness than is possessed by an animal. What then, the historian must ask, are the factors and what the means whereby humanity has encased itself in this shell of religion, which almost everywhere has been raised as a protective growth about the social body? . . . [T]he principles of religion [are like the principles of human evolution]. . . . [Man] once had a brain like that of a fish, then like that of a reptile, and so on through the types of bird and marsupial, upward to the brain of the higher mammals. . . . Man then was not suddenly created.”⁵⁵⁴ From Hopkins' belief that all religion, including Christianity, is a mere product of evolution, like man himself, he describes what he believes is a progression from “the worship of stones, hills, trees, and plants” to “the worship of animals” to “the worship of elements and heavenly phenomena” to “the worship of the sun,” to the worship of man, of ancestors, and eventually the alleged evolutionary development of Christianity. From this evolutionary, atheistic viewpoint, Hopkins wrote:

Christianity . . . utilized . . . much pagan material . . . [such as] baptism . . . the hope of immortality and resurrection, miraculous cures [and] water turned into wine[.] . . . The religions of the divine Mother and of Mithra had already taught the doctrine of a redeeming god . . . man through the death and resurrection of the god became . . . a partaker also in the divine nature . . . the pagan gods were still remembered under a new form . . . [whether of] demons . . . [or] angels . . . to whom man still prayed. . . . It makes no difference whether union be felt with Brahma or God, with Vishnu Krishna or with Jesus Christ . . . the realization of

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Pgs. 1, 352, 353, *ibid.*

union, not the special object of faith, [is] what matters. . . . God is one with Vishnu . . . Christ and Buddha and Krishna represent the same idea . . . [When someone is] bowing down before Buddha . . . let us not cry out, “Ah, the wretched idolator!”

Hopkins’ presupposition that religion evolved and that Jesus Christ was not the Son of God led him to conclude that the “evolved” idea of the Trinity must have not been believed by this “Jesus” who was not God’s Son, that Paul only gradually evolved it, and that the apostle John and early Christianity then saw it evolve. Unless one accepts Hopkins’ evolutionary philosophy, the quotation made by the Watchtower from his book is worthless, as Hopkins assumes without any evidence or argument that the Lord Jesus saw Himself as simply a man, rather than as than God incarnate, equal to the Father and the Holy Spirit. The fact that even a radical religious skeptic and Christ-rejector like Hopkins admitted, in extremely close proximity to the sentence wrenched from its context by the Watchtower, that the New Testament teaches Trinitarianism and the earliest Christianity knew Jesus was God, illuminates the extremely deceitful manipulation of sources by the Arians in the Watchtower society.

The Watchtower also, as quoted above, wrote: “*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.”⁵⁵⁵ “LaCugna argues that early Christian history and dogma took an improper approach by defining God’s inner life, the self-relatedness of 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.”⁵⁵⁶ 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

⁵⁵⁵ “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 triumphantly. 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).

⁵⁵⁶ “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.

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.”⁵⁵⁷ 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.⁵⁵⁸ 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 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

⁵⁵⁷ Pg. 11-12, *Should You Believe In the Trinity?*

⁵⁵⁸ 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.

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.⁵⁵⁹

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."⁵⁶⁰ 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 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."⁵⁶¹ 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.

⁵⁵⁹ Pgs. 388, 389, 397, 401, 402, 407, 409, 413, 418, 420, 421, Norton, *ibid*.

⁵⁶⁰ Pgs. 5, 37, 40, 61-62, Norton, *ibid*.

⁵⁶¹ Pgs. 95-96, Norton, *ibid*.

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.”⁵⁶² 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 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.”⁵⁶³ Norton quotes Trinitarians who say that Platonic philosophy influenced early Christianity 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

⁵⁶² See pg. 100.

⁵⁶³ See pg. 100.

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 book⁵⁶⁴ 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.’”⁵⁶⁵ While the lack of context makes the quotation extremely difficult to trace,⁵⁶⁶ one can with great diligence discover that it comes from pg. 197 of the book in question, written by one Arthur Wiegall⁵⁶⁷ (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

⁵⁶⁴ See pgs. 3, 6, 11, *Should You Believe in the Trinity?*

⁵⁶⁵ *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).

⁵⁶⁶ 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 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.

⁵⁶⁷ Weigall 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.

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 undoubtedly 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. 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.”⁵⁶⁸

Weigall is obviously an irrational, Bible-hating wacko. He provides no documentation, no proof, nothing that even closely resembles a semblance at an argument for the claims in his book; they are nothing but the speculations and ridiculous accusations 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

⁵⁶⁸ 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.

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 regularly unreliable and untrustworthy, and they are all, in any case, false. 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 group⁵⁶⁹ 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.⁵⁷⁰ 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.⁵⁷¹

Similarly, Unitarians and modalists may affirm that Trinitarianism was derived from Plato or Platonic philosophy. They offer as proof for their contention extremely

⁵⁶⁹ cf. *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* pgs 2, 10

⁵⁷⁰ cf. *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* pgs. 11-12.

⁵⁷¹ 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.

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."

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.⁵⁷² Nor do the writings of Aristotle or other pre-Christian pagan philosophers. Similarities of language⁵⁷³ between post-Christian neo-Platonic philosophers and Christian Trinitarians

⁵⁷² 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

Platonism

Arianism

Trinitarianism

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.”

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.).

⁵⁷³ 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

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.⁵⁷⁴ 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 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.⁵⁷⁵ 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. . . .

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.

⁵⁷⁴ “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 τρεῖς 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.).

⁵⁷⁵ 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).

Kindred ideas are also found in Pythagoreanism.”⁵⁷⁶ “[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.”⁵⁷⁷ Modalism is a concept which mixes Christianity and paganism.

Similarly, “Arius . . . was following . . . a path inevitably traced for him by the Middle Platonist preconceptions he had inherited,”⁵⁷⁸ since “the impact of Platonism reveals itself in . . . thoroughgoing subordinationism.”⁵⁷⁹ The Arian view of the incarnation of Christ “took as its premis[e] [a] Platonic conception.”⁵⁸⁰

⁵⁷⁶ “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.”)

⁵⁷⁷ “Monarchianism,” *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, McClintock & Strong, vol. 6.

⁵⁷⁸ pg. 231, *Early Christian Doctrines*, J. N. D. Kelly. San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins, 1978 (5th rev. ed).

⁵⁷⁹ pg. 131, *Early Christian Doctrines*, Kelly. The quote specifically speaks of the theology of the heretic and (less radical, but still) Arian precursor, Origen.

⁵⁸⁰ pg. 281, *Early Christian Doctrines*, Kelly. Other heretics also adopted a Platonized view of the incarnation.

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.”⁵⁸¹ He writes, “Indeed heresies are themselves instigated by [pagan] philosophy.”⁵⁸² 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.”⁵⁸³ 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?”⁵⁸⁴ The evidence from patristic writers affirms that the doctrines of Arianism, Sabellianism, and other heresies were 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?

Representative Quotations from the Earliest Christian Writings— Are these men Trinitarians or Arians?

⁵⁸¹ 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.

⁵⁸² Chapter 7, *The Prescription Against Heretics*.

⁵⁸³ *Defence of the Nicene Definition (De Decretis)*, 28, 31.

⁵⁸⁴ *Exposition of the Christian Faith*, Ambrose. Book 1:13:85.

The allegation that Trinitarianism was invented in A. D. 325 at the Council of Nicea, or even later,⁵⁸⁵ is a historical monstrosity.⁵⁸⁶ The doctrine that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were equally God (contra Arianism), and yet were distinct Persons (contra Sabellianism), was believed and confessed by Christians from the time of the composition of the New Testament onwards. There are no Arian statements such as “the Son of God was created out of nothing” or “the Holy Spirit is an impersonal force.” While this composition is not a detailed history of doctrine or of ancient Christianity, and thus does not attempt to evaluate the whole of what any of the following writers believed, the following ten quotations (which could have been greatly multiplied) from contemporaries of the apostle John and those only decades after him—and far, far before the Council of Nicea—make it painfully obvious just how wrong such Arian and Sabellian corruptions of history are.⁵⁸⁷

Deity of the Son

⁵⁸⁵ In truly astounding opposition to the facts, the Watchtower Society writes, “If the Trinity is not a Biblical teaching, how did it become a doctrine of Christendom? Many think that it was formulated at the Council of Nicea in 325 C.E. That is not totally correct, however. The Council of Nicea . . . did not establish the Trinity . . . [n]one of the bishops at Nicea promoted a Trinity[.] . . . If a Trinity had been a clear Bible truth, should they not have proposed it at that time? . . . [At]the Council of Constantinople in 381 C.E. . . . [for] the first time, Christendom’s Trinity began to come into focus. Yet, even after the Council of Constantinople, the Trinity did not become a widely accepted creed. . . . It was only in later centuries that the Trinity was formulated into set creeds” (*Should You Believe in the Trinity?* pgs. 7-9).

⁵⁸⁶ “[T]he following particulars . . . which cannot be invalidated . . . prove conclusively that . . . [the] Ante-Nicene Fathers . . . held the same Trinitarianism with the Nicene and Post-Nicene divines. 1.) The Ante-Nicene Fathers employed the word *God* in the strict sense of signifying the Divine *substance*, and applied it to the Son in this sense. 2.) They admitted but one substance to be strictly Divine, and rejected with abhorrence the notion of inferior and secondary divinities. 3.) The confined worship to the one true God, and yet worshipped the Son. 4.) The attributed eternity, omnipotence, and uncreatedness to the Son, and held him to be the Creator and Preserver of the universe. 5.) Had the Ante-Nicene Fathers held that the Son was different from the Father in respect to substance, eternity, omnipotence, uncreatedness, [etc.], they would certainly have specified this difference in the Sabellian controversy; for this would have proved beyond all dispute that the Son and Father are not one Person or Hypostasis. But they never did” (pg. 153, William G. T. Shedd, *History of Christian Doctrine*, vol. 1, book III:2:3, elec. acc. AGES Digital Software).

⁵⁸⁷ Since only the testimony of self-professed Christians is included below, testimony to Christian Trinitarianism from non-Christian sources is not included below. Testimonies from Roman officials and other non-Christians is, however, fascinating, such as the letter of Pliny the Younger to the Roman emperor Trajan c. A. D. 112: “I ask them if they are Christians. If they admit this, I ask them the question again a second and third time, threatening them with the death sentence if they persist. . . . But they declared that their only crime or error was that they used to meet regularly before daybreak on an appointed day, and to sing a hymn to Christ as to God, and to bind themselves by an oath not to commit any crime, but to abstain from theft, robbery, adultery or breach of trust, and not to deny a deposit when this was required” (Pliny, *Letters* 10.96, in *The Letters of Pliny*, 2 vols., trans. William Melmoth. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1915, 2:403ff.).

Ignatius (died c. A. D. 100)	“I glorify Jesus Christ, the God who made you so wise” ⁵⁸⁸ (Smyrnaeans 1:1)
Ignatius (died c. A. D. 100)	“Jesus Christ our God” ⁵⁸⁹ (Ephesians 1:1)
Clement (c. A. D. 100-150) ⁵⁹⁰	“Brethren, we ought to conceive of Jesus Christ as of God, as the judge of the living and the dead.” (2 Clement 1:1) ⁵⁹¹
Justin Martyr (c. A. D. 100-165)	“Christ is called both God and Lord of hosts . . . reference is made . . . to Christ . . . [in] the Psalm[s] of David . . . [as] the God of Jacob . . . the Lord of hosts . . . the King of glory” (Dialogue with Trypho, 36) ⁵⁹²
Justin Martyr (c. A. D. 100-165)	He existed formerly as Son of the Maker of all things, being God, and was born a man by the Virgin. (Dialogue with Trypho, 48) ⁵⁹³
Justin Martyr (c. A. D. 100-165)	Now the Word of God is His Son[.] . . . From the writings of Moses also this will be manifest; for thus it is written in them, “And the [Messenger/Angel] of God spoke to Moses, in a flame of fire out of the bush, and said, I am that I am, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, the God of your fathers; go down into Egypt, and bring forth My people.” . . . [P]roving that Jesus the Christ is the Son of God and His Apostle, being of old the Word, and appearing sometimes in the form of fire, and sometimes in the likeness of angels; but now, by the will of God, having become man for the human race . . . [T]hey who affirm that the Son is the Father, are proved neither to have become acquainted with the Father, nor to know that the Father of the universe has a Son; who also, being the first-begotten Word of

⁵⁸⁸ Δοξάζω Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν τὸν θεὸν τὸν οὕτως ὑμᾶς σοφίσαντα.

⁵⁸⁹ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν.

⁵⁹⁰ If one wishes to maintain (as is likely) that 2 Clement was not written by that Clement of Rome who flourished c. A. D. 90-100, was the third pastor of the church at Rome, and composed 1 Clement, nevertheless “the controversies with which the writer deals are those of the early part of the 2nd century[.] . . . Internal evidence . . . assigns to the work a date not later than the 2nd century, and probably the first half of it” (“Clemens Romanus,” *A Dictionary of Early Christian Biography*, Henry Wace. elec. acc. *Accordance Bible Software*). “[If not by Clement of Rome himself, then it] appears to have been delivered about [A. D.] 140–50” (“Clement of Rome,” *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, gen. ed. J. D. Douglas. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1974. Elec. acc. *Accordance Bible Software*).

⁵⁹¹ Ἀδελφοί, οὕτως δεῖ ἡμᾶς φρονεῖν περὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὥς περὶ θεοῦ, ὥς περὶ κριτοῦ ζώντων καὶ νεκρῶν.

⁵⁹² καὶ Θεὸς καὶ Κύριος τῶν δυνάμεων ὁ Χριστὸς . . . εἰς τὸν Χριστὸν εἰρῆσθαι . . . Ἔστι δὲ ψαλμὸς τοῦ Δαβὶδ οὗτος . . . Θεοῦ Ἰακώβ . . . Κύριος τῶν δυνάμεων . . . Κύριος τῶν δυνάμεων . . . ὁ Βασιλεὺς τῆς δόξης.

⁵⁹³ προὔπηρχεν Υἱὸς τοῦ Ποιητοῦ τῶν ὅλων, Θεὸς ὢν, καὶ γεγέννηται ἄνθρωπος διὰ τῆς Παρθένου.

Martyrdom of Polycarp (c. A. D. 150)

Epistle to Diognatus (2nd century)

God, is even God. And of old He appeared in the shape of fire and in the likeness of an angel to Moses and to the other prophets; but now . . . having . . . become Man by a virgin, according to the counsel of the Father, for the salvation of those who believe on Him, He endured both to be set at nought and to suffer, that by dying and rising again He might conquer death. (Apology of Justin 1:63)⁵⁹⁴

[To] the Lord Jesus Christ . . . be the glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit forever and ever. (Martyrdom of Polycarp 22:3; cf. 14:3)⁵⁹⁵

On the contrary, the omnipotent Creator of all, the invisible God himself, established among men the truth and the holy, incomprehensible word from heaven. . . not, as one might imagine, by sending 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, fire, air, abyss, the things in the heights, the things in the depths, the

⁵⁹⁴ Ὁ Λόγος δὲ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐστὶν ὁ Υἱὸς αὐτοῦ[.] . . . Καὶ ἐκ τῶν τοῦ Μωσέως δὲ συγγραμμάτων φανερόν τοῦτο γενήσεται. Λέλεκται δὲ ἐν αὐτοῖς οὕτως· “Καὶ ἐλάλησε Μωϋσεὶ ἄγγελος Θεοῦ ἐν φλογὶ πυρὸς ἐκ τῆς βάτου, καὶ εἶπεν· Ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὢν, Θεὸς Ἀβραάμ, Θεὸς Ἰσαάκ, Θεὸς Ἰακώβ, ὁ Θεὸς τῶν πατέρων σου. κάτελθε εἰς Αἴγυπτον, καὶ ἐξάγαγε τὸν λαόν μου.” . . . Ἀλλ’ εἰς ἀπόδειξιν γεγονάσιν οἶδε οἱ λόγοι, ὅτι Υἱὸς Θεοῦ καὶ ἀπόστολος Ἰησοῦς ὁ Χριστὸς ἐστὶ, πρότερον Λόγος ὢν, καὶ ἐν ιδέᾳ πυρὸς ποτὲ φανείς, ποτὲ δὲ καὶ ἐν εἰκόνι ἀσωμάτων· νῦν δέ, διὰ θελήματος Θεοῦ ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἀνθρωπείου γένους ἄνθρωπος γενόμενος[.] . . . Οἱ γὰρ τὸν Υἱὸν Πατέρα φάσκοντες εἶναι ἐλέγχονται μήτε τὸν Πατέρα ἐπιστάμενοι, μηθ’ ὅτι ἐστὶν Υἱὸς τῷ Πατρὶ τῶν ὅλων γινώσκοντες· ὃς καὶ Λόγος πρωτότοκος ὢν τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ Θεὸς ὑπάρχει. Καὶ πρότερον διὰ τῆς τοῦ πυρὸς μορφῆς καὶ εἰκόνος ἀσωμάτου τῷ Μωϋσεὶ καὶ τοῖς ἐτέροις προφήταις ἐφάνη· νῦν δ’ . . . διὰ παρθένου ἄνθρωπος γενόμενος κατὰ τὴν τοῦ Πατρὸς βουλήν, ὑπὲρ σωτηρίας τῶν πιστευόντων αὐτῷ, καὶ ἐξουθενηθῆναι καὶ παθεῖν ὑπέμεινεν, ἵνα ἀποθανὼν καὶ ἀναστὰς νικήσῃ τὸν θάνατον. It should be noted that the references by Justin to Christ as Ἄγγελος refers to Him as the Messenger or Angel of Jehovah, the Old Testament Person who is so far from being a created being that He is Jehovah Himself. This is apparent to anyone who reads the context of Justin’s declarations.

⁵⁹⁵ ὁ κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς . . . ᾧ ἡ δόξα σὺν πατρὶ καὶ ἀγίῳ πνεύματι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων, ἀμήν.

Athenagoras (2nd century)

Irenaeus (c. A. D. 120-203)

things in between—this one he sent to them! . . . [H]e sent him in gentleness and meekness, as a king might send his son who is a king; he sent him as God; he sent him as a man to men. (Epistle to Diognetus 7:2,4)⁵⁹⁶

Who, then, would not be astonished to hear men who speak of God the Father, and of God the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and who declare both their power in union and their distinction in order, called atheists? (Plea for Christians, 10)⁵⁹⁷

Therefore neither would the Lord, nor the Holy Spirit, nor the apostles, have ever named as God, definitely and absolutely, him who was not God, unless he were truly God; nor would they have named any one in his own person Lord, except God the Father ruling over all, and His Son[.] . . . Since, therefore, the Father is truly Lord, and the Son truly Lord, the Holy Spirit has fitly designated them by the title of Lord. [When] the Scripture says, “Then the Lord [Jehovah] rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah fire and brimstone from the Lord out of heaven” [Genesis 19:24] . . . it here points out that the Son, who had also been talking with Abraham, had received power to judge the Sodomites for their wickedness. And this [text following] does declare the same truth: “Thy throne, O God; is for ever and ever; the scepter of Your kingdom is a right scepter. You have loved righteousness, and hated iniquity: therefore God, Your God, has anointed You.” For the Spirit designates both [of them] by the name, of God — both Him who is anointed as Son, and Him who does anoint, that is, the Father. . . . Therefore,

⁵⁹⁶ Diog. 7:2 ἀλλ’ αὐτὸς ἀληθῶς ὁ παντοκράτωρ καὶ παντοκτίστης καὶ ἀόρατος θεός, αὐτὸς ἀπ’ οὐρανῶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν καὶ τὸν λόγον τὸν ἅγιον καὶ ἀπερινόητον ἀνθρώποις ἐνίδρυσεν . . . οὐ καθάπερ ἂν τις εἰκάσειεν ἀνθρώποις ὑπηρετήν τινά πέμψας ἢ ἄγγελον ἢ ἄρχοντα ἢ τινὰ τῶν διεπόντων τὰ ἐπίγεια ἢ τινὰ τῶν πεπιστευμένων τὰς ἐν οὐρανοῖς διοικήσεις, ἀλλ’ αὐτὸν τὸν τεχνίτην καὶ δημιουργὸν τῶν ὅλων, ὃ τοὺς οὐρανούς ἐκτισεν, ὃ τὴν θάλασσαν ἰδίοις ὅροις ἐνέκλεισεν, οὗ τὰ μυστήρια πιστῶς πάντα φυλάσσει τὰ στοιχεῖα, παρ’ οὗ τὰ μέτρα τῶν τῆς ἡμέρας δρόμων ἡλῖος εἴληφε φυλάσσειν, ὃ πειθαρχεῖ σελήνῃ νυκτὶ φαίνειν κελεύοντι, ὃ πειθαρχεῖ τὰ ἄστρα τῷ τῆς σελήνης ἀκολουθοῦντα δρόμῳ, ὃ πάντα διατέτακται καὶ διώριστα καὶ ὑποτέτακται, οὐρανοὶ καὶ τὰ ἐν οὐρανοῖς, γῆ καὶ τὰ ἐν τῇ γῇ, θάλασσα καὶ τὰ ἐν τῇ θαλάσσῃ, πῦρ, ἀήρ, ἄβυσσος, τὰ ἐν ὕψει, τὰ ἐν βάθει, τὰ ἐν τῷ μεταξύ· τοῦτον πρὸς αὐτοὺς ἀπέστειλεν. . . . ἐν ἐπιεικείᾳ καὶ πραύτητι ὡς βασιλεὺς πέμπων υἱὸν βασιλέα ἔπεμψεν, ὡς θεὸν ἔπεμψεν, ὡς ἄνθρωπον πρὸς ἀνθρώπους ἔπεμψεν, ὡς σῶζων ἔπεμψεν, ὡς πείθων, οὐ βιαζόμενος· βία γὰρ οὐ πρόσσεστι τῷ θεῷ.

⁵⁹⁷ Τίς οὖν οὐκ ἂν ἀπορήσαι, λέγοντας Θεὸν Πατέρα καὶ Υἱὸν Θεὸν καὶ Πνεῦμα ἅγιον, δεικνύντας αὐτῶν καὶ τὴν ἐν τῇ ἐνώσει δύναμιν καὶ τὴν ἐν τῇ τάξει διαίρεσιν, ἀκούσας ἀθέους καλουμένους;

as I have already stated, no other is named as God, or is called Lord, except Him who is God and Lord of all, who also said to Moses, “I AM That I AM And thus shall you say to the children of Israel: He who is, has sent me to you;” and His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who makes those that believe in His name the sons of God. (Against Heresies, III:6:1-2)

The Trinitarian can agree with the earliest writers of Christianity: “[W]e confess . . . the Father of righteousness and temperance and the other virtues . . . [and] both Him, and the Son . . . and the prophetic Spirit, we worship and adore,⁵⁹⁸ knowing them in reason and truth, and declaring without grudging to every one who wishes to learn, as we have been taught” (Justin Martyr, *Apology* 1:6).⁵⁹⁹ The Arian and Sabellian cannot so confess, or so worship the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the one true God.⁶⁰⁰

⁵⁹⁸ Note also the composition “The Worship of the Son of God in Scripture and the Earliest Christianity” at <http://faithsaves.net>.

⁵⁹⁹ ὁμολογοῦμεν . . . πατὸς δικαιοσύνης καὶ σωφροσύνης, καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἀρετῶν. . . καὶ τὸν . . . Υἱὸν . . . καὶ τὸν . . . Πνεῦμά τε τὸ προφητικὸν σεβόμεθα, καὶ προσκυνούμεν, λόγῳ καὶ ἀληθείᾳ τιμῶντες, καὶ παντὶ βουλομένῳ μαθεῖν, ὡς ἐδιδάχθημεν, ἀφθόνως παραδιδόντες.

⁶⁰⁰ While this analysis did not especially focus upon the earliest patristic testimony to the Deity of the Spirit, it should be noted that “no apologetic writer of the second century spoke of the Spirit of God as one of the creatures” (pg. 49, *The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church*, Henry Barclay Swete. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1966 (reprint of 1912 ed).), but they did make statements such as “we acknowledge a God, and a Son his Logos, and a Holy Spirit, united in essence, — the Father, the Son, the Spirit” (Athenagoras, *Plea for Christians* 24; Ὡς γὰρ Θεὸν φαμεν, καὶ Υἱὸν τὸν Λόγον αὐτοῦ, καὶ Πνεῦμα ἅγιον, ἐνούμενα μὲν κατὰ δύναμιν, τὸν Πατέρα, τὸν Υἱόν, τὸ Πνεῦμα, ὅτι Νοῦς, Λόγος, Σοφία, Υἱὸς τοῦ Πατρός). The affirmation that the Father, Son, and Spirit are united in essence (or, more literally, equal or one in power) requires that they are the one true God.

Does the Son of God Receive Worship?

When Satan offered Christ the kingdoms of the whole world, saying, “All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me[,] [t]hen saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Matthew 4:9-10; cf. Luke 4:7-8). Worship is only to be directed to the true God, Jehovah. To worship any created being is abominable idolatry. An examination of the words for worship in the New Testament demonstrate that the Lord Jesus Christ received worship, just as the Father did. This is clear and powerful evidence for His true Deity.

Satan asked for Christ’s worship in Matthew 4:9-10 employing the standard Greek word for *worship*,⁶⁰¹ which appears 60 times⁶⁰² in the New Testament. His request was scornfully rejected, the Lord Jesus affirming that God is the One who deserves worship. The New Testament indicates that when people worshipped idols, God judged them severely (Acts 7:43), promising those who worship false gods the lake of fire (Revelation 14:9-11; 21:8). When Cornelius met the apostle Peter, “and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him[,] [then] Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man” (Acts 10:25-26). Peter did not receive worship—he was but a man, a created being. The apostle John, overwhelmed at the glory presented to him in the book of Revelation, records, “I John saw these things, and heard *them*. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See *thou do it* not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God. . . . I fell at [the] feet [of the angel that had given him the vision] to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God” (Revelation 22:8-9; 19:10).

⁶⁰¹ The verb προσκυνέω. καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ, Ταῦτα πάντα σοι δώσω, ἐὰν πεσὼν προσκυνήσῃς μοι. τότε λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Ὑπαγε, Σατανᾶ· γέγραπται γάρ, Κύριον τὸν Θεόν σου προσκυνήσεις, καὶ αὐτῷ μόνῳ λατρεύσεις (Matthew 4:9-10).

⁶⁰² The complete list of references is: Matthew 2:2, 8, 11; 4:9-10; 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 15:25; 18:26; 20:20; 28:9, 17; Mark 5:6; 15:19; Luke 4:7-8; 24:52; John 4:20-24; 9:38; 12:20; Acts 7:43; 8:27; 10:25; 24:11; 1Cor 14:25; Hebrews 1:6; 11:21; Revelation 3:9; 4:10; 5:14; 7:11; 9:20; 11:1, 16; 13:4, 8, 12, 15; 14:7, 9, 11; 15:4; 16:2; 19:4, 10, 20; 20:4; 22:8-9. It should be noted that while the English of the KJV may be confusing in Luke 14:10, no Greek word for the worship of God (προσκυνέω, λατρεύω, σέβω, etc.) is found in the passage; the verse simply states that the humble man will receive δόξα.

While worship of created beings is severely forbidden, both God and the particular Person of the Father receive worship: “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him” (John 4:23; cf. vv. 20-24).⁶⁰³ This word *worship* “[i]n the New Testament . . . is nowhere used but for that religious worship which is due to God alone. And when it is remembered of any that they did [*proskuneo*, worship] or perform the duty and homage unto any but God, it is remembered as idolatry.”⁶⁰⁴ In what should very

⁶⁰³ In John 12:20; Acts 24:11; 1 Corinthians 14:25; Hebrews 11:21, the true God, without further specification, receives worship. Matthew 18:26 also falls in the category of the worship of God, and specifically the Father, for although here the “master” in the Lord Jesus’ parable receives worship, he represents the “heavenly Father” (18:35) to whom sinners owe an immense sin debt greater than any possibility of payment (18:24). While Revelation 3:9 would be the best attempt to affirm that προσκυνέω does not necessarily refer to genuine worship peculiar to God alone in the New Testament, and the syntax of the verse is comparable to Luke 4:7 and Revelation 15:4 (cf. also Isaiah 45:14; 49:23; 60:14), a strong argument, it is possible that the verse speaks about the ungodly falling down to offer genuine worship to God “before,” that is, in the presence of, the church. The word “before” (ἐνώπιον) can “pertain to a position in front of an entity, before someone or something” or pertain “to being present or in view, in the sight of, in the presence of, among” someone or something (BDAG). Neither the first, nor especially the second of these common significations (which is found elsewhere in Revelation; cf. 7:11, 15; 13:13; 14:3, 10) for this preposition require that the church itself be the recipient of worship, rather than God in the presence of the assembly. On this view, “I will make them to come and worship before thy feet” (προσκυνήσωσιν ἐνώπιον τῶν ποδῶν σου) does not mean that the church itself received the worship, but that the ungodly will be compelled to come and worship God in the presence of these Christians in the eschatological judgment (Philippians 2:9-11) if they do not repent of their persecuting actions, fall down before them, and worship God in this life (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:24-25; cf. also the historical interaction of the church at Philadelphia with Judaism as recorded in Ignatius’ epistle to the Philadelphians 6:1; also note the different preposition in Revelation 22:8, where what is forbidden is John’s action when he ἔπεσα προσκυνῆσαι ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ποδῶν τοῦ ἀγγέλου.). Also compare Revelation 3:9 to 2 Kings 18:22 (LXX), καὶ ὅτι εἶπας πρὸς με ἐπὶ κύριον θεὸν πεποιθήμεν οὐχὶ αὐτὸς οὗτος οὗ ἄπεστησεν Εζεκιας τὰ ὑψηλὰ αὐτοῦ καὶ τὰ θυσιαστήρια αὐτοῦ καὶ εἶπεν τῷ Ιουδα καὶ τῇ Ιερουσαλημ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου τούτου προσκυνήσετε ἐν Ιερουσαλημ, “And whereas thou hast said to me, We trust on the Lord God: is not this he, whose high places and altars Ezekias has removed, and has said to Juda and Jerusalem, Ye shall *worship before this altar* in Jerusalem?” Here the altar is not worshipped, but God is “before” the altar. Just as “before” does not of itself necessitate that the church itself receives the worship, so the connection of “worship” and the “feet” in Revelation 3:9 does not require this position. In Psalm 98:5, LXX, “worship the footstool of His feet” does not mean that the footstool itself is worshipped, but God is worshipped at the place where His “feet” are (cf. Psalm 131:7, LXX); God, not the footstool for the feet, receives the worship. Similarly (although with a different preposition), when “Jacob . . . worshipped, *leaning* upon the top of his staff,” the word *leaning* is properly supplied, for the Greek προσεκύνησεν ἐπὶ τὸ ἄκρον τῆς ραβδου αὐτοῦ does not by any means signify that Jacob worshipped his staff.

The conclusion that the worship of Revelation 3:9 is directed to God in the presence of the church is syntactically defensible. Since Revelation 19:10; 22:9, specifically forbid worship (προσκυνέω) of the created order, and the command is given to only “worship God,” it would seem out of place to conclude that worship is given to humans in Revelation 3:9. Thus, the conclusion that 3:9 refers to the worship of God in the presence of the members of the church, thus vindicating their faith, is to be preferred, and no exception to the rule that worship with προσκυνέω is properly rendered to God alone is found in the New Testament.

⁶⁰⁴ John Owen, *Commentary on Hebrews*, note on Hebrews 1:6 (elec. acc. AGES Digital Software Library). Owen continues, “And unto this sense was it restrained of old by the Spartans, who denied that it

deeply trouble the Arian, the Lord Jesus Christ regularly receives worship in the New Testament. Indeed, references to the worship of Him outnumber references to the worship of the Father! Passages that specify the worship of Jesus Christ include:⁶⁰⁵

Matthew 2:2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to **worship** him.

Matt. 2:11 And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and **worshipped** him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

Matt. 8:2 And, behold, there came a leper and **worshipped** him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

Matt. 9:18 While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and **worshipped** him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live.

Matt. 15:25 Then came she and **worshipped** him, saying, Lord, help me.

Matt. 20:20 Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, **worshipping** him, and desiring a certain thing of him.

Matt. 28:9 And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and **worshipped** him.

Luke 24:52 And they **worshipped** him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy:

John 9:38 And he said, Lord, I believe. And he **worshipped** him.

Many individuals, and the disciples both before and after Christ's resurrection, worshipped Him. They did so because they recognized that, as true Son of the Father, He possessed the identical Divine nature, and was equal Deity to He who begat Him: "Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God" (Matthew 14:33). Nor can the disciples somehow all have been mistaken, and somehow worshipped the Lord Jesus over and over again by mistake, because He never rebuked them for their worship, but accepted it as entirely proper and appropriate to Him—which, had He not been true God, would have constituted a terrible sin (cf. Acts 10:25-26; Revelation 22:8-9). Furthermore, God the Father specifically commanded that His Son receive worship—indeed, all the angels⁶⁰⁶ were commanded to worship Jesus, even when He was still a baby in Mary's womb: "And again, when [the Father] bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him" (Hebrews 1:6; cf. Luke 2:12-15). Not only do believers on earth, and all the angels,

was ἐν νόμῳ, lawful for them ἄνθρωπον προσκυνεῖν, — that is, to fall down to or to adore a man, Herodot. in Polym." Thus, a restricted sense of προσκυνέω, affirming that it was not appropriate for mere humans, had a precedent in earlier Greek.

⁶⁰⁵ Note also Matthew 2:8; 28:17; Mark 5:6; 15:19; and the further passages mentioned below.

⁶⁰⁶ How the Lord Jesus Christ could be the angel Michael, as affirmed by the Watchtower, when Michael was, with all the other angels, worshipping Christ, is a great conundrum for defenders of the Watchtower heresy.

worship the Lord Jesus Christ, but worship of the Son, equal to the worship of the Father, will be the joy of the saints in heaven. As “all the angels stood round about the throne, and *about* the elders [representing believers] and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God” (Revelation 7:11; 11:16; 15:4; 19:4), and as believers “fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power” (Revelation 4:10-11), so do they offer the same worship to Christ. The apostle John seeing, in his vision of heaven, “in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders . . . a Lamb as it had been slain [Jesus Christ] . . . the elders [representing believers] fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints [prayer and worship offered to Christ, as to God]. 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; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. 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; 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. 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. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four *and* twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever” (Revelation 5:6-14). As believers fall down and worship God the Father, and offer Him praise and adoration (4:10-11), so do they fall down⁶⁰⁷ before (5:6, 8) and worship, pray to and praise, and adore the Son (5:8-14).⁶⁰⁸ Indeed, the entire created order, “every creature which is in

⁶⁰⁷ Furthermore, in the book of Revelation, to prostrate oneself or *fall down* (πίπτω) before a person is always connected to worship, yet both Father and Son are regularly fallen before and thus worshipped in the book (Revelation 1:17; 4:10; 5:8, 14; 7:11; 11:16; 19:4; contrast Revelation 19:10; 22:8; cf. Esther 3:5). This is consistent with the rest of the New Testament, where godly people only fall down before God—but regularly do so before the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 2:11; 4:9; 17:6; 18:26, 29; 26:39; Mark 5:22; 9:20; 14:35; Luke 5:12; 8:41; 17:16; John 11:32; 18:6; Acts 5:5, 10; 9:4; 10:25; 22:7; 1 Corinthians 14:25; Revelation 1:17; 4:10; 5:8, 14; 7:11; 11:16; 19:4, 10; 22:8).

⁶⁰⁸ Note that while Revelation identifies the true God, the sole fit object of worship, as the One who lives for ever and ever (ζάω + εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων; 4:9, 10; 5:14; 10:6; 15:7), the Son is the Living One who lives for ever and ever, employing the same Greek phrase (ὁ ζῶν . . . καὶ ἰδού, ζῶν εἰμὶ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων, ἀμήν. 1:18). Worship of He who lives for ever and ever is not only the worship of the Father, but also of the Son. Indeed, Revelation first identifies the Son as He who is

heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them,” ascribe equal “blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, [to] him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever” (5:13).⁶⁰⁹

In accordance with the fact that the New Testament restricts the proper use of the Greek verb *proskuneo*, to worship, to the true God, but nonetheless offers very numerous examples of worship of the Lord Jesus Christ, so the earliest patristic writers likewise restrict worship (*proskuneo*) to the true God, explicitly stating that no one and nothing else should receive worship.⁶¹⁰ God alone receives *worship*, while kings, magistrates, and similar lesser rulers, as created beings, receive simply *honor*.⁶¹¹ “Therefore I will rather honor the king, not, indeed, worshipping him, but praying for him. But God, the living and true God, I worship, knowing that the king is made by Him. You will say, then, to me, ‘Why do you not worship the king?’ Because he is not made to be worshipped, but to be revered with lawful honor, for he is not a god, but a man appointed by God, not to be worshipped, but to judge justly.”⁶¹² Nonetheless, the earliest

the Living One, the Possessor of self-existent life, before identifying the God whom all creation worships as He who possesses this attribute and title.

One should also note that the statement that the “elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints,” is not just an indication that the Son is the fit object of prayer, indicating His omniscience, omnipotence, and Deity, but also a very explicit statement of worship. This incense . . . [from the] golden censer . . . [was] offer[ed] . . . with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, *which came* with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God” (Revelation 8:3-4; cf. Psalm 141:1-2). The incense of prayer is offered to Christ, but it is offered to God, because Christ is God. The image comes from the altar of incense in the tabernacle, where the incense is offered “before the LORD” (Leviticus 4:7; 16:12; Deuteronomy 33:10; etc.). As the incense at the OT typical altar was offered to Jehovah, so the incense of prayer offered in the NT antitype to Christ is offered to Jehovah, for the Son is true God. As physical sacrifices under Moses were offered to God alone, so the spiritual sacrifice of prayer, being made to both Father and Son, is nonetheless made to only the true God.

⁶⁰⁹ It should be noted that the proof for the worship of Christ from the book of Revelation stands even independently of the question of the New Testament significance of προσκυνέω, λατρεύω, or any other individual Greek word. Even if one were to successfully demonstrate that none of the verbs ascribing worship to the Son were sufficient to establish the doctrine that He receives worship—which cannot be done—the variegated ascriptions of equal glory and honor to the Father and Son in Revelation would establish the propriety of the worship of Christ.

⁶¹⁰ 2 Clement 1:6; 3:1; Martyrdom of Polycarp 3:1; Diognetes 2:4-5; Athenagoras, Plea for the Christians 16; Theophilus of Antioch to Autolycus, 1:11; 2:35; etc. Dialogue with Trypho 52, 56 are not exceptions, for they clearly also speak of Christ as the object of worship in context.

⁶¹¹ Cf. also Athenagoras, Plea for Christians 16, for the worship/honor (προσκυνέω/θεραπεύω, τιμάω etc.) distinction, similar to the Biblical truth confirmed by a comparison of Romans 13:7 and Matthew 4:10; kings receive “honor,” God receives “worship.”

⁶¹² Theophilus of Antioch to Autolycus 1:11: οἰγαροῦν μᾶλλον τιμήσω τὸν βασιλέα, οὐ προσκυνῶν αὐτῷ, ἀλλὰ εὐχόμενος ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ. Θεῷ δὲ τῷ ὄντως Θεῷ καὶ ἀληθεῖ προσκυνῶ, εἰδὼς, ὅτι ὁ βασιλεὺς ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ γέγονεν. Ἐρεῖς οὖν μοι Διὰ τί οὐ προσκυνεῖς τὸν βασιλέα; Ὅτι οὐκ εἰς τὸ προσκυνεῖσθαι γέγονεν, ἀλλὰ εἰς τὸ τιμᾶσθαι τῇ νομίμῳ τιμῇ· θεὸς γὰρ οὐκ ἔστιν, ἀλλὰ ἄνθρωπος ὑπὸ Θεοῦ τεταγμένος, οὐκ εἰς τὸ προσκυνεῖσθαι, ἀλλὰ εἰς τὸ δικαίως κρίνειν.

Christian writings testify that worship is offered equally to the Father and the Son.

Consider the following examples:

- 1.) We will never be able either to abandon the Christ who suffered for the salvation of the whole world of those who are saved, the blameless on behalf of sinners, or to **worship** any one else. For this one, who is the Son of God, we **worship**, but the martyrs we love as disciples and imitators of the Lord, as they deserve, on account of their matchless devotion to their own King and Teacher. May we also become their partners and fellow-disciples! (Martyrdom of Polycarp 17:2-3)⁶¹³
- 2.) Whence to God alone we render **worship** . . . next to God, we **worship** and love the Word who is from the unbegotten and ineffable God, since also He became man for our sakes, that becoming a partaker of our sufferings, He might also bring us healing. (Apology of Justin 1:17; 2:13).⁶¹⁴
- 3.) “[W]e confess . . . the Father of righteousness and temperance and the other virtues . . . [and] both Him, and the Son . . . and the prophetic Spirit, we **worship** and adore,⁶¹⁵ knowing them in reason and truth, and declaring without grudging to

⁶¹³ ὅτι οὔτε τὸν Χριστὸν ποτε καταλιπεῖν δυνησόμεθα, τὸν ὑπὲρ τῆς τοῦ παντὸς κόσμου τῶν σωζομένων σωτηρίας παθόντα, ἄμωμον ὑπὲρ ἁμαρτωλῶν, οὔτε ἕτερόν τινα σέβεσθαι. τοῦτον μὲν γὰρ υἱὸν ὄντα τοῦ θεοῦ προσκυνούμεν, τοὺς δὲ μάρτυρας ὡς μαθητὰς καὶ μιμητὰς τοῦ κυρίου ἀγαπῶμεν ἀξίως ἕνεκεν εὐνοίας ἀνυπερβλήτου τῆς εἰς τὸν ἴδιον βασιλέα καὶ διδάσκαλον ὧν γένοιτο καὶ ἡμᾶς συγκοινωνοὺς τε καὶ συμμαθητὰς γενέσθαι.

⁶¹⁴ “Ὅθεν Θεὸν μὲν μόνον προσκυνούμεν . . . Τὸν γὰρ ἀπὸ ἀγεννήτου καὶ ἀρρήτου Θεοῦ Λόγον μετὰ τὸν Θεὸν προσκυνούμεν καὶ ἀγαπῶμεν, ἐπειδὴ καὶ δι’ ἡμᾶς ἄνθρωπος γέγονεν, ὅπως καὶ τῶν παθόντων ἡμετέρων συμμετοχὸς γενόμενος, καὶ ἴασιν ποιήσεται.

⁶¹⁵ The verb rendered “adore,” σέβω, is also used in the New Testament exclusively for the worship of God (or for the condemned worship of idolators who falsely believe they are worshipping God, cf. Acts 19:27—what is excluded is any use of σέβω in the New Testament for honor appropriate and Scripturally acceptable for created beings, for anyone less than the one true God), although, like λατρεύω, it is much less common than the standard verb προσκυνέω. The verb appears in Matthew 15:9; Mark 7:7; Acts 13:43, 50; 16:14; 17:4, 17; 18:7, 13; 19:27; ten NT uses. The closely related verb σεβάζομαι is found once (Romans 1:25). The worship or adoring reverence of σέβω emphasizes the ceremonial or ritual aspects of worship. This NT exclusivity of worship in of God is also maintained in the LXX in every instance, both in the canonical books (Joshua 4:24; 22:25; Job 1:9; Jonah 1:9; Isaiah 29:13; 66:14) and in later apocryphal additions (Joshua 24:33; 2 Maccabees 1:3; 3 Maccabees 3:4; 4 Maccabees 5:24; 8:14; Ode 7:33; Wisdom 15:6, 18; Jonah 1:9; Daniel 3:33, 90; 14:3-5, 23, 27), a total of 21 instances of the verb. Josephus expresses what appears to be the traditional Jewish view that “The first commandment teaches us that there is but one God, and that we ought to worship [σεβῶ] him only;—the second commands us not to make the image of any living creature to worship [προσκυνέω] it” (*Antiquities* 3:91; Διδάσκει μὲν οὖν ἡμᾶς ὁ πρῶτος λόγος ὅτι θεὸς ἐστὶν εἷς καὶ τοῦτον δεῖ σέβεσθαι μόνον ὁ δὲ δεῦτερος κελεύει μηδενὸς εἰκόνα ζῶου ποιήσαντας προσκυνεῖν). However, the New Testament does not contain a specific statement prohibiting the offering of σέβω to created beings, as it prohibits the worship of προσκυνέω and λατρεύω in Matthew 4:10; this can explain the use of the word in *Shepherd of Hermas* 4:10 (cf. Philo, *On the Special Laws* 4:33) for human reverence. Even without an explicit NT prohibition of offering σέβω to creatures, the standard early Christian attitude appears to follow the Jewish attitude expressed by Josephus in condemning as those “with whom we have nothing in common, since we know them to be atheists, atheists, impious, unrighteous, and sinful, [who are] confessors of Jesus in name only, instead of worshippers of Him” (*Dialogue with Trypho* 35; ὧν οὐδενὶ κοινωνοῦμεν, οἱ γνωρίζοντες ἀθέους καὶ ἀσεβεῖς καὶ ἀδίκους καὶ ἀνόμους αὐτοὺς ὑπάρχοντας, καὶ ἀντὶ τοῦ τὸν Ἰησοῦν σέβειν, ὀνόματι μόνον ὁμολογεῖν). In the New Testament (John 9:31), LXX, early patristics, Josephus, Philo, and extant OT and NT pseudepigrapha, the related word θεοσεβής is used like

every one who wishes to learn, as we have been taught” (Justin Martyr, *Apology* 1:6).⁶¹⁶

4.) You shall **worship** the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve. . . . [A]t the time of [Christ’s] birth, Magi who came from Arabia **worshipped** Him . . . Now this king Herod, at the time when the Magi came to him from Arabia, and said they knew from a star which appeared in the heavens that a King had been born in your country, and that they had come to **worship** Him, learned from the elders of your people that it was thus written regarding Bethlehem in the prophet: ‘And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the princes of Judah; for out of you shall go forth the leader who shall feed my people.’ Accordingly the Magi from Arabia came to Bethlehem and **worshipped** the Child, and presented Him with gifts, gold and frankincense, and myrrh; but returned not to Herod, being warned in a revelation after **worshipping** the Child in Bethlehem. . . . As soon as the Child was born [they] came to **worship** Him, for even at His birth He was in possession of His power. . . . Accordingly, when a star rose in heaven at the time of His birth, as is recorded in the memoirs of His apostles, the Magi from Arabia, recognizing the sign by this, came and **worshipped** Him. . . . And that Christ being Lord, and God the Son of God, and appearing formerly . . . in the glory of fire as at the bush . . . let all the angels of God **worship** Him (*Dialogue with Trypho* 103, 77-78, 106, 128, 130).⁶¹⁷

The earliest post-apostolic writings in the Christian realm perpetuated the New Testament practice of restricting worship (*proskuneo*) to the one true God—and they perpetuated the New Testament practice of worshipping the Lord Jesus Christ.⁶¹⁸ They thus clearly

σέβω of worship, adoration, and reverence for the true God, without the slightest hint of some sort of reference to a sort of respect for a quasi-deity, as Arians blasphemously make of the Lord Jesus. The like is true in the same cross-section of the New Testament and related literature for the words θεοσεβεία (1 Timothy 2:10), σεβάζομαι, etc.

⁶¹⁶ ὁμολογοῦμεν . . . πατὴρ δίκαιος ὁμολογῶν καὶ σωφροσύνης, καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἀρετῶν. . . καὶ τὸν . . . Υἱὸν . . . καὶ τὸν . . . Πνεῦμά τε τὸ προφητικὸν σεβόμεθα, καὶ προσκυνούμεν, λόγῳ καὶ ἀληθείᾳ τιμῶντες, καὶ παντὶ βουλομένῳ μαθεῖν, ὡς ἐδιδάχθημεν, ἀφθόνως παραδιδόντες.

⁶¹⁷ Κύριον τὸν Θεόν σου προσκυνήσεις, καὶ αὐτῷ μόνῳ λατρεύσεις. . . . Ἄμα γὰρ τῷ γεννηθῆναι αὐτόν, μάγοι, ἀπὸ Ἀραβίας παραγενόμενοι, προσεκύνησαν αὐτῷ . . . Καὶ γὰρ οὗτος ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἡρώδης, μαθὼν παρὰ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων τοῦ λαοῦ ὑμῶν, τότε ἐλθόντων πρὸς αὐτὸν τῶν ἀπὸ Ἀραβίας μάγων, καὶ εἰπόντων, ἐξ ἀστέρος τοῦ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ φανέντος ἐγνωκέναι ὅτι βασιλεὺς γεγένηται ἐν τῇ χώρᾳ ὑμῶν, καὶ ἤλθομεν προσκυνῆσαι αὐτόν καὶ ἐν Βηθλεὲμ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων εἰπόντων, ὅτι γέγραπται ἐν τῷ προφῆτῃ οὕτως: “Καὶ σὺ Βηθλεὲμ γῆ Ἰούδα, οὐδαμῶς ἐλαχίστη εἶ ἐν τοῖς ἡγεμόσιν Ἰούδα: ἐκ σοῦ γὰρ ἐξελεύσεται ἡγούμενος, ὅστις ποιμανεῖ τὸν λαόν μου.” Τῶν ἀπὸ Ἀραβίας οὖν μάγων ἐλθόντων εἰς Βηθλεὲμ, καὶ προσκυνησάντων τὸ παιδίον, καὶ προσενεγκάντων αὐτῷ δῶρα, χρυσόν, καὶ λίβανον καὶ σμύρναν, ἔπειτα κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν μετὰ τὸ προσκυνῆσαι τὸν παῖδα ἐν Βηθλεὲμ ἐκελεύσθησαν μὴ ἐπανελθεῖν πρὸς τὸν Ἡρώδη: . . . οἵτινες ἅμα τῷ γεννηθῆναι τὸ παιδίον, ἐλθόντες προσεκύνησαν αὐτῷ. Καὶ γὰρ γεννηθεὶς δύναμιν τὴν αὐτοῦ ἔσχε: . . . ὡς γέγραπται ἐν τοῖς ἀπομνημονεύμασι τῶν ἀποστόλων αὐτοῦ. οἱ ἀπὸ Ἀραβίας μάγοι ἐκ τούτου ἐπιγόντες, παρεγένοντο, καὶ προσεκύνησαν αὐτῷ. . . . Καὶ ὅτι Κύριος ὢν ὁ Χριστός, καὶ Θεὸς Θεοῦ Υἱὸς ὑπάρχων, καὶ δυνάμει φαινόμενος πρότερον . . . καὶ ἐν πυρὸς δόξῃ, ὡς ἐν τῇ βάτῳ πέφανται . . . προσκυνησάτωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες ἄγγελοι Θεοῦ.

⁶¹⁸ This was the received view for centuries, so that “the word *προσκυνεῖν* became consecrated to the highest Christian worship” (footnote #56, Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Holy Spirit, Against the Followers*

evidenced their belief in the plain teaching of the New Testament that Jesus Christ is God.⁶¹⁹

One notes that the service of God, employing the verb *latreuo* or the noun *latreia* also provides evidence for the Deity and worship of the Son of God in early Christianity. The Lord Jesus, in Matthew 4:10, affirmed, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve [*latreuo*],” thus indicating that a *latreuo* sort of service is peculiar to the true God only. Both this verb and its related noun in every instance in the New Testament refer to an act of service or worship done to one whom the worshipper recognizes as the true God.⁶²⁰ While within the New Testament itself these words are less common than *proskuneo*,⁶²¹ and are ascribed to God without distinction of Person, rather than to either the Father under that specific name⁶²² or indisputably ascribed to the Son as such (but note Revelation 22:3),⁶²³ within the canonical books of the Greek OT *latreuo*

of Macedonius, in *Church Fathers — The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series*, ed. Philip Schaff. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, elec. acc. *Accordance Bible Software*). Likewise, for centuries after the composition of the New Testament, Christianity accepted that “worship, then, which in Greek is called λατρεία, and in Latin *servitus* . . . is due to God only” (Augustine, *City of God*, 10:1). It is true that the so-called Seventh Ecumenical Council of A. D. 787 decreed, against the opponents of idolatry, that images were to receive προσκυνέω, while God alone λατρεύω, but this medieval distinction ran contrary to both the Bible and the practice of the earliest Christianity, and was simply a way to justify the developing apostasy and idolatry of the Catholicism of its day. It should be noted that there was a tremendous struggle, the iconoclastic controversy, even within the tremendous error of post-Constantinian Catholicism, over this acceptance of the worship (προσκυνέω) of anything lesser than God, and this grievous apostasy was never accepted by those adherents of true New Testament Christianity who lived in that day.

⁶¹⁹ This conclusion is not undermined by the fact that Greek literature before the New Testament and non-Christian contemporary writings employ προσκυνέω in a wider sense in which humans can receive it (e. g. LXX: Genesis 23:7; 2 Kings 2:15; Josephus, *Antiquities* 1:335; *War* 2:336). The evidence for the Deity of Christ from προσκυνέω is derived from the specific and restricted use of the word found in the inspired New Testament, which is corroborated by the earliest post-apostolic Christian testimony. What non-Christians worshipped, or how they used the word προσκυνέω, or the limits of meaning of the word in the *Koiné* in general, does not alter this testimony.

⁶²⁰ In other words, both words are used for the service of the true God in the great majority of instances (Matthew 4:10; Luke 1:74; 2:37; Acts 7:7; Romans 9:4, etc.) but they are also used for people who are deceived into thinking they are worshipping God when they are not (John 16:2) and for the worship of idols, which is condemned since such do not deserve *latreuo/latreia* (Acts 7:42). The words are never used in the New Testament for acts when the one offering the service recognizes the object of his *latreia* as less than God.

⁶²¹ The verb λατρεύω appears in 21 verses: Matthew 4:10; Luke 1:74; 2:37; 4:8; Acts 7:7, 42; 24:14; 26:7; 27:23; Romans 1:9, 25; Philippians 3:3; 2 Timothy 1:3; Hebrews 8:5; 9:9, 14; 10:2; 12:28; 13:10; Revelation 7:15; 22:3. The noun λατρεία appears in 5 verses, John 16:2; Romans 9:4; 12:1; Hebrews 9:1, 6.

⁶²² This is not to say that the Person of the Father is not worthy of λατρεύω/λατρεία (cf. Romans 1:9), but that it would be invalid to attempt to build some sort of pro-Arian argument from the lack of specific ascription of the verb or noun in connection with the word *Son*.

⁶²³ Does Revelation 22:3 specifically ascribe *latreuo* worship to the Son as well as the Father? Even apart from the question of the recipient of *latreuo* in Revelation 22:3, the fact that there is but one throne of God and the Lamb in Revelation 22:1, 3 conclusively demonstrates Christ’s Deity. The distinction between the Lamb as “in the midst” of the throne in Revelation 5:6 and the throne actually being His in Revelation

service is peculiar to one the worshipper recognizes as God in every clear instance in the text, out of 96 instances.⁶²⁴ However, the Greek LXX makes the Messiah the object of

22:1, 3 relates to the cessation of the mediatorial kingdom of the Son in history at the end of the Millennium. “When the last enemy is put down by our Lord [Jesus Christ] as the mediatorial king, when even death itself is abolished and complete harmony is established, then the purpose of 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 Corinthians 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’ (Revelation 22:3–5)” (“The Mediatorial Kingdom from the Acts Period to the eternal State,” Alva J. McClain. *Bibliotheca Sacra* 112:448 (Oct 1955), pg. 310). One notes also that there never is at any point in the book of Revelation a vision of two eternally different thrones, one allegedly ontologically superior throne for the Father and an ontologically inferior throne for the Son.

But in Revelation 22:3, in the clauses “the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him,” is the “him” served the Father only, or both the Father and Son together, on account of their unity of essence? In favor of the position that the one receiving *latreuō* in Revelation 22:3 is the Father, one notes that the ones offering the service/worship are His “servants” (δοῦλοι), and the saints are such “servants” of the Father in 7:3; 10:7; 11:18; 15:3; 19:2, 5; 22:6. The Father’s name is said to be on the forehead of believers in 7:3; 9:4; and 14:1, and His name is mentioned as well in 11:18; 13:6; 15:4; 16:9, supporting a similar conclusion in 22:3–4. The ungodly want to flee from the “face” (πρόσωπον) of the Father in Revelation 6:16, while the saints look upon the “face” of the One worshipped in 22:3–4. In Revelation 7:15, the only other *latreuō* passage in Revelation, the Father is the recipient of the service/worship (cf. the dynamic in 7:9–17).

However, the view that the object of *latreuō* service/worship in Revelation 22:3–4 is both Father and Son can point out that Revelation likewise refers to the “servants” of the Son (Revelation 2:20), to fleeing from His “face” in Revelation 20:11, and to Christ’s “name” (Revelation 19:12–13, 16)—indeed, the “name” of both Father and Son are placed upon the believer (Revelation 3:12). The averred plurality of God and the Lamb in 22:3 as the recipients of *latreuō* service with the singular direct object *him* (“the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him”) is paralleled to the plurality of the reign of God and Christ, but singularity in *he shall reign*, in Revelation 11:15 (“The kingdoms of this world are become *the kingdoms* of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.”).

Whether or not both Father and Son are specifically recognized as the recipients of *latreuō* in Revelation 22:3, the singularity of their eternal throne in 22:1–3 clearly demonstrates the Deity of both (note that Revelation 3:21 likewise affirms the thronal unity of Father and Son in Divinity, while the saints share in the mediatorial throne of Christ as glorified Man), and the book of Revelation elsewhere clearly ascribes the same titles, honor, and glory to both. If Revelation 22:3 refers to the *latreuō* service of both Father and Son, it provides another proof of the Deity of the Son. Even if the verse does not, *latreuō* worship of the Father in one verse does not exclude the worthiness of the Son for the same worship, any more than *proskuneō* worship of the Father in one passage (John 4:23) proves that the Son is unworthy of the like worship (Matthew 14:33). The One on the eternal and unshakeable Divine throne—who is Father and Son and Spirit—is worthy of all worship.

⁶²⁴ The complete list of references, totalling 97 when the Apocrypha is included, for λατρεύω is: Exodus 3:12; 4:23; 7:16, 26; 8:16; 9:1, 13; 10:3, 7–8, 11, 24, 26; 12:31; 20:5; 23:24–25; Leviticus 18:21; Numbers 16:9; Deuteronomy 4:19, 28; 5:9; 6:13; 7:4, 16; 8:19; 10:12, 20; 11:13, 16, 28; 12:2; 13:3, 7, 14; 17:3; 28:14, 36, 47–48; 29:17, 25; 30:17; 31:20; Joshua 22:5, 27; 23:7, 16; 24:2, 14–16, 18–22, 24, 29; Judges 2:11, 13, 19; 3:6–7; 10:6, 10, 13, 16; 2 Samuel 15:8; 2 Kings 17:12, 16, 33, 35; 21:21; 2 Chronicles 7:19; Ezekiel 20:32; Daniel 3:12, 14, 18, 95; 4:37; 6:17, 21, 27; 7:14; 1 Esdras 1:4; 4:54; Judith 3:8; 3 Maccabees 6:6; Ode 9:75; Sirach 4:14. For λατρεία, the complete list is: Exodus 12:25–26; 13:5; Joshua 22:27; 1 Chronicles 28:13; 1 Maccabees 1:43; 2:19, 22; 3 Maccabees 4:14, nine instances, five of them in the canonical OT books. The apparent exception in Deuteronomy 28:48 is a judgment upon the ungodly Israelites who are given up to worship false gods, including men who deify themselves (cf. Deuteronomy

latreuo service, affirming that the One “coming with the clouds of heaven as the Son of man . . . was given the dominion, and the honour, and the kingdom; and all nations, tribes, and languages, shall serve [*latreuo*] him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom shall not be destroyed” (Daniel 7:13-14).⁶²⁵

Similarly, the earliest post-Christian writings ascribe *latreuo* worship to the Son of God:

Therefore prepare for action and serve God in fear and truth, leaving behind the empty and meaningless talk and the error of the crowd, and believing in him who raised our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead and gave him glory and a throne at His right hand; to whom all things in heaven and on earth were subjected, whom every breathing creature serves [*latreuo*], who is coming as Judge of the living and the dead, for whose blood God will hold responsible those who disobey him. (*Polycarp to the Philippians* 2:1, c. A. D. 110-120)⁶²⁶

[B]ehold, one like the Son of man coming with the clouds of heaven; and He came to the Ancient of days, and stood before Him. And they who stood by brought Him near; and there were given Him power and kingly honor, and all nations of the earth by their families, and all glory, serve [*latreuo*] Him. And His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not be taken away; and His kingdom shall not be destroyed. (Dialogue with Trypo 31, c. A. D. 140-165)⁶²⁷

While the earliest Christian writings ascribe *latreuo* worship to the Lord Jesus Christ, they follow the New Testament in affirming that such worship befits only the true God, even affirming that offering the true God alone the worship of *proskuneo* and of *latreuo*

28:36, 64; Daniel 3:12-18); Esther 3:3-5), and in Numbers 16:9 λατρεύειν αὐτοῖς could be “to minister for them” rather than to directly offer them *latreuo*. However, it is true that the syntax of Numbers 16:9 is like that in Deuteronomy 28:14; Judges 2:19, the only other instances of λατρεύειν αὐτοῖς in the LXX, where it expresses a service of worship. Furthermore, in the indisputably non-canonical 3 Maccabees 4:14, λατρεία is used for torturous service to an idolatrous tyrant: ἀπογραφῆναι δὲ πᾶν τὸ φύλον ἐξ ὀνόματος οὐκ εἰς τὴν ἔμπροσθεν βραχεὶ προδεδηλωμένην τῶν ἔργων κατάπονον λατρείαν στρεβλωθέντας δὲ ταῖς παρηγγελμέναις αἰκίαις τὸ τέλος ἀφανίσαι μιᾷς ὑπὸ καιρὸν ἡμέρας.

The semantic range of λατρεύω/λατρεία in the wider *Koiné* does, of course, go beyond worship of the true God. Note, e. g., Philo, *On the Sacrifices of Abel and Cain* 84; *On the Special Laws* 2:167; 3:201, where it is used for of non-divine service, such as a servant gives a master, or a tooth to the one in whose mouth it is (yet note *On the Migration of Abraham* 132); or see *Sibylline Oracles* 2:31; 4:104; 11:64, 65; 13:94; Pseudo-Phocylides 121, 200.

⁶²⁵ ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ὡς υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου ἦρχετο . . . καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτῷ ἐξουσία καὶ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη τῆς γῆς κατὰ γένη καὶ πᾶσα δόξα αὐτῷ λατρεύουσα καὶ ἡ ἐξουσία αὐτοῦ ἐξουσία αἰώνιος ἥτις οὐ μὴ ἄρθῃ καὶ ἡ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ ἥτις οὐ μὴ φθαρῇ.

⁶²⁶ Διὸ ἀναζωσάμενοι τὰς ὀσφύας δουλεύσατε τῷ θεῷ ἐν φόβῳ καὶ ἀληθείᾳ, ἀπολιπόντες τὴν κενὴν ματαιολογίαν καὶ τὴν τῶν πολλῶν πλάνην, πιστεύσαντες εἰς τὸν ἐγείραντα τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν καὶ δόντα αὐτῷ δόξαν καὶ θρόνον ἐκ δεξιῶν αὐτοῦ· ᾧ ὑπετάγη τὰ πάντα ἐπουράνια καὶ ἐπίγεια, ᾧ πᾶσα πνοὴ λατρεύει, ὃς ἔρχεται κριτὴς ζώντων καὶ νεκρῶν, οὗ τὸ αἷμα ἐκζητήσει ὁ θεὸς ἀπὸ τῶν ἀπειθούντων αὐτῷ.

⁶²⁷ ἰδοὺ μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ὡς Υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου ἐρχόμενος· καὶ ἦλθεν ἔως τοῦ Παλαιοῦ τῶν ἡμερῶν, καὶ παρῆν ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ· καὶ οἱ παρεστηκότες προσήγαγον αὐτόν· καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτῷ ἐξουσία καὶ τιμὴ βασιλική, καὶ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη τῆς γῆς κατὰ γένη, καὶ πᾶσα δόξα λατρεύουσα. Καὶ ἡ ἐξουσία αὐτοῦ, ἐξουσία αἰώνιος, ἥτις οὐ μὴ ἄρθῃ· καὶ ἡ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ οὐ μὴ φθαρῇ. Note that reference is made to the ascription of *latreuo* worship/service to the Messiah in the Greek Old Testament in Daniel 7:13-14.

is part of the greatest of all commandments: “And that we ought to worship [*proskuneo*] God alone, He thus persuaded us: “The greatest commandment is, You shall worship [*proskuneo*] the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve [*latreuo*], with all your heart, and with all your strength, the Lord God that made you” (*Apology of Justin* 1:16; cf. *Dialogue with Trypho* 103; 125; *Theophilus of Antioch to Autolycus* 2:34-35; 3:9).⁶²⁸

Jehovah states, “my glory will I not give unto another” (Isaiah 42:8; 48:11)—yet He commands that His Son be worshipped as He is. This is the practice of the New Testament and the earliest Christianity. Indeed, “all *men* should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him” (John 5:23). Why? The Lord Jesus is true God, absolutely equal in nature to His Father.

⁶²⁸ Ὡς δὲ καὶ τὸν Θεὸν μόνον δεῖ προσκυνεῖν, οὕτως ἔπεισεν, εἰπὼν· “Μεγίστη ἐντολὴ ἐστὶ· Κύριον τὸν Θεόν σου προσκυνήσεις, καὶ αὐτῷ μόνῳ λατρεύσεις ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας σου, καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ἰσχύος σου, Κύριον τὸν Θεὸν τὸν ποιήσαντά σε.”

Should You Believe in the Trinity?

(*Watchtower Magazine*, 1989)

WARNING: THE WORK BELOW IS A CULT PAMPHLET FILLED WITH SCRIPTURE-TWISTING AND LIES.

DO YOU believe in the Trinity? Most people in Christendom do. After all, it has been the central doctrine of the churches for centuries.

In view of this, you would think that there could be no question about it. But there is, and lately even some of its supporters have added fuel to the controversy.

Why should a subject like this be of any more than passing interest? Because Jesus himself said: "Eternal life is this: to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." So our entire future hinges on our knowing the true nature of God, and that means getting to the root of the Trinity controversy. Therefore, why not examine it for yourself?—[John 17:3](#), Catholic *Jerusalem Bible* (JB).

Various Trinitarian concepts exist. But generally the Trinity teaching is that in the Godhead there are three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; yet, together they are but one God. The doctrine says that the three are coequal, almighty, and uncreated, having existed eternally in the Godhead.

Others, however, say that the Trinity doctrine is false, that Almighty God stands alone as a separate, eternal, and all-powerful being. They say that Jesus in his prehuman existence was, like the angels, a separate spirit person created by God, and for this reason he must have had a beginning. They teach that Jesus has never been Almighty God's equal in any sense; he has always been subject to God and still is. They also believe that the holy ghost is not a person but God's spirit, his active force.

Supporters of the Trinity say that it is founded not only on religious tradition but also on the Bible. Critics of the doctrine say that it is not a Bible teaching, one history source even declaring: "The origin of the [Trinity] is entirely pagan."—*The Paganism in Our Christianity*.

If the Trinity is true, it is degrading to Jesus to say that he was never equal to God as part of a Godhead. But if the Trinity is false, it is degrading to Almighty God to call anyone his equal, and even worse to call Mary the "Mother of God." If the Trinity is false, it dishonors God to say, as noted in the book *Catholicism*: "Unless [people] keep this Faith

whole and undefiled, without doubt [they] shall perish everlastingly. And the Catholic Faith is this: we worship one God in Trinity."

There are good reasons, then, why you should want to know the truth about the Trinity. But before examining its origin and its claim of truthfulness, it would be helpful to define this doctrine more specifically. What, exactly, is the Trinity? How do supporters of it explain it?

How is the Trinity Explained?

THE Roman Catholic Church states: "The Trinity is the term employed to signify the central doctrine of the Christian religion . . . Thus, in the words of the Athanasian Creed: 'the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, and yet there are not three Gods but one God.' In this Trinity . . . the Persons are co-eternal and co-equal: all alike are uncreated and omnipotent."—*The Catholic Encyclopedia*.

Nearly all other churches in Christendom agree. For example, the Greek Orthodox Church also calls the Trinity "the fundamental doctrine of Christianity," even saying: "Christians are those who accept Christ as God." In the book *Our Orthodox Christian Faith*, the same church declares: "God is triune. . . . The Father is totally God. The Son is totally God. The Holy Spirit is totally God."

Thus, the Trinity is considered to be "one God in three Persons." Each is said to be without beginning, having existed for eternity. Each is said to be almighty, with each neither greater nor lesser than the others.

Is such reasoning hard to follow? Many sincere believers have found it to be confusing, contrary to normal reason, unlike anything in their experience. How, they ask, could the Father be God, Jesus be God, and the holy spirit be God, yet there be not three Gods but only one God?

“Beyond the Grasp of Human Reason”

THIS confusion is widespread. *The Encyclopedia Americana* notes that the doctrine of the Trinity is considered to be "beyond the grasp of human reason."

Many who accept the Trinity view it that same way. Monsignor Eugene Clark says: "God is one, and God is three. Since there is nothing like this in creation, we cannot understand it, but only accept it." Cardinal John O'Connor states: "We know that it is a very profound mystery, which we don't begin to understand." And Pope John Paul II speaks of "the inscrutable mystery of God the Trinity."

Thus, *A Dictionary of Religious Knowledge* says: "Precisely what that doctrine is, or rather precisely how it is to be explained, Trinitarians are not agreed among themselves."

The disciples of Jesus were the humble common people, not the religious leaders

We can understand, then, why the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* observes: "There are few teachers of Trinitarian theology in Roman Catholic seminaries who have not been badgered at one time or another by the question, 'But how does one preach the

Trinity?' And if the question is symptomatic of confusion on the part of the students, perhaps it is no less symptomatic of similar confusion on the part of their professors."

The truth of that observation can be verified by going to a library and examining books that support the Trinity. Countless pages have been written attempting to explain it. Yet, after struggling through the labyrinth of confusing theological terms and explanations, investigators still come away unsatisfied.

In this regard, Jesuit Joseph Bracken observes in his book *What Are They Saying About the Trinity?*: "Priests who with considerable effort learned . . . the Trinity during their seminary years naturally hesitated to present it to their people from the pulpit, even on Trinity Sunday. . . . Why should one bore people with something that in the end they wouldn't properly understand anyway?" He also says: "The Trinity is a matter of formal belief, but it has little or no [effect] in day-to-day Christian life and worship." Yet, it is "the central doctrine" of the churches!

Catholic theologian Hans Küng observes in his book *Christianity and the World Religions* that the Trinity is one reason why the churches have been unable to make any significant headway with non-Christian peoples. He states: "Even well-informed Muslims simply cannot follow, as the Jews thus far have likewise failed to grasp, the idea of the Trinity. . . . The *distinctions* made by the doctrine of the Trinity between one God and three hypostases do not satisfy Muslims, who are confused, rather than enlightened, by theological terms derived from Syriac, Greek, and Latin. Muslims find it all a word game. . . . Why should anyone want to add anything to the notion of God's oneness and uniqueness that can only dilute or nullify that oneness and uniqueness?"

"Not a God of Confusion"

HOW could such a confusing doctrine originate? *The Catholic Encyclopedia* claims: "A dogma so mysterious presupposes a Divine revelation." Catholic scholars Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler state in their *Theological Dictionary*: "The Trinity is a mystery . . . in the strict sense . . . , which could not be known without revelation, and even after revelation cannot become wholly intelligible."

However, contending that since the Trinity is such a confusing mystery, it must have come from divine revelation creates another major problem. Why? Because divine revelation itself does not allow for such a view of God: "God is not a God of confusion."—[1 Corinthians 14:33](#), *Revised Standard Version (RS)*.

In view of that statement, would God be responsible for a doctrine about himself that is so confusing that even Hebrew, Greek, and Latin scholars cannot really explain it?

Furthermore, do people have to be theologians 'to know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent'? ([John 17:3](#), *JB*) If that were the case, why did so few of the educated Jewish religious leaders recognize Jesus as the Messiah? His faithful disciples were, instead, humble farmers, fishermen, tax collectors, housewives. Those common people were so certain of what Jesus taught about God that they could teach it to others and were even willing to die for their belief.—[Matthew 15:1-9](#); [21:23-32](#), [43](#); [23:13-36](#); [John 7:45-49](#); [Acts 4:13](#).

Is it Clearly in the Bible?

IF THE Trinity were true, it should be clearly and consistently presented in the Bible. Why? Because, as the apostles affirmed, the Bible is God's revelation of himself to mankind. And since we need to know God to worship him acceptably, the Bible should be clear in telling us just who he is.

First-century believers accepted the Scriptures as the authentic revelation of God. It was the basis for their beliefs, the final authority. For example, when the apostle Paul preached to people in the city of Beroea, "they received the word with the greatest eagerness of mind, carefully examining the Scriptures daily as to whether these things were so."—[Acts 17:10, 11](#).

What did prominent men of God at that time use as their authority? [Acts 17:2, 3](#) tells us: "According to Paul's custom . . . he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving by references [from the Scriptures]."

Jesus himself set the example in using the Scriptures as the basis for his teaching, repeatedly saying: "It is written." "He interpreted to them things pertaining to himself in all the Scriptures."—[Matthew 4:4, 7](#); [Luke 24:27](#).

Thus Jesus, Paul, and first-century believers used the Scriptures as the foundation for their teaching. They knew that "all Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial for teaching, for reproving, for setting things straight, for disciplining in righteousness, that the man of God may be fully competent, completely equipped for every good work."—[2 Timothy 3:16, 17](#); see also [1 Corinthians 4:6](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:13](#); [2 Peter 1:20, 21](#).

Since the Bible can 'set things straight,' it should clearly reveal information about a matter as fundamental as the Trinity is claimed to be. But do theologians and historians themselves say that it is clearly a Bible teaching?

“Trinity” in the Bible?

A PROTESTANT publication states: "The word Trinity is not found in the Bible . . . It did not find a place formally in the theology of the church till the 4th century." (*The Illustrated Bible Dictionary*) And a Catholic authority says that the Trinity "is not . . . directly and immediately [the] word of God."—*New Catholic Encyclopedia*.

The Catholic Encyclopedia also comments: "In Scripture there is as yet no single term by which the Three Divine Persons are denoted together. The word ^{τριάς} [tri'as] (of which the Latin *trinitas* is a translation) is first found in Theophilus of Antioch about A. D. 180. . . . Shortly afterwards it appears in its Latin form of *trinitas* in Tertullian."

However, this is no proof in itself that Tertullian taught the Trinity. The Catholic work *Trinitas—A Theological Encyclopedia of the Holy Trinity*, for example, notes that some of Tertullian's words were later used by others to describe the Trinity. Then it cautions: "But hasty conclusions cannot be drawn from usage, for he does not apply the words to Trinitarian theology."

Testimony of the Hebrew Scriptures

WHILE the word "Trinity" is not found in the Bible, is at least the *idea* of the Trinity taught clearly in it? For instance, what do the Hebrew Scriptures ("Old Testament") reveal?

The Encyclopedia of Religion admits: "Theologians today are in agreement that the Hebrew Bible does not contain a doctrine of the Trinity." And the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* also says: "The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is not taught in the O[ld] T[estament]."

Similarly, in his book *The Triune God*, Jesuit Edmund Fortman admits: "The Old Testament . . . tells us nothing explicitly or by necessary implication of a Triune God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. . . . *There is no evidence that any sacred writer even suspected the existence of a [Trinity] within the Godhead.* . . . Even to see in [the "Old Testament"] suggestions or foreshadowings or 'veiled signs' of the trinity of persons, is to go beyond the words and intent of the sacred writers."—Italics ours.

An examination of the Hebrew Scriptures themselves will bear out these comments. Thus, there is no clear teaching of a Trinity in the first 39 books of the Bible that make up the true canon of the inspired Hebrew Scriptures.

Testimony of the Greek Scriptures

WELL, then, do the Christian Greek Scriptures ("New Testament") speak clearly of a Trinity?

The Encyclopedia of Religion says: "Theologians agree that the New Testament also does not contain an explicit doctrine of the Trinity."

Jesuit Fortman states: "The New Testament writers . . . give us no formal or formulated doctrine of the Trinity, no explicit teaching that in one God there are three co-equal divine persons. . . . Nowhere do we find any trinitarian doctrine of three distinct subjects of divine life and activity in the same Godhead."

The New Encyclopædia Britannica observes: "Neither the word Trinity nor the explicit doctrine appears in the New Testament."

Bernhard Lohse says in *A Short History of Christian Doctrine*: "As far as the New Testament is concerned, one does not find in it an actual doctrine of the Trinity."

The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology similarly states: "The N[ew] T[estament] does not contain the developed doctrine of the Trinity. 'The Bible lacks the express declaration that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are of equal essence' [said Protestant theologian Karl Barth]."

Yale University professor E. Washburn Hopkins affirmed: "To Jesus and Paul the doctrine of the trinity was apparently unknown; . . . they say nothing about it."—*Origin and Evolution of Religion*.

Historian Arthur Weigall notes: "Jesus Christ never mentioned such a phenomenon, and nowhere in the New Testament does the word 'Trinity' appear. The idea was only adopted by the Church three hundred years after the death of our Lord."—*The Paganism in Our Christianity*.

Thus, neither the 39 books of the Hebrew Scriptures nor the canon of 27 inspired books of the Christian Greek Scriptures provide any clear teaching of the Trinity.

Taught by Early Christians?

DID the early Christians teach the Trinity? Note the following comments by historians and theologians:

"Primitive Christianity did not have an explicit doctrine of the Trinity such as was subsequently elaborated in the creeds."—*The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*.

"The early Christians, however, did not at first think of applying the [Trinity] idea to their own faith. They paid their devotions to God the Father and to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and they recognised the . . . Holy Spirit; but there was no thought of these three being an actual Trinity, co-equal and united in One."—*The Paganism in Our Christianity*.

"At first the Christian faith was not Trinitarian . . . It was not so in the apostolic and sub-apostolic ages, as reflected in the N[ew] T[estament] and other early Christian writings."—*Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*.

"The formulation 'one God in three Persons' was not solidly established, certainly not fully assimilated into Christian life and its profession of faith, prior to the end of the 4th century. . . . Among the Apostolic Fathers, there had been nothing even remotely approaching such a mentality or perspective."—*New Catholic Encyclopedia*.

What the Ante-Nicene Fathers Taught

THE ante-Nicene Fathers were acknowledged to have been leading religious teachers in the early centuries after Christ's birth. What they taught is of interest.

Justin Martyr, who died about 165 C.E., called the prehuman Jesus a created angel who is "other than the God who made all things." He said that Jesus was inferior to God and "never did anything except what the Creator . . . willed him to do and say."

Irenaeus, who died about 200 C.E., said that the prehuman Jesus had a separate existence from God and was inferior to him. He showed that Jesus is not equal to the "One true and only God," who is "supreme over all, and besides whom there is no other."

Clement of Alexandria, who died about 215 C.E., called Jesus in his prehuman existence "a creature" but called God "the uncreated and imperishable and only true God." He said that the Son "is next to the only omnipotent Father" but not equal to him.

Tertullian, who died about 230 C.E., taught the supremacy of God. He observed: "The Father is different from the Son (another), as he is greater; as he who begets is different from him who is begotten; he who sends, different from him who is sent." He also said: "There was a time when the Son was not. . . . Before all things, God was alone."

Hippolytus, who died about 235 C.E., said that God is "the one God, the first and the only One, the Maker and Lord of all," who "had nothing co-eval [of equal age] with him But he was One, alone by himself; who, willing it, called into being what had no being before," such as the created prehuman Jesus.

Origen, who died about 250 C.E., said that "the Father and Son are two substances . . . two things as to their essence," and that "compared with the Father, [the Son] is a very small light."

"There is no evidence that any sacred writer even suspected the existence of a [Trinity] within the Godhead."—The Triune God

Summing up the historical evidence, Alvan Lamson says in *The Church of the First Three Centuries*: "The modern popular doctrine of the Trinity . . . derives no support from the language of Justin [Martyr]: and this observation may be extended to all the ante-Nicene Fathers; that is, to all Christian writers for three centuries after the birth of Christ. It is true, they speak of the Father, Son, and . . . holy Spirit, but not as co-equal, not as one numerical essence, not as Three in One, in any sense now admitted by Trinitarians. The very reverse is the fact."

Thus, the testimony of the Bible and of history makes clear that the Trinity was unknown throughout Biblical times and for several centuries thereafter.

How did the Trinity Doctrine Develop?

AT THIS point you might ask: 'If the Trinity is not a Biblical teaching, how did it become a doctrine of Christendom?' Many think that it was formulated at the Council of Nicaea in 325 C.E.

That is not totally correct, however. The Council of Nicaea did assert that Christ was of the same substance as God, which laid the groundwork for later Trinitarian theology. But it did not establish the Trinity, for at that council there was no mention of the holy spirit as the third person of a triune Godhead.

Constantine's Role at Nicaea

FOR many years, there had been much opposition on Biblical grounds to the developing idea that Jesus was God. To try to solve the dispute, Roman emperor Constantine summoned all bishops to Nicaea. About 300, a fraction of the total, actually attended.

Constantine was not a Christian. Supposedly, he converted later in life, but he was not baptized until he lay dying. Regarding him, Henry Chadwick says in *The Early Church*: "Constantine, like his father, worshipped the Unconquered Sun; . . . his conversion should not be interpreted as an inward experience of grace . . . It was a military matter. His comprehension of Christian doctrine was never very clear, but he was sure that victory in battle lay in the gift of the God of the Christians."

What role did this unbaptized emperor play at the Council of Nicaea? The *Encyclopædia Britannica* relates: "Constantine himself presided, actively guiding the discussions, and personally proposed . . . the crucial formula expressing the relation of Christ to God in the creed issued by the council, 'of one substance with the Father' . . . Overawed by the emperor, the bishops, with two exceptions only, signed the creed, many of them much against their inclination."

Hence, Constantine's role was crucial. After two months of furious religious debate, this pagan politician intervened and decided in favor of those who said that Jesus was God. But why? Certainly not because of any Biblical conviction. "Constantine had basically no understanding whatsoever of the questions that were being asked in Greek theology," says *A Short History of Christian Doctrine*. What he did understand was that religious division was a threat to his empire, and he wanted to solidify his domain.

'Fourth century Trinitarianism was a deviation from early Christian teaching.'	—The Encyclopedia Americana
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None of the bishops at Nicaea promoted a Trinity, however. They decided only the nature of Jesus but not the role of the holy spirit. If a Trinity had been a clear Bible truth, should they not have proposed it at that time?

Further Development

AFTER Nicaea, debates on the subject continued for decades. Those who believed that Jesus was not equal to God even came back into favor for a time. But later Emperor Theodosius decided against them. He established the creed of the Council of Nicaea as the standard for his realm and convened the Council of Constantinople in 381 C.E. to clarify the formula.

That council agreed to place the holy spirit on the same level as God and Christ. For the first time, Christendom's Trinity began to come into focus.

Yet, even after the Council of Constantinople, the Trinity did not become a widely accepted creed. Many opposed it and thus brought on themselves violent persecution. It was only in later centuries that the Trinity was formulated into set creeds. *The Encyclopedia Americana* notes: "The full development of Trinitarianism took place in the West, in the Scholasticism of the Middle Ages, when an explanation was undertaken in terms of philosophy and psychology."

The Athanasian Creed

THE Trinity was defined more fully in the Athanasian Creed. Athanasius was a clergyman who supported Constantine at Nicaea. The creed that bears his name declares: "We worship one God in Trinity . . . The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God; and yet they are not three gods, but one God."

Well-informed scholars agree, however, that Athanasius did not compose this creed. *The New Encyclopædia Britannica* comments: "The creed was unknown to the Eastern Church until the 12th century. Since the 17th century, scholars have generally agreed that the Athanasian Creed was not written by Athanasius (died 373) but was probably composed in southern France during the 5th century. . . . The creed's influence seems to have been primarily in southern France and Spain in the 6th and 7th centuries. It was used in the liturgy of the church in Germany in the 9th century and somewhat later in Rome."

So it took centuries from the time of Christ for the Trinity to become widely accepted in Christendom. And in all of this, what guided the decisions? Was it the Word of God, or was it clerical and political considerations? In *Origin and Evolution of Religion*, E. W. Hopkins answers: "The final orthodox definition of the trinity was largely a matter of church politics."

Apostasy Foretold

THIS disreputable history of the Trinity fits in with what Jesus and his apostles foretold would follow their time. They said that there would be an apostasy, a deviation, a falling away from true worship until Christ's return, when true worship would be restored before God's day of destruction of this system of things.

"The	Many centuries before the time of Christ, there were triads, or trinities, of
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Triad of the Great Gods"	gods in ancient Babylonia and Assyria. The French "Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology" notes one such triad in that Mesopotamian area: "The universe was divided into three regions each of which became the domain of a god. Anu's share was the sky. The earth was given to Enlil. Ea became the ruler of the waters. Together they constituted the triad of the Great Gods."
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Regarding that "day," the apostle Paul said: "It will not come unless the apostasy comes first and the man of lawlessness gets revealed." ([2 Thessalonians 2:3, 7](#)) Later, he foretold: "When I have gone fierce wolves will invade you and will have no mercy on the flock. Even from your own ranks there will be men coming forward with a travesty of the truth on their lips to induce the disciples to follow them." ([Acts 20:29, 30](#), *JB*) Other disciples of Jesus also wrote of this apostasy with its 'lawless' clergy class.—See, for example, [2 Peter 2:1](#); [1 John 4:1-3](#); [Jude 3, 4](#).

Paul also wrote: "The time is sure to come when, far from being content with sound teaching, people will be avid for the latest novelty and collect themselves a whole series of teachers according to their own tastes; and then, instead of listening to the truth, they will turn to myths."—[2 Timothy 4:3, 4](#), *JB*.

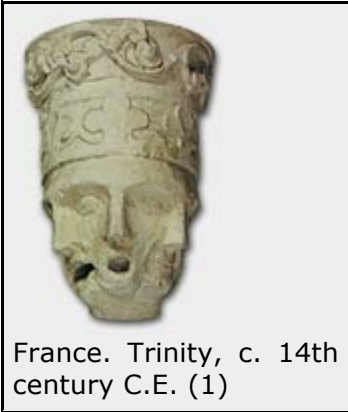
Jesus himself explained what was behind this falling away from true worship. He said that he had sowed good seeds but that the enemy, Satan, would oversow the field with weeds. So along with the first blades of wheat, the weeds appeared also. Thus, a deviation from pure Christianity was to be expected until the harvest, when Christ would set matters right. ([Matthew 13:24-43](#)) *The Encyclopedia Americana* comments: "Fourth century Trinitarianism did not reflect accurately early Christian teaching regarding the nature of God; it was, on the contrary, a deviation from this teaching." Where, then, did this deviation originate?—[1 Timothy 1:6](#).

What Influenced It

THROUGHOUT the ancient world, as far back as Babylonia, the worship of pagan gods grouped in threes, or triads, was common. That influence was also prevalent in Egypt, Greece, and Rome in the centuries before, during, and after Christ. And after the death of the apostles, such pagan beliefs began to invade Christianity.

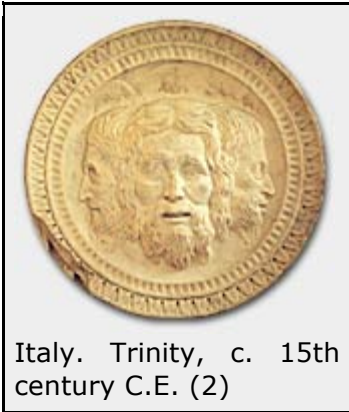
Historian Will Durant observed: "Christianity did not destroy paganism; it adopted it. . . . From Egypt came the ideas of a divine trinity." And in the book *Egyptian Religion*, Siegfried Morenz notes: "The trinity was a major preoccupation of Egyptian theologians . . . Three gods are combined and treated as a single being, addressed in the singular. In this way the spiritual force of Egyptian religion shows a direct link with Christian theology."

Thus, in Alexandria, Egypt, churchmen of the late third and early fourth centuries, such as Athanasius, reflected this influence as they formulated ideas that led to the Trinity. Their own influence spread, so that Morenz considers "Alexandrian theology as the intermediary between the Egyptian religious heritage and Christianity."



France. Trinity, c. 14th century C.E. (1)

In the preface to Edward Gibbon's *History of Christianity*, we read: "If Paganism was conquered by Christianity, it is equally true that Christianity was corrupted by Paganism. The pure Deism of the first Christians . . . was changed, by the Church of Rome, into the incomprehensible dogma of the trinity. Many of the pagan tenets, invented by the Egyptians and idealized by Plato, were retained as being worthy of belief."



Italy. Trinity, c. 15th century C.E. (2)

A Dictionary of Religious Knowledge notes that many say that the Trinity "is a corruption borrowed from the heathen religions, and ingrafted on the Christian faith." And *The Paganism in Our Christianity* declares: "The origin of the [Trinity] is entirely pagan."

That is why, in the *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, James Hastings wrote: "In Indian religion, *e.g.*, we meet with the trinitarian group of Brahma, Siva, and Visnu; and in Egyptian religion with the trinitarian group of Osiris, Isis, and Horus . . . Nor is it only in historical religions that we find God viewed as a Trinity. One recalls in particular the Neo-

Platonic view of the Supreme or Ultimate Reality," which is "triadically represented." What does the Greek philosopher Plato have to do with the Trinity?

Platonism

PLATO, it is thought, lived from 428 to 347 before Christ. While he did not teach the Trinity in its present form, his philosophies paved the way for it. Later, philosophical movements that included triadic beliefs sprang up, and these were influenced by Plato's ideas of God and nature.



Germany. Trinity,

The French *Nouveau Dictionnaire Universel* (New Universal Dictionary) says of Plato's influence: "The Platonic *trinity*, itself merely a rearrangement of older *trinities* dating back to earlier peoples, appears to be the rational philosophic *trinity* of attributes that gave birth to the three hypostases or divine persons taught by the Christian churches. . . . This Greek philosopher's conception of the divine *trinity* . . . can be found in all the ancient [pagan] religions."

20th century C.E.

The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge shows the influence of this Greek philosophy: "The doctrines of the Logos and the Trinity received their shape from Greek Fathers, who . . . were much influenced, directly or indirectly, by the Platonic philosophy . . . That errors and corruptions crept into the Church from this source can not be denied."

The Church of the First Three Centuries says: "The doctrine of the Trinity was of gradual and comparatively late formation; . . . it had its origin in a source entirely foreign from that of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures; . . . it grew up, and was ingrafted on Christianity, through the hands of the Platonizing Fathers."

By the end of the third century C.E., "Christianity" and the new Platonic philosophies became inseparably united. As Adolf Harnack states in *Outlines of the History of Dogma*, church doctrine became "firmly rooted in the soil of Hellenism [pagan Greek thought]. Thereby it became a mystery to the great majority of Christians."

The church claimed that its new doctrines were based on the Bible. But Harnack says: "In reality it legitimized in its midst the Hellenic speculation, the superstitious views and customs of pagan mystery-worship."

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."

Thus, in the fourth century C.E., the apostasy foretold by Jesus and the apostles came into full bloom. Development of the Trinity was just one evidence of this. The apostate churches also began embracing other pagan ideas, such as hellfire, immortality of the soul, and idolatry. Spiritually speaking, Christendom had entered its foretold dark ages, dominated by a growing "man of lawlessness" clergy class.—[2 Thessalonians 2:3](#), [7](#).

Hindu Trinity	The book "The Symbolism of Hindu Gods and Rituals" says regarding a Hindu trinity that existed centuries before Christ: "Siva is one of the gods of the Trinity. He is said to be the god of destruction. The other two gods are Brahma, the god of creation and Vishnu, the god of maintenance. . . . To indicate that these three processes are one and the same the three gods are combined in one form."—Published by A. Parthasarathy, Bombay.
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Why Did God's Prophets Not Teach It?

WHY, for thousands of years, did none of God's prophets teach his people about the Trinity? At the latest, would Jesus not use his ability as the Great Teacher to make the Trinity clear to his followers? Would God inspire hundreds of pages of Scripture and yet not use any of this instruction to teach the Trinity if it were the "central doctrine" of faith?

Are Christians to believe that centuries after Christ and after having inspired the writing of the Bible, God would back the formulation of a doctrine that was unknown to his servants for thousands of years, one that is an "inscrutable mystery" "beyond the grasp of human reason," one that admittedly had a pagan background and was "largely a matter of church politics"?

The testimony of history is clear: The Trinity teaching is a deviation from the truth, an apostatizing from it.

What Does the Bible Say About God and Jesus?

IF PEOPLE were to read the Bible from cover to cover without any preconceived idea of a Trinity, would they arrive at such a concept on their own? Not at all.

What comes through very clearly to an impartial reader is that God alone is the Almighty, the Creator, separate and distinct from anyone else, and that Jesus, even in his prehuman existence, is also separate and distinct, a created being, subordinate to God.

God is One, Not Three

THE Bible teaching that God is one is called monotheism. And L. L. Paine, professor of ecclesiastical history, indicates that monotheism in its purest form does not allow for a Trinity: "The Old Testament is strictly monotheistic. God is a single personal being. The idea that a trinity is to be found there . . . is utterly without foundation."

Was there any change from monotheism after Jesus came to the earth? Paine answers: "On this point there is no break between the Old Testament and the New. The monotheistic tradition is continued. Jesus was a Jew, trained by Jewish parents in the Old Testament scriptures. His teaching was Jewish to the core; a new gospel indeed, but not a new theology. . . . And he accepted as his own belief the great text of Jewish monotheism: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one God.'"

Those words are found at [Deuteronomy 6:4](#). The Catholic *New Jerusalem Bible (NJB)* here reads: "Listen, Israel: Yahweh our God is the one, the only Yahweh."^{*} In the grammar of that verse, the word "one" has no plural modifiers to suggest that it means anything but one individual.

The Christian apostle Paul did not indicate any change in the nature of God either, even after Jesus came to the earth. He wrote: "God is only one."—[Galatians 3:20](#); see also [1 Corinthians 8:4-6](#).

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. As God states: "*I am Jehovah. That is my name; and to no one else shall I give my own glory.*" ([Isaiah 42:8](#)) "*I am Yahweh your God . . . You shall have no gods except me.*" (Italics ours.)—[Exodus 20:2, 3](#), *JB*.

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? Surely, if God were composed of three persons, he would have had his Bible writers make it abundantly clear so that there could be no doubt about it. At least the writers of the Christian Greek Scriptures who had personal contact with God's own Son would have done so. But they did not.

Instead, what the Bible writers did make abundantly clear is that God is one Person—a unique, unpartitioned Being who has no equal: "I am Jehovah, and there is no one else. With the exception of me there is no God." ([Isaiah 45:5](#)) "You, whose name is Jehovah, you alone are the Most High over all the earth."—[Psalm 83:18](#).

Not a Plural God

JESUS called God "the only true God." ([John 17:3](#)) Never did he refer to God as a deity of plural persons. That is why nowhere in the Bible is anyone but Jehovah called Almighty. Otherwise, it voids the meaning of the word "almighty." Neither Jesus nor the holy spirit is ever called that, for Jehovah alone is supreme. At [Genesis 17:1](#) he declares: "I am God Almighty." And [Exodus 18:11](#) says: "Jehovah is greater than all the other gods."

In the Hebrew Scriptures, the word *'eloh'ah* (god) has two plural forms, namely, *'elo-him'* (gods) and *'elo-heh'* (gods of). These plural forms generally refer to Jehovah, in which case they are translated in the singular as "God." Do these plural forms indicate a Trinity? No, they do not. In *A Dictionary of the Bible*, William Smith says: "The fanciful idea that [*'elo-him'*] referred to the trinity of persons in the Godhead hardly finds now a supporter among scholars. It is either what grammarians call *the plural of majesty*, or it denotes the *fullness* of divine strength, the *sum of the powers* displayed by God."

The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures says of *'elo-him'*: "It is almost invariably construed with a singular verbal predicate, and takes a singular adjectival attribute." To illustrate this, the title *'elo-him'* appears 35 times by itself in the account of creation, and every time the verb describing what God said and did is singular. ([Genesis 1:1-2:4](#)) Thus, that publication concludes: "[*'Elo-him'*] must rather be explained as an *intensive plural*, denoting *greatness* and *majesty*."

'Elo-him' means, not "persons," but "gods." So those who argue that this word implies a Trinity make themselves polytheists, worshipers of more than one God. Why? Because it would mean that there were three gods in the Trinity. But nearly all Trinity supporters reject the view that the Trinity is made up of three separate gods.

The Bible also uses the words '*elo-him*' and '*elo-heh*' when referring to a number of false idol gods. ([Exodus 12:12](#); [20:23](#)) But at other times it may refer to just a single false god, as when the Philistines referred to "Dagon their god [*'elo-heh*']." ([Judges 16:23, 24](#)) Baal is called "a god [*'elo-him*']." ([1 Kings 18:27](#)) In addition, the term is used for humans. ([Psalm 82:1, 6](#)) Moses was told that he was to serve as "God" [*'elo-him*] to Aaron and to Pharaoh.—[Exodus 4:16](#); [7:1](#).

Obviously, using the titles '*elo-him*' and '*elo-heh*' for false gods, and even humans, did not imply that each was a plurality of gods; neither does applying '*elo-him*' or '*elo-heh*' to Jehovah mean that he is more than one person, especially when we consider the testimony of the rest of the Bible on this subject.

Jesus a Separate Creation

WHILE on earth, Jesus was a human, although a perfect one because it was God who transferred the life-force of Jesus to the womb of Mary. ([Matthew 1:18-25](#)) But that is not how he began. He himself declared that he had "descended from heaven." ([John 3:13](#)) So it was only natural that he would later say to his followers: "What if you should see the Son of man [Jesus] ascend to where he was before?"—[John 6:62](#), *NJB*.

Thus, 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.

Jesus, in his prehuman existence, was "the first-born of all creation." ([Colossians 1:15](#), *NJB*) He was "the beginning of God's creation." ([Revelation 3:14](#), *RS*, Catholic edition). "Beginning" [Greek, *ar-khe*] cannot rightly be interpreted to mean that Jesus was the 'beginner' of God's creation. In his Bible writings, John uses various forms of the Greek word *ar-khe* more than 20 times, and these always have the common meaning of "beginning." Yes, Jesus was created by God as the beginning of God's invisible creations.

Having been created by God, Jesus is in a secondary position in time, power, and knowledge
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Notice how closely those references to the origin of Jesus correlate with expressions uttered by the figurative "Wisdom" in the Bible book of Proverbs: "Yahweh created me, first-fruits of his fashioning, before the oldest of his works. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills, I came to birth; before he had made the earth, the countryside, and the first elements of the world." ([Proverbs 8:12, 22, 25, 26](#), *NJB*) While the term "Wisdom" is used to personify the one whom God created, most scholars agree that it is actually a figure of speech for Jesus as a spirit creature prior to his human existence.

As "Wisdom" in his prehuman existence, Jesus goes on to say that he was "by his [God's] side, a master craftsman." ([Proverbs 8:30](#), *JB*) In harmony with this role as master

craftsman, [Colossians 1:16](#) says of Jesus that "through him God created everything in heaven and on earth."—*Today's English Version (TEV)*.

So it was by means of this master worker, his junior partner, as it were, that Almighty God created all other things. The Bible summarizes the matter this way: "For us there is one God, the Father, *from* whom are all things . . . and one Lord, Jesus Christ, *through* whom are all things." (Italics ours.)—[1 Corinthians 8:6](#), *RS*, Catholic edition.

It no doubt was to this master craftsman that God said: "Let us make man in our image." ([Genesis 1:26](#)) Some have claimed that the "us" and "our" in this expression indicate a Trinity. But if you were to say, 'Let us make something for ourselves,' no one would normally understand this to imply that several persons are combined as one inside of you. You simply mean that two or more individuals will work together on something. So, too, when God used "us" and "our," he was simply addressing another individual, his first spirit creation, the master craftsman, the prehuman Jesus.

Could God Be Tempted?

AT [MATTHEW 4:1](#), Jesus is spoken of as being "tempted by the Devil." After showing Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world and their glory," Satan said: "All these things I will give you if you fall down and do an act of worship to me." ([Matthew 4:8, 9](#)) 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. The temptation of Jesus would make sense only if he was, not God, but a separate individual who had his own free will, one who could have been disloyal had he chosen to be, such as an angel or a human.

On the other hand, it is unimaginable that God could sin and be disloyal to himself. "Perfect is his activity . . . A God of faithfulness, . . . righteous and upright is he." ([Deuteronomy 32:4](#)) So if Jesus had been God, he could not have been tempted.—[James 1:13](#).

Not being God, Jesus could have been disloyal. But he remained faithful, saying: "Go away, Satan! For it is written, 'It is Jehovah your God you must worship, and it is to him alone you must render sacred service.'"—[Matthew 4:10](#).

How Much Was the Ransom?

ONE of the main reasons why Jesus came to earth also has a direct bearing on the Trinity. The Bible states: "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, a man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself a corresponding ransom for all."—[1 Timothy 2:5, 6](#).

Jesus, no more and no less than a perfect human, became a ransom that compensated exactly for what Adam lost—the right to perfect human life on earth. So Jesus could rightly be called "the last Adam" by the apostle Paul, who said in the same context: "Just as in Adam all are dying, so also in the Christ all will be made alive." ([1 Corinthians 15:22](#), [45](#)) The perfect human life of Jesus was the "corresponding ransom" required by divine justice—no more, no less. A basic principle even of human justice is that the price paid should fit the wrong committed.

If Jesus, however, were part of a Godhead, the ransom price would have been infinitely higher than what God's own Law required. ([Exodus 21:23-25](#); [Leviticus 24:19-21](#)) It was only a perfect human, Adam, who sinned in Eden, not God. So the ransom, to be truly in line with God's justice, had to be strictly an equivalent—a perfect human, "the last Adam." Thus, when God sent Jesus to earth as the ransom, he made Jesus to be what would satisfy justice, not an incarnation, not a god-man, but 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?

How the "Only-Begotten Son"?

THE Bible calls Jesus the "only-begotten Son" of God. ([John 1:14](#); [3:16](#), [18](#); [1 John 4:9](#)) Trinitarians say that since God is eternal, so the Son of God is eternal. But how 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." (*Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*) They say that in Jesus' case it means "the sense of unoriginated relationship," a sort of only son relationship without the begetting. (*Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*) 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

Furthermore, why does the Bible use the very same Greek word for "only-begotten" (as Vine admits without any explanation) 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.

The basic Greek word for "only-begotten" used for Jesus and Isaac is *mo·no·ge·nes'*, from *mo'nos*, meaning "only," and *gi'no·mai*, a root word meaning "to generate," "to become (come into being)," states Strong's *Exhaustive Concordance*. Hence, *mo·no·ge·nes'* is defined as: "Only born, only begotten, i.e. an only child."—*A Greek and English Lexicon of the New Testament*, by E. Robinson.

The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, edited by Gerhard Kittel, says: "[*Mo·no·ge·nes'*] means 'of sole descent,' i.e., without brothers or sisters." This book also

states that at [John 1:18](#); [3:16](#), [18](#); and [1 John 4:9](#), "the relation of Jesus is not just compared to that of an only child to its father. It *is* the relation of the only-begotten to the Father."

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, like Abraham, begets a son. ([Hebrews 11:17](#)) 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.

When one considers that Jesus was not the only spirit son of God created in heaven, it becomes evident why the term "only-begotten Son" was used in his case. Countless other created spirit beings, angels, are also called "sons of God," in the same sense that Adam was, because their life-force originated with Jehovah God, the Fountain, or Source, of life. ([Job 38:7](#); [Psalm 36:9](#); [Luke 3:38](#)) But these were all created *through* the "only-begotten Son," who was the only one directly begotten by God.—[Colossians 1:15-17](#).

Was Jesus Considered to Be God?

WHILE Jesus is often called the Son of God in the Bible, nobody in the first century ever thought of him as being God the Son. Even the demons, who "believe there is one God," knew from their experience in the spirit realm that Jesus was not God. So, correctly, they addressed Jesus as the separate "Son of God." ([James 2:19](#); [Matthew 8:29](#)) And when Jesus died, the pagan Roman soldiers standing by knew enough to say that what they had heard from his followers must be right, not that Jesus was God, but that "certainly this was God's Son."—[Matthew 27:54](#).

Hence, the phrase "Son of God" refers to Jesus as a separate created being, not as part of a Trinity. As the Son of God, he could not be God himself, for [John 1:18](#) says: "No one has ever seen God."—*RS*, Catholic edition.

The disciples viewed Jesus as the "one mediator between God and men," not as God himself. ([1 Timothy 2:5](#)) Since by definition a mediator is someone separate from those who need mediation, it would be a contradiction for Jesus to be one entity with either of the parties he is trying to reconcile. That would be a pretending to be something he is not.

The Bible is clear and consistent about the relationship of God to Jesus. Jehovah God alone is Almighty. He created the prehuman Jesus directly. Thus, Jesus had a beginning and could never be coequal with God in power or eternity.

* God's name is rendered "Yahweh" in some translations, "Jehovah" in others.

Is God Always Superior to Jesus?

JESUS never claimed to be God. Everything he said about himself indicates that he did not consider himself equal to God in any way—not in power, not in knowledge, not in age.

In every period of his existence, whether in heaven or on earth, his speech and conduct reflect subordination to God. God is always the superior, Jesus the lesser one who was created by God.

Jesus Distinguished from God

TIME and again, Jesus showed that he was a creature separate from God and that he, Jesus, had a God above him, a God whom he worshiped, a God whom he called "Father." In prayer to God, that is, the Father, Jesus said, "You, *the only true God*." ([John 17:3](#)) At [John 20:17](#) he said to Mary Magdalene: "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." (*RS*, Catholic edition) At [2 Corinthians 1:3](#) the apostle Paul confirms this relationship: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Since Jesus *had* a God, his Father, he could not at the same time *be* that God.

The apostle Paul had no reservations about speaking of Jesus and God as distinctly separate: "For us there is one God, the Father, . . . and there is one Lord, Jesus Christ." ([1 Corinthians 8:6](#), *JB*) The apostle shows the distinction when he mentions "the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels." ([1 Timothy 5:21](#), *RS Common Bible*) Just as Paul speaks of Jesus and the angels as being distinct from one another in heaven, so too are Jesus and God.

Jesus' words at [John 8:17, 18](#) are also significant. He states: "In your own Law it is written, 'The witness of two men is true.' I am one that bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me." Here Jesus shows that he and the Father, that is, Almighty God, must be two distinct entities, for how else could there truly be two witnesses?

Jesus further showed that he was a separate being from God by saying: "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone." ([Mark 10:18](#), *JB*) So Jesus was saying that no one is as good as God is, not even Jesus himself. God is good in a way that separates him from Jesus.

God's Submissive Servant

TIME and again, Jesus made statements such as: "The Son cannot do anything at his own pleasure, he can only do what he sees his Father doing." ([John 5:19](#), *The Holy Bible*, by Monsignor R. A. Knox) "I have come down from heaven to do, not my will, but the will of him that sent me." ([John 6:38](#)) "What I teach is not mine, but belongs to him that sent me." ([John 7:16](#)) Is not the sender superior to the one sent?

This relationship is evident in Jesus' illustration of the vineyard. He likened God, his Father, to the owner of the vineyard, who traveled abroad and left it in the charge of cultivators, who represented the Jewish clergy. When the owner later sent a slave to get some of the fruit of the vineyard, the cultivators beat the slave and sent him away empty-handed. Then the owner sent a second slave, and later a third, both of whom got the same treatment. Finally, the owner said: "I will send my son [Jesus] the beloved. Likely they will respect this one." But the corrupt cultivators said: "'This is the heir; let us kill him, that the inheritance may become ours.' With that they threw him outside the vineyard and killed him." ([Luke 20:9-16](#)) Thus Jesus illustrated his own position as one being sent by God to do God's will, just as a father sends a submissive son.

Jesus told the Jews: "I have come down from heaven to do, not my will, but the will of him that sent me." —[John 6:38](#)

The followers of Jesus always viewed him as a submissive servant of God, not as God's equal. They prayed to God about "thy holy servant Jesus, whom thou didst anoint, . . . and signs and wonders are performed through the name of thy holy servant Jesus."—[Acts 4:23, 27, 30](#), *RS*, Catholic edition.

God Superior at All Times

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." ([Matthew 3:16, 17](#)) Was God saying that he was his own son, that he approved himself, that he sent himself? No, God the Creator was saying that he, as the superior, was approving a lesser one, his Son Jesus, for the work ahead.

When Jesus cried out: "My God, my God, why have you deserted me?" he surely did not believe that he himself was God

Jesus indicated his Father's superiority when he said: "Jehovah's spirit is upon me, because he anointed me to declare good news to the poor." ([Luke 4:18](#)) Anointing is the giving of authority or a commission by a superior to someone who does not already have authority. Here God is plainly the superior, for he anointed Jesus, giving him authority that he did not previously have.

Jesus made his Father's superiority clear when the mother of two disciples asked that her sons sit one at the right and one at the left of Jesus when he came into his Kingdom. Jesus answered: "As for seats at my right hand and my left, these are not mine to grant; they belong to those to whom they have been allotted by my Father," that is, God. ([Matthew 20:23](#), *JB*) Had Jesus been Almighty God, those positions would have been his to give. But Jesus could not give them, for they were God's to give, and Jesus was not God.

Jesus' own prayers are a powerful example of his inferior position. When Jesus was about to die, he showed who his superior was by praying: "Father, if you wish, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, let, not my will, but yours take place." ([Luke 22:42](#)) To whom was he praying? To a part of himself? No, he was praying to someone entirely separate,

his Father, God, whose will was superior and could be different from his own, the only One able to "remove this cup."

Then, as he neared death, Jesus cried out: "My God, my God, why have you deserted me?" ([Mark 15:34](#), *JB*) To whom was Jesus crying out? To himself or to part of himself? Surely, that cry, "My God," was not from someone who considered himself to be God. And if Jesus were God, then by whom was he deserted? Himself? That would not make sense. Jesus also said: "Father, into your hands I entrust my spirit." ([Luke 23:46](#)) If Jesus were God, for what reason should he entrust his spirit to the Father?

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: "O my God, my Holy One, you 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 ransom 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.

Does Jesus' ability to perform miracles, such as resurrecting people, indicate that he was God? Well, the apostles and the prophets Elijah and Elisha had that power too, but that did not make them more than men. God gave the power to perform miracles to the prophets, Jesus, and the apostles to show that He was backing them. But it did not make any of them part of a plural Godhead.

Jesus Had Limited Knowledge

WHEN Jesus gave his prophecy about the end of this system of things, he stated: "But of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." ([Mark 13:32](#), *RS*, Catholic edition) Had Jesus been the equal Son part 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.

'New Testament research has been leading an increasing number of scholars to the conclusion that Jesus certainly never believed himself to be God.' —Bulletin of the John Rylands Library

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 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.

Jesus Continues Subordinate

IN HIS prehuman existence, and also when he was on earth, Jesus was subordinate to God. After his resurrection, he continues to be in a subordinate, secondary position.

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." ([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.

Paul also said that Christ entered "heaven itself, so that he could appear in the actual presence of God on our behalf." ([Hebrews 9:24](#), *JB*) 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 "gazed into heaven and caught sight of God's glory and of Jesus standing at God's right hand." ([Acts 7:55](#)) Clearly, he saw two separate individuals—but no holy spirit, no Trinity Godhead.

In the account at [Revelation 4:8](#) to [5:7](#), God is shown seated on his heavenly throne, but Jesus is not. He has to approach God to take a scroll from God's right hand. This shows that in heaven Jesus is not God but is separate from him.

In agreement with the foregoing, the *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* in Manchester, England, states: "In his post-resurrection heavenly life, Jesus is portrayed as retaining a personal individuality every bit as distinct and separate from the person of God as was his in his life on earth as the terrestrial Jesus. Alongside God and compared with God, he appears, indeed, as yet another heavenly being in God's heavenly court, just as the angels were—though as God's Son, he stands in a different category, and ranks far above them."—Compare [Philippians 2:11](#).

The *Bulletin* also says: "What, however, is said of his life and functions as the celestial Christ neither means nor implies that in divine status he stands on a par with God himself and is fully God. On the contrary, in the New Testament picture of his heavenly person and ministry we behold a figure both separate from and subordinate to God."

In the everlasting future in heaven, Jesus will continue to be a separate, subordinate servant of God. The Bible expresses it this way: "After that will come the end, when he [Jesus in heaven] will hand over the kingdom to God the Father . . . Then the Son himself will be subjected to the One who has subjected everything to him, so that God may be all in all."—[1 Corinthians 15:24, 28](#), *NJB*.

Jesus Never Claimed to Be God

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. 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](#)) And this is why Jesus himself said: "The Father is greater than I."—[John 14:28](#), RS, Catholic edition.

The fact is that Jesus is not God and never claimed to be. This is being recognized by an increasing number of scholars. As the Rylands *Bulletin* states: "The fact has to be faced that New Testament research over, say, the last thirty or forty years has been leading an increasing number of reputable New Testament scholars to the conclusion that Jesus . . . certainly never believed himself to be God."

The *Bulletin* also says of first-century Christians: "When, therefore, they assigned [Jesus] such honorific titles as Christ, Son of man, Son of God and Lord, these were ways of saying not that he was God, but that he did God's work."

Thus, even some religious scholars admit that the idea of Jesus' being God opposes the entire testimony of the Bible. There, God is always the superior, and Jesus is the subordinate servant.

The Holy Spirit—God's Active Force

ACCORDING to the Trinity doctrine, the holy spirit is the third person of a Godhead, equal to the Father and to the Son. As the book *Our Orthodox Christian Faith* says: "The Holy Spirit is totally God."

In the Hebrew Scriptures, the word most frequently used for "spirit" is *ru'ach*, meaning "breath; wind; spirit." In the Greek Scriptures, the word is *pneu'ma*, having a similar meaning. Do these words indicate that the holy spirit is part of a Trinity?

An Active Force

THE Bible's use of "holy spirit" indicates that it is a controlled force that Jehovah God uses to accomplish a variety of his purposes. To a certain extent, it can be likened to electricity, a force that can be adapted to perform a great variety of operations.

At [Genesis 1:2](#) the Bible states that "God's active force ["spirit" (Hebrew, *ru'ach*)] was moving to and fro over the surface of the waters." Here, God's spirit was his active force working to shape the earth.

God uses his spirit to enlighten those who serve him. David prayed: "Teach me to do your will, for you are my God. Your spirit [*ru'ach*] is good; may it lead me in the land of uprightness." ([Psalm 143:10](#)) When 70 capable men were appointed to help Moses, God

said to him: "I shall have to take away some of the spirit [*ru'ach*] that is upon you and place it upon them."—[Numbers 11:17](#).

Bible prophecy was recorded when men of God were "borne along by holy spirit [Greek, from *pneu'ma*]." ([2 Peter 1:20, 21](#)) In this way the Bible was "inspired of God," the Greek word for which is *The-o'pneu-stos*, meaning "God-breathed." ([2 Timothy 3:16](#)) And holy spirit guided certain people to see visions or to have prophetic dreams.—[2 Samuel 23:2](#); [Joel 2:28, 29](#); [Luke 1:67](#); [Acts 1:16](#); [2:32, 33](#).

The holy spirit impelled Jesus to go into the wilderness after his baptism. ([Mark 1:12](#)) The spirit was like a fire within God's servants, causing them to be energized by that force. And it enabled them to speak out boldly and courageously.—[Micah 3:8](#); [Acts 7:55-60](#); [18:25](#); [Romans 12:11](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:19](#).

By his spirit, God carries out his judgments on men and nations. ([Isaiah 30:27, 28](#); [59:18, 19](#)) And God's spirit can reach everywhere, acting for people or against them.—[Psalm 139:7-12](#).

“Power Beyond Normal”

GOD'S spirit can also supply "power beyond what is normal" to those who serve him. ([2 Corinthians 4:7](#)) This enables them to endure trials of faith or to do things they could not otherwise do.

For example, regarding Samson, [Judges 14:6](#) relates: "The spirit of Yahweh seized on him, and though he had no weapon in his hand he tore the lion in pieces." (*JB*) Did a divine person actually enter or seize Samson, manipulating his body to do what he did? No, it was really "the power of the LORD [that] made Samson strong."—*TEV*.

The Bible says that when Jesus was baptized, holy spirit came down upon him appearing like a dove, not like a human form. ([Mark 1:10](#)) This active force of God enabled Jesus to heal the sick and raise the dead. As [Luke 5:17](#) says: "The Power of the Lord [God] was behind his [Jesus'] works of healing."—*JB*.

"On the whole, the New Testament, like the Old, speaks of the spirit as a divine energy or power." —A Catholic Dictionary

God's spirit also empowered the disciples of Jesus to do miraculous things. [Acts 2:1-4](#) relates that the disciples were assembled together at Pentecost when "suddenly there occurred from heaven a noise just like that of a rushing stiff breeze, . . . and they all became filled with holy spirit and started to speak with different tongues, just as the spirit was granting them to make utterance."

So the holy spirit gave Jesus and other servants of God the power to do what humans ordinarily could not do.

Not a Person

ARE there not, however, Bible verses that speak of the holy spirit in personal terms? Yes, but note what Catholic theologian Edmund Fortman says about this in *The Triune God*: "Although this spirit is often described in personal terms, it seems quite clear that the sacred writers [of the Hebrew Scriptures] never conceived or presented this spirit as a distinct person."

In the Scriptures it is not unusual for something to be personified. Wisdom is said to have children. ([Luke 7:35](#)) Sin and death are called kings. ([Romans 5:14, 21](#)) At [Genesis 4:7](#) *The New English Bible* (NE) says: "Sin is a demon crouching at the door," personifying sin as a wicked spirit crouching at Cain's door. But, of course, sin is not a spirit person; nor does personifying the holy spirit make it a spirit person.

On one occasion the holy spirit appeared as a dove. On another occasion it appeared as tongues of fire—never as a person

Similarly, at [1 John 5:6-8](#) (NE) not only the spirit but also "the water, and the blood" are said to *be* "witnesses." But water and blood are obviously not persons, and neither is the holy spirit a person.

In harmony with this is the Bible's general usage of "holy spirit" in an impersonal way, such as paralleling it with water and fire. ([Matthew 3:11](#); [Mark 1:8](#)) People are urged to become filled with holy spirit instead of with wine. ([Ephesians 5:18](#)) They are spoken of as being filled with holy spirit in the same way they are filled with such qualities as wisdom, faith, and joy. ([Acts 6:3](#); [11:24](#); [13:52](#)) And at [2 Corinthians 6:6](#) holy spirit is included among a number of qualities. Such expressions would not be so common if the holy spirit were actually a person.

Then, too, while some Bible texts say that the spirit speaks, other texts show that this was actually done through humans or angels. ([Matthew 10:19, 20](#); [Acts 4:24, 25](#); [28:25](#); [Hebrews 2:2](#)) The action of the spirit in such instances is like that of radio waves transmitting messages from one person to another far away.

At [Matthew 28:19](#) reference is made to "the name . . . of the holy spirit." But the word "name" does not always mean a personal name, either in Greek or in English. When we say "in the name of the law," we are not referring to a person. We mean that which the law stands for, its authority. Robertson's *Word Pictures in the New Testament* says: "The use of name (*onoma*) here is a common one in the Septuagint and the papyri for power or authority." So baptism 'in the name of the holy spirit' recognizes the authority of the spirit, that it is from God and functions by divine will.

The "Helper"

JESUS spoke of the holy spirit as a "helper," and he said it would teach, guide, and speak. ([John 14:16, 26](#); [16:13](#)) The Greek word he used for helper (*pa-ra'kle-tos*) is in the masculine gender. So when Jesus referred to what the helper would do, he used masculine personal pronouns. ([John 16:7, 8](#)) On the other hand, when the neuter Greek word for spirit (*pneu'ma*) is used, the neuter pronoun "it" is properly employed.

Most Trinitarian translators hide this fact, as the Catholic *New American Bible* admits regarding [John 14:17](#): "The Greek word for 'Spirit' is neuter, and while we use personal pronouns in English ('he,' 'his,' 'him'), most Greek MSS [manuscripts] employ 'it.'"

So when the Bible uses masculine personal pronouns in connection with *pa-ra'kle-tos* at [John 16:7, 8](#), it is conforming to rules of grammar, not expressing a doctrine.

No Part of a Trinity

VARIOUS sources acknowledge that the Bible does not support the idea that the holy spirit is the third person of a Trinity. For example:

The Catholic Encyclopedia: "Nowhere in the Old Testament do we find any clear indication of a Third Person."

Catholic theologian Fortman: "The Jews never regarded the spirit as a person; nor is there any solid evidence that any Old Testament writer held this view. . . . The Holy Spirit is usually presented in the Synoptics [Gospels] and in Acts as a divine force or power."

The *New Catholic Encyclopedia*: "The O[ld] T[estament] clearly does not envisage God's spirit as a person . . . God's spirit is simply God's power. If it is sometimes represented as being distinct from God, it is because the breath of Yahweh acts exteriorly." It also says: "The majority of N[ew] T[estament] texts reveal God's spirit as *something*, not *someone*; this is especially seen in the parallelism between the spirit and the power of God."—Italics ours.

A Catholic Dictionary: "On the whole, the New Testament, like the Old, speaks of the spirit as a divine energy or power."

Hence, neither the Jews nor the early Christians viewed the holy spirit as part of a Trinity. That teaching came centuries later. As *A Catholic Dictionary* notes: "The third Person was asserted at a Council of Alexandria in 362 . . . and finally by the Council of Constantinople of 381"—some three and a half centuries after holy spirit filled the disciples at Pentecost!

No, the holy spirit is not a person and it is not part of a Trinity. The holy spirit is God's active force that he uses to accomplish his will. It is not equal to God but is always at his disposition and subordinate to him.

What about Trinity "Proof Texts"?

IT IS said that some Bible texts offer proof in support of the Trinity. However, when reading such texts, we should keep in mind that the Biblical and historical evidence does not support the Trinity.

Any Bible reference offered as proof must be understood in the context of the consistent teaching of the entire Bible. Very often the true meaning of such a text is clarified by the context of surrounding verses.

Three in One

THE *New Catholic Encyclopedia* offers three such "proof texts" but also admits: "The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is not taught in the O[ld] T[estament]. In the N[ew] T[estament] the oldest evidence is in the Pauline epistles, especially 2 Cor 13.13 [[verse 14](#) in some Bibles], and [1 Cor 12.4-6](#). In the Gospels evidence of the Trinity is found explicitly only in the baptismal formula of [Mt 28.19](#)."

In those verses the three "persons" are listed as follows in *The New Jerusalem Bible*. [Second Corinthians 13:13 \(14\)](#) puts the three together in this way: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." [First Corinthians 12:4-6](#) says: "There are many different gifts, but it is always the same Spirit; there are many different ways of serving, but it is always the same Lord. There are many different forms of activity, but in everybody it is the same God who is at work in them all." And [Matthew 28:19](#) reads: "Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

Do those verses say that God, Christ, and the holy spirit constitute a Trinitarian Godhead, that the three are equal in substance, power, and eternity? No, they do not, no more than listing three people, such as Tom, Dick, and Harry, means that they are three in one.

This type of reference, admits McClintock and Strong's *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, "proves only that there are the three subjects named, . . . but it does not prove, by itself, that all the three belong necessarily to the divine nature, and possess equal divine honor."

Although a supporter of the Trinity, that source says of [2 Corinthians 13:13 \(14\)](#): "We could not justly infer that they possessed *equal authority*, or the same nature." And of [Matthew 28:18-20](#) it says: "This text, however, taken by itself, would not prove decisively either the *personality* of the three subjects mentioned, or their *equality* or *divinity*."

When Jesus was baptized, God, Jesus, and the holy spirit were also mentioned in the same context. Jesus "saw descending like a dove God's spirit coming upon him." ([Matthew 3:16](#)) This, however, does not say that the three are one. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are mentioned together numerous times, but that does not make them one. Peter, James, and John are named together, but that does not make them one either. Furthermore, God's spirit descended upon Jesus at his baptism, showing

that Jesus was not anointed by spirit until that time. This being so, how could he be part of a Trinity where he had always been one with the holy spirit?

Another reference that speaks of the three together is found in some older Bible translations at [1 John 5:7](#). Scholars acknowledge, however, that these words were not originally in the Bible but were added much later. Most modern translations rightly omit this spurious verse.

Other "proof texts" deal only with the relationship between two—the Father and Jesus. Let us consider some of them.

“I and the Father Are One”

THAT text, at [John 10:30](#), is often cited to support the Trinity, even though no third person is mentioned there. But Jesus himself showed what he meant by his being "one" with the Father. At [John 17:21, 22](#), he prayed to God that his disciples "may all be one, just as you, Father, are in union with me and I am in union with you, that they also may be in union with us, . . . that they may be one just as we are one." Was Jesus praying that all his disciples would become a single entity? No, obviously Jesus was praying that they would be united in thought and purpose, as he and God were.—See also [1 Corinthians 1:10](#).

Jesus prayed to God that his disciples might "all be one," just as he and his Father "are one"

At [1 Corinthians 3:6, 8](#), Paul says: "I planted, Apollos watered . . . He that plants and he that waters are one." Paul did not mean that he and Apollos were two persons in one; he meant that they were unified in purpose. The Greek word that Paul used here for "one" (*hen*) is neuter, literally "one (thing)," indicating oneness in cooperation. It is the same word that Jesus used at [John 10:30](#) to describe his relationship with his Father. It is also the same word that Jesus used at [John 17:21, 22](#). So when he used the word "one" (*hen*) in these cases, he was talking about unity of thought and purpose.

Regarding [John 10:30](#), John Calvin (who was a Trinitarian) said in the book *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*: "The ancients made a wrong use of this passage to prove that Christ is . . . of the same essence with the Father. For Christ does not argue about the unity of substance, but about the agreement which he has with the Father."

Right in the context of the verses after [John 10:30](#), Jesus forcefully argued that his words were not a claim to be God. He asked the Jews who wrongly drew that conclusion and wanted to stone him: "Why do you charge me with blasphemy because I, consecrated and sent into the world by the Father, said, 'I am God's son'?" ([John 10:31-36](#), NE) No, Jesus claimed that he was, not God the Son, but the Son of God.

“Making Himself Equal to God”?

"The ancients made a wrong

ANOTHER scripture offered as support for the Trinity is [John 5:18](#). It says that the Jews (as at [John 10:31-36](#)) wanted to kill Jesus because "he was also calling God his own Father, making himself equal to God."

use of [[John 10:30](#)] to prove that Christ is . . . of the same essence with the Father." — Commentary on the Gospel According to John, by John Calvin

But who said that Jesus was making himself equal to God? Not Jesus. He defended himself against this false charge in the very next [verse \(19\)](#): "To this accusation Jesus replied: . . . 'the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees the Father doing.'"—*JB*.

By this, Jesus showed the Jews that he was not equal to God and therefore could not act on his own initiative. Can we imagine someone equal to Almighty God saying that he could "do nothing by himself"? (Compare [Daniel 4:34, 35](#).) Interestingly, the context of both [John 5:18](#) and [10:30](#) shows that Jesus defended himself against false charges from Jews who, like the Trinitarians, were drawing wrong conclusions!

“Equal with God”?

AT [PHILIPPIANS 2:6](#) the Catholic *Douay Version* (Dy) of 1609 says of Jesus: "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." The *King James Version* (KJ) of 1611 reads much the same. A number of such versions are still used by some to support the idea that Jesus was equal to God. But note how other translations render this verse:

- 1869: "who, being in the form of God, did not regard it as a thing to be grasped at to be on an equality with God." *The New Testament*, by G. R. Noyes.
- 1965: "He—truly of divine nature!—never self-confidently made himself equal to God." *Das Neue Testament*, revised edition, by Friedrich Pfäfflin.
- 1968: "who, although being in the form of God, did not consider being equal to God a thing to greedily make his own." *La Bibbia Concordata*.
- 1976: "He always had the nature of God, but he did not think that by force he should try to become equal with God." *Today's English Version*.
- 1984: "who, although he was existing in God's form, gave no consideration to a seizure, namely, that he should be equal to God." *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*.
- 1985: "Who, being in the form of God, did not count equality with God something to be grasped." *The New Jerusalem Bible*.

Some claim, however, that even these more accurate renderings imply that (1) Jesus already had equality but did not want to hold on to it or that (2) he did not need to grasp at equality because he already had it.

In this regard, Ralph Martin, in *The Epistle of Paul to the Philippians*, says of the original Greek: "It is questionable, however, whether the sense of the verb can glide from its real meaning of 'to seize', 'to snatch violently' to that of 'to hold fast.'" *The Expositor's Greek Testament* also says: "We cannot find any passage where ἄρπάζω [har-pa'zo] or any of its derivatives has the sense of 'holding in possession,' 'retaining'. It seems invariably to mean 'seize,' 'snatch violently'. Thus it is not permissible to glide from the true sense 'grasp at' into one which is totally different, 'hold fast.'"

From the foregoing it is apparent that the translators of versions such as the *Douay* and the *King James* are bending the rules to support Trinitarian ends. Far from saying that Jesus thought it was appropriate to be equal to God, the Greek of [Philippians 2:6](#), when read objectively, shows just the opposite, that Jesus did *not* think it was appropriate.

Jesus showed the Jews that he was not equal to God, saying that he could 'do nothing by himself but only what he saw the Father doing'

The context of the surrounding verses (3-5, 7, 8, *Dy*) makes it clear how verse 6 is to be understood. The Philippians were urged: "In humility, let each esteem others better than themselves." Then Paul uses Christ as the outstanding example of this attitude: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." What "mind"? To 'think it not robbery to be equal with God'? No, that would be just the opposite of the point being made! Rather, Jesus, who 'esteemed God as better than himself,' would never 'grasp for equality with God,' but instead he "humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death."

Surely, that cannot be talking about any part of Almighty God. It was talking about Jesus Christ, who perfectly illustrated Paul's point here—namely the importance of humility and obedience to one's Superior and Creator, Jehovah God.

“I Am”

AT [JOHN 8:58](#) a number of translations, for instance *The Jerusalem Bible*, have Jesus saying: "Before Abraham ever was, I Am." Was Jesus there teaching, as Trinitarians assert, that he was known by the title "I Am"? And, as they claim, does this mean that he was Jehovah of the Hebrew Scriptures, since the *King James Version* at [Exodus 3:14](#) states: "God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM"?

At [Exodus 3:14](#) (*KJ*) the phrase "I AM" is used as a title for God to indicate that he really existed and would do what he promised. *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs*, edited by Dr. J. H. Hertz, says of the phrase: "To the Israelites in bondage, the meaning would be, 'Although He has not yet displayed His power towards you, He will do so; He is eternal and will certainly redeem you.' Most moderns follow Rashi [a French Bible and Talmud commentator] in rendering [[Exodus 3:14](#)] 'I will be what I will be.'"

The expression at [John 8:58](#) is quite different from the one used at [Exodus 3:14](#). Jesus did not use it as a name or a title but as a means of explaining his prehuman existence. Hence, note how some other Bible versions render [John 8:58](#)

- 1869: "From before Abraham was, I have been." *The New Testament*, by G. R. Noyes.
- 1935: "I existed before Abraham was born!" *The Bible—An American Translation*, by J. M. P. Smith and E. J. Goodspeed.
- 1965: "Before Abraham was born, I was already the one that I am." *Das Neue Testament*, by Jörg Zink.
- 1981: "I was alive before Abraham was born!" *The Simple English Bible*.
- 1984: "Before Abraham came into existence, I have been." *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*.

Thus, the real thought of the Greek used here is that God's created "firstborn," Jesus, had existed long before Abraham was born.—[Colossians 1:15](#); [Proverbs 8:22, 23, 30](#); [Revelation 3:14](#).

Again, the context shows this to be the correct understanding. This time the Jews wanted to stone Jesus for claiming to "have seen Abraham" although, as they said, he was not yet 50 years old. (Verse 57) Jesus' natural response was to tell the truth about his age. So he naturally told them that he "was alive before Abraham was born!"—*The Simple English Bible*.

“The Word Was God”

AT [JOHN 1:1](#) the *King James Version* reads: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Trinitarians claim that this means that "the Word" (Greek, *ho lo'gos*) who came to earth as Jesus Christ was Almighty God himself.

Someone who is "with" another person cannot also be that other person

Note, however, that here again the context lays the groundwork for accurate understanding. Even the *King James Version* says, "The Word was *with* God." (Italics ours.) Someone who is "with" another person cannot be the same as that other person. In agreement with this, the *Journal of Biblical Literature*, edited by Jesuit Joseph A. Fitzmyer, notes that if the latter part of [John 1:1](#) were interpreted to mean "the" God, this "would then contradict the preceding clause," which says that the Word was *with* God.

Notice, too, how other translations render this part of the verse:

- 1808: "and the word was a god." *The New Testament in an Improved Version, Upon the Basis of Archbishop Newcome's New*

Translation: With a Corrected Text.

- 1864: "and a god was the word." *The Emphatic Diaglott*, interlinear reading, by Benjamin Wilson.
- 1928: "and the Word was a divine being." *La Bible du Centenaire*, L'Evangile selon Jean, by Maurice Goguel.
- 1935: "and the Word was divine." *The Bible—An American Translation*, by J. M. P. Smith and E. J. Goodspeed.
- 1946: "and of a divine kind was the Word." *Das Neue Testament*, by Ludwig Thimme.
- 1950: "and the Word was a god." *New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures*.
- 1958: "and the Word was a God." *The New Testament*, by James L. Tomanek.
- 1975: "and a god (or, of a divine kind) was the Word." *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, by Siegfried Schulz.
- 1978: "and godlike kind was the Logos." *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, by Johannes Schneider.

At [John 1:1](#) there are two occurrences of the Greek noun *the-os'* (god). The first occurrence refers to Almighty God, with whom the Word was ("and the Word [*lo'gos*] was with God [a form of *the-os'*]"). This first *the-os'* is preceded by the word *ton* (the), a form of the Greek definite article that points to a distinct identity, in this case Almighty God ("and the Word was with [the] God").

On the other hand, there is no article before the second *the-os'* at [John 1:1](#). So a literal translation would read, "and god was the Word." Yet we have seen that many translations render this second *the-os'* (a predicate noun) as "divine," "godlike," or "a god." On what authority do they do this?

The Koine Greek language had a definite article ("the"), but it did not have an indefinite article ("a" or "an"). So when a predicate noun is not preceded by the definite article, it may be indefinite, depending on the context.

The *Journal of Biblical Literature* says that expressions "with an anarthrous [no article] predicate preceding the verb, are primarily qualitative in meaning." As the *Journal* notes, this indicates that the *lo'gos* can be likened to a god. It also says of [John 1:1](#): "The qualitative force of the predicate is so prominent that the noun [*the-os'*] cannot be regarded as definite."

So [John 1:1](#) highlights the quality of the Word, that he was "divine," "godlike," "a god," but not Almighty God. This harmonizes with the rest of the Bible, which shows that Jesus, here called "the Word" in his role as God's Spokesman, was an obedient subordinate sent to earth by his Superior, Almighty God.

There are many other Bible verses in which almost all translators in other languages consistently insert the article "a" when translating Greek sentences with the same structure. For example, at [Mark 6:49](#), when the disciples saw Jesus walking on water, the *King James Version* says: "They supposed it had been a spirit." In the Koine Greek, there is no "a" before "spirit." But almost all translations in other languages add an "a" in order to make the rendering fit the context. In the same way, since [John 1:1](#) shows that the Word was *with* God, he could not *be* God but was "a god," or "divine."

Joseph Henry Thayer, a theologian and scholar who worked on the *American Standard Version*, stated simply: "The Logos was divine, not the divine Being himself." And Jesuit John L. McKenzie wrote in his *Dictionary of the Bible*: "[Jn 1:1](#) should rigorously be translated . . . 'the word was a divine being.'"

Violating a Rule?

SOME claim, however, that such renderings violate a rule of Koine Greek grammar published by Greek scholar E. C. Colwell back in 1933. He asserted that in Greek a predicate noun "has the [definite] article when it follows the verb; it does not have the [definite] article when it precedes the verb." By this he meant that a predicate noun preceding the verb should be understood as though it did have the definite article ("the") in front of it. At [John 1:1](#) the second noun (*the-os*), the predicate, precedes the verb—"and [*the-os*] was the Word." So, Colwell claimed, [John 1:1](#) should read "and [the] God was the Word."

But consider just two examples found at [John 8:44](#). There Jesus says of the Devil: "That one was a manslayer" and "he is a liar." Just as at [John 1:1](#), the predicate nouns ("manslayer" and "liar") precede the verbs ("was" and "is") in the Greek. There is no indefinite article in front of either noun because there was no indefinite article in Koine Greek. But most translations insert the word "a" because Greek grammar and the context require it.—See also [Mark 11:32](#); [John 4:19](#); [6:70](#); [9:17](#); [10:1](#); [12:6](#).

Colwell had to acknowledge this regarding the predicate noun, for he said: "It is indefinite ["a" or "an"] in this position only when the context demands it." So even he admits that when the context requires it, translators may insert an indefinite article in front of the noun in this type of sentence structure.

"The Logos was divine, not the divine Being himself."—Joseph Henry Thayer, Bible scholar

Does the context require an indefinite article at [John 1:1](#)? Yes, for the testimony of the entire Bible is that Jesus is not Almighty God. Thus, not Colwell's questionable rule of grammar, but *context* should guide the translator in such cases. And it is apparent from the many translations that insert the indefinite article "a" at [John 1:1](#) and in other places that many scholars disagree with such an artificial rule, and so does God's Word.

No Conflict

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 82:1-6](#)) Even Satan is called "the god of this system of things" at [2 Corinthians 4:4](#).

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." Because of his unique position in relation to Jehovah, Jesus is a "Mighty God."—[John 1:1](#); [Isaiah 9:6](#).

Since the Bible calls humans, angels, even Satan, "gods," or powerful ones, the superior Jesus in heaven can properly be called "a god"

But does not "Mighty God" with its capital letters indicate that Jesus is in some way equal to Jehovah God? Not at all. Isaiah merely prophesied this to be one of four names that Jesus would be called, and in the English language such names are capitalized. Still, even though Jesus was called "Mighty," there can be only one who is "Almighty." To call Jehovah God "Almighty" would have little significance unless there existed others who were also called gods but who occupied a lesser or inferior position.

The *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* in England notes that according to Catholic theologian Karl Rahner, while *the-os'* is used in scriptures such as [John 1:1](#) in reference to Christ, "in none of these instances is 'theos' used in such a manner as to identify Jesus with him who elsewhere in the New Testament figures as 'ho Theos,' that is, the Supreme God." And the *Bulletin* adds: "If the New Testament writers believed it vital that the faithful should confess Jesus as 'God', is the almost complete absence of just this form of confession in the New Testament explicable?"

But what about the apostle Thomas' saying, "My Lord and my God!" to Jesus at [John 20:28](#)? To Thomas, Jesus was like "a god," especially in the miraculous circumstances that prompted his exclamation. Some scholars suggest that Thomas may simply have made an emotional exclamation of astonishment, spoken to Jesus but directed to God. In either case, Thomas did not think that Jesus was Almighty God, for he and all the other apostles knew that Jesus never claimed to be God but taught that Jehovah alone is "the only true God."—[John 17:3](#).

Again, the context helps us to understand this. A few days earlier the resurrected Jesus had told Mary Magdalene to tell the disciples: "I am ascending to my Father and your Father and to my God and your God." ([John 20:17](#)) Even though Jesus was already resurrected as a mighty spirit, Jehovah was still his God. And Jesus continued to refer to Him as such even in the last book of the Bible, after he was glorified.—[Revelation 1:5, 6](#); [3:2](#), [12](#).

Just three verses after Thomas' exclamation, at [John 20:31](#), the Bible further clarifies the matter by stating: "These have been written down that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God," not that he was Almighty God. And it meant "Son" in a literal way, as with a natural father and son, not as some mysterious part of a Trinity Godhead.

Must Harmonize with the Bible

IT IS claimed that several other scriptures support the Trinity. But these are similar to those discussed above in that, when carefully examined, they offer no actual support. Such texts only illustrate that when considering any claimed support for the Trinity, one must ask: Does the interpretation harmonize with the consistent teaching of the entire Bible—that Jehovah God alone is Supreme? If not, then the interpretation must be in error.

We also need to keep in mind that not even so much as one "proof text" says that God, Jesus, and the holy spirit are one in some mysterious Godhead. Not one scripture anywhere in the Bible says that all three are the same in substance, power, and eternity. The Bible is consistent in revealing Almighty God, Jehovah, as alone Supreme, Jesus as his created Son, and the holy spirit as God's active force

Worship God on His Terms

JESUS said in prayer to God: "This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ." ([John 17:3](#)) What kind of knowledge? "[God's] will is that all sorts of men should be saved and come to an *accurate* knowledge of truth." ([1 Timothy 2:4](#)) *The Amplified Bible* renders the latter phrase this way: "Know precisely *and* correctly the [divine] Truth."

So God wants us to know him and his purposes accurately, in conformity with divine truth. And God's Word, the Holy Bible, is the source of that truth. ([John 17:17](#); [2 Timothy 3:16, 17](#)) When people learn accurately what the Bible says about God, then they will avoid being like those mentioned at [Romans 10:2, 3](#), who had "a zeal for God; but not according to accurate knowledge." Or like the Samaritans, to whom Jesus said: "You worship what you do not know."—[John 4:22](#).

Therefore, if we want God's approval, we need to ask ourselves: What does *God* say about himself? How does *he* want to be worshiped? What are *his* purposes, and how should we fit in with them? An accurate knowledge of the truth gives us the right answers to such questions. Then we can worship God on his terms.

Dishonoring God

"THOSE honoring me I shall honor," says God. ([1 Samuel 2:30](#)) Does it honor God to call anyone his equal? Does it honor him to call Mary "the mother of God" and the "Mediatrice . . . between the Creator and His creatures," as does the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*? No, those ideas insult God. No one is his equal; nor did he have a fleshly

mother, since Jesus was not God. And there is no "Mediatrix," for God has appointed only "one mediator between God and men," Jesus.—[1 Timothy 2:5](#); [1 John 2:1, 2](#).

Beyond a doubt, the Trinity doctrine has confused and diluted people's understanding of God's true position. It prevents people from accurately knowing the Universal Sovereign, Jehovah God, and from worshiping him on his terms. As theologian Hans Küng said: "Why should anyone want to add anything to the notion of God's oneness and uniqueness that can only dilute or nullify that oneness and uniqueness?" But that is what belief in the Trinity has done.

Those who believe in the Trinity are not "holding God in accurate knowledge." ([Romans 1:28](#)) That verse also says: "God gave them up to a disapproved mental state, to do the things not fitting." [Verses 29 to 31](#) list some of those 'unfitting' things, such as 'murder, strife, being false to agreements, having no natural affection, merciless.' Those very things have been practiced by religions that accept the Trinity.

For instance, Trinitarians have often persecuted and even killed those who rejected the Trinity doctrine. And they have gone even further. They have killed their fellow Trinitarians in wartime. What could be more 'unfitting' than Catholics killing Catholics, Orthodox killing Orthodox, Protestants killing Protestants—all in the name of the same Trinitarian God?

Yet, Jesus plainly said: "By this all will know that you are my disciples, *if you have love among yourselves*." ([John 13:35](#)) God's Word expands on this, saying: "The children of God and the children of the Devil are evident by this fact: Everyone who does not carry on righteousness does not originate with God, *neither does he who does not love his brother*." It likens those who kill their spiritual brothers to "Cain, who originated with the wicked one [Satan] and slaughtered his brother."—[1 John 3:10-12](#).

Thus, the teaching of confusing doctrines about God has led to actions that violate his laws. Indeed, what has happened throughout Christendom is what Danish theologian Søren Kierkegaard described: "Christendom has done away with Christianity without being quite aware of it."

Christendom's spiritual condition fits what the apostle Paul wrote: "They publicly declare they know God, but they disown him by their works, because they are detestable and disobedient and not approved for good work of any sort."—[Titus 1:16](#).

Soon, when God brings this present wicked system of things to its end, Trinitarian Christendom will be called to account. And she will be judged adversely for her God-dishonoring actions and doctrines.—[Matthew 24:14, 34; 25:31-34, 41, 46; Revelation 17:1-6, 16; 18:1-8, 20, 24; 19:17-21](#).

Reject the Trinity

THERE can be no compromise with God's truths. Hence, to worship God on his terms means to reject the Trinity doctrine. It contradicts what the prophets, Jesus, the apostles, and the early Christians believed and taught. It contradicts what God says about himself in his own inspired Word. Thus, he counsels: "Acknowledge that I alone am God and that there is no one else like me."—[Isaiah 46:9](#), *TEV*.

God's interests are not served by making him confusing and mysterious. Instead, the more that people become confused about God and his purposes, the better it suits God's Adversary, Satan the Devil, the 'god of this world.' It is he who promotes such false doctrines to 'blind the minds of unbelievers.' ([2 Corinthians 4:4](#)) And the Trinity doctrine also serves the interests of clergymen who want to maintain their hold on people, for they make it appear as though only theologians can understand it.—See [John 8:44](#).

Accurate knowledge of God brings great relief. It frees us from teachings that are in conflict with God's Word and from organizations that have apostatized. As Jesus said: "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."—[John 8:32](#).

By honoring God as supreme and worshiping him on his terms, we can avoid the judgment that he will soon bring on apostate Christendom. Instead, we can look forward to God's favor when this system ends: "The world is passing away and so is its desire, but he that does the will of God remains forever."—[1 John 2:17](#).

An illustration (of many that could have been given) of Arian persecution of Trinitarians—both Anabaptist (Novatian) and Catholic, and the Invention of Tortures that even the Pagans did not use to persecute Christians by the Arians

Chapter XXXVIII

Cruelty of Macedonius, and Tumults raised by him.

The bishops of the Arian party began to assume greater assurance from the imperial edicts. In what manner they undertook to convene a Synod, we will explain somewhat later. Let us now briefly mention a few of their previous acts. Acacius and Patrophilus having ejected Maximus, bishop of Jerusalem, installed Cyril in his see. Macedonius subverted the order of things in the cities and provinces adjacent to Constantinople, promoting to ecclesiastical honors his assistants in his intrigues against the churches. He ordained Eleusius bishop of Cyzicus, and Marathonius, bishop of Nicomedia: the latter had before been a deacon under Macedonius himself, and proved very active in founding monasteries both of men and women. But we must now mention in what way Macedonius desolated the churches in the cities and provinces around Constantinople. This man, as I have already said, having seized the bishopric, inflicted innumerable calamities on such as were unwilling to adopt his views. His persecutions were not confined to those who were recognized as members of the catholic church, but extended to the Novatians also, inasmuch as he knew that they maintained the doctrine of the *homooousion*; they therefore with the others underwent the most intolerable sufferings, but their bishop, Angelius by name, effected his escape by flight. Many persons eminent for their piety were seized and tortured, because they refused to communicate with him: and after the torture, they forcibly constrained the men to be partakers of the holy mysteries, their mouths being forced open with a piece of wood, and then the consecrated elements thrust into them. Those who were so treated regarded this as a punishment far more grievous than all others. Moreover they laid hold of women and children, and compelled them to be initiated [by baptism]; and if any one resisted or otherwise spoke against it, stripes immediately followed, and after the stripes, bonds and imprisonment, and other violent measures. I shall here relate an instance or two whereby the reader may form some idea of the extent of the harshness and cruelty exercised by Macedonius and those who were then in power. They first pressed in a box, and then sawed off, the breasts of such women as were unwilling to communicate with them. The same parts of the persons of other women they burnt partly with iron, and partly with eggs intensely heated in the fire. This mode of torture which was unknown even among the heathen, was invented by those who professed to be Christians. These facts were related to me by the aged Auxanon, the presbyter in the Novatian church of whom I spoke in the first book. He said also that he had himself endured not a few severities from the Arians, prior to his reaching the dignity of presbyter; having been thrown into prison and beaten with many stripes, together with Alexander the Paphlagonian, his companion in the monastic life. He added that he had himself been able to sustain these tortures, but that Alexander died in

prison from the effects of their infliction. He is now buried on the right of those sailing into the bay of Constantinople which is called Ceras, close by the rivers, where there is a church of the Novatians named after Alexander. Moreover the Arians, at the instigation of Macedonius, demolished with many other churches in various cities, that of the Novatians at Constantinople near Pelargus. Why I particularly mention this church, will be seen from the extraordinary circumstances connected with it, as testified by the same aged Auxanon. The emperor's edict and the violence of Macedonius had doomed to destruction the churches of those who maintained the doctrine of consubstantiality; the decree and violence reached this church, and those also who were charged with the execution of the mandate were at hand to carry it into effect. I cannot but admire the zeal displayed by the Novatians on this occasion, as well as the sympathy they experienced from those whom the Arians at that time ejected, but who are now in peaceful possession of their churches. For when the emissaries of their enemies were urgent to accomplish its destruction, an immense multitude of Novatians, aided by numbers of others who held similar sentiments, having assembled around this devoted church, pulled it down, and conveyed the materials of it to another place: this place stands opposite the city, and is called Sycæ, and forms the thirteenth ward of the town of Constantinople. This removal was effected in a very short time, from the extraordinary ardor of the numerous persons engaged in it: one carried tiles, another stones, a third timber; some loading themselves with one thing, and some with another. Even women and children assisted in the work, regarding it as the realization of their best wishes, and esteeming it the greatest honor to be accounted the faithful guardians of things consecrated to God. In this way at that time was the church of the Novatians transported to Sycæ. Long afterwards when Constantius was dead, the emperor Julian ordered its former site to be restored, and permitted them to rebuild it there. The people therefore, as before, having carried back the materials, reared the church in its former position; and from this circumstance, and its great improvement in structure and ornament, they not inappropriately called it *Anastasia*. The church as we before said was restored afterwards in the reign of Julian. But at that time both the Catholics and the Novatians were alike subjected to persecution: for the former abominated offering their devotions in those churches in which the Arians assembled, but frequented the other three—for this is the number of the churches which the Novatians have in the city—and engaged in divine service with them. Indeed they would have been wholly united, had not the Novatians refused from regard to their ancient precepts. In other respects however, they mutually maintained such a degree of cordiality and affection, as to be ready to lay down their lives for one another: both parties were therefore persecuted indiscriminately, not only at Constantinople, but also in other provinces and cities. At Cyzicus, Eleusius, the bishop of that place, perpetrated the same kind of enormities against the Christians there, as Macedonius had done elsewhere, harassing and putting them to flight in all directions; and [among other things] he completely demolished the church of the Novatians at Cyzicus. But Macedonius consummated his wickedness in the following manner. Hearing that there was a great number of the Novatian sect in the province of Paphlagonia, and especially at Mantinium, and perceiving that such a numerous body could not be driven from their homes by ecclesiastics alone, he caused, by the emperor's permission, four companies of soldiers to be sent into Paphlagonia, that through dread of the military they might receive the Arian opinion. But those who inhabited Mantinium, animated to desperation by zeal for their

religion, armed themselves with long reap-hooks, hatchets, and whatever weapon came to hand, and went forth to meet the troops; on which a conflict ensuing, many indeed of the Paphlagonians were slain, but nearly all the soldiers were destroyed. I learnt these things from a Paphlagonian peasant who said that he was present at the engagement; and many others of that province corroborate this account. Such were the exploits of Macedonius on behalf of Christianity, consisting of murders, battles, incarcerations, and civil wars: proceedings which rendered him odious not only to the objects of his persecution, but even to his own party. He became obnoxious also to the emperor on these accounts, and particularly so from the circumstance I am about to relate. The church where the coffin lay that contained the relics of the emperor Constantine threatened to fall. On this account those that entered, as well as those who were accustomed to remain there for devotional purposes, were in much fear. Macedonius, therefore, wished to remove the emperor's remains, lest the coffin should be injured by the ruins. The populace getting intelligence of this, endeavored to prevent it, insisting 'that the emperor's bones should not be disturbed, as such a disinterment would be equivalent, to their being dug up': many however affirmed that its removal could not possibly injure the dead body, and thus two parties were formed on this question; such as held the doctrine of consubstantiality joining with those who opposed it on the ground of its impiety. Macedonius, in total disregard of these prejudices, caused the emperor's remains to be transported to the church where those of the martyr Acacius lay. Whereupon a vast multitude rushed toward that edifice in two hostile divisions, which attacked one another with great fury, and great loss of life was occasioned, so that the churchyard was covered with gore, and the well also which was in it overflowed with blood, which ran into the adjacent portico, and thence even into the very street. When the emperor was informed of this unfortunate occurrence, he was highly incensed against Macedonius, both on account of the slaughter which he had occasioned, and because he had dared to move his father's body without consulting him. Having therefore left the Cæsar Julian to take care of the western parts, he himself set out for the east. How Macedonius was a short time afterwards deposed, and thus suffered a most inadequate punishment for his infamous crimes, I shall hereafter relate.⁶²⁹

⁶²⁹ Socrates Scholasticus. (1890). *The Ecclesiastical History*, by Socrates Scholasticus A. C. Zenos, Trans.). In P. Schaff & H. Wace (Eds.), *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series, Volume II: Socrates, Sozomenus: Church Histories* (P. Schaff & H. Wace, Ed.) (65–67). New York: Christian Literature Company.

Selected Texts Where the Deity of Christ is Attacked or Denied in Modern Bible Versions Because of Corruptions in the Greek Critical Text, with a Brief Defense of the Received Text Readings in These Texts⁶³⁰

Luke 24:52

And they **worshipped him**, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy (KJV)
καὶ αὐτοὶ **προσκυνήσαντες αὐτόν**, ὑπέστρεψαν εἰς Ἱερουσαλὴμ μετὰ χαρᾶς μεγάλης·

(TR)

And they returned to Jerusalem with great joy, (RSV)

Καὶ αὐτοὶ ὑπέστρεψαν εἰς Ἱερουσαλὴμ μετὰ χαρᾶς μεγάλης (CT-Tisch)

The words “worshipped him,” indicating the Deity of the resurrected Christ, are missing in only one Greek manuscript, codex D, one of the worst Greek MSS in existence. All the rest of the Greek copies—thousands of them—have the words.

John 1:18

No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten **Son**, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. (KJV)

Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακε πώποτε· ὁ μονογενὴς **υἱός**, ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς, ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο. (TR)

Various modern versions change “the only begotten Son” to “only begotten **god/God**” (cf. NWT)

Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε· μονογενὴς **θεὸς** ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο. (CT)

Arians employ the “only begotten god” reading to affirm that Christ is a secondary deity that was created by the true God. Furthermore, classical Trinitarian truth affirms that Christ is begotten as Son, not as God—the Person of the Son, not the Divine essence, is begotten. Over 99% of Greek MSS have the Received Text reading.⁶³¹ Even one of the

⁶³⁰ The list above is by no means comprehensive; other texts, exist, such as 1 John 3:16: “Hereby perceive we the love *of God*, because he laid down his life for us” (KJV), ἐν τούτῳ ἐγνώκαμεν τὴν ἀγάπην τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὅτι ἐκεῖνος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἔθηκε, TR; “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us” (ESV), ἐν τούτῳ ἐγνώκαμεν τὴν ἀγάπην, ὅτι ἐκεῖνος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἔθηκεν, CT, are also present. Note that the NKJV rejects the KJV and follows the critical text in 1 John 3:16, removing the Deity of Christ to read “By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us” with the critical text. The KJV/TR reading has some Greek MSS support and is also supported by various ancient versions, such as the Latin Vulgate.

⁶³¹ Modalists such as Oneness Pentecostals would also naturally prefer the critical text reading to the Received Text, because the *Textus Receptus* affirms that Christ, as Son, eternally exists in the bosom of the Father (ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς), supporting Christ’s status as the eternal Son and refuting the modalist notion that Christ only became Son at the time of His assumption of a human nature in the incarnation.

editors of the critical Greek text noted: “It is doubtful that the author would have written μονογενὴς θεὸς, which may be a primitive, transcriptional error in the Alexandrian tradition.”⁶³² The first mention of the “begotten god” reading appears in a fragment ascribed to the Gnostic heretic Valentinus. The Old Latin, the Vulgate, the Georgian, and the Slavonic versions have the Received Text reading, and the patristic writers Tertullian, Hippolytus of Rome, Athanasius, Chrysostom, Origen, Eusebius, Gregory of Nyssa, and, Basil of Caesarea also provide support. Arius, on the other hand, employed “only begotten god.”

John 3:13

And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, *even* the Son of man **which is in heaven**. (KJV)

καὶ οὐδεὶς ἀναβέβηκεν εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν, εἰ μὴ ὁ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καταβάς, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου **ὁ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ**. (TR)

No one has ascended into heaven except the who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. (ESV)

καὶ οὐδεὶς ἀναβέβηκεν εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν εἰ μὴ ὁ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καταβάς, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. (CT)

The KJV/TR reading teaches that Christ is Omnipresent God even during His earthly ministry; He is the Son of Man who is in a particular location, and omnipresent Deity who is both on earth and in heaven at the same time. The critical text removes this testimony to Christ's Deity. 99% of Greek MSS possess the KJV/TR reading, which is also supported by all ancient Latin and Syriac versions, the Coptic, Ethiopic, Georgian, and all Armenian versions. The KJV/TR is also supported by patristic writers such as Hippolytus, Athanasius, Didymus, Aphraates, Eustathius, Chrysostom, Theodorot, Cyril, Paulus Bishop of Emesa, Theodore of Mopsuestia; Amphiochius, Severus, Theodorus Heraclitus, Ambrose, Novatian, Hilary, Victorinus, Jerome, Cassian, Vigilus, Zeno, Marius, and Augustine, among others.

Acts 20:28

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of **God**, which he hath purchased with **his own blood**. (KJV)

προσέχετε οὖν ἑαυτοῖς καὶ παντὶ τῷ ποιμνίῳ, ἐν ᾧ ὑμεῖς τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιον ἔθετο ἐπισκόπους, ποιμαίνειν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ **Θεοῦ**, ἣν περιποιήσατο διὰ **τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος**. (TR)

Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of the **Lord**, which he obtained with **the blood of his Own**. (ESV marg.)

⁶³² Pg. 170, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, (4th rev. ed.). B. M. Metzger & United Bible Societies. London: United Bible Societies, 1994.

προσέχετε ἑαυτοῖς καὶ παντὶ τῷ ποιμνίῳ, ἐν ᾧ ὑμᾶς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἔθετο ἐπισκόπους ποιμαίνειν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ **Κυρίου**, ἣν περιεποιήσατο διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ ἰδίου. (CT-Tisch)

Only 4% of Greek MSS follow the critical text reading “Lord.” The Received Text reading has more Greek MSS support, while many Greek MSS follow the conflated reading “church of the Lord and God,” which, although inaccurate, also provides further evidence for the presence of the word “God” in the original, showing that Jesus Christ is God. Only 4% of Greek MSS do not call Christ “God” in this passage. Furthermore, Paul uses the expression “church of God” eleven times, while never using the expression “church of the Lord,” an expression that is actually absent from the New Testament entirely.

The variant at the end of the verse allows the critical text to be translated “the blood of his Own,” making the “God” or “Lord” be a different Person from the One who has blood. The TR reading is in 95% of Greek MSS.

Romans 9:5

Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, **who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.** (KJV)

ὧν οἱ πατέρες, καὶ ἐξ ὧν ὁ Χριστὸς τὸ κατὰ σάρκα, ὁ ὢν ἐπὶ πάντων, Θεὸς εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας. ἀμήν. (TR)

to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ. **God who is over all be blessed for ever. Amen.**

(RSV)

ὧν οἱ πατέρες καὶ ἐξ ὧν ὁ Χριστὸς τὸ κατὰ σάρκα. ὁ ὢν ἐπὶ πάντων θεὸς εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, ἀμήν.

(CT)

Here the critical text corrupts the punctuation of the passage to remove the fact that Romans 9:5 is recognizing that Christ is over all as the eternally blessed God.

Note the excerpt below from my notes on the Greek exegesis of the book of Romans explaining why this is erroneous:

KJV: Whose *are* the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ *came*, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

RSV: to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ. God who is over all be blessed for ever. Amen. (similar renderings are found in the text of other modern versions (NEB, etc.), or mentioned in the footnotes in various modern versions, such as the NIV, HCSB, etc.)

The KJV punctuates the verse as does the TR:

ὧν οἱ πατέρες, καὶ ἐξ ὧν ὁ Χριστὸς τὸ κατὰ σάρκα, ὁ ὢν ἐπὶ πάντων, Θεὸς εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας. ἀμήν.

The UBS (until the most recent edition, when it switched, Moo affirms) punctuated the verse as follows, in a way that accords with the translation of the RSV:

ὧν οἱ πατέρες, καὶ ἐξ ὧν ὁ Χριστὸς τὸ κατὰ σάρκα, ὁ ὢν ἐπὶ πάντων Θεὸς εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, ἀμήν.

The difference is the comma in the TR after πάντων, and the period/comma after αἰῶνας. The difference that makes the TR affirm the Deity of Christ in this verse, while the UBS/CT does not affirm it, is the comma/lack of a comma after πάντων. The affirmation of Christ’s Deity in Romans 9:5 in the TR, and the lack of such an affirmation in the CT, is typical of the theological slant of the two Greek New Testaments (cf. Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 3:16; John 3:13; 1 John 5:7; Revelation 1:8, 11; etc.). The CT

cannot begin to build lists like this for the TR.

So which is correct? Does Romans 9:5 affirm the Deity of Christ, or not? (much of the discussion below come from Cranfield on Romans in the *International Critical Commentary*)

The arguments against the Deity of Christ in Romans 9:5, and in favor of either, “who is over all. God be blessed for ever, Amen.” or, “God who is over all be blessed for ever, Amen.” or “He who is over all, God, be blessed for ever, Amen.” are mainly two.

- 1.) Four uncial manuscripts (A B C L)—note the inclusion of Vaticanus (B)—have a point after σάρκα, either by the first hand or by subsequent correctors, as do a handful of miniscules.
- 2.) To quote Metzger’s *Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, “nowhere else in his genuine epistles [Tit 2:13 is generally regarded as deutero-Pauline] does Paul ever designate *ho Christos* as *Theos*. In fact, on the basis of the general tenor of his theology it was considered tantamount to impossible that Paul would have expressed Christ’s greatness by calling him God blessed for ever.” This heretical, modernistic, junk “reason” is the main one for the UBS punctuation. Note that this “reason” also assumes the validity of another CT corruption, namely in Romans 14:10-12 changing judgment seat of “Christ” (v. 10) who is “God” (v. 12), into “judgment seat of God” (v. 10, 12). One with a TR notes that only a few chapters after Romans 9:5, in the same book, Paul exceedingly unequivocally identifies Christ as *Theos*. The TR has 98% of MSS agreeing with it in reading “Christ” in v. 10, while “God” is supported by Aleph, A, B, and C (supporting the idea that these were Arianizing MSS).

In favor of the Deity of Christ in Romans 9:5:

- 1.) The arguments against it are exceedingly poor. The punctuation argument neglects the fact that “the presence of marks of punctuation in early manuscripts of the New Testament is so haphazard that one cannot infer with confidence the construction given by the punctuator to the passage. For example, in Ro 9:2-4 codex Alexandrinus has a colon after μεγάλη in ver. 2, one between Χριστοῦ and ὑπὲρ and another after σάρκα in ver. 3, and one after Ἰσραηλῖται in v. 4. Codex Vaticanus has a colon at the end of Ro 9:3, after both occurrences of Ἰσραήλ in ver. 6, after Ἀβραάμ in ver. 7, Ῥεβέκκα in ver. 10, and αὐτοῦ in ver. 22!” Besides, Vaticanus and its allies are exceedingly corrupt MSS in general, frequently adding, dropping, switching, etc. words, and they appear to have been under Arian influence, through their regular omission or corruption of texts dealing with the Deity of Christ (1 Timothy 3:16; Acts 20:28 [note, both by Paul]; Jude 4; John 3:13; 1:18; cf. Revelation 1:8, 11, etc.) Furthermore, no one is certain objectively about who put these punctuation marks in—the date of the punctuation, even as the date of the Vaticanus MSS itself, is not based upon objective external evidence.
- 2.) In particular in regard to the rendering “God who is over all be blessed for ever, Amen,” as in the RSV, the correct Greek for “God who is over all” would be ὁ ἐπὶ πάντων Θεός, without the ὧν.
- 3.) The argument that Paul does not call Christ *Theos* is inherently modernistic, assumes Titus 2:13 is not inspired, goes against overwhelming evidence in 1 Timothy 3:16, assumes Paul did not say what the MSS evidence indicates in Acts 20:28, ignores Paul’s frequent ascription of passages about Jehovah in the OT to the Lord Jesus, assumes that the Holy Spirit would not inspire what Paul was penman for to call Christ *Theos*, although the Spirit led John (John 20:28; 1:1; etc.), Peter (2 Peter 1:1), and the other NT writers to do so, and has many other problems. Any translation or Greek testament that accepts the Arian position on Romans 9:5 is influenced by theological liberalism and apostasy, rather than objectivity of evidence. Note that in 1 Timothy 3:16 failing to call Christ “God manifest in the flesh” (Θεὸς ἐφανερώθη ἐν σαρκί) has a grammatical issue (ὅς w/o antecedent) stating that some unknown person appeared in a body (ὅς ἐφανερώθη ἐν σαρκί), again in 1 Timothy 3:16 the TR has the overwhelming majority of MSS.
- 4.) The positive evidence for “who is over all, God blessed for ever, Amen” is overwhelming.⁶³³
- a.) Pauline doxologies are generally either an integral part of the preceding sentence or else closely connected with it (the doxology referring to a person named in the preceding sentence), and do not stand in complete asyndeton, as, according to the Arian view of the punctuation, Romans 9:5 would do. Compare, e. g., 1:25; 11:36; 2 Cor 11:31; Gal 1:5; 2 Tim 4:18.
- b.) Whenever *baruk* or its Greek equivalent εὐλογητός is used in the Bible in an independent doxology, it is always (apart from one known exception: in the LXX version of Psalm 68[LXX: 67]:19—apparently a duplicate translation/LXX textual corruption—it is also worth seeing if there are textual variants in the

⁶³³ One other alternative translation that favors the Deity of Christ is “who is God over all, blessed for ever, Amen,” connecting Θεὸς with ἐπὶ πάντων. However, the translation that is found in the KJV is to be preferred.

LXX on this—has been inserted before εὐλογητὸς κύριος)⁶³⁴ the first word of the sentence, and the same rule is regularly applied also in extra-Biblical Jewish usage. Compare, e. g., Gen 9:26; 1 Sam 25:32; Ps 28:6 (LXX 27:6); 31:21-22 (LXX 30:21),⁶³⁵ 41:13 (LXX, 40:14); 66:20 (LXX, 65:20) Luke 1:68; 2 Cor 1:3; Eph 1:3; 1 Pet 1:3; 1QM 13:2; 14:4; and in the Eighteen Benedictions. It should be remembered how characteristic of Jewish worship this ‘Blessed be . . .’ formula is. This is a very strong, indeed, a conclusive argument in favor of the Trinitarian position on Romans 9:5. Θεὸς εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας is not a doxology, but a description of Christ.

c.) the expression εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας is twice besides used by Paul, and each time unquestionably not in an ascription of praise, but in an assertion regarding the subject of the sentence; Romans 1:25,⁶³⁶ 2 Cor 11:31; whereas he twice uses the phrase *eunlogetos ho Theos*, as an ascription of praise, without joining εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας. If one looks at 2 Corinthians 11:31 (ὁ Θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ οἶδεν, ὁ ὢν εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, ὅτι οὐ ψεύδομαι.), not only the same phrase as in Romans 9:5 is employed, but the same construction with ὁ ὢν occurs, and there the whole refers to the subject of the sentence. No one would here submit that the participle in this context was a wish or exclamation, or that it introduced an entirely new person. No one would deny that it refers back to the previous subject, and that surely is the correct way to view the same construction in Rom 9:5.

c.) The use of τὸ κατὰ σάρκα in v. 5a suggests that an antithesis is going to follow.

d.) An independent doxology would be rather surprising at this point, since, though a recital of Israel’s privileges might well ordinarily have been an occasion for such a doxology, in this case they have been mentioned in order to emphasize the grievousness of the Jews’ disobedience. (A dependent doxology like that of 1:25 would be a different matter and would be perfectly natural).

e.) The only natural way to take ὁ ὢν in the position it holds in the collocation of words forming vv. 3-5 is as the equivalent of *hos estin*, “who is.”

f.) The great majority of patristic writers took Romans 9:5 as evidence for the Deity of Christ, including Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, Hippolytus, Tertullian, Origen, Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret,

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Note the underlined phrase at the end of 67:18 (LXX), which corresponds with nothing in Hebrew, and probably is simply a copyist error, reduplicating the next phrase (the εὐλογητὸς κύριος) and therefore does not undermine the argument below by any means:

Psa. 67:19 ἀνέβης εἰς ὕψος ἡχμαλώτευσας αἰχμαλωσίαν ἔλαβες δόματα ἐν ἀνθρώπῳ καὶ γὰρ ἀπειθοῦντες τοῦ κατασκηνώσαι κύριος ὁ θεὸς εὐλογητός

Psa. 67:20 εὐλογητὸς κύριος ἡμέραν καθ’ ἡμέραν κατευοδώσει ἡμῖν ὁ θεὸς τῶν σωτηρίων ἡμῶν διάψαλμα

BLXX (67:18) Thou art gone up on high, thou hast led captivity captive, thou hast received gifts for man, yea, for *they were* rebellious, that thou mightest dwell among them. BLXX (67:19) Blessed be the Lord God, blessed be the Lord daily; and the God of our salvation shall prosper us. Pause.

⁶³⁵ Gen. 9:26 καὶ εἶπεν εὐλογητὸς κύριος ὁ θεὸς τοῦ Σημ καὶ ἔσται Χαναν παῖς αὐτοῦ

1Sam. 25:32 καὶ εἶπεν Δαυιδ τῇ Αβιγαια εὐλογητὸς κύριος ὁ θεὸς Ἰσραὴλ ὃς ἀπέστειλén σε σήμερον ἐν ταύτῃ εἰς ἀπάντησίν μου

Psa. 27:6 εὐλογητὸς κύριος ὅτι εἰσήκουσεν τῆς φωνῆς τῆς δεήσεώς μου

Psa. 30:22 εὐλογητὸς κύριος ὅτι ἐθαυμάστωσεν τὸ ἔλεος αὐτοῦ ἐν πόλει περιοχῆς

Psa. 40:14 εὐλογητὸς κύριος ὁ θεὸς Ἰσραὴλ ἀπὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος καὶ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα γένοιτο γένοιτο

Psa. 65:20 εὐλογητὸς ὁ θεός ὃς οὐκ ἀπέστησεν τὴν προσευχὴν μου καὶ τὸ ἔλεος αὐτοῦ ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ

Luke 1:68 Εὐλογητὸς Κύριος ὁ Θεὸς τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ, ὅτι ἐπεσκέψατο καὶ ἐποίησε λύτρωσιν τῷ λαῷ αὐτοῦ,

2Cor. 1:3 Εὐλογητὸς ὁ Θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὁ πατὴρ τῶν οἰκτιρμῶν καὶ Θεὸς πάσης παρακλήσεως,

Eph. 1:3 Εὐλογητὸς ὁ Θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὁ εὐλόγησας ἡμᾶς ἐν πάσῃ εὐλογίᾳ πνευματικῇ ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις ἐν Χριστῷ

1Pet. 1:3 Εὐλογητὸς ὁ Θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὁ κατὰ τὸ πολὺ αὐτοῦ ἔλεος ἀναγεννήσας ἡμᾶς εἰς ἐλπίδα ζωσαν δι’ ἀναστάσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐκ νεκρῶν,

⁶³⁶ 25 οἵτινες μετήλλαξαν τὴν ἀλήθειαν τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐν τῷ ψεύδει, καὶ ἐσεβάσθησαν καὶ ἐλάτρευσαν τῇ κτίσει παρὰ τὸν κτίσαντα, ὃς ἐστὶν εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας. ἀμήν.

Theophylact, Ambrosiaster, Augustine, and Pelagius. This was also the common view of later interpreters.

Alford concludes his comments on Romans 9:5 by stating that the Trinitarian view of the passage “is then not only that most agreeable to the usage of the Apostle, *but the only one admissible by the rules of grammar and arrangement*. It also admirably suits the context: for, having enumerated the historic advantages of the Jewish people, he concludes by stating one which ranks far higher than all,—that from them sprung, according to the flesh, He who is God over all, blessed for ever.”

So the doxology of Romans 9:5 is actually affirming, first, Christ’s lordship over all things (cf. 14:9; Phil 2:10)—the πάντων is a neuter, but an inclusive one which includes persons as well as things (cf. the neuter singular in Jn 6:37, 39; 17:24 and the neuter plural in 1 Cor 1:27f (in the light of 1:26); Col 1:16), and secondly His divine nature as *Theos*.

1 Corinthians 10:9

Neither let us tempt **Christ**, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. (KJV)

μηδὲ ἐκπειράζωμεν τὸν **Χριστόν**, καθὼς καὶ τινες αὐτῶν ἐπείρασαν, καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν ὄφεων ἀπώλοντο. (TR)

Nor let us try the **Lord**, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. (NASV)

μηδὲ ἐκπειράζωμεν τὸν **κύριον**, καθὼς καὶ τινες αὐτῶν ἐπείρασαν, καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν ὄφεων ἀπώλοντο. (CT-WH)

1 Corinthians 10:9 indicates that when the nation of Israel tempted Jehovah in their wilderness wanderings, they were really tempting Christ, identifying Jesus Christ as Jehovah (Numbers 21:5-6; Exodus 17:2, 7). The critical text weakens this identification of Christ with Jehovah by substituting the reading *Lord* for *Christ*, allowing anti-Trinitarians to identify the *Lord* with God the Father.

The Received Text reading is supported by the vast majority of Greek MSS, including the oldest MS in existence (P⁴⁶), as well as the Old Latin, Vulgate, Syriac, Sahidic, and Bohairic versions, and patristic writers from all geographical portions of Christendom from Irenaeus onward.

Colossians 3:16

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the **Lord**. (KJV)

ὁ λόγος τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐνοικεῖτω ἐν ὑμῖν πλουσίως ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ· διδάσκοντες καὶ νουθετοῦντες ἑαυτούς, ψαλμοῖς, καὶ ὕμνοις, καὶ ᾠδαῖς πνευματικαῖς, ἐν χάριτι ᾄδοντες ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ ὑμῶν τῷ **Κυρίῳ**. (TR)

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to **God**. (NASV)

Ὁ λόγος τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐνοικεῖτω ἐν ὑμῖν πλουσίως, ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ διδάσκοντες καὶ νουθετοῦντες ἑαυτούς, ψαλμοῖς ὕμνοις ᾠδαῖς πνευματικαῖς ἐν τῇ χάριτι ᾄδοντες ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν τῷ **θεῷ**. (CT)

Colossians 3:16 indicates that worship in song is directed to the “Lord” Jesus Christ, indicating His Deity. The reference to the Son as “Lord” in v. 16 is confirmed by v. 17 also: “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” The critical text removes this testimony to Christ’s Deity by changing “Lord” to “God,” that is, the Father. 96% of Greek MSS support the *Textus Receptus*, as do the ancient Old Latin and Gothic versions and other ancient witnesses.

1 Timothy 3:16

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: **God** was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory. (KJV)

καὶ ὁμολογουμένως μέγα ἐστὶ τὸ τῆς εὐσεβείας μυστήριον **Θεὸς** ἐφανερώθη ἐν σαρκί, ἐδικαιώθη ἐν πνεύματι, ὤφθη ἀγγέλοις, ἐκηρύχθη ἐν ἔθνεσιν, ἐπιστεύθη ἐν κόσμῳ, ἀνελήμθη ἐν δόξῃ. (TR)

Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: **He** was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory. (ESV)

καὶ ὁμολογουμένως μέγα ἐστὶν τὸ τῆς εὐσεβείας μυστήριον **ὁς** ἐφανερώθη ἐν σαρκί, ἐδικαιώθη ἐν πνεύματι, ὤφθη ἀγγέλοις, ἐκηρύχθη ἐν ἔθνεσιν, ἐπιστεύθη ἐν κόσμῳ, ἀνελήμθη ἐν δόξῃ. (CT)

The Received Text reading is in the overwhelming majority of manuscripts—99%. Furthermore, not one known Greek MSS on earth reads “he.” The critical Greek text actually reads the pronoun “who,” which is bad grammar. The CT reading is in four MSS (0.6%)—at most. In fact, one of these four (Alexandrinus) actually read “God” but was then changed into “who,” and another one (Sinaiticus) also testifies to the reading “God.” Therefore, the English translation of the CT reads “he,” since “who” does not make any sense. One must choose between 99% of the MSS and proper grammar or 0.6% (at most) of MSS and bad grammar. The bad grammar made one Greek MS (the corrupt codex D) change the Greek pronoun from *hos* to *ho* to eliminate the bad grammar that is present when “God” is removed from the passage. Patristic writers such as Gregory of Nyssa, Didymus, Chrysostom, Theodoret, and Euthalius also support the Received Text. Furthermore, there is no great mystery in a male human being having human flesh, but God being manifest in the flesh is certainly a great mystery.

1 John 5:7-8

For there are three that bear record **in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.** 8 **And there are three that bear witness in earth,** the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. (KJV)

ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσὶν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, ὁ πατήρ, ὁ λόγος, καὶ τὸ Ἅγιον Πνεῦμα· καὶ οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς ἓν εἰσι. 8 καὶ τρεῖς εἰσὶν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῇ γῇ, τὸ Πνεῦμα, καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ, καὶ τὸ αἷμα· καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν. (TR)

For there are three that testify: 8 the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three

agree. (ESV)

ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες, 8 τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ καὶ τὸ αἷμα, καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν. (CT)

The critical text eliminates this tremendous testimony to the Trinity. Evidence for the inspiration of 1 John 5:7 is provided at more length at the end of this article.

Jude 4

For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord **God**, and our Lord Jesus Christ. (KJV)

παρεισέδυσαν γάρ τινες ἄνθρωποι, οἱ πάλαι προγεγραμμένοι εἰς τοῦτο τὸ κρίμα, ἀσεβεῖς, τὴν τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμῶν χάριν μετατιθέντες εἰς ἀσέλγειαν, καὶ τὸν μόνον δεσπότην **Θεόν**, καὶ Κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἄρνούμενοι. (TR)

For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. (ESV)

παρεισέδυσαν γάρ τινες ἄνθρωποι, οἱ πάλαι προγεγραμμένοι εἰς τοῦτο τὸ κρίμα, ἀσεβεῖς, τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν χάριτα μετατιθέντες εἰς ἀσέλγειαν καὶ τὸν μόνον δεσπότην καὶ κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἄρνούμενοι. (CT)

The Greek grammar in Jude 4, where a single article is found in the phrase “the only Lord [*despotes*] God and our Lord [*kurios*] Jesus Christ” indicates that Christ is the Lord God because of the Granville-Sharp rule. The critical text eliminates this testimony to Christ’s Deity by eliminating the word “God” from the text, rejecting the very large majority of MSS.

Revelation 1:8, 11

I am Alpha and Omega, **the beginning and the ending**, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. . . . Saying, **I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last:** and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. (KJV)

Ἐγὼ εἰμι τὸ Α καὶ τὸ Ω, **ἀρχὴ καὶ τέλος**, λέγει ὁ Κύριος, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, ὁ παντοκράτωρ. . . . λεγούσης, Ἐγὼ εἰμι **τὸ Α καὶ τὸ Ω, ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος**· καὶ, Ὁ βλέπεις γράψον εἰς βιβλίον, καὶ πέμψον ταῖς ἑπτὰ ἐκκλησίαις ταῖς ἐν Ἀσίᾳ, εἰς Ἐφεσον, καὶ εἰς Σμύρναν, καὶ εἰς Πέργαμον, καὶ εἰς Θυάτειρα, καὶ εἰς Σάρδεις, καὶ εἰς Φιλαδέλφειαν, καὶ εἰς Λαοδικείαν. (TR)

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord **God**, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.” . . . saying, “Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.” (ESV)

Ἐγώ εἰμι τὸ ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὦ, λέγει κύριος ὁ θεός, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, ὁ παντοκράτωρ. . . . λεγούσης· ὁ βλέπεις γράψον εἰς βιβλίον καὶ πέμψον ταῖς ἑπτὰ ἐκκλησίαις, εἰς Ἔφεσον καὶ εἰς Σμύρναν καὶ εἰς Πέργαμον καὶ εἰς Θυάτειρα καὶ εἰς Σάρδεις καὶ εἰς Φιλαδέλφειαν καὶ εἰς Λαοδίκειαν. (CT)

The Received Text identifies Christ, the speaker in 1:8, 11, as the Almighty, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending, the first and the last. The critical text, by adding the word “God” in v. 8 and omitting the phrases highlighted above in v. 8 and v. 11, change the speaker in v. 8 from Christ to the Father, and remove the testimony to Christ’s Deity from this passage.

There is excellent Greek MSS support for the Received Text reading (which is also receives support from other sources; e. g., in v. 8, the Old Latin, the Vulgate, and other witnesses). While the textual situation in the book of Revelation is complicated, the Received Text tends to follow the largest single group of MSS. “Hoskier declared, concerning the TR text of Revelation: “I may state that if Erasmus had striven to found a text on the largest number of existing MSS [manuscripts] in the world of one type, he could not have succeeded better. . . . Here then is a powerful example of God’s guiding providence in preserving the text of Revelation.”⁶³⁷

Revelation 20:12

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before **God**; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. (KJV)

καὶ εἶδον τοὺς νεκρούς, μικροὺς καὶ μεγάλους, ἐστῶτας ἐνώπιον τοῦ **Θεοῦ**, καὶ βιβλία ἠνεώχθησαν· καὶ βιβλίον ἄλλο ἠνεώχθη, ὃ ἐστὶ τῆς ζωῆς· καὶ ἐκρίθησαν οἱ νεκροὶ ἐκ τῶν γεγραμμένων ἐν τοῖς βιβλίοις, κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν. (TR)

And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before **the throne**, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. (ESV)

καὶ εἶδον τοὺς νεκρούς, τοὺς μεγάλους καὶ τοὺς μικρούς, ἐστῶτας ἐνώπιον τοῦ **θρόνου**. καὶ βιβλία ἠνοιχθησαν, καὶ ἄλλο βιβλίον ἠνοιχθη, ὃ ἐστὶν τῆς ζωῆς, καὶ ἐκρίθησαν οἱ νεκροὶ ἐκ τῶν γεγραμμένων ἐν τοῖς βιβλίοις κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν. (CT)

Since Jesus Christ is the One sitting on this throne, the Received Text declares that He is “God,” while the critical text changes “God” to “throne.” Concerning the MSS evidence in the book of Revelation, see the comments on Revelation 1:8, 11 above.

Evidence for the inspiration and preservation of 1 John 5:7

In contrast to the other verses above, only a minority of Greek MSS contain the reading that is found in the *Textus Receptus* in 1 John 5:7—the definite majority of Greek

⁶³⁷ Pg. 16, 26, pg. 16, *When the KJV Departs from the “Majority” Text*, Jack Moorman, 2nd ed. Collingswood, NJ: Bible For Today, 1988.

MSS do not contain the verse. Why, then, should it be accepted as part of the Word of God and a testimony to the Trinity?

1.) In God's providence, God had the verse placed in the *Textus Receptus*, which true churches have received as containing all the words given by miraculous inspiration and preserved providentially. Since the Holy Spirit has led His churches to receive this verse (cf. John 17:8; 1 Timothy 3:15), it is part of the canonical NT text.

2.) There are readings found in the critical text that have far less evidence than 1 John 5:7, yet are accepted on CT principles (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:3, where the CT follows 1 Greek MS); in Luke 3:33, the CT reading is not found in any Greek MS known on earth).

3.) Only 14 of the c. 500 Greek MSS that lack 1 John 5:7 predate the ninth century, while there are many early witnesses in favor of 1 John 5:7. Consider the following chart (from an article by Jesse Boyd):

Historical Breakdown of Hostile Evidence

2/498 °© 4th century (a, B) = 0.4% of hostile evidence
 2/498 °© 5th century (A, 048) = 0.4% of hostile evidence
 1/498 °© 6th century (0296) = 0.2% of hostile evidence
 0/498 °© 7th century = 0.0% of hostile evidence
 1/498 °© 8th century (Y+) = 0.2% of hostile evidence
 8/498 °© 9th century (K, L, P, 049, 1424+, 1841+, 1862, 1895) = 1.6% of hostile evidence
 484/498 °© post 9th century = 97.2% of hostile evidence

- 30 mss. °© 10th century
- 80 mss. °© 11th century
- 79 mss. °© 12th century
- 98 mss. °© 13th century
- 119 mss. °© 14th century
- 55 mss. °© 15th century
- 15 mss. °© 16th century
- 6 mss. °© 17th century
- 1 mss. °© 18th century

Historical Breakdown of Favorable Evidence

A.D. (ca.) 200 °© Tertullian
 250 °© Cyprian
 318 °© Athanasius
 350 °© Idacius Clarus
 380 °© Priscillian
 385 °© Gregory of Nazanzius
 390 °© Jerome
 450 °© Contra Varimadum
 450 °© Latin mss. m
 485 °© Council of Carthage
 485 °© Victor of Vitensis
 500 °© Latin mss. r
 527 °© Fulgentius
 570 °© Cassiodorus
 636 °© Isidore of Seville
 650 °© Codex Pal Legionensus
 700 °© Jaqub of Edessa
 735 °© mss. used by Venerable Bede
 850 °© Codex Ulmensis

*In addition to the aforementioned favorable evidence, the Comma can be traced back through the Waldensian Church to the translation of the Old Italic in the 2nd century. Moreover, in the 7th century, at least 12 Old Latin mss contain the passage; at least 21 in the 8th century, and at least 189 in the 9th century. Over 6,000 Old Latin manuscripts remained unexamined to this day. It is also probable that the Comma was found in the Old Syriac tradition as far back as its translation. The Armenian and Slavonic versions bear witness to the Comma in several copies, and the German versions prior to Luther bear consistent testimony to it.

RESULT: The Johannine Comma enjoys at least 19 pieces of concrete favorable evidence predating the ninth century; hostile witnesses, on the other hand, can only claim 14 Greek manuscripts and an argument from silence with regard to the patristic evidence.

4.) The removal of 1 John 5:7 creates a grammatical error in the Greek text, one recognized, for example, by the early Greek patristic writer Gregory of Nazianzus c. A. D. 380. Concerning the CT reading, Gregory stated: “[The apostle John] has not been consistent in the way he has happened upon his terms; for after using Three in the masculine gender he adds three words which are neuter, contrary to the definitions and laws which you and your grammarians have laid down” (*Oration* 32:19). That is, there is a clear disagreement in the gender of the words in the critical Greek text between 1 John 5:7-8, so that the words “there are three who bear witness [masculine gender]” are followed by the three words in the neuter gender, “the Spirit and the water and the blood.” In the Received Text, there is no problem of gender discordance, but proper grammar is employed. Since the Apostle John, under inspiration, did not write bad grammar, the Received Text reading of 1 John 5:7 is correct.⁶³⁸

Note the following explanation:

The full text [of 1 John 5:7] follows with the disputed word in brackets:

HOTI TREIS EISIN HOI MARTUROUTES (EN TO OURANO, HO PATER, HO LOGOS, KAI TO HAGION PNEUMA; KAI HOUTOI HOI TREIS HEN EISI. KAI TREIS EISIN HOI MARTUROUTES EN TE GE) TO PNEUMA, KAI TO HUDOR, KAI TO HAIMA; KAI HOI TREIS EIS TO HEN EISIN.

The internal evidence against the omission is as follows:

1. The masculine article, numeral and participle HOI TREIS MARTUROUTES, are made to agree directly with three neuters, an insuperable and very bald grammatical difficulty. If the disputed words are allowed to remain, they agree with two masculines and one neuter noun HO PATER, HO LOGOS, KAI TO HAGION PNEUMA and, according to the rule of syntax, the masculines among the group control the gender over a neuter connected with them. Then the occurrence of the masculines TREIS MARTUROUTES in verse 8 agreeing with the neuters PNEUMA, HUDOR and HAIMA may be accounted for by the power of attraction, well known in Greek syntax.

2. If the disputed words are omitted, the 8th verse coming next to the 6th gives a very bald and awkward, and apparently meaningless repetition of the Spirit's witness twice in immediate

⁶³⁸ Note that in the TR that the three heavenly witnesses are “the witness of God,” v. 9, and the consubstantiality of the Persons of the Trinity, rather than a mere unity of agreement, is seen in the difference between the οἱ τρεῖς ἐν εἰσι and the οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἐν εἰσιν of the earthly witnesses. Note also that the gender discordance in the CT is not properly explicable based on a personification of πνεῦμα because of v. 6: τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν τὸ μαρτυροῦν.

succession.

3. If the words are omitted, the concluding words at the end of verse 8 contain an unintelligible reference. The Greek words KAI HOI TREIS EIS TO HEN EISIN mean precisely--"and these three agree to that (aforesaid) One." This rendering preserves the force of the definite article in this verse. Then what is "that One" to which "these three" are said to agree? If the 7th verse is omitted "that One" does not appear, and "that One" in verse 8, which designates One to whom the reader has already been introduced, has not antecedent presence in the passage. Let verse 7 stand, and all is clear, and the three earthly witnesses testify to that aforementioned unity which the Father, Word and Spirit constitute.

4. John has asserted in the previous 6 verses that faith is the bond of our spiritual life and victory over the world. This faith must have a solid warrant, and the truth of which faith must be assured is the Sonship and Divinity of Christ. See verses 5, 11, 12, 20. The only faith that quickens the soul and overcomes the world is (verse 5) the belief that Jesus is God's Son, that God has appointed Him our Life, and that this Life is true God. God's warrant for this faith comes: FIRST in verse 6, in the words of the Holy Ghost speaking by inspired men; SECOND in verse 7, in the words of the Father, the Word and the Spirit, asserting and confirming by miracles the Sonship and unity of Christ with the Father.; THIRD in verse 8, in the work of the Holy Ghost applying the blood and water from Christ's pierced side for our cleansing. FOURTH in verse 10, in the spiritual consciousness of the believer himself, certifying to him that he feels within a divine change.

How harmonious is all this if we accept the 7th verse as genuine, but if we omit it the very keystone of the arch is wanting, and the crowning proof that the warrant of our faith is divine (verse 9) is struck out. (Summarised from *Discussions of Robert Lewis Dabney*, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1967, by the Trinitarian Bible Society, 217 Kingston Road, London, SW19, 3NN England; reprinted in in September 16, 1998 (Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, fbns@wayoflife.org)

The following document also provides ancient testimony to the genuineness of 1 John 5:7, and explains why it is omitted in many Greek MSS:

Jerome's Prologue to the Canonical Epistles⁶³⁹

⁶³⁹ The translation below was made by Thomas Caldwell, S. J. of Marquette University in Milwaukee, WI. The translation comes from the Codex Fuldensis (c. A. D. 541-546). This Latin codex is available at <http://books.google.com>, and the Latin text above is found on pg. 399. The preface claims to be by Jerome, the translator of the Latin Vulgate. The prologue has textual critical value because it bears on the question of the authenticity of the Johannine Comma, 1 John 5:7 ("For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one."). If the preface is indeed by Jerome, it would provide evidence that there were Greek copies in his day that contained the Comma, and that Jerome thought that others who seem to have held to heretical doctrine had removed the verse from their manuscripts. Such a belief on Jerome's part would explain the presence of the Comma in the overwhelming majority of copies of the Latin Vulgate. There is certainly evidence for the Comma in the Old Latin Bible and various other sources before Jerome. If the Prologue is not by Jerome, whoever wrote it would still make the assertion that the Comma was originally present but was removed by unfaithful and heretical scribes. Of course, both Jerome and the copyist of the codex Fuldensis died many centuries ago and nobody today can ask them what actually happened. It is certainly true that many opponents of the genuineness of the Comma would dismiss out of hand the possibility that this Prologue truly comes from Jerome based on the assumption that there cannot be genuine evidence so early for the Comma, just as they dismiss Cyprian's quotation of the Comma in A. D. 251 ("The Lord says, 'I and the Father are one;' and again it is written of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, 'And these

The order of the seven Epistles which are called canonical is not the same among the Greeks who follow the correct faith and the one found in the Latin codices, where Peter, being the first among the apostles, also has his two epistles first. But just as we have corrected the evangelists into their proper order, so with God's help have we done with these. The first is one of James, then two of Peter, three of John and one of Jude.

Just as these are properly understood and so translated faithfully by interpreters into Latin without leaving ambiguity for the readers nor [allowing] the variety of genres to conflict, especially in that text where we read the unity of the trinity is placed in the first letter of John, where much error has occurred at the hands of unfaithful translators contrary to the truth of faith, who have kept just the three words water, blood and spirit in this edition omitting mention of Father, Word and Spirit in which especially the [universal] faith is strengthened and the unity of substance of Father, Son and Holy Spirit is attested.

In the other epistles to what extent our edition varies from others I leave to the prudence of the reader. But you, virgin of Christ, Eustocium, when you ask me urgently about the truth of scripture you expose my old age to being gnawed at by the teeth of envious ones who accuse me of being a falsifier and corruptor of the scriptures. But in such work I neither fear the envy of my critics nor deny the truth of scripture to those who seek it.

End of Prologue

PROLOGUS IN EPISTULAS CANONICAS.

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Non ita ordo est apud graecos qui integre sapiunt et fidem rectam sectantur. Epistularam septem quae canonicae nuncupantur. ut in latinis codicibus inuenitur quod petrus primus est in numero apostolorum primae sint etiam eius 5 epistulae in ordine ceterarum. Sed sicut euangelistas dudum ad ueritatis lineam correximus ita has proprio ordine deo nos iuuante reddidimus Est enim prima earum una iacobi. petri duae. iohannis tres. et iudae una 10 Quae sicut ab eis digestae sunt ita quoque ab interpretaetibus fideliter in latinum eloquium uerterentur nec ambiguitatem legentibus facerent nec sermonum se uarietas inpugnaret. illo praecipue loco ubi de unitate trinitatis in prima iohannis epistula positum legimus in qua est ab infidelibus 15 translatoribus multum erratum esse fidei ueritate conperimus trium tantummodo uocabula hoc est aquae sanguinis et spiritus in ipsa sua editione potentes et patri uerbique ac spiritus testimonium omittentes» In quo maxime et fides catholica roboratur et patris et fili et spiritus sancti una diuinitatis 20 substantia conprobatur. In ceteris uero epistulis quantum nostra aliorum distet editio lectoris prudentiae derelinquo. Sed tu uirgo christi eusthocium dum a me in pensius scribaturae ueritatem inquiris meam quodammodo senectutem inuidorum dentibus conrodendam exponis qui me falsarium corruptoremque 25 sanctarum pronuntiant scribaturarum. Sed ego in tali opere nec aemulorum meorum inuidentiam pertimesco nec sanctae scribaturae ueritatem poscentibus denegabo

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There is also a popular myth circulating that Erasmus promised to add 1 John 5:7 to his edition of the Greek New Testament if a single copy with the verse could be found. A copy was then allegedly forged, and Erasmus added 1 John 5:7, supposedly, based on this forged copy. However, none of this happened—it is simply a myth. Note the article below:

three are one.”” *On The Unity of the Church*, Treatise 1:6. Trans. *Church Fathers: The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts & James Donaldson.) on the assumption that Cyprian simply cannot have quoted it, since it allegedly did not yet exist. However, the fact that many people dismiss the evidence of this Prologue to the Comma from unreasonable biases does not of itself mean that the work did indeed come from Jerome's hand.

It should also be noted that there seem to be some problems with the Latin of the prologue found in the codex, whether as a result of errors in the modern scanning of the text, ancient copyist errors, or for other reasons. Those who know Latin should be able to evaluate these matters.

WHY DID ERASMUS ADD THE JOHANNINE COMMA TO HIS 3RD EDITION GREEK NEW TESTAMENT?

There are two popular myths regarding Erasmus and 1 John 5:7 that are parroted by modernists, evangelicals, and even fundamentalists today who defend the modern versions against the KJV.

The first myth is that Erasmus promised to insert the verse if a Greek manuscript were produced. This is stated as follows by Bruce Metzger: "Erasmus promised that he would insert *the Comma Johanneum*, as it is called, in future editions if a single Greek manuscript could be found that contained the passage. At length such a copy was found-- or made to order" (Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 1st and 2nd editions). The second myth is that Erasmus challenged Edward Lee to find a Greek manuscript that included 1 John 5:7. This originated with Erika Rummel in 1986 in her book *Erasmus' Annotations* and was repeated by James White in 1995 (*The Truth about the KJV-Only Controversy*).

In *A History of the Debate over 1 John 5:7,8*, Michael Maynard records that H.J. de Jonge, the Dean of the Faculty of Theology at Rijksuniversiteit (Leiden, Netherlands), has refuted both myths. de Jonge, a recognized specialist in Erasmian studies, refuted the myth of a promise in 1980, stating that Metzger's view on Erasmus' promise "has no foundation in Erasmus' work. Consequently it is highly improbable that he included the difficult passage because he considered himself bound by any such promise." He has also refuted the new myth of a challenge (which Rummel devised in reaction to the burial of the promise myth). In a letter of June 13, 1995, to Maynard, de Jonge wrote: I have checked again Erasmus' words quoted by Erika Rummel and her comments on them in her book *Erasmus' Annotations*. This is what Erasmus writes [on] in his *Liber tertius quo respondet ... Ed. Lei*: Erasmus first records that Lee had reproached him with neglect of the MSS. of 1 John because Er. (according to Lee) had consulted only one MS. Erasmus replies that he had certainly not used only one ms., but many copies, first in England, then in Brabant, and finally at Basle. He cannot accept, therefore, Lee's reproach of negligence and impiety.

'Is it negligence and impiety, if I did not consult manuscripts which were simply not within my reach? I have at least assembled whatever I could assemble. Let Lee produce a Greek MS. which contains what my edition does not contain and let him show that that manuscript was within my reach. Only then can he reproach me with negligence in sacred matters.'

From this passage you can see that Erasmus does not challenge Lee to produce a manuscript etc. What Erasmus argues is that Lee may only reproach Erasmus with negligence of MSS if he demonstrates that Erasmus could have consulted any MS. In which the *Comma Johanneum* figured. Erasmus does not at all ask for a MS. Containing the *Comma Johanneum*. He denies Lee the right to call him negligent and impious if the latter does not prove that Erasmus neglected a manuscript to which he had access. In short, Rummel's interpretation is simply wrong. The passage she quotes has nothing to do with a challenge. Also, she cuts the quotation short, so that the real sense of the passage becomes unrecognizable. She is absolutely not justified in speaking of a challenge in this case or in the case of any other passage on the subject (emphasis in original) (de Jonge, cited from Maynard, p. 383).

Jeffrey Khoo observes further: "Yale professor Roland Bainton, another Erasmian expert, agrees with de Jonge, furnishing proof from Erasmus' own writing that Erasmus' inclusion of 1 John 5:7f was not due to a so-called 'promise' but the fact that he believed 'the verse was in the Vulgate and must therefore have been in the Greek text used by Jerome'" (Jeffrey Khoo, *Kept Pure in All Ages*, 2001, p. 88).

Edward F. Hills, who had a doctorate in textual criticism from Harvard, testifies: "...it was not trickery that was responsible for the inclusion of the *Johannine Comma* in the Textus Receptus, but the usage of the Latin speaking Church" (Hills, *The King James Version Defended*).

In the 3rd edition of *The Text of the New Testament* Bruce Metzger corrected his false assertion about Erasmus as follows: "What is said on p. 101 above about Erasmus' promise to include the *Comma Johanneum* if one Greek manuscript were found that contained it, and his subsequent suspicion that MS 61 was written expressly to force him to do so, needs to be corrected in the light of the research of H. J. DeJonge, a specialist in Erasmian studies who finds no explicit evidence that supports this frequently made assertion" (Metzger, *The Text of The New Testament*, 3rd edition, p. 291, footnote 2). The problem is that this myth continues to be paraded as truth by modern version defenders.

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

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

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

What is the essence of the doctrine of God as taught by the Bible - the doctrine we have labelled Oneness? First, there is one indivisible God with no distinction of persons. Second, Jesus Christ is the fulness of the Godhead incarnate. He is God the Father - the Jehovah of the Old Testament - robed in flesh.⁶⁴⁰

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).⁶⁴¹

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.

⁶⁴⁰ Chapter 13, *The Oneness of God*, David Bernard.

⁶⁴¹ 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://faithsaves.net>. 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://faithsaves.net>.

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.⁶⁴²

x.) Texts that mention the Father and the Son often do not mention the Holy Spirit, so He is not a separate Person.⁶⁴³

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)

⁶⁴² 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.

⁶⁴³ 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).

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.⁶⁴⁴ Indeed, the Lord Jesus speaks in dozens of texts of “my Father,”⁶⁴⁵ but Christ never even once spoke of “my Son.” Many times the Lord Jesus said He was sent by the Father,⁶⁴⁶ but never once does Christ say He was the Father who begat the Son, sent the Son, loved the Son, or anything else of the kind. He never said that He was His own Father. These facts explain why anyone who simply read the New Testament would conclude that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, but one would require extra-biblical revelations or modalist teachers before one could overcome the plain meaning of the Bible and declare that Jesus Christ is the Father.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I [Jesus Christ] will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; *even* the Spirit of truth[.] . . . These things have I spoken unto you, being *yet* present with you. But the Comforter, *which is* the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my

⁶⁴⁴ 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.

⁶⁴⁵ 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.

⁶⁴⁶ 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.

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).⁶⁴⁷ Peter wrote: “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied” (1 Peter 1:2). Similarly, Jude stated: “But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life” (Jude 20-21). Modalism must change the Scripture from a revelation of God’s nature to utter confusion and illusion to escape the meaning of all these texts.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.⁶⁴⁸ (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)

⁶⁴⁷ Note the exposition of this passage above.

⁶⁴⁸ Acts 3:13, 26 employ *παῖς* instead of *υἱός*.

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 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).⁶⁴⁹

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

Second, Oneness Pentecostals affirm that the references to Christ as the "begotten" Son, and Hebrews 1:5-6, where Christ is said to 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

⁶⁴⁹ 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.

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).⁶⁵⁰ In Psalm 2:7-12, king

⁶⁵⁰ The phrase בֶּרֶךְ אֱלֹהִין in Daniel 3:25 is properly translated “the Son of God,” not “a son of the gods.” First, the definiteness of the absolute noun אֱלֹהִין, 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 אֱלֹהִין “the spirit,” not “a spirit,” of the gods/God, and in Daniel 5:11 חֵכְמַת אֱלֹהִין is “the wisdom of the gods,” not “a wisdom of gods.”

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

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

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

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

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

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name *was* John. 7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all

supports a reference to “God,” not to the “gods.” Theodotian and Aquila likewise read υἱὸ 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 ܐܠܗܝܢ] 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” (ܐܠܗܝܢ ܥܠܝܝܡܝܢ) 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 ܒܪ 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.

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*.⁶⁵¹

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 relationship⁶⁵² such as that described in v. 18 as being the “Son . . . in the bosom of the

⁶⁵¹ 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 σαρκὸς, 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 ἔμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν ὅτι πρῶτός μου ἦν. 16 καὶ ἐκ τοῦ πληρώματος αὐτοῦ ἡμεῖς πάντες ἐλάβομεν, καὶ χάριν ἀντὶ χάριτος. 17 ὅτι ὁ νόμος διὰ Μωσέως ἐδόθη, ἡ χάρις καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐγένετο. 18 Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακε πώποτε· ὁ μονογενὴς υἱός, ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς, ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο.

⁶⁵² 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 ἐξηλθε 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

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

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

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

The One who is distinct from the Father who sent Him, “the Son” who was sent by the “Father” to redeem those that the Father gave Him from eternity and raise them up at the last day (6:37-40), “came down from heaven” to redeem the world. It is utterly impossible, if language has any objective meaning and the Bible truly is God’s revelation

Person of the Son before the incarnation (John 1:1-3). Thus, while the simple use of *πρός* is not conclusive of itself, the context of John 1 and the parallelism of John 13 support the idea of personal fellowship in the *πρός 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 *πρός* employed for living relationship, intimate converse” (pgs. 623, 625, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*).

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.⁶⁵³ Consequently, the

⁶⁵³ 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.

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 *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

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.

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

⁶⁵⁴ 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 τετήρηκας. 7 νῦν ἔγνωκαν ὅτι πάντα ὅσα δέδωκάς μοι, παρὰ σοῦ ἐστίν· 8 ὅτι τὰ ῥήματα ἃ δέδωκάς μοι, δέδωκα αὐτοῖς· καὶ αὐτοὶ ἔλαβον, καὶ ἔγνωσαν ἀληθῶς ὅτι παρὰ σοῦ ἐξήλθον, καὶ ἐπίστευσαν ὅτι σύ με ἀπέστειλας. 9 ἐγὼ περὶ αὐτῶν ἔρωτῶ· οὐ περὶ τοῦ κόσμου ἔρωτῶ, ἀλλὰ περὶ ὧν δέδωκάς μοι ὅτι σοὶ εἰσὶν· 10 καὶ τὰ ἐμὰ πάντα σὰ ἐστί, 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 ἔρωτῶ 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 εἰμί. 17 ἀγιάσον αὐτοὺς ἐν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ σου· ὁ λόγος ὁ σὸς ἀλήθεια ἐστί. 18 καθὼς ἐμὲ ἀπέστειλας εἰς τὸν κόσμον, καὶ γὰρ ἀπέστειλα αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸν κόσμον. 19 καὶ ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν ἐγὼ ἀγιάζω ἐμαυτόν, ἵνα καὶ αὐτοὶ ὧσιν ἡγιασμένοι ἐν ἀληθείᾳ. 20 οὐ περὶ τούτων δὲ ἔρωτῶ μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ τῶν πιστευσόντων διὰ τοῦ λόγου αὐτῶν εἰς ἐμέ· 21 ἵνα πάντες ἐν ὧσιν καθὼς σύ, πάτερ, ἐν ἐμοί, καὶ γὰρ 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 ἡγάπησας αὐτούς, καθὼς ἐμὲ ἡγάπησας. 24 πάτερ, οὓς δέδωκάς μοι, θέλω ἵνα ὅπου εἰμὶ ἐγὼ, κἀκεῖνοι ὧσι μετ’ ἐμοῦ· ἵνα θεωρῶσιν τὴν δόξαν τὴν ἐμὴν, ἣν ἔδωκάς μοι, ὅτι ἡγάπησάς με πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου. 25 πάτερ δίκαιε, καὶ ὁ κόσμος σε οὐκ ἔγνω, ἐγὼ δὲ σε ἔγνω, καὶ οὗτοι ἔγνωσαν ὅτι σύ με ἀπέστειλας· 26 καὶ ἐγνώρισά αὐτοῖς τὸ ὄνομά σου, καὶ γνωρίσω ἵνα ἡ ἀγάπη, ἣν ἡγάπησας με, ἐν αὐτοῖς ᾗ, καὶ γὰρ ἐν αὐτοῖς.

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.⁶⁵⁵

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

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

“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).⁶⁵⁶

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.⁶⁵⁷

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).⁶⁵⁸ Consequently, the

⁶⁵⁶ 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).

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

⁶⁵⁸ 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 εὑρεθεὶς and

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 modalists⁶⁵⁹ 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.”⁶⁶⁰ Nor can the exaltation described in v. 9-11 be referred to Christ’s human nature—rather, Jesus Christ’s nature as Jehovah is affirmed as every knee bows to Him, glorifying the distinct Person of God the Father (v. 9-11).

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

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

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.

⁶⁵⁹ 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).

⁶⁶⁰ 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).

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?⁶⁶¹

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 whom⁶⁶² the Father “made the worlds.” The Son is the

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

⁶⁶² 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 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-existent but future person or thing. On the contrary, the “for the sake of” idea is plainly and clearly διὰ + the accusative, not διὰ + the genitive, as is seen within Hebrews itself (δι’ ἣν αἰτίαν, “for which cause,” 2:11); “through whom” and “for the sake of” are even clearly set forth as distinct within the book of Hebrews in successive phrases (δι’ ὃν τὰ πάντα, καὶ δι’ οὗ τὰ πάντα, “for whom *are* all things, and by whom *are* all things,” 2:10). Hebrews 1:2 plainly teaches that the Son was the personal, Almighty, extant, and personally distinct Agent through whom the Father created all things. The modalist would require that the text of Hebrews 1:2 read δι’ ὃν rather than δι’ οὗ.

Agent of the creation itself. Nor is the human nature of Jesus Christ “the brightness of [the Father’s] glory,” or “the express image of his person,” nor can a human nature or a human person “uphol[d] all things by the word of his power.” On the contrary, only if the Son is a Divine Person are these descriptions at all appropriate. The Divine Person of the Son, the Agent of Creation, is the Object of angelic worship at the time when the Father brings the Son into the world in the incarnation (v. 6), and the Father testifies by His own speech that His Son is “God . . . for ever and ever,” and the Lord Jehovah (v. 10-12; Psalm 102:12, 25-27), although distinguished from the Father, who is called “God, thy God” (v. 9), and who anointed the Son with the oil of gladness. Two distinct and eternal Divine Persons are very evident in Hebrews 1, as they are in the rest of Hebrews—the “Son of God” is “without . . . beginning of days, [or] end of life” (Hebrews 7:3), so “Son” is a designation of the second eternal Person in the Trinity, rather than only a designation of a human nature that had a very clear beginning of days in the womb of Mary. Hebrews 10:5-7 record the speech of this same Son, in His preexistent state, to His Father: “Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.” The Son existed before a body was prepared for Him, and at His Father’s will He entered into the world and became Man. His existence before the incarnation is very clear.

3.) Objections to Personal Distinctions by Modalists Answered

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

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

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

Isaiah 9:6 teaches that Jesus Christ has a fatherly role towards His people, not that He is the Person of the Father. In Hebrews 2:13, believers are called Christ's "children," quoting Isaiah 8:18 (only a few verses before Isaiah 9:6; cf. John 13:33). The Lord Jesus exercises fatherly care over His people, but that is an entirely different matter from saying that He is the Person of the Father. Indeed, Isaiah 9:6 specifically calls Christ the "son" that was "given," distinguishing Him as Son from the Father.

John 14:18 employs the word *orphanos*,⁶⁶³ translated in the KJV as "comfortless," and the use of *orphanos* is also used by modalists to argue that Jesus Christ is the Father. If Christ speaks about leaving His people "fatherless" (cf. the use of *orphanos* in James 1:27), He must be God the Father, it is argued. However, the fact that Christ exercises a fatherly care for His people no more proves that He is God the Father than the fact that Paul says he is a father to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 4:15) proves that the Apostle Paul is God the Father, or the Apostle John's references to believers as "little children" proves that John is God the Father (1 John 2:1). The tender paternal care of the Lord Jesus for His needy people mentioned in John 14:18 by no means proves that He is the Person of God the Father—on the contrary, in the immediate context of the verse Christ is distinguished regularly and repeatedly from the Father (cf. John 14:2, 6-7, 9-13, 16, 20, 21, 23, 26, 28, 31). Besides, the word *orphanos* was used in the first century, as it had been used for centuries, to mean "pertaining to being without the aid and comfort of one who serves as associate and friend," rather than solely to being literally fatherless; thus, e. g., the friends of Socrates are described, thinking of his absence from them, as "thinking that [they] would have to spend the rest of our lives just like children deprived of their father [*orphanos*]." ⁶⁶⁴ 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

⁶⁶³ ὀρφανός.

⁶⁶⁴ BDAG, ὀρφανός.

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” (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,⁶⁶⁵ 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.

⁶⁶⁵ This teaching has been explained above.

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 gender⁶⁶⁶ in His affirmation of unity with the Father, rather than the masculine—the text teaches that the Father and Christ are one thing, one essence, but not that the Lord Jesus and the Father are one Person.

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

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

However, 1 John consistently distinguishes “the Father . . . and his Son Jesus Christ” (1:3, 7; 2:1, 23-24; 3:23; 4:2-3, 9-11, 14-15; 5:1, 5:1-13; 20). Neither in 1 John, nor anywhere else in Scripture, does the Bible speak of the second coming of the Father—rather, Scripture always speaks of the second coming of Christ, who is specifically distinguished from the Father (Matthew 16:27; Acts 1:7-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 19:11-15). Nobody who simply read the book of 1 John would conclude from 3:1-5 that Jesus Christ is the Father. On the contrary, 1 John is very clear that the one who will “appear” is Jesus Christ, who is distinct from the Father.⁶⁶⁷ 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”

⁶⁶⁶ That is, the text reads ἐγὼ καὶ ὁ πατήρ ἐν ἑσμέν, not ἐγὼ καὶ ὁ πατήρ εἰς ἑσμέν.

⁶⁶⁷ In 1 John 3:2, “appear” is φανερόω. Compare the uses of the verb in 1 John 1:2 (Christ, who was “with” the Father, was *manifest/appeared* at His first coming); 2:28 (the immediate precontext of 1 John 3:1-5ff.; “abide in Christ (cf. John 15) so that when Christ *appears* you will not be ashamed before Him”); 3:2, 5 (the texts in question); 3:8 (“the Son of God *was manifested/appeared*, the immediate postcontext of 3:1-5). The only Person who *appears* or *is manifested* in 1 John is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The Father’s love appears or is manifested, but not by His own appearance, but “because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world” (4:9).

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 6:16). Third, in the forty-two verses where the word “throne”⁶⁶⁸ is employed in relation to the Father or Jesus Christ in the New Testament, not one text teaches that the Father is Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, many texts speaking of a *throne* distinguish the Father and the Lord Jesus:

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

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

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

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

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

⁶⁶⁸ 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.

(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 beasts said, Amen. And the four *and* twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever. (Revelation 5:6-14)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[and] his throne” (Revelation 3:21). Jesus Christ, “the Lamb,” is “in the midst of the throne” of the Father, and takes a book “out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne,” with the result that every creature says, “Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, *be* unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever,” ascribing Divine worship equally to the Father and Christ while distinguishing them (Revelation 5:6-14). The Father on the throne is distinguished from the Lamb (Revelation 6:16; 7:9-10, 15-17). Christ is caught up to the Father’s throne (Revelation 12:5). In the New Jerusalem, the Apostle John speaks of “the throne of God and of the Lamb,” showing the unity between them in here speaking of a single throne while still distinguishing the Father and Christ (Revelation 22:1, 3).

Without having actually entered glory yet, it is difficult for the believer to know exactly how literally to take all the imagery of heaven in the book of Revelation or what exactly the Christian will see when he gets there. Jehovah also declares: “The heaven *is* my throne, and the earth *is* my footstool” (Isaiah 66:1), but He does not somehow wrap the heavens around some body that He supposedly has and then makes the globe into a rest for His feet. Since the Father is invisible, has no body, and is omnipresent, He does not literally sit on a throne, although He indubitably rules as the Sovereign King from eternity to eternity. In any case, none of the texts in Scripture speaking of God’s “throne” affirm that Jesus Christ is the Father or the Holy Spirit, while the Divine Persons of the Father and Christ⁶⁶⁹ are regularly and repeatedly distinguished in “throne” passages.

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

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

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

⁶⁶⁹ It is impossible to explain the distinctions made in Scripture in the throne texts between the Father and Christ by simply appealing to the Lord Jesus’ Divine and human natures. Distinct from the Father as God the Son, Christ has His own throne (Hebrews 1:8-9). He gives the Divine blessings of grace and peace equally with the Father and the Holy Spirit, but is distinct from them (Revelation 1:4-6). As distinct from the Father, Christ receives equal Divine worship (Revelation 5:6-14). As distinct from the Father, Christ’s wrath is equally Divinely all-searching (Revelation 6:16), He equally but distinctly can give Divine salvation (Revelation 7:9-10), etc.

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).⁶⁷⁰ Romans 8:9-11 actually distinguishes the Persons of the Godhead:

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

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

ix.) Since the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit have the same functions,
they are the same Person.⁶⁷¹

One could as well affirm that because Paul preached the gospel, and Timothy preached the gospel, that Paul was Timothy; or that because Isaiah prophecied, and Jeremiah prophecied, that Isaiah was Jeremiah; or because David was king of Israel, and Solomon

⁶⁷⁰ 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.

⁶⁷¹ 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.

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.⁶⁷²

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

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

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son,

⁶⁷² 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).

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.⁶⁷³ The dogmatic crux on which the argument turns is the assertion that baptism is “for” the remission of sins in the sense that it is administered “in order to

⁶⁷³ Some baptismal regenerationists affirm that the Holy Spirit is received immediately after baptism. Others add requirements not found in Acts 2:38 by any stretch of the imagination; for example, Oneness Pentecostalism makes speaking in tongues after baptism a necessary sign of the receipt of the Spirit (see “Salvation, the Spirit, and Tongues,” pgs. 197-213, *Oneness Pentecostals & The Trinity*, Gregory A. Boyd, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1992). Roman Catholicism teaches that “the effect of the sacrament of Confirmation [which generally takes place years after infant baptism] is the full outpouring of the Holy Spirit as once granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost,” so that what Peter preached in Acts 2:38 is received only after a bishop “anoint[s] the forehead of the baptized with sacred chrism . . . together with the laying on of the minister’s hand and the words . . . ‘Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit’” (sections #1302, 1320, pgs. 330, 333, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Mahweh, NJ: Paulist Press, 1994). Apparently Peter’s promise “ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” to his audience upon complying with Acts 2:38 would have been better stated as “ye shall only receive the gift of the Holy Ghost if, continuing faithful for some time after baptism, ye speak in tongues/get oil put on your forehead by a properly ordained bishop [or priest if it is an extreme emergency and you may die without the seal of the Holy Spirit] and submit to other ritualistic requirements.”

receive” forgiveness.⁶⁷⁴ 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 usually⁶⁷⁵ 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 1,767⁶⁷⁶ times. As one might expect with a word this common, *eis* has a great variety of meanings in different contexts—as does the English word “for.”⁶⁷⁷ 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)

⁶⁷⁴ 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?

⁶⁷⁵ 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.

⁶⁷⁶ This statistic was obtained by a search of the Greek *Textus Receptus* using *Accordance* Bible software. The same figure is given on pg. 357 of *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, Daniel Wallace (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996).

⁶⁷⁷ 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.

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”⁶⁷⁸ or “with respect to” is clearly found in Scripture. This sense of *eis* represents Acts 2:38 as “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ on account of the remission of sins [received at the time of repentance].” The baptismal regenerationist concludes too much when he affirms that Acts 2:38 proves his doctrine that baptism is administered “in order to obtain”⁶⁷⁹ forgiveness. The verse can easily convey a meaning perfectly

⁶⁷⁸ “*Eis* . . . [can be] use[d] . . . causally [as] ‘on account of,’ . . . Matthew 12:41. . . . [In] Matthew 10:41 . . . the sense here called for is a causal one, for which the preposition *eis* is suitable, just as the Semitic equivalent *le* admits not only a final but also a causal sense” (para. 98, 106, *Biblical Greek Illustrated by Examples*, Maximilian Zerwick. Eng. ed. Joseph Smith. Rome: Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblici, 1963). *Eis* can mean “because of” (pg. 103, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1957). Concerning “*eis* . . . some contexts would certainly suit a causal sense: Matthew 3:11, *because of repentance* . . . 10:41; 12:41=Luke 11:32 *metenoesan eis to kerugma Iona*: they repented *because of* the preaching of Jonah . . . Acts 2:38 *be baptized eis aphesin ton hamartion, on the basis of* . . . Acts 7:53; Romans 4:20, *on account of* the promises of God, Abraham did not waver . . . Romans 11:32 God has imprisoned all *because of disobedience* . . . Titus 3:14, to maintain good works, *because of the compelling need of them*; Hebrews 12:7 [v. l.], you are enduring *because of discipline* . . . 1 John 5:10” (pgs. 266-267, 18:4:1c, Moulton, J. H. *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*. 4 vols. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1908-76. Vol. 3 (1963): *Syntax*, by Nigel Turner). See J. R. Mantey, “The Causal Use of *Eis* in the New Testament,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 70 (1951) pgs. 45-48, and “On Causal *Eis* Again,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 70 (1951) pgs. 309-311. In addition to quoting Matthew 3:11; 12:41; Acts 2:38, and other inspired texts as examples of a causal (“because of”) use of *eis* in the New Testament, Mantey provides evidence from uninspired Greek, such as Genesis 4:23 (LXX): *Andra apekteina eis trauma emoi kai neaniskon eis molopa emoi*, “I killed a man *for* [on account of] wounding me, and a young man *for* [on account of] striking me.” Mantey also mentions contemporary secular Greek examples such as Lucian, *The Dead Come to Life*, Vol. III, 12: *ta hremata panu hetairika, kai epainoumene hupo ton heraston eis kallos echaire*, “Her words are always those of a courtesan, and she delighted in being praised by her lovers *for* [because of] her beauty.” B. H. Carroll provides evidence “from Aristophanes: ‘To jeer at a man *eis* his rags’ . . . [f]rom Plato . . . ‘To differ from one *eis* virtue.’ . . . [He concludes,] the meaning of *eis* in Acts 2:38 is . . . with reference to remission of sins. I am willing to risk my scholarship on that” (pgs. 81-82, *An Interpretation of the English Bible*, sec. 8, “The Theory of Baptismal Regeneration (concluded): Acts 2:38,” elec. acc. AGES Digital Software Library vol. 11, B. H. Carroll Collection. Rio, WI: 2006). Indeed, the “illustrations of . . . [the usage of *eis* as] because of . . . are numerous in the N. T. and the *Koiné* [Greek outside of the Bible] generally” (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*, A. T. Robertson, Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1960, note on Acts 2:38).

⁶⁷⁹ 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.

harmonious with justification by faith before baptism.⁶⁸⁰

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.⁶⁸¹ 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.⁶⁸² For example, John the Baptist preached, “I indeed baptize you with water unto [*eis*] repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and *with* fire” (Matthew 3:11). Here it is obvious that John baptized people “on account of” their prior repentance; he certainly did not wrestle unrepentant sinners into the water “in order to” get them to repent!⁶⁸³ The affirmation

⁶⁸⁰ 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.”

⁶⁸¹ 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.”

⁶⁸² In addition to the very obvious Matthew 3:11, it is hard to see how “in order to” can fit many other Biblical texts. Is Matthew 28:19 “in order to” obtain the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost? (Compare *eis* used with baptism and “name” in Acts 8:16; 19:5.) Is Mark 1:9 “in order to” obtain the Jordan river? Is Acts 19:3 “in order to” obtain John’s baptism? Is 1 Corinthians 1:13 (also 1:15) “in order to” obtain the name of Paul? Is 1 Corinthians 10:2 “in order to obtain” Moses? The only remaining verses containing *eis* and baptism can at least as easily signify “with respect to,” “on account of,” or one of the other senses of *eis*. Not one verse must signify “in order to” obtain (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3, 4; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:27).

⁶⁸³ 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

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),⁶⁸⁴ controls a proper understanding of Acts 2:38. John had “preached . . . the baptism of repentance [the baptism that is the result of repentance] to all the people of Israel” (Acts

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 Christendom to compose a church history, slightly altered the statements of Josephus but agreed with his conclusions, writing: “John who was called the Baptist . . . said that baptism would prove acceptable . . . only in those who used it not to escape from any sins but for bodily purity, on condition that the soul also had been previously cleansed thoroughly by righteousness” (*Ecclesiastical History*, I. XI:5, cited in Loeb Classical Library ed., trans. Kirsopp Lake, pg. 81). While neither the writings of Josephus nor of Eusebius are inspired Scripture, of course, if John publicly proclaimed that his baptism was a prerequisite to forgiveness, would not the ancient historical record have indicated, rather than contradicted, this view?

⁶⁸⁴ John’s “baptism of repentance for (*eis*) the remission of sins” (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3) was not one administered “in order to” obtain remission by baptism but “on account of” remission already received by repentance and faith in the Savior (Acts 19:4-5). The genitive construction “baptism of repentance” (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3; Acts 13:24; 19:4) is a result/reason construction, meaning “baptism [result] on account of repentance [reason],” similar to the phrases “work [result] of faith [reason], labour [result] of love [reason], and patience [result] of hope [reason]” (1 Thessalonians 1:3; cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:11; Hebrews 6:10) or “obedience [result] of faith [reason]” (Romans 16:26). (Compare the discussion of the genitive of production/producer on pgs. 104-106 of Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, and the genitive of source or origin analyzed on pgs. 109-110, which Wallace says “stresses cause,” that is, reason. The connection between production/producer and reason/result can be seen, not only in the texts above, but in verses such as 1 Peter 1:3, “sanctification of the Spirit” or Galatians 3:13, “curse of the law”; cf. also Galatians 5:22; 2 Corinthians 11:26. Note, outside the NT, texts such as 1 Clement 50:5, “harmony of love,” or Amos 6:12; Sirach 45:11 (LXX); or Philo, *Allegorical Interpretation* 2:68.) Baptism is one of the “works meet for repentance” (Matthew 3:8; Acts 26:20) that follows receiving the gospel. The record of John preaching “I indeed baptize you with water unto (*eis*) repentance” (Matthew 3:11) is simply a statement explaining the summary phrase that John preached a “baptism of repentance for (*eis*, on account of) the remission of sins” (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3). Since the phrase “a baptism of repentance” is a result/reason genitive construction indicating that baptism is a result of repentance, Matthew 3:11 means that John baptized with water “on account of” or “as a result of” repentance, defining *eis* in the text as “on account of/because of” repentance. One notes further that even apart from this strong syntactical evidence from related passages, the natural and obvious sense of Matthew 3:11 is *eis* in the sense of “on account of” in any case.

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).⁶⁸⁵ The call to baptism was only for the “every one of you”⁶⁸⁶ that had

⁶⁸⁵ Peter’s use of *kathos kai*, “even as,” in Acts 10:47; 15:8 provides further support for the fact that the Holy Spirit was received before baptism in Acts 2:38. Peter explains that in the same way that the Holy Spirit was given before baptism in the account of Acts 10:43-48, the Jews who responded to the gospel in Acts 2:38 likewise received the Spirit before baptism. Compare the other uses of *kathos kai* in the New Testament (Luke 6:36; 11:1; 24:24; Acts 2:22; 10:47; 15:8; Romans 1:13; 15:7; 1 Corinthians 10:6, 9–10, 33–11:1; 13:12; 14:34; 2 Corinthians 1:14; 11:12; Galatians 5:21; Ephesians 4:4, 17, 32; 5:2, 25, 29; Colossians 1:6–7; 3:13; 1 Thessalonians 2:14; 3:4; 4:6, 13; 5:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:1; Hebrews 5:6; 2 Peter 1:14; 3:15).

⁶⁸⁶ “of you” (*hymon*), 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

already repented. The “be baptized every one of you” section of the verse is parenthetical to the command to repent and its associated promise of the Spirit. Parenthetical statements, including those parallel in structure to Acts 2:38, are found throughout Scripture.⁶⁸⁷ 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 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)

derived.

⁶⁸⁷ 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).

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.⁶⁸⁸ Furthermore, even before the gift of tongues, the miraculous ability to speak in known foreign languages, ceased,⁶⁸⁹ 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”⁶⁹⁰ is dependent upon the aorist verb “received,”⁶⁹¹ and the verse indicates that Paul assumed⁶⁹² 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.”⁶⁹³ Paul’s question to these professed disciples assumed the reality of an immediate receipt of the Spirit at the moment of faith. “[In Acts 19:2] there is no question about what happened *after* believing; but the question rightly relates to what occurred *when* they believed. . . . [The verse could be rendered] rightly, ‘Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?’”⁶⁹⁴ The post-believing coming of the Spirit in miraculous power recorded in Acts 19:6 employs a different Greek word⁶⁹⁵ than that

⁶⁸⁸ E. g., 1 John 5:7; Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; John 1:1-18.

⁶⁸⁹ 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.

⁶⁹⁰ *pisteusantes*.

⁶⁹¹ *elabete*.

⁶⁹² Consider also the use of *ei* in the question.

⁶⁹³ Pg. 624, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, Daniel Wallace.

⁶⁹⁴ *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.

⁶⁹⁵ *erchomai*.

generally used for the simple receipt of the Spirit as in verse 2.⁶⁹⁶ 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.⁶⁹⁷ 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”⁶⁹⁸ is entirely erroneous and heretical, and it cannot be sustained Scripturally. If one must, as Oneness Pentecostalism affirms, employ the correct words at the time of baptism or salvation is impossible, which words should be employed? Those of Acts 2:38, “in [*epi*] the name of Jesus Christ”; those of Acts 8:16 and 19:5, “in [*eis*] the name of the Lord Jesus”; or those of Acts 10:48, “in [*en*] the name of the Lord”? Since there are three different groups of words, with three different prepositions employed (*epi*, *eis*, and *en*), and three different endings (“Jesus Christ,” “Lord Jesus,” “Lord,”—note that the last does not even have the name “Jesus” at all), which set constitutes the magic words without which salvation is impossible? Would it also not be very unfortunate that, whichever of the three sets of words one determines is the true one, every person the apostles and first century Christians baptized employing the two “wrong” sets of words was eternally damned? How many of the first century Christians must have missed heaven because they did not know which of the various sets of words were the magic keys to heaven! How unfortunate, indeed, how misleading it is that Luke, writing under inspiration, does not give the slightest hint that either Acts 2:38, or 8:16, or 19:5, or any other verbal formulation whatsoever, is essential to salvation! What errors the apostles made as well in allowing all those baptized in Acts into church membership, whichever set of words are recorded in connection with their baptism, although the two-thirds with the wrong formula were not truly saved! Or is it not rather obvious that the Oneness Pentecostal notion that a certain set of words is essential to salvation cannot be sustained in the book of Acts or elsewhere in Scripture? Since there is no consistent set of words recorded in Acts in connection with baptism “in the name of” the Lord, and so Acts is not

⁶⁹⁶ *lambano*.

⁶⁹⁷ Romans 8:15; 1 Corinthians 2:12; 2 Corinthians 11:4; Galatians 3:2, 14, cf. the prediction in John 7:39.

⁶⁹⁸ Chapter 6, “Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,” *The Oneness of God*, David K. Bernard. Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 1995.

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.”⁶⁹⁹ “For those things which the prophets announced, saying,

⁶⁹⁹

Didache 7:1.

‘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.’”⁷⁰⁰ 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.’”⁷⁰¹ 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.

⁷⁰⁰ Chapter 9, Ignatius to the Philadelphians.

⁷⁰¹ 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).

William Branham's Bogus Healings

Aug/21/13 06:03

The following was first published in *O Timothy* magazine, Volume 7, Issue 4, 1990. The interview with the late Alfred Pohl was conducted February 21, 1990, by David Cloud. While visiting with us for a few days in Washington state, Mr. Pohl, who lived in Canada, agreed to recount his experiences in a healing campaign with William Branham. At that time, Pohl was a leader in a Pentecostal denomination and a teacher in their Bible college. The duplicity and heresy he witnessed in the Branham healing campaign was a major step toward his leaving Pentecostalism. His book [17 Reasons Why I Left the Tongues Movement](#) is available as a free eBook from www.wayoflife.org.



BRANHAM'S LIFE AND BELIEFS

William Branham was an acclaimed Pentecostal healer and prophet who arose from the ranks during the same general period as such other well known Pentecostal figures as Oral Roberts, T.L. Osborn, Jack Coe, Kathryn Kuhlman, and Demos Shakarian. Branham conducted large healing campaigns in America, Canada, and Europe, and was honored as a prophet of God throughout Pentecostalism.

Though dead, Branham is still referred to frequently by Pentecostal leaders and publications, and there are churches, particularly in Canada and Europe, that claim him as their leader.

"The person universally acknowledged as the revival's 'father' and 'pacesetter' was William Branham. The sudden appearance of his miraculous healing campaigns in 1946 set off a spiritual explosion in the Pentecostal movement which was to move to

Main Street, U.S.A., by the 1950s and give birth to the broader charismatic movement in the 1960s, which currently affects almost every denomination in the country. ... 'Branham filled the largest stadiums and meeting halls in the world.' ... As the pacesetter of the healing revival, Branham was the primary source of inspiration in the development of other healing ministries. He inspired hundreds of ministers to enter the healing ministry and a multitude of evangelists paid tribute to him for the impact he had upon their work. As early as 1950, over 1,000 healing evangelists gathered at a *Voice of Healing* [the name of Branham's magazine] convention to acknowledge the profound influence of Branham on the healing movement" (*Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988, p. 372).

Before we proceed with Alfred Pohl's interview, we will give a brief overview of Branham's life from the report, "Latter-day Prophets: The Kansas City Connection," by Albert James Dager. In brackets we will insert other material which we feel is helpful in understanding Branham:

"William Marion Branham was born April 6, 1909, on a farm near Berksville, Kentucky, U.S.A. At the time of his birth, his mother was fifteen years of age and his dad was eighteen. Something unusual happened the day he was born. A few rays of light shone into the room and a halo, one foot in diameter, appeared above the mother and the baby. As a result of this incident his mother took him to a Baptist church in the community. This was the first and last time he went to church for many years. While William Branham was quite young, his parents moved to a farm near Jeffersonville, Indiana, where "his early life was marked by tragedy, poverty, and misunderstanding" (Carl Dyck, *William Branham: The Man and His Message*, Saskatoon: Western Tract Mission, 1984, p. 3).

It should also be noted that Branham's parents believed in fortunetelling and he was burdened through occultism at an early age (Kurt Koch, *Between Christ and Satan*, p. 150).

In 1948, William Branham, a Baptist preacher turned Pentecostal, incorporated into his own ministry the ideas [Franklin] Hall presented in *Atomic Power with God through Fasting and Prayer*. Because of his influence over the lives of almost all the "healing revival" preachers that followed after him, Branham proved to be the most influential of Hall's disciples.

Branham's followers believed him to be the apostle of the final Church age.

He gained popularity through his teachings on what he called "God's Seventh Church Age," which would be the final move of God before the manifestation of His Kingdom on earth. Branham based this teaching on his interpretation of Joel 2:23, which speaks of the latter rain on God's blessings upon Israel, and applied this latter rain to the neo-pentecostal move of his day. He taught that God's promise to restore what

the locust, cankerworm, caterpillar, and palmerworm had eaten would be the restoration of the Church out of denominationalism, which he equated with the Mark of the Beast.

Branham is said to have exhibited remarkable healing power [we will see from Pohl's interview that this was a sham], and the ability to give accurate words of knowledge about people whom he had never met. [The latter is soothsaying, which is occultic.]

From a very early age it was evident that supernatural power accompanied Branham's life. When he was three years of age [other accounts give the age as two and seven], he first heard "the Voice." This disembodied Voice told him that he was never to drink, smoke, or defile his body in any way, for he was being groomed for work at a later date (*William Branham, My Life Story*, Jeffersonville, IN: Spoken Word Publications, undated, p. 24).

The Voice accompanied Branham throughout his lifetime, and eventually made itself known as an angel. This angel directed him in every aspect of his personal life, and it was the angel rather than the Holy Spirit to whom Branham gave credit for his power (Kurt Koch, *Occult Bondage and Deliverance*, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1972, p. 50).

Branham knew that if he didn't do what the Voice told him to do, he would suffer greatly.

[The angel supposedly appeared during a 1933 baptismal service in the Ohio River at Jeffersonville, Indiana, and said to Branham: "As John the Baptist foreran the first coming of Christ, you will forerun His Second Coming" (*In the Days of the Voice of the 7th Angel*, Edmonton: End Time Message Tabernacle, p. 53).]

Branham propagated what he called the "Serpent's Seed" teaching: the belief that Cain was produced through a sexual union between Eve and the serpent in the garden. The curse of the Serpent's Seed, he believed, continues to plague mankind through women, and is evidenced in their temptation of men (Branham, *My Life Story*, p. 19).

[This strange teaching is stated as follows by one of Branham's disciples: "Eve's eating was adultery with the serpent, Proverbs 30:20. Remember, he was not a snake at this point. That curse came after the act. ... It was not an apple that caused Adam and Eve to realize they were naked. But it was a sex act. ... The serpent was an upright handsome creature. He was, in fact, 'the missing link' that science even in their unspiritual wisdom, can see is missing 'between man and monkey.' ... Satan used this creature to get himself into the Human race" (*Was it an Apple?* Lima, Oh: Bible Believers of Lima).]

[Branham believed that some humans are descended from the serpent's seed and are destined for hell, which is not eternal, however. The seed of God, i.e., those who receive Branham's teaching, are predestined to become the Bride of Christ. There are

still others who possess free will and who may be saved out of the denominational churches, but they must suffer through the Great Tribulation. He considered denominationalism a mark of the Beast (Rev. 13:17) (*Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, pp. 95, 96).]

Another of Branham's teachings was that the Zodiac and the Egyptian pyramids were equal to the Scriptures in the revelation of God's Word (Branham, Adoption, Jeffersonville, IN: Spoken Word Publications, pp. 31, 104).

[Branham denied the Trinity, and required that believers baptized by a Trinitarian formula be rebaptized in the name of "Jesus only" (*Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, pp. 95, 96). In a sermon entitled "The Way of a True Prophet," Branham stated this view as follows: "Why don't you examine your baptism of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and that false 'trinity' it's so-called, which is nothing in the world but three offices of one God, titles. No, name of Father, there's no such a thing as name, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost--Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, which is the Lord Jesus Christ" (*In the Days of the Voice of the 7th Angel*, p. 41).]

[Branham proclaimed himself the angel of Revelation 3:14 and 10:7 and predicted that by 1977 all denominations would be consumed by the World Council of Churches under the control of the Roman Catholics, that the Rapture would take place, and that the world would be destroyed (*Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, p. 96). Branham predicted that by 1977 all denominations would be consumed by the World Council of Churches under the control of Rome and the Rapture and the end of the world would take place (*Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, first edition, p. 96). He said, "At--at least, this great nation is going to strike a war that's going to blow it to bits" (Branham, *The Laodician Church Age*, Dec. 11, 1960, Jefferson, Indiana, audio tape).]

Although many Pentecostals overlooked these and other false prophecies and aberrant teachings and embraced him as an apostle and a prophet, his popularity declined in the late '50s due to his attempt to establish his proclamations as equal to Scripture. Even the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International [FGBMFI], which had supported Branham and given him an open forum at their meetings, began to move away from him, although some local chapters continued to use him as a speaker.

In spite of Branham's denial of the Trinity, and his aberrant teachings on immortalization, on the restoration of the Church and on the offices of apostles and prophets, Demos Shakarian [founder of FGBMFI] wrote, "Rev. Branham often made the statement that the only Fellowship to which he belonged was FGBMFI. Often, when called upon to speak at various conventions and chapter meetings, he has traveled long distances to keep those engagements. His spirit of service was an inspiration" (David E. Harrell, Jr., *All Things Are Possible*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1976, p. 161).

Branham was injured in a head-on collision while on a trip to Arizona and passed away six days later [on December 24, 1965]. Many of his followers believed that he had truly come in the spirit of Elijah; some believed him to be God, born of a virgin, and fully expected him to rise from the dead in three days (Ibid.).

To date, William Branham's body is still in the grave. But his occult healing methodology was picked up by hundreds of others upon whom he had laid his hands for transference of the spirit that worked through him. These included almost all the major names who operated as "healing" evangelists during that time, and who are still at work today. They took Branham's mantle through the period known as the Latter Rain.

The previous report, except for the parts within brackets, is from Albert James Dager, *Latter-day Prophets: The Kansas City Connection*, Media Spotlight.

BRANHAM'S

ANGEL

We believe it is important to say more about Branham's angel and the supernatural powers that influenced his life. As has been noted, from early childhood Branham experienced voices and visions. Consider the following quotes from his testimony:

"I was crying, and all at once I heard something making a noise like a whirlwind, something like this going 'Whooooossh, whoooooosssh,' just a noise like that. Well, it was awful quiet, and I looked around. And you know what, a little whirlwind, I believe you call them a little cyclone. And I was under a great white popular tree, stood about halfway between the barn and the house. And I heard that noise. ... And I got just few feet from that, out from under the branches of this big tree, and, oh, my, it made a whirl sounding. And I turned to look and about halfway up that tree was another whirlwind, caught in that tree just a-going around and around, moving those leaves. ... So I watched, but it didn't leave off. Usually it's just a puff for a moment, then it goes, but it had already been in there two minutes or more.

"Well, I started up the lane again. And I turned to look at this again. And when It did, a human Voice just as audible as mine is, said, 'Don't you never drink, smoke, or defile your body in any way. There'll be a work for you to do when you get older.' Why, it liked to scared me to death! You could imagine how a little fellow felt. I dropped those buckets, and home I went just as hard as I could go, screaming at the top of my voice. ...

"Well, I told that to Mama, and--and she just laughed at me. And I was just hysterical. She called the doctor, and the doctor said, 'Well, he's just nervous, that's all.' So she put me to bed. And I never, from that day to this, ever passed by that tree again. I was scared. I'd go down the other side of the garden, because I thought there was a man up in that tree and He was talking to me, great deep Voice that spoke" (*William Branham, My Life Story*, Edmonton: End Time Message Tabernacle, pp.

14-15);

This was the beginning of Branham's experience in the supernatural, and he claimed that this voice followed him the rest of his life and was the voice which controlled his healing ministry. Years later Branham was baptizing in the Ohio River and claims that the voice spoke again:

"I was baptizing down on the river, my first converts, at the Ohio River ... And just then a whirl come from the heavens above, and here come that Light, shining down. ... And It hung right over where I was at. A Voice spoke from there, and said, 'As John the Baptist was sent for the forerunner of the first coming of Christ, you've got a Message that will bring forth the forerunning of the Second Coming of Christ.' And It liked to a-scared me to death.

"And I went back, and all the people there ... they asked me, said, 'What did that Light mean?'

"A big group of colored people from the--the Gilead Age Baptist church and the Lone Star church down there, and many of those was down there, they began screaming when they saw that happen, people fainted" (William Branham, *How the Angel Came to Me, and His Commission*, Edmonton: End Time Message Tabernacle, p. 18).

Branham was bothered by the many visitations and repeatedly prayed that God would take them away. Finally the voice appeared to him in bodily form and gave him a commission to heal:

"And then all along down through life I'd see that, see that moving, see that visions, how those things would happen. Then, a little later on, It kept bothering me so much, and everybody telling me It was wrong. ... No matter how much I'd keep praying for That not to come, It come anyhow....

"I was game warden in the State of Indiana. ... I said, 'Honey, I can't go on like this, I'm a prisoner.' I said, 'All the time, when this thing keeps happening, and things like that, and these visions a-coming, and so forth like that, or whatever it is.' I said, 'Them trances like,' I said, 'I don't know what that is. And, honey, I- I-I-I don't want to fool with it, they--they tell me it's the Devil. And I love the Lord Jesus.'

"And I said, 'Meda [his wife], I'll never come out of that woods until God promises me He'll take that thing away from me and never let it happen again.' ...

"And I went up there that night and went back in the little old cabin floor. ... Where I used to trap when I was a boy, had a trap line through there and go up there and fish and stay all night. Just a little old dilapidated cabin sitting over there ... And I set down on this little stool. And I just sitting, oh, kind of in this position, just like that.

“And, all at once, I seen a Light flicker in the room. And I thought somebody was come up with a flashlight. And I looked around, and I thought, ‘Well ...’ And here It was, right out in front of me. And old wooden boards on the floor. And there It was, right in front of me. And a little old drum stove sitting in the corner, the top was tore out of it. And--and right in here there was a--a Light on the floor, and I thought, ‘Well, where's that? Well, that couldn't be coming.’

“I looked around. And here It was above me, this very same Light, right there above me, hanging right like that. Circling around like a fire, kind of an emerald color, going, ‘Whoossh, whoossh, whoossh!’ like that, just above It, like that. And I looked at That, and I thought, ‘What is That?’ Now, It scared me.

“And I heard somebody coming, just walking, only it was barefooted. And I seen the foot of a Man come in. Dark in the room, all but right here where It was shining right down. And I seen the foot of a Man coming in. And when He come into the room, walked on up, He was a Man about ... looked to weigh about two hundred pounds. [Branham also described him as dark of complexion, with shoulder length hair.] He had His hands folded like this.

“Now, I had seen It in a Whirlwind, I had heard It talk to me, and seen It in the form of a Light, but the first time I ever seen the image of It. It walked up to me, real close.

“Well, honest friends, I--I thought my heart would fail me. ... Cause after hundreds and hundreds of times of visitations, it paralyzes me when He comes near. It sometimes it even makes me ... I almost completely pass out, just so weak when I leave the platform many times. If I stay too long, I'll go completely out. I've had them ride me around for hours, not even know where I was at. And I can't explain it. ...

“So I was sitting there and looking at Him. I--I kind of had my hand up like that. He was looking right at me, just as pleasant. But He had a real deep Voice, and He said, ‘Do not fear. I am sent from the Presence of Almighty God.’ And when He spoke, that Voice, that was the same Voice that spoke to me when I was two years old, all the way up. I knowed that was Him.

“He said, ‘I am sent from the Presence of Almighty God, to tell you that your peculiar birth’ (as you know what my birth was up there; that same Light hung over me when I was first born). And so He said, ‘Your peculiar birth and misunderstood life has been to indicate that you're to go to all the world and pray for the sick people.’ And said, ‘And regardless of what they have ... if you get the people to believe you, and be sincere when you pray, nothing shall stand before your prayers, not even cancer.’

“And He said, ‘As the prophet Moses was given two gifts, signs to vindicate his ministry, so will you be given two.’ He said, ‘One of them will be that you'll take the person that you're praying for by the hand, with your left hand and their right,’ and said, ‘then just stand quiet, and there'll be a physical effect that'll happen on your body. Then you pray. And if it leaves, the disease is gone from the people. If it doesn't

leave, just ask a blessing and walk away.'

"He said, 'And the next thing will be, if they won't hear that, then they will hear this. Then it'll come to pass that you'll know the very secret of their heart. This they will hear.'

"He said, 'You were born in this world for that purpose'" (William Branham, *How the Angel Came to Me, and His Commission*, Edmonton: End Time Message Tabernacle, pp. 18-22).

We don't believe these visitations were of the Lord. Note the fear that the voice caused in young Branham, and the turmoil and confusion and fear that it caused in his life from then on. The Bible says, "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace..." (1 Cor. 14:33).

In the Bible, when God or angels spoke to or appeared to men, it is true that they often were afraid. But God always calmed the fears of those who were visited, and there were not lingering fear and turmoil because of the visitations. We do not believe that the Lord would have allowed Branham to continue in the suffocating kind of fear that he experienced from the visitations. "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7).

Another evidence of the demonic nature of Branham's visitations is the legalistic bondage that accompanied them. The devil is a slave master. The Lord Jesus Christ sets the captives free. Branham never did experience the liberty of conscience and action that Christ gives. He lived in fear and acted under a compulsive-type behavior associated with demonic oppression.

We have quoted Branham's own statement about being a prisoner to the visitations. Consider Branham's painful, servile relationship with the angel:

"One evening, just before a meeting, Branham told his interpreter, 'Don't stand to the right of me because my angel stands there.' Branham described the angel as a well-built man, dark hair with folded arms. The angel supposedly stood next to Branham, and what the angel said, he had to obey.

"Branham said that the angel was with him day and night and without him he had no authority in his preaching. In fact, he could not even decide things in his own private life. In his healing, Branham was always told by the angel who to heal and who not to. Once an interpreter asked Branham, 'Do you think your power to heal people comes from the Holy Spirit?' 'No,' Branham replied, 'my angel does it.' Kurt Koch confirms 'the fact that Branham's angel was a spiritistic rather than a divine angel.' He relates a story about a woman whose brother-in-law, in spite of being a minister, was involved in occultism, spiritistic meetings and magic. When Branham first was introduced to him, Branham spontaneously said, 'You look exactly like the angel which appears to me every day.' The weird, spiritistic minister frightened Christians

who knew him” (Carl Dyck, *William Branham: The Man and His Message*, Saskatoon: Western Tract Mission, 1984, p. 16).

We believe Branham was influenced by demonic spirits. The bondage in which he lived was an occultic bondage. His powers were those of a soothsayer.

His healing powers were occultic. The voices that tormented him, the vibrations and swellings in his hand, the lights, the fiery balls that supposedly danced about the room during some of his healing crusades, the complete exhaustion he experienced after his meetings--all of this is evidence of occultic powers. And this is what men of God tried to warn him of. In fact, when Branham met fortunetellers, they even told him that he was influenced by their kind of supernatural powers:

“What made me more scared than ever, every time I met a fortuneteller, they would recognize something had happened. And that would just ... it just nearly killed me.

“For instance, one day my cousins and I was going down through a carnival ground, and we was just boys, walking along. So there was a little old fortuneteller sitting out there in one of those tents. ... She said, ‘Say, you, come here a minute!’ And the three of us boys turned around. And she said, ‘You with the striped sweater’ (that was me).
...

“And I walked up, I said, ‘Yes, ma'am, what could I do for you?’

“And she said, ‘Say, did you know there's a Light that follows you? You were born under a certain sign.’

“I said, ‘What do you mean?’

“She said, ‘Well, you were born under a certain sign. There's a Light that follows you. You were born for a Divine call’” (*William Branham: The Man and His Message*, pp. 22-23).

Branham tells of other instances in which soothsayers told him similar things. He said, "And every time I get around one of them, that's the way it would be." Then the preachers, saying, "That's the Devil! That's the Devil!" (Ibid. p. 25).

This is a sad story. It is too bad that Branham did not listen to the wise voices which were warning him that the visitations were demonic. It is too bad that Branham did not listen to his own fears and his own conscience which caused him to want to escape the visitations. It is too bad that Branham did not listen to the Bible. As it turns out, he did not listen to wisdom. Instead he allowed the demonic powers to control his life, and he, in turn, led multitudes of other people into all sorts of error and confusion.

WILLIAM BRANHAM HEALING MEETING: EYEWITNESS REPORT

By

A.H.

Pohl

O TIMOTHY: Can you tell me, Bro. Pohl, where and when the Branham meeting was held?

POHL: It was in the city of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, in the 40's, because we left in '50. It was in the 40s when Branham came to Saskatoon for a healing campaign, and I was involved in it very, very much, because at that time we had a Bible Institute right beside the church where the healing campaign was conducted. I was on staff at the Bible Institute and as such I had responsibility in taking care of all the worst cases, the stretcher cases, and the people that could not walk, coming to the church and going to the healing line. These came into the dorm of the Bible Institute where I was responsible and placed them in the rooms for the time while they're waiting for Branham to come to minister to them.

So, I was very closely involved with Branham in this. When the meetings were over, like when the meeting was over in the church, I would take Mr. Branham by the arm and lead him from room to room in this dorm, which was just adjacent to the church, and he would pray for these people. And then, when I had taken him into every room, met every patient, then I'd lead him to the back door, and he would be gone, go to his hotel. His brother was out there with the car, picked him up and took him to the hotel. And he was gone. All day, all that night, next day.

He gave orders--at least orders were given that no one was suppose to contact him at the hotel. And, he'd come an hour late, half an hour late the next night to the meeting. Say if the meeting started at 7:00, he'd be there about 7:30. The meeting was already in progress when he arrived. I guess that was part of procedure, but no one--with those circumstances--nobody could really visit with him, or talk to him, or get acquainted with him.

I was the only one that really could have an opportunity to talk to him, and that was when we were going from room to room, side by side, in the dorm. It was quite an experience.

O TIMOTHY: The denomination you were involved with then was what?

POHL: Apostolic Church of Pentecost of Canada, Incorporated.

O TIMOTHY: Okay. Now, he would have the meetings and then have a healing line right before he went into the dorm?

POHL: Right, right. There was always the preaching meeting, and then the healing line, the prayer line, and then of course, I took him into the dorm, to go to all the stretcher cases, and so forth.

O TIMOTHY: Now, did many claim to be healed, or did it seem that many were

healed in the meeting?

POHL: In the meetings? Ah, yes, there were those that claimed to be healed, and there were those people that thought they saw healings, or thought they saw miracles. But, when you were on the inside, you saw that some of those things that were supposed to be miracles, were not miracles at all. From the outside, you would think that something had really happened; but having been right close to Branham, and working right with him, I discovered that a lot of those supposed healings or miracles were really not miracles after all.

O TIMOTHY: Okay. As you took him through the dorm, he prayed for different individuals. What did he say during those encounters with the individuals?

POHL: Well, one of the things he did was to take the hand of the person, and quite often I heard him say that the angel that gave him this gift told him that to identify certain diseases--and he would speak of cancer very much--there are vibrations that he felt on his hand that indicate that this person has cancer. So he would take the patient's hand and hold it. He would say, "Yes, the vibrations tell me that you have cancer." Then he'd say something like this, "We're going to pray for you, that the Lord will heal you." And he proceeded to do this. Then he went on, and when he was through praying, he would take that hand again or else he would hold the hand throughout the prayer, and he would say, "The vibrations are gone. The cancer is dead. You are healed."

And the person would rejoice, of course; so would I. I thoroughly believed in Branham, I thought he was God's man and so forth, and we wanted to see people healed. So [supposedly] the cancer was dead, and we were happy about this.

But then he had a little added statement there, and that was something like this. "Now, just keep on trusting the Lord. You're healed. Don't loose your faith in the Lord. Just keep your faith and trust the Lord, and you're healed." He said, "You're going to be sick for a while. You're going to be quite sick for a few days." Quite often he referred to three days. "You're going to be very sick for three days."

The people often asked, "Well, what do you mean, Brother Branham? If I'm healed, why should I be sick?"

He said, "The cancer, the cancerous growth which is now dead inside your body has to be carried out by the blood stream. And it's waste material; it has to be carried out; it's poison material, and so you'll be sick for quite awhile until that is carried away."

But what happened then was this: that in the meantime the people wouldn't worry about it.

They'd say, "Well, that's what Branham said would happen. I'm healed."

But this went on, till some of these people got sicker and sicker and died.

So he had an out. By this time he was gone [from that place].

O TIMOTHY: Right. So there were many that he proclaimed healed?

POHL: Yes, yes. Practically every one as I recall, standing beside these various bedsides--practically everyone was pronounced healed. But the tragedy is that so many of those died after Branham was gone. So there was something wrong.

He also said, "Don't let your faith fail." In other words he emphasized that point. "Don't let your faith fail." And his out was this, I'm sure, that when they died, well, "Their faith failed."

It wasn't his faith, it was their faith. In other words, it was the patient's faith, which I don't see that in Scripture. When the Lord healed people, they were healed. And there wasn't such a thing as "You'll be sick for five days, or three days," and so, "don't lose your faith." I don't see that in Scripture.

O TIMOTHY: There was a newspaper that tried to investigate the healings. Can you tell me something about that? What were they able to confirm as far as healings?

POHL: Yes, in Winnipeg. Branham came to Canada at that time and he preached at a number of Apostolic churches in Canada. The first church was the church of our moderator in Winnipeg, who brought him into Canada. And Mr. Branham had his campaign there. Then he came later on to Saskatoon.

When the campaign was in progress in Winnipeg, the newspaper (one of the large city newspapers) was giving considerable coverage to the meetings, and they indicated that there were a lot of people healed. They were favorable to this church, and advertised it and gave news reports that quite a few people were healed. But later on that same editor sent out some reporters to check on some of these people that they had written up in the paper weeks before. [The reporters were] to check up and see whether these people who were supposedly healed at that time, were still alive, or whatever.

And when these reporters went back, they discovered that these people had died, or were in the same state or in a worse state than they were before. So, the editor then put it in the paper that these cases had turned out to be phonies, and that these people weren't healed after all. And there was something wrong with these so-called miracles and healings.

But when the pastor of the church saw these reports in the paper, he went to the editor rather disturbed and not very happy about the situation, and he confronted the editor: "Why do you do this to our church? You're hurting the reputation of our church, and you shouldn't do that to us."

And the editor said words something to this effect, "Well, pastor, if the healings are genuine, you don't have to worry, do you?"

And I thought to myself later on when I heard this, well, that editor certainly had a lot of common sense, because if they're genuine, why worry? If they're not, well then they should be exposed--which is what the paper did.

And the editor said, "Pastor, we gave you good coverage when Mr. Branham was here." The pastor had to admit they did. "Now," he said, "we owe it to our people to give them the rest of the story." And he said, "That's what we found." He said to the pastor, "I'll tell you what I'll do, if you can bring me one genuine case of a genuine healing, I'll give you the front page."

And I was told right in that pastor's home that they couldn't find one.

O TIMOTHY: Not one?

POHL: Not one.

O TIMOTHY: I understand there was a radio pastor whose wife supposedly was healed, and also a man with four students in the college. Could you tell me about those two?

POHL: Oh, yes. Yes. The first one I would relate to is a man from a little place near Regina, Saskatchewan. He and his wife were staunch Christians in our denomination. Very fine family. They had four children, and they were all attending our Bible school at that time, in which I was on staff. We knew these children very well--such very fine children, and young people, and a very fine family.

One day during the healing campaign, the phone rang in our dorm and I answered it in our office there, and here was this man phoning from the airport. He'd flown his wife in from near Regina, and he said, "We're here. We want Branham to pray for my wife. She's dying of cancer. What shall we do?"

Well, I said, "Bring her down to the Bible school dorm." And he knew very well where that was. I said, "I'll meet you at the south door, and we'll put her in a room, and I'll see that Branham prays for her."

Which he did, and after the meeting that night we proceeded to take Branham from room to room, and of course we had her in mind very much. And we brought him into her room, and the husband was there, too. Branham prayed for her and pronounced her healed.

Well, there was great rejoicing on the part of all of us. We really were rejoicing that the Lord had healed this woman. [We were rejoicing] for the sake of the whole

family. He had given them this story, of course, that "she's still going to be sick, though she's healed; she's going to feel pretty bad." So, they flew back as soon as they could. They wouldn't stay around. We didn't have the facilities to take care of sick people there. There was just a dormitory, and so they went back as soon as they could.

About 10 to 14 days later, in that time frame, I was sitting in the office in the Bible school. Branham was gone; the meetings were over. The door opened to the main building, and I could hear footsteps, then a knock on the office door. In came this gentleman. Of course I recognized him immediately, but I saw that his face was very downcast; he was really under pressure and a heavy burden. So I invited him to sit down, and I said, "Brother," I said, "what's on your heart?" And he said, "Brother Pohl, you were standing beside my wife when she was sick in one of the rooms in the dorm. Mr. Branham prayed for her, and he pronounced her healed."

I said, "Yes, I was right there." He said, "Tell me, how is it that my wife who was healed ten days ago, [somewhere in that time frame], is now in the grave?" He said, "Tell me, how that can be?"

Well, it really hit him hard, and it hit me hard too, because that's the first I heard that she had died. We hadn't heard that she had died. So here he was all broken up and he wanted an explanation. What could I tell him? I think that's one of the hardest questions I've ever had to answer in my life. Why is she dead, if she was healed? And I was witness. He couldn't figure this out, a very fine Christian, and I felt for him.

To this day I don't know what I said, but I know we wept together and we prayed together. I could have said this: "Brother, your faith failed, or your wife's faith failed."

What help would I have been to him? I mean, that's a terrible thing to do.

I wouldn't dare say that to him, to anyone. He was broken. He had enough to burden him down at this stage without saying, "Your faith failed you." That was the wrong thing to say, so I didn't say it.

I could have said that, because that's the feeling behind a lot of these cases. The healer will say, well "Your faith failed, and it's not my fault."

But, I don't see that that is the case in Scripture either--where people's faith failed, and they lost their healing after God healed, or the Lord healed them, or the Apostles healed them. So, it's ridiculous.

Anyway, he left then, and of course we prayed for him, and so on. But it really was a difficult blow to this man and his family.

Then the other party was--I recall so well--was a pastor from Port Arthur, Ontario,

which is now called Thunderbay, Ontario. (They combined two cities, Port Arthur and Port William.)

This man was a pentecostal pastor, had a radio broadcast and, I understand, quite a sizable church. He flew his wife in and the nurse to Saskatoon which was quite a trip--quite costly. And again I had the phone call from the airport and placed them in a room there eventually in the dorm. And when the meeting was over, and the prayer line was over in the church, I brought Branham into the dorm and he prayed for this lady as well. He prayed also for the nurse. The nurse was deaf. He prayed for her healing, and claimed that she was healed. He also claimed that the pastor's wife was healed of cancer.

Well, there was great rejoicing. Let me tell you, we rejoiced together, because I thoroughly believed in Branham all this time, I thought he was just ... just it. He was God's man. We rejoiced together, and then Branham left. And the husband (the pastor) said to me, "Now, Brother Pohl," he said, "I've spent thousands of dollars to try to get help for my wife, on doctors, and this and that and the other, medicines." He said, "I really can't afford it, but here"-- and he wrote out a sizable check. He said, "I can't afford it, but Branham is worth it." He said, "My wife is healed."

He took Branham at his word. See, it wasn't anything else; he just believed Branham. And here was this sizable check. He said, "Give it to Branham." Which I did, the next day.

Later on, about three, four weeks later, I left for Ontario. I was missionary secretary of our denomination, and I visited some of our churches in Ontario. And in the process of visiting our churches, I came to Port Arthur, Port William. We had a church in Port William, and one of the first things I did when I got to Port William was to ask the pastors, "What about pastor so and so in Port Arthur?" I named him. I said, "How's his wife doing?" I said, "She was healed in the meetings in Saskatoon."

And I saw a strange look that came over their faces as I asked that question. And I thought in my heart, "Oh, no, not another one." Just like the family I was telling you about in Saskatoon, from Regina. And I said in my heart, "No, not another one."

And they said, "Haven't you heard, haven't you heard? She's dead. She passed away."

Well that was another blow to me, because I began to realize that something was wrong with this kind of healing. This was counterfeit; something was drastically wrong. Of all people, here was a pastor who loved the Lord and served the Lord, and, you know, why did this happen? Did his faith fail?

Did his wife's faith fail? He had a whole church behind him. But no, she passed away.

I was told that the worst thing was that this man (the pastor) had a very good radio broadcast in the area. He went on the air as soon as he got home, and he announced

that they had been to Saskatoon to the Branham meetings and had wonderful meetings there, and there were many healings, and amongst them his wife was gloriously healed in those meetings.

I'm sure that many people rejoiced, were happy to hear that. But, it wasn't very long after that, a few days later, he had to get on the same radio station and mention the fact that his wife had passed away. And I was told that that gave his radio program a severe blow and setback, because the world at large--I mean they think too, they're not stupid--here one day she was gloriously healed, and a few days later she's dead. You know, this doesn't add up.

We had more of those cases--these are just two exceptional ones--but there were others that passed away. I stood beside bed after bed, person after person who was pronounced healed and yet, where were they? They passed away. So there was something very wrong with this type of healing.

O TIMOTHY: In the meetings inside the main auditorium, Branham mentioned his angel different times, you said. Could you tell me about the incident with the spots on the hand, and then the secret words that he mentioned?

POHL: Oh, yes. This happened in the church, in one of the prayer lines, the healing lines. I was standing right beside Branham, beside his left arm, and our moderator was standing on his right hand. And we were helping him with these people coming by, praying with them and so on.

And in one case, Branham took the hand of a man, grabbed his hand and then lifted it up in the air and showed the back of his hand toward the audience. And he said this, "The angel that gave me this gift,"--he talked quite a bit about that angel that gave him the gift--"told me that in (a certain sickness--I forget which it was) spots will appear on the back of my hand."

And as he held this man's hand out and showed the back of his hand toward the audience, he said, "Folks, can you see the spots on my hand?"

Would you believe hands went up all over that auditorium and even in the back of the auditorium (people were standing; the place was jammed). And in the balcony way back there you could hardly see his hand, let alone see spots on his hand. It was way back there, and people had their hands up!

Back there in the gallery, and the balcony, and way at the back at the door. They could see spots! It was just something else, and I said to myself, "How can these people see those spots?"

They could hardly see his hand, you know, it's too far away. But people were holding up their hands. It was amazing. And I when I think back to this now, it seems to have been a form of mass hypnotism. People see what they want to see; they wanted to see

spots, because they believed in Branham, and there they were and they could all see spots.

Excepting two of us. First of all, myself. I was standing right beside him. I was touching him, shoulder to shoulder. And I looked, and for the life of me I couldn't see any spots. There were no spots.

And you know how I resolved that little problem? I said to myself, "Look, all these people can see spots. And I can't. There's something wrong with me. They can't all be out of tune with God. I'm the one that's backslidden." And I said to myself, "I'm going to talk to you later," and "there's something wrong with you."

Really, I was so sincere about this thing. I believed in Branham so much that I felt I was out of step with God. And so I said, "Okay, I'm going to talk to myself later."

And then the healing went on, and the prayer line ended finally, and I led Branham into the dorm again, and into the various rooms. When it was all over, I came back into church and here were quite a few people yet, visiting, standing around. It was quite an exciting time. And lo and behold, the moderator, who stood on the other side of Branham that night, said, "Brother Pohl, I want to ask you something."

"What is it?"

He said, "You were standing right beside Branham tonight when he held up this man's hand, and people could see spots."

And then that thought came back to me, "Oh, yeah, that's right. I was the one that didn't see the spots."

So, I said, "Yes, I was right there. And you were on the other side on the right."

He said, "Tell me, did you see any spots on the back of his hand?" And I said, "No, I didn't see any spots." He said, "I didn't either. I didn't either. And we were right there."

He said, "Tell me something. How is it that you and I who were standing right beside him couldn't see the spots, and all those people back there, way back there, could see spots?"

Well, how do you answer that? He was our moderator. That made me feel so much better, because I found out that he was backslidden too, and not me only, see what I mean! I had felt I had been backslidden because I couldn't see those spots. But here's our moderator.

"We're in trouble; our moderator's backslidden, too, huh?"

That's how I reasoned. So I felt much better because I knew I wasn't the only one, that our brother moderator couldn't see any spots either. And I thought, "Well, there's something wrong here, there's something wrong with this whole procedure."

Alright, that's the one thing, and then we came to the last meeting. The last meeting was in the Saskatoon arena. We were crowded out in the church, it was just packed. We couldn't get the people in. So the last Sunday afternoon we had rented the arena downtown. I think there were approximately three thousand people there. And I'm sure there were people from all over and from every part of the spectrum of Saskatoon.

He preached of course, Branham preached, and [there was] a long prayer line, very long. There were scores of people that wanted to be prayed for.

So Branham was getting pretty tired, praying for one after the other. And he was trying to cast a deaf and dumb spirit out of this woman. He prayed and nothing happened. At least to him, nothing happened. And then we just waited a bit, and then he said, "Folks," he said, "I want every eye closed this time. I'm going to pray again. We want this woman healed." He said, "I want every eye closed." And he said, "I can't do this unless every eye is closed."

At this time I was standing right in front of Branham with the person he was praying for between us ... Branham on the little platform there and the person between us he was praying for. I was, say, six feet from Branham, five or six feet from him.

And while I was waiting for him to finish up praying for this lady, he asked the people, "Please close your eyes." He was going to pray for her the second time, which he did. And once again he said, "This woman can't be healed like this. Somebody is still looking." He said, "I want every eye closed."

Now I thought the reason was in reverence to God, respect to God, wanting prayer answered, and so on; but here he came out with something else. "The reason that I want every eye closed is that the angel that gave me this gift gave me some words that I must say to cast off this deaf and dumb spirit; and I'm not suppose to reveal those words to any human being."

He said, "The reason I ask you to close your eyes is so you will not read my lips when I say those words."

Well, you know, when he said that--and I'm right in front of him, no mistaking, I heard this; I was so close to him.; I wasn't way back in the audience, or anything; I'm right there--I said to myself, "Wait a minute. What is this?"

Publicly he said, "In the name of Jesus Christ, I command thee, thou foul, deaf and dumb spirit, come out of this woman." You know, he said it really loud, and with

authority, but in the name of Jesus Christ. But that didn't do it. Obviously there was something else that was needed. And under his breath he said--well, you name it, whatever it was, something like "hocus, pocus", something that was given to him that was superior to the name of Jesus Christ, in his line of thinking.

This is what the angel told him. And this is the only thing that would do the job.

Well, when he said that, that just hit me so hard. I said to myself, "There's something wrong here. Is there anything greater than the name of Jesus Christ?" What can be greater? To me, the name of Jesus Christ is all powerful, it is the authority, the final authority. There's nothing greater. And here he had something else that was greater. The name of Jesus Christ didn't do it; he had to go resort to some other statements, some hocus pocus stuff that did the job.

Well, immediately I said within myself that this is occultism, this is spiritism, this is witchcraft, this is not Christian. It can't be. If the name of Jesus Christ doesn't do it, then it's something else. And that's what it was. So I became very suspicious.

And when people began to die one after another--people whose beds I had stood beside, and he had pronounced them healed--I said to myself, "Well, that just proves these healings were fake. They're not genuine. This is not in the name of Christ."

He was deceiving the people with the name of Jesus Christ, but underneath his breath there was something else. And he didn't want us to read his lips. Now I never looked. I don't think I could read his lips anyway, I'm not even used to doing that. He was so careful that nobody would read lips.

O TIMOTHY: Maybe at this point someone would be convinced that William Branham was a deceiver, but they might be thinking that maybe he was a small off-beat character in the pentecostal movement, and maybe this was an isolated sort of incident and not very widespread. What would you say about that?

POHL: No, Branham was well known. I don't know how many places he visited in total, but I know some of the men who accompanied him in the meetings.

He had two men with him, besides his younger brother, and they would tell us fabulous stories of great miracles that happened here, there, and everywhere in the States. I also understand that he was over in Africa and had a great ministry over there. Branham is well-known yet in many parts of our country. I don't know about in the States, but I know just last week we heard of two churches right here in southern British Columbia that are Branhamite churches.

And I had a letter from a man just last week from Saskatchewan, and he said his relatives are into Branhamite teaching, and they are linked to a Branham church, and he said he's having such a problem because they are trying to influence his teenage children to become Branhamites. Now, that's in Saskatchewan. And he said, "Have

you got any literature, any more literature, any help that I could turn to?" He said, "We need something like that."

There are several other churches in Saskatchewan that I know of, and I know there are two right here in Southern B.C. There is also a church up at White Horse, in the Yukon. I had some people come down to see me in order to talk to me about Branham from up there. I had to do some counseling with a young couple from up there. It's not just an isolated thing. His tapes and his books are very well circulated, very well. I've met people all over the place that are Branhamites. Had them even attend my meetings.

O TIMOTHY: I understand Branham was also widely accepted by charismatic leaders and is still well-known as a famous charismatic healer.

POHL: Yes, I know our denomination accepted him; I can't figure out why they didn't get wise to it; they should have. Our moderator should have recognized it when he couldn't see the spots, and I couldn't see them. He should have recognized there's something wrong. He should have recognized, too, when he dealt with the editor of the newspaper in Winnipeg, when he couldn't produce one genuine case. But still, even after that he let Branham go through our churches throughout western Canada.

To me, it was ridiculous. That's another thing that made me leave the denomination, because I said that I cannot stay in a denomination that is dishonest like that. That isn't honesty.

The moderator knew that something was wrong, but he didn't do a thing about it. The only thing I could do, then, was to get out. That's why we left the denomination. ...

Strangely enough, a missionary who is working in a radio station in France came to see me in Three Hills and wanted all the information I could give him on Branham. I said, "Why?" Well, he said, "We get letters from North Africa,"--it's a Christian radio station--"and people are writing about Branham. We get converts over there, and we don't know what we're dealing with."

He said, "There's nothing on Branham in books or anything like that." He said, "Give us all the help you can. I understand you were working with Branham in the healing campaign and know a little bit about him."

So I gave him all I could, but at that time there were no books on Branham. Now there is. There is a book now, that has come out in the last eight or ten years, quite a sizable book, and it's good. It comes out of Saskatoon.

This man wrote about Branham, and he quotes from my book as well, and he gets

some very good information that people can use now, and I've been mailing that book out. In fact I sold one last week to some other people that have been involved with Branham right here in southern B.C. I've distributed a lot of those books already. There's another little pamphlet now that I've gotten hold of, two little pamphlets, in fact, that I'm also distributing. ...

O TIMOTHY: I think it's common knowledge that the charismatic healers like Kathryn Kuhlman, Oral Roberts, and John Wimber have a very, very low success rate, to say the least. I think that's common knowledge. What do you think the problem is here? Men are claiming to be healing, and we see that in the Bible there were healings, that God healed. Do you think God is not working among men today, or what's the problem?

POHL: Well, I believe God heals. I still have a personal belief that God heals because I have seen healings--not a large amount, but I have seen some genuine healings. But I don't claim to have the gift of healing. I just pray for people according to James 5. I believe that's the order for the church today. I believe the gift of healing was given in the early church and was largely something that was a credential for the Lord himself and for the apostles. That was their credentials for the fact--in the case of Jesus Christ--that he was the Messiah. And in the case of the Apostles, that they were the Apostles of Jesus Christ. Christ had laid the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20), and the Apostles finished building on that foundation. They had their credentials, as Paul says in 2 Cor. 12:12 that "the signs of an Apostle were wrought among you in all power and signs and wonders."

What are the signs of an Apostle? I believe these signs, wonders, and miracles, were their credentials, the apostolic credentials. And that's why many of these things were done in the early church, as the credentials of their authority under Christ.

Alright. Today, though, we have this teaching that everybody can do signs, wonders, and miracles, or nearly everybody, that these gifts are still very prevalent in the church. There are all kinds of people who claim to have the gift of healing and so on. But are they genuine?

To answer your question, I say they are not. These are not the gifts of healing, these are not genuine. Real genuine gifts of healing were there for Christ and the Apostles, as their credential signs. But today these are not Apostles. And they don't need these credentials as Apostles, because they aren't Apostles.

Sure, they can pray for people according to James 5, and they can be healed if the Lord so wills, but it doesn't mean that there's going to be a lot of healing, just a great deal of healings going on as in the days of Christ because those are there as credential signs for the early church.

So today you have some healings that are done by people who claim to have the gift of healing, but who don't really have the gift, and in most cases they don't heal people

anyway. They're not genuine healers.

Some healings are temporary. I think a lot of that has to do with psychological side of it. Some people claim to be healed, you know, in the excitement of a healing meeting, [and they] throw away their crutches, but in a short while they'll need crutches again. In excitement, psychologically you can do some strange things. Strange things can happen, but it's not lasting.

I don't think anybody has the gift of healing today. And I think that's proven by the fact that the percentage [of sicknesses which are healed] is so very low.

[It is also true that] some people are healed in spite of the healer. Now, if I'm really sincere before God, and I look beyond the healer, and I'm trusting the Lord to heal me, then the miracle can happen in spite of the healer. And I think there are some cases like that. I'm not a bit surprised that that happens, because God does answer faith.

Not like Branham said--I remember him saying this to one man in the healing line one night in Saskatoon--"Do you believe that the angel gave me this gift?" To me, that was a very unfair question. Here the man had been in that long healing line, and he finally got to Branham, and he wanted to be prayed for and healed. And now he's confronted with this question: "Do you believe that the angel gave me this gift?" What could the man say? If he said, "No," Branham wouldn't have prayed for him. So what did he do? In front of all these people he said, "Yes." You understand? But how could he know? There was no way that he knew that an angel met Branham. He's only taking Branham at his word.

"Do you believe an angel gave me this gift?"

Well, "Yes," he said, then Branham prayed for him. But that's ridiculous. He was having faith in Branham's word, not in the Bible. It wasn't the Lord. He was looking to a man. And that's why I think so many people were not healed, because they just depended on Branham, because Branham was a healer. [And this is true] whoever the healer is. There was something wrong there. No wonder there were very few people healed.

O TIMOTHY: We appreciate very much, Brother Pohl, that you have shared the experiences with us about William Branham.

About Way of Life - The name "Way of Life" is from Proverbs 6:23: "For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life." The biblical instruction that molds men to God's will requires reproof. It is not strictly positive. It does not focus on man's "self-esteem." It does not avoid controversial or unpopular subjects. It warns as well as comforts. It deals with sin and false teaching in a plain manner. It is reproves, rebukes, exhorts with all

longsuffering and doctrine (2 Tim. 4:2). This is what we seek to do through Way of Life Literature. The Way of Life preaching and publishing ministry based in Bethel Baptist Church, London, Ontario, of which Wilbert Unger is the founding Pastor. A mail stop is maintained in Port Huron, Michigan.

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A SCRIPTURAL ANALYSIS OF THE CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT

When two beliefs contradict, they cannot both be true. In the end no one wants to discover he has believed a lie his entire life. Neither does God want men to believe a lie, so He has lovingly imparted His Words to prevent this. Anyone who loves God will eagerly apply Scripture to what he believes to ensure that it truly honors Him. This tract should enable someone to apply Scripture to the charismatic movement.

Who is a charismatic? A charismatic participates in “gifts” of “tongues,” “healing,” or “miracles.” The term *charismatic* comes from the Greek word *charisma*, which essentially means *gift*. As this term relates to the charismatic movement, these (tongues, healing, miracles) are gifts of the Holy Spirit that the New Testament (NT) calls “signs and wonders” (John 4:48). The “sign,” technically and originally, points to a supernatural happening that validates Scripture. Most of the gifts of the Spirit (such as teaching, exhortation, helps, etc.) have the purpose of edifying (building up) the church. In the NT the gifts of validation (signs) and edification were genuine gifts from the Holy Spirit that were received at the moment of one’s faith in Christ for salvation (John 14:16,17; Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 12:7-11). The modern charismatic movement claims that the gifts of validation, the sign gifts, continue today. In addition, many charismatics also maintain that God still provides believers special revelation on the level of the Bible. This pamphlet will evaluate with Scripture these foundational charismatic beliefs.

Foundational Principles for a Right Decision

One will not likely make the right decision about the charismatic movement without following certain foundational Scriptural principles. First, *experiences often deceive*. We all tend toward being deceived, since, as Jeremiah 17:9 says, “the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” You cannot depend on how you feel because “there is a way which seemeth right unto man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov 14:12). Satan often deceives by means of experiences. He presents himself as “an angel of light” and “it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness” (2 Cor 11:14, 15). The people said of Simon the sorcerer, “This man is the great power of God ... and to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries” (Acts 8: 10, 11). The Lord Jesus warned, “For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Mt 24:24).

Second, *the Bible is sufficient and reliable for testing truthfulness, but experiences are characteristically unreliable*. The Bible is truth (Jn 17: 1 7) and is sufficient for every good work (2 Tim 3: 16,17). God is pleased only by faith (Heb 11:6) and faith comes from God’s Word (Rom 10:17; Jn 20:30, 31). Experiences (“sight”) and faith are mutually exclusive (2 Cor 5:7). Seeking experiences is wicked and unfaithful. The Lord Jesus said that those seeking signs—tongues, healings, miracles—commit spiritual adultery, that is, they are unfaithful to God: “An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it” (Mt 12:39). Experiences should be rejected as non-authoritative competition with the evidence of God’s Word. The Bible is complete. No more Bible is being written—Jude 3 says that “the faith . . . was once (and for all) delivered (completed action) unto the saints” and Revelation 22:18-19 promises a curse upon anyone who adds or takes away from that completed revelation. Even good, valid experiences are less sure than the Bible. Peter writes that his experience on the

Mount of Transfiguration is less sure than the Word of God (2 Pet 1:16-21). The most incredible experiences still fall far short of the Bible. According to the Lord Jesus, Abraham said to the rich man in hell, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Lk 16:31). We will be judged based on God's Words, not on experiences: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my [Christ's] words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I [Christ] have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (In 12:48). God rejects unscriptural worship because worship of God must be in truth (John 4:23, 24). Those who would please God will and must test every belief, practice, and experience using the Bible.

A Checklist to Determine Whether You Should Join or Remain in the Charismatic Movement

I. TONGUES

1.) **Are they known languages?** Yes: ____ No: ____

The word "tongues" (*glossa*-Acts 2:11) means "languages." The tongues or languages spoken on the Day of Pentecost were Parthian, Mede, Cappadocian, etc. (Acts 2:9-11). Each person in that multinational gathering heard the Word of God in his own tongue or language. Likewise, the word "tongue" in 1 Corinthians refers to specific known languages (cf. 1 Cor 14:21 + Isa 28:11-12—Babylonian). Mere gibberish (unintelligible nonlanguage) violates Scripture. Some might call it a "heavenly language" or "tongues of angels," but every time God speaks personally or by means of angels, He speaks in an already known language.

2.) **Are they translated into a known language?** Yes: ____ No: ____

1 Corinthians 14:27, 28: "If any man speak in an unknown tongue . . . let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church[.]" "Interpreting" is "translating," that is, giving a word-for-word, phrase-for-phrase translation in the known tongue identical in meaning to the word in the unknown tongue. Unless someone translates the unknown language, speaking in one is unscriptural.

3.) **Are there Jews are present to witness the foreign languages (tongues) being spoken?** Yes: ____ No: ____

1 Corinthians 1:22: "For the Jews require a sign." God designed the signs for the Jews. Every time people spoke in tongues in the book of Acts, Jews were present. How many Jews are present when tongues are employed?

4.) **Are unbelievers understanding the tongues, that is, are the tongues a miracle to validate the Word of God for unbelievers?** Yes: ____ No: ____

1 Corinthians 14:22: "Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not." When someone can speak in a real language that he has never learned (such as someone speaking Arabic who only knows English), that is a miracle. Unintelligible gibberish is not a miracle, and, therefore, does not validate anything. This also invalidates the practice of private praying to God in "tongues" (cf. 1 Cor 14:15).

5.) **Are the tongues spoken one person at a time, and, at the most, by three people?** Yes: ____ No: ____

1 Corinthians 14:27: "If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at

the most by three, and that by course.”

6.) Is someone in attendance who understands the foreign language being spoken?

Yes: ____ No: ____

1 Corinthians 14:19: “I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.” Unless someone needs to hear in that language, there is no need for that tongue.

The modern “tongues” movement contradicts Scripture because tongues have ceased (1 Cor 13:8b). The purpose of sign gifts was to authenticate God’s Word. Since confirmation of the New Testament was completed with the completion of the canon of Scripture, the miraculous gift of tongues has ceased. Tongues did not reappear (and then only in a fraudulent form) until the charismatic movement began at the beginning of the 20th Century. Tongues could not have disappeared if they were a permanent gift to the church (a total apostasy is impossible-Mt 16:18; 28:20), so they only could have stopped because God had accomplished His purpose for them.

II. HEALINGS

If someone has the Biblical gift of healing from God, then his gift will mirror what the Lord Jesus and the apostles did in the Gospels and Acts.

1.) Is everyone healed regardless of faith? Yes: ____ No: ____

Nowhere does the NT say that healing requires faith by the recipient. The few times that Jesus says, “Thy faith hath made thee whole” (Mt 9:22; Mk 5:34; 10:52; Lk 8:48, 50; 17:19), the Lord is specifically referring to the faith that saved them from their sin (“whole” comes from the same Greek word translated “saved,” and means “salvation from sin”; the same Greek is translated “thy faith hath saved thee,” Lu 7:50; 18:42). In no instance did the Lord Jesus Christ require faith as a basis for healing. He healed without discrimination as to person or affliction. The vast majority in Galilee did not believe in Christ, but He healed all that came to Him (Mt 4:23-25).

2.) Are people healed everywhere (hospitals, streets, homes, etc.)?

Yes: ____ No: ____

The Lord healed throughout “Syria” (Mt 4:24), at the bottom of a mountain (Mt 8:8), in a desert place outside of the cities (Mt 14:14), on a mountain by the Sea of Galilee (Mt 15:30), and in the coasts of Judaea beyond Jordan (Mt 19:1). Luke 9:6 explicitly says that He healed “everywhere.” There were no “healing meetings” in the Bible.

3.) Are people healed completely? Yes: ____ No: ____

The Lord Jesus had no relapses or failed healings.

4.) Are people immediately healed? Yes: ____ No: ____

No one had to wait for Jesus’ healing to take effect. He took care of their sickness or injury immediately. He immediately cleansed lepers (Mt 8:3; Lk 17:14). He immediately restored the hand of a withered man (Mt 12:10-13).

5.) Is everything healed, including organic diseases (replacing missing limbs)?

Yes: ____ No: ____

The Lord Jesus Christ reattached the ear of Malchus after it had been completely cut off by Peter (Lk. 22:51,52). Matthew 9:35 says that He healed “every sickness and every disease” in Galilee (cf. Mt 4:23). In John 9 He healed a man born blind (also Mt 9:27-30; Mk 8:22-25). Matthew 15:30-31 reads: “And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus’ feet; and he healed them: insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel.” Someone who truly has the gift of healing will be able to reattach the body parts of people who have lost them.

6.) Are people raised from the dead? Yes: ____ No: ____

The Lord Jesus Christ raised people from the dead (Mt 9:18, 24; Lk 7:12-15). He had the power to raise those who had been dead for days and were already decomposing (Jn 11). Christ’s apostles also raised people from the dead (Mt 10:8; Acts 9:40; 20:10-12).

God still heals people, but the gift of healing (like the gift of tongues) was for the confirmation of God’s Word (Mk 16:20; Acts 14:3; Rom 15:19; Heb 2:4). Since those who claim to have the gift of healing today do not duplicate the miracles of Jesus Christ and the apostles, their claims are fraudulent. The Lord Jesus Christ was proven to be Messiah by miracles (Mt 11:46; Lk 7:20-22; Jn 5:36; Acts 2:22). Believers accept by faith without signs or wonders that Jesus is the Messiah and that the Bible is already confirmed as God’s Word.

III. OTHER DOCTRINAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES

1.) Do women preach to or teach men? Yes: ____ No: ____

1 Corinthians 14:29-35 and 1 Timothy 2:9-15 both plainly command women not to teach or preach to men, which would include not speaking in tongues in a mixed gender gathering.

2.) Are worldly (rock, pop, jazz, etc.) music or unbiblical words used in the services?
Yes: ____ No: ____

God will not accept worldly (Rom 12:2; 1 Jn 2:15), sensual (Jam 3:15), or fleshly (1 Pet 2:12; Rom 13:14; Tit 2:12) music as worship. He calls for rational (Rom 12:1-2) worship in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Col 3:16), not “vain repetitions, as the heathen” (Mt 6:7). God does not want the emotions or the will alone, but also the key element of a “sound mind” (2 Tim 1:7; Titus 2:6; Mt 22:37). All “worship” that substitutes emotionalism for the conscious actings of the mind is demonic.

3.) Is it taught that a Christian can lose his salvation? Yes: ____ No: ____

Once God saves someone, no man can pluck him out of God’s hand (Jn 10:27-29; Rom 8:28-39) because he is “kept by the power of God” (1 Pet 1:5). If you do the keeping, then you are doing the saving. Any religion that that you can lose your salvation is teaching you salvation by works. Keeping saved by works like being saved by works; both are impossible (Eph 2:8, 9; Rom 4:1-8). Both corrupt the gospel—“a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (Rom 3:28).

If, on the first two of sections above, you answered “no” to any of the questions, you or your church is violating Scripture. On the third section, if you answered “yes” to any of them, you or your church is transgressing God’s Word. Since the tongues, healing, and miracles of the charismatic movement are not from God, they could only be Satanic or humanly faked. In the end, Satan will primarily use miracles as his means of deceiving people (Rev 19:20). People filled with the Holy Spirit will not speak in tongues, or claim the gifts of healing, or miracle-working. They will boldly preach the gospel (Acts 4:31), manifest the fruit of the Spirit in a holy life (Gal 5:22, 23), selflessly relate with others (Eph 5:18-6:9), and manifest their spiritual giftedness (1 Cor 12:7-11). Since the Word of God is the sword of the Holy Spirit (Eph 6:17), a Spirit-filled church will carefully avoid violating Scripture.

A charismatic church undermines Scripture with experience, adds to God’s Word, distorts the Biblical purpose of sign gifts, rejects the teaching of the Bible on tongues and healings, adds to grace, misrepresents true spirituality, and counterfeits NT Christianity. As with any false religion, the Bible teaches complete separation from false belief, teaching, and practice. If you believe in the Lord, you must renounce and separate from the charismatic movement. 2 Corinthians 6:17, 18 commands: “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” Not only will you separate from false religion, but you will also join a truly Spirit-filled church of the living and true God.

For more information, or for a free home Bible study either in person or by mail that explains more about the Bible, salvation, and other Biblical truths, visit, call, or write to:

Faithsaves.net

Faithsaves.net has special resources dealing with evidence for the Bible and for creation to help atheists, agnostics, and others skeptical about Scripture, as well as material specifically for Catholics, Lutherans, Presbyterians and other Reformed believers, Muslims, Jews, Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses and other non-Trinitarians, Seventh-Day Adventists and other Sabbatarians, Pentecostals, Evangelicals, and members of other religions.

Will I Be Saved if I Ask Jesus to Come into my Heart or Repeat the “Sinner’s Prayer”?

Countless multitudes of people in Christendom, especially evangelicals and fundamentalists,⁷⁰² have taught that the way to be saved is to pray and ask Jesus into one’s heart, quoting Revelation 3:20. Many more have taught, claiming Romans 10:9-10 and 10:13 as support, that one must pray and ask to be saved by confessing Jesus with one’s mouth and calling upon him in a “sinner’s prayer,” as well as believing in Him, and after one both believes and then asks to be saved he is forgiven of his sins. People who say the sinner’s prayer or ask Jesus into their hearts are then given assurance of salvation because of what they just did.

On the other hand, many Bible-believing and practicing churches teach that salvation is by repentant faith alone in Christ. Consequently, the lost do not need to ask Jesus into their hearts, confess anything with their mouths, or pray anything whatever in order to become Christians—they simply need to trust in Christ to save them from the penalty and power of their sin. If the lost trust in Christ while praying, that is wonderful; if they trust in Christ without praying, that is equally wonderful. These churches teach that salvation does not come by praying, nor does assurance come from remembering that one prayed a “sinner’s prayer.” They teach that directing the lost to ask Jesus into their hearts in order to be saved does not help anyone understand the gospel, but actually creates tremendous confusion and large numbers of people who are not truly Christians but think that they are because they have performed a man-made religious ritual. You may ask: “What is the truth? Can I become a child of God by asking Jesus into my heart or praying the ‘sinner’s prayer,’ or not?”

What is the Gospel?

1 Cor 15:1-4 states that it is “the gospel . . . by which also ye are saved.” To understand whether or not you need to ask Jesus into your heart or say the “sinner’s prayer,” a proper understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ is required. There are four things a lost person must know in order to be saved.⁷⁰³

1.) *Why you need the gospel: You are a sinner*

God’s standard is “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Mt 5:48), but you have fallen miserably short of His holy glory. “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). “There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are

⁷⁰² Evangelical and fundamentalist readers are highly encouraged to read the pamphlet “Do You Want to Worship God?” available at: <http://faithsaves.net/do-you-want-to-worship-God/>.

⁷⁰³ Compare “Do You Know You Have Eternal Life?” at <http://faithsaves.net/salvation/>.

all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Rom 3:10-12). You can say, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps 51:5), since you sinned in the first man, Adam (Rom 5:12-19), and were born with a "heart [that] is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jer 17:9). Your corrupt nature makes you "as an unclean thing, and all [your] righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Is 64:6). It only takes one sin to keep you out of God's presence: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (Jam 2:10), but you have committed numberless sins, every one of which is written down in God's books (Rev 20:11-15). The Lord Jesus Christ said that unjust anger is murder (Mt 5:21-22), and a lustful thought is adultery (Mt 5:27-28), so you are a murderer and an adulterer. You have lied (Prov 6:16), been proud (Pr 6:16-19), bitter (Ro 3:14), unthankful (2 Tim 3:2), covetous (2 Tim 3:2), and hypocritical (Is 33:14). You have broken the greatest commandment of all, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Mt 22:37). Indeed, until you are born again (Jn 3:3), you "cannot please God" (Rom 8:8) in any way, but are "defiled and unbelieving" with "nothing pure; but even [your] mind and conscience is defiled" (Tit 1:15). This very moment, "the wrath of God abideth" on you (Jn 3:36). You are "condemned already" (Jn 3:18). You "have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out" (Num 32:23).

2.) *Why you need the gospel: you deserve a penalty for your sin*

God's law says, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal 3:10). You have not continuously and perfectly obeyed, so you have earned His curse. Since "the wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23), you deserve both physical death, the separation of the soul and spirit from the body (Heb 9:27), and spiritual death, the separation of a person from God. Until one is born again, he is "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph 2:1), his "damnation is just" (Rom 3:8), and he is consequently headed for the second death, eternal separation from God in the lake of fire: "This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev 20:14-15). In the lake of fire the lost "shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and [they] shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night" (Rev 14:10-11). The question arises: "How can ye escape the damnation of hell?" (Mt 23:33).

3.) *What the gospel is: Christ died for your sin, was buried, and rose again from the dead*
 Jesus Christ is "God manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim 3:16). The Son of God, who existed from eternity past with the Father and the Holy Spirit, the three eternal Persons of the one and only true God (1 Jn 5:7), took to Himself a human nature, so that, although He was still 100% God, He became 100% Man as well. He lived a sinless life and then died on the cross, where His Father "made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might

be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Cor 5:21). He then rose bodily from the grave and ascended to heaven, from whence He will soon return to judge the world. On the cross God laid your transgressions upon His Son, who suffered to pay your sin debt. The law demands perfect righteousness for entry into heaven, but Christ died as your Substitute so that His death and shed blood could pay for your sin, and you could have His righteousness put to your account and be counted righteous in God’s sight for the Savior’s sake. You can be saved, not through your own works, but through His work; not by your attempts to obey the law, but by His perfect obedience to it and death to satisfy it. “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us” (Gal 3:13). “Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but [made alive] by the Spirit” (1 Pet 3:18). Since by “one offering he hath perfected for ever” those that are washed in His blood (Heb 10:14), there is nothing that you can do to save yourself, or to keep yourself saved. “Salvation is of the LORD” (Jon 2:9).

4.) *The way to receive the gospel: Repentant faith in Jesus Christ*

To have the Lord Jesus’ blood wash away your sins, you must place your faith in Him. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (Jn 3:16). Saving faith in Jesus Christ involves:

a.) *Repentance*. “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Lu 13:3). “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out” (Ac 3:19). In repentance, you agree with God that you are as bad as the Bible says you are, that you are headed to hell and deserve it for your sins, and you turn from your sins to submit unconditionally to God as your Lord. Jesus Christ said, “Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life [wants to live his own way and will not turn to God’s way] shall lose it [in hell]; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Mark 8:34-36).

b.) *Faith: trust in the Lord Jesus alone to save*. You do not believe on Jesus Christ for salvation if you think that any good deed you have done, are doing, or will do helps save you, or if you believe that any religious ritual, such as baptism, communion, confessing your sins every day, or saying a one-time “sinner’s prayer,” is the instrumentality through which you receive the forgiveness of sin. Salvation is based on Christ’s work on the cross alone and is received by repentant faith alone. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, “For by grace [undeserved favor] are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.” If salvation is “by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.” (Rom 11:6). “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us” (Tit 3:5). Saving faith is also not just mental assent to facts, and nobody can say that he has always believed in

Christ. You must come to a specific point in your life where you see yourself as a lost, helpless sinner, you turn from your sins, and you trust solely in the Lord Jesus for eternal life. You must forsake all confidence in your supposed goodness, your religious rituals, and any other false trust, and place your confidence in the Savior's blood and righteousness alone.

If you will come to Jesus Christ for salvation, He will keep you saved; no one who has ever truly believed in Him can perish (Rom 8:28-39). Once you are saved, you are always saved, both from sin's penalty, eternal damnation, and from sin's power: "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor 5:21). If you will repent and believe in Him, he promises you everlasting life with Him in heaven upon His return or your death, and a holy life on earth now, freed from the bondage of sin.

Have you ever turned to the Lord Jesus Christ in repentant faith? If not, you need to receive Him immediately to save you from your sin (Jn 1:12). He promises, "him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (Jn 6:37). Turn to Him today—tomorrow it may be too late. "Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." (Pr 27:1).

What About Asking Jesus to Come into my Heart?

Since the clear truth of the gospel of Christ is that sinners become the children of God by repentant faith alone (Gal 3:26; Jn 3:16, 18, 36; 6:47; Rom 3:28; 4:5; 5:1), the overall teaching of Scripture makes it clear that you do not need to ask Jesus to come into your heart in order to be saved. However, there are many further reasons why salvation is not based on whether you pray such a prayer. Consider the following fourteen:

1.) *The Bible never commands anyone to ask Jesus to come into his heart.*

Despite the widespread use of this phrase in modern times, God's Word never commands any lost sinner to ask Jesus to come into his heart. The Old Testament sacrificial system set forth the gospel in picture and pointed forward to Christ's work on the cross. God gave Israel many extremely detailed instructions concerning the sacrificial animals and ritual so that the Lord Jesus Christ and His saving work would be properly pictured. Never once was there a command or a suggestion that any Jew was to ask into his heart the sacrificial animal or the coming Messiah the animal pictured. Furthermore, there are no examples in the New Testament of Christ telling people to ask Him into their hearts. Nor are there any examples of the Apostles telling anyone to ask Jesus into his heart. Someone who simply read the Bible would never conclude that asking Jesus into his heart is the way the lost are forgiven of their sin.

2.) *Asking Jesus into your heart is not the way to be saved.*

When a lost man asked the Apostle Paul, "What must I do to be saved?" the Apostle did not say, "Pray, ask Jesus into your heart, and you will be saved." Paul said:

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Ac 16:30-31). Likewise, the Apostle Peter taught: “he that believeth on [Christ] shall not be confounded” (1 Pet 2:6). The Lord Jesus Himself regularly preached to the lost: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life” (Jn 6:47; 3:16, 18; 5:24; 6:35, 40; 11:25-26, etc.). According to Christ and the Apostles, the lost must believe on Christ to be saved, not ask Him into their heart.

3.) *You can ask Jesus to come into your heart without repenting and without believing on Christ.*

Scripture commands the lost, “Repent . . . that your sins may be blotted out” (Ac 3:19), and warns that “except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Lu 13:3, 5). However, someone can ask Jesus to come into his heart without understanding his need to repent, without knowing what repentance is, without any desire to repent, and without ever repenting. If you ask Jesus into your heart ten thousand times, but never repent, you will perish. If you repent, but never ask Jesus into your heart, your sins will be blotted out. Likewise the Bible affirms: “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (Jn 3:36). Someone who asks Christ into his heart but never believes is still under the wrath of God, while someone who believes on Christ but never asks Him into his heart has everlasting life. Nor should you assume that you believed on the Lord Jesus because you asked Him into your heart. A lost man can ask Jesus into his heart without understanding or assenting mentally to the facts of the gospel. He can also assent mentally to the gospel and ask Christ into his heart without ever “believ[ing]” and “trust[ing] in Christ” (Eph 1:12-14). Saving faith involves understanding the gospel, assent to it, and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ (Heb 11:13), but asking Jesus into your heart does not require any of these three things.⁷⁰⁴

4.) *Real salvation involves a miraculous work of the Holy Spirit, but no such work is required to ask Jesus into your heart.*

All lost people are “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1-3). Since sin has corrupted every part of their fallen nature (Jer 17:9), they have blinded eyes, hardened hearts, and minds unable to submit to God (Jn 12:40; Rom 8:7; 3:11). They are so utterly enslaved to sin (Rom 6:17) and Satan (2 Tim 2:26) that they are unable to repent or believe (Jn 12:40) apart from God in His grace miraculously drawing them to Himself. God must supernaturally give the lost the repentance (2 Tim 2:25) and faith (Phil 1:29) that they will never produce in themselves (Jn 3:6)—they will only believe “if God permit” (Heb 6:3). The Lord Jesus explained: “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him” (Jn 6:44). The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit must inwardly “teach” and “draw” the lost (Jn 6:44-45; 12:32; 16:8-11); the Son must supernaturally reveal the Father to them (Mt 11:27), and the Holy Spirit must “renew”

⁷⁰⁴ See “Bible Study #5: *How Do I Receive the Gospel?*” at <http://faithsaves.net/Bible-studies/> for more on the nature of true repentance and saving faith.

them (Heb 6:6) and produce faith in them through the Word of God (Rom 10:17). Just as God took a world in darkness and miraculously and creatively spoke light into existence (Gen 1:3), so believers can say, “God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor 4:6). At the same moment a sinner is enabled to believe by God’s mighty grace, he is born again (Jn 3:5) and made a new creature (2 Cor 5:17). God miraculously shines His gracious light into his dark heart, renews him and makes him willing to come to Christ, gives him repentance and faith, draws him to embrace Christ, and raises him from spiritual death to spiritual life in a miracle as real as the physical resurrection of the Lord Jesus’ body from His tomb (Eph 2:1-6). A lost sinner coming to Christ in repentant faith is an astonishing display of Divine power that brings the new Christian into living fellowship with God (Jn 17:3; 1 Jn 1:3), removes his fundamental bent towards sin and creates a new bent toward holiness (Eze 36:26-27), and leaves him radically and permanently changed. On the other hand, nothing miraculous or supernatural must take place for someone to ask Jesus into his heart. A winsome personality, emotional music, manipulative salesmanship, psychological techniques, and many other merely human and natural traits have been sufficient to lead millions to ask Jesus to come into their hearts without any work of the the Holy Spirit whatsoever.

5.) Asking Jesus into your heart directs you away from what Christ has done to what you are doing.

The gospel is the good news that “Christ died for our sins . . . was buried, and . . . rose again the third day” (1 Cor 15:3-4). A lost sinner must not look to himself, his religious actions, or anything he has done, is doing, or will do for salvation. He must look away from and outside of himself to trust in what the Son of God accomplished in history when He paid the penalty for his sins on the cross and rose victoriously from the grave. The gospel call is: “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (Jn 1:29). The Savior declares: “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth” (Is 45:21-22). The “preach[ing] of the gospel” is the “preaching of the cross”; when “Jesus Christ is evidently set forth [as] crucified,” then one is “preach[ing] the gospel” (1 Cor 1:17-18; Gal 3:1). On the other hand, the sinner who asks Jesus into his heart is very likely to look away from Christ to his own heart and to the fervency, sincerity, and attitude in which he made his prayer. He is likely to rely on the non-biblical promise, perhaps made to him by some zealous but misguided convert-maker, that if he will ask Jesus to come in he will be saved, instead of relying on the many Biblical promises made by God that all who believe on Christ will be saved. The best prayers, the greatest fervency, and the most complete sincerity ever found in a fallen man are but as filthy rags before God (Is 64:6)—there is no hope in them. The gospel is not that a sinner must pray, ask to be saved, and have faith that God will answer his prayer. The gospel is that Christ died in the place of sinful men, was buried, and rose again, and those that entrust themselves to Him are given eternal life (1 Cor 15:1-4). The lost must

turn from every false hope—including the false hope that salvation is received by faith and prayer, rather than by faith alone in Christ alone—and place their confidence in what alone is a sure ground for their souls—the substitutionary death and shed blood of the Son of God.

6.) *Asking Jesus to come into your heart confuses the means of salvation with a result of salvation.*

When a lost sinner, enabled by God's grace, repents and trusts in the Savior, he is spiritually united to Christ, what Scripture calls being "in Christ" (Eph 1:3). He passes from death to life (Jn 5:24), from being unrighteous to being justified or declared righteous (1 Cor 6:9; Rom 3:24), from being without peace to having peace with God (Is 57:21; Rom 5:1), from having no access to God to having direct access to Him through Christ (Rom 5:2; 1 Tim 2:5), from having no hope to having a sure hope (Eph 2:12; Heb 6:19), from being a child of the devil to being a child of God (Jn 8:44; 1:12), from being without Christ to having Christ live in him (2 Cor 13:5; Gal 2:20), from being without the Holy Spirit to being indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:9), and so on. He now has "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph 1:3). One of the blessings of being united to Christ is that He does indeed make the believer His dwelling place (Col 1:27; Rom 8:10), but that does not mean that a person is saved by asking Christ to come in, any more than one is saved by asking to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit or asking to have all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. No, the lost must trust in Christ and His saving work on the cross alone, and when they entrust themselves to Him, they receive every good thing on account of their union with Him, whether justification, a sure hope, adoption into the family of God, the indwelling presence of Christ, direct access to the Father, or any of the other glorious blessings possessed by the people of God.

7.) *Asking Jesus into your heart can bring false assurance to a lost person and prevent a saved person from having true assurance.*

Since the Bible never promises salvation to a lost sinner if he asks Jesus into his heart, those who perform this human work and think that they are saved because they did it are almost surely just as lost as they were before. There are literally millions of people who have asked Jesus into their hearts instead of coming to the Lord Jesus in repentant faith. They were, perhaps, told that asking Christ to come in would guarantee them a happy life, peace, or perhaps financial success and a good marriage. If none of these things come to pass, they become bitter towards the Lord Jesus and His people, disillusioned with the Bible, and inoculated against the true gospel by the spiritual counterfeit they adopted. When someone comes to them and tries to show them that, Biblically speaking, they never were saved and they need to submit to Christ as Lord and rely on Him as Savior from sin, they say, "I tried Jesus already and it didn't work." Others ask Jesus into their hearts over and over again, hoping that the prayer will finally stick and they will finally have freedom from sin's control. Others rely on the assurance given to them by the convert-maker who told them to ask Him to come in and conclude

that they must be saved, although they are just as much in bondage to sin as they were before, because of the supposed Biblical promise that all who ask Christ to come in will go to heaven. These often remain deluded until the day they die and “in hell . . . lift up [their] eyes, being in torments,” hearing in horror from Christ, “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Lu 16:23; Mt 7:23). Many such people never even come to church, although the book of Acts records that those truly born again not only attended church and submitted to baptism but even stood for Christ despite life-threatening persecution and showed incredible sacrificial love for their fellow believers (Ac 2:41-47). Others ask Jesus to come in, attend church for a while, and then drop out because they have no root of spiritual life within them from true conversion (Mr 4:6, 17). Others come to church out of habit, but their carnality, divisiveness, and lack of true spirituality causes their pastors and fellow church members untold heartache. Others ask Jesus into their hearts as little children and keep coming to church because their Christian parents enforce godly habits in their home. They outwardly imitate true Christians and perhaps even go to Bible college and end up in the ministry, where they teach others to ask Jesus into their hearts just like they did—but having never themselves personally trusted in the substitutionary work of Christ on the cross, they are just as lost as were the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah.⁷⁰⁵ Such people may be very sincere, but God warns: “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov 14:12).

Finally, some people understand the gospel and truly repent and trust in Christ’s substitutionary work on the cross despite being told to ask Jesus into their heart. Many of these true Christians lack assurance of salvation because they wonder if they were sincere enough when they prayed or if they said the right words. They constantly think back to the time they asked Christ into their hearts and wonder if they did it the right way. They can get no assurance of salvation because neither salvation nor assurance of salvation can come from something that is foreign to Scripture. No one has ever been saved or received Biblical assurance of salvation by asking Christ into his heart.

8.) *Telling children to ask Jesus into their hearts is confusing and hinders them from understand the gospel.*

Children do not think the same way that adults do (1 Cor 13:11). They think very literally and concretely. If they are told to ask Jesus into their hearts, they are likely to think that the Lord Jesus in His human body somehow comes to be inside of the organ that pumps their blood. Many adults who are told to ask Jesus into their hearts have no idea what they are doing and what the ritual is supposed to mean; how much the more

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See, for example, the testimony “The Other Jesus: Justification by Faith vs. Asking Jesus into one’s Heart,” by Ovid Need (<http://faithsaves.net/soteriology/>). The author is a Baptist pastor who was lost because he asked Jesus into his heart instead of trusting in the Redeemer’s blood. He finally understood the gospel and was born again after years as an unconverted preacher, during which time he lead hundreds and hundreds of others to ask Jesus into their hearts.

are children confused by this non-biblical terminology? How many children have been led to think about their circulatory system and the beating of a heart muscle, and hindered or prevented from looking away from themselves to rely on the completed work of Christ on the cross, by being told to ask Christ into their hearts? It is true that a skilful teacher can manipulate many children into doing almost anything, including asking Jesus to come into their hearts. However, the fact that children can repeat some words does not mean that they understand the redeeming cross of Christ and trusted in the Lord Jesus as their own Substitute, Savior and Master. There is not one gospel for adults—repentant faith in Christ for salvation—and a different one for children, asking Jesus to come into their hearts. A child who has not been convicted of sin by the Holy Spirit and enabled to understand and trust in the crucified Redeemer's Person and work is not ready to be saved, although he may be ready and willing to ask Jesus into his heart so that he can please a convert-maker or so that he can, as he supposes, become ready for heaven by saying a prayer.

Furthermore, since a sinner must understand the gospel before he can believe or trust in Christ (Eph 1:13), a child who is led to ask Jesus into his heart, but does not understand the true gospel, does not become a Christian if some time later he intellectually assents to the truth that salvation is by repentant faith alone, not by prayer. One cannot first be born again and then, some months or years later, believe on Christ. A child who asks Jesus into his heart is fearfully likely to always think, "I'm saved because I did what my godly leaders or parents told me: I asked Jesus into my heart." He may go on to later understand the necessity of trusting in Christ, but unless he rejects his false profession and realizes that he is yet a hell-bound sinner who must come to the Lord Jesus for forgiveness, he will be eternally damned (Lu 5:31-32). Neither children nor adults grow into salvation—they must repent and believe the gospel after first understanding Christ's substitutionary work on the cross.

9.) *The Bible gives us many examples of people who were saved without asking Jesus into their hearts.*

The Old Testament records the father of the faithful, Abraham, being saved when he "he believed in the LORD; and [the Lord] counted it to him for righteousness" (Gen 15:6; cf. Rom 4:1-5; Gal 3:6). King David wrote: "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" (Ps 2:12). The prophet Isaiah proclaimed salvation for those who believed in the coming Messiah, the virgin-born Immanuel, and warned, "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established" (Is 7:9-14; 28:16). Nobody in the Old Testament ever asked the Messiah to come into his heart, promised blessing to those who performed this work, or warned of judgment on those who do not. In the New Testament, the Lord Jesus repeatedly told people who had believed in Him, but who had never even thought of asking Him to come into their hearts, "Thy faith hath saved thee" (Lu 7:50; 18:42). While Christ was preaching "many believed on him" (Jn 8:30; 10:42)

and were saved without asking Him into their hearts. In the book of Acts, the Apostles preached that “whosoever believeth in [Christ] shall receive remission of sins” (Ac 10:43; 16:31), and while they were preaching people would believe and be indwelt by the Holy Spirit without ever asking Jesus into their hearts (Ac 10:44-48). The Bible records the Apostle Paul’s conversion (Ac 9) and the Apostle’s giving his salvation testimony twice (Ac 22, 26), but never gives the slightest hint that Paul asked Jesus to come into his heart. There are no examples in Scripture of people who were born again when they asked Jesus into their heart, and many examples of people who were saved but never did any such thing.

10.) *Revelation 3:20 is not about the lost asking Jesus to come into their hearts.*

The only text in the Bible that is frequently used⁷⁰⁶ to persuade people to ask Jesus into their hearts is Revelation 3:20: “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” Supposedly this verse proves that Jesus Christ is knocking at the “heart’s door” of the unsaved, waiting to come in if He is asked. If a lost person asks Jesus to come into his heart, then Christ comes into him and he is saved. However, the fact is that the verse has nothing whatsoever to do with asking Jesus into one’s heart. The words “ask,” “Jesus,” and “heart” are not in the text at all. The verse actually portrays Christ standing outside the backslidden church being addressed in the passage (3:14) and calling on the members of the church to repent and return to being zealous for Him (3:19). The “door” in 3:20 is not the “heart’s door” of a lost person but the door of entry into the church. Furthermore, the Lord does not say that He will come “into” a heart or anything else in the text; “in” and “to” are different words in the English text. Christ is not promising to penetrate “into” the heart of a lost person in Revelation 3:20, but to “come in” to “sup with” or have fellowship with the members of a church that would deal with their sin. The verse employs the Greek verb “come in” followed by the preposition “to,” a different and following word; the word “into” is not found in the Greek text, just as it does not appear in the English. The Greek construction employed in the passage⁷⁰⁷ is always used in the New Testament of entering a building to stand before someone, not

⁷⁰⁶ For example, the pamphlet “The Four Spiritual Laws,” distributed by Campus Crusade, never mentions hell and promises people a “wonderful . . . life” on earth (contrary to Jn 16:33) if they say the “sinner’s prayer.” It concludes by quoting Revelation 3:20, contains a printed prayer for people to recite, and then declares: “Did you receive Christ into your life by sincerely praying the suggested prayer? According to His promise in Revelation 3:20, where is Christ right now in relation to you? Christ said that He would come into your life. Would He mislead you? . . . Christ is in your life . . . from the very moment you invite Him in.” This pamphlet had, by 2003, been distributed to over 2.5 billion people and translated into over 200 languages (*Congressional Record*, V. 149, Pt. 15, July 28, 2003-September 5, 2003, 20379). It has now been given to billions more people, likely making it the most widely distributed religious booklet in history. Similarly, Campus Crusade’s JESUS film has been watched by over six billion people. In its summary of what the organization views as the gospel at the end of the film, hell is likewise omitted, but Revelation 3:20 is quoted, followed by a “sinner’s prayer” to repeat for salvation.

⁷⁰⁷ *Eiserchomai + pros*. Besides Revelation 3:20, the construction appears in Mr 6:25; 15:43; Lu 1:28; Ac 10:3; 11:3; 17:2; 28:8.

penetration into a person's heart. Consequently, Revelation 3:20 is a promise that Christ will spiritually come in to stand before and have fellowship with church members who turn back to Him. It is by no means a promise that He will penetrate inside the heart of a lost person who asks Christ to come into him.

11.) *Nobody asked Jesus to come into his heart to be saved for the overwhelming majority of church history.*

An examination of centuries of early Christian writings reveals no evidence that anyone thought that salvation came to those who asked Jesus into their hearts. Furthermore, no Baptist or evangelical Protestant confession of faith, or any other significant confession of faith of Christendom whatever, has affirmed that salvation comes by asking Jesus into one's heart. Church history reveals that this idea is a modern innovation⁷⁰⁸ that would have been foreign to the vast majority of believers since Christ started His church in the first century. Someone who thinks that asking Jesus into his heart is proper because "everyone does it" ignores the position of vast numbers of modern Bible-believing churches who oppose this extrabiblical practice. Such a person also ignores the fact that for century after century not only was it false to say that everyone did it, but in fact absolutely nobody did it.

12.) *There are infernal spiritual powers that can make you feel happy when you ask Jesus into your heart.*

While nobody has ever become a Christian because he asked Jesus to come into his heart, there are many, many people who have experienced peaceful, pleasant, and joyous sensations after engaging in this man-made religious ritual. However, such feelings do not in the least prove that one has become a Christian and a child of God. Pagans worshipping demonic idols have had many genuine religious experiences (1 Cor 12:2). Hell-bound false prophets have had fantastic and incredible encounters with the supernatural (Num 22:9-13, 20, 28-34) and even performed miracles themselves (Ex 7:10-11, 22; 8:7). Judas, the betrayer of Christ who never was a true Christian (Jn 6:70; 12:6), experienced the personal presence of Christ Himself for years and was able to perform miracles because of his Apostolic office (Mt 10:5-8). People can have the Holy

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Dr. Paul Chitwood notes:

Although the Sinner's Prayer is widely used and enormously popular today, no variation of it is found in the Bible. . . . In addition to the Sinner's Prayer not occurring in the Bible, it is also absent from the pages of church history. We fail to see it even through the rise of revivalism and mass evangelism [in] the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. . . . Leading lost persons in praying the Sinner's Prayer is a relatively new method in evangelism . . . [with] no occurrence before the twentieth century. The routine use of a model prayer for salvation in any form is also absent before the twentieth century. . . . [Likewise,] the concept of bringing or inviting "Jesus into your heart" is one that does not occur readily before the turn of the twentieth century. . . . The Sinner's Prayer was not popularized until late [in] the twentieth century, possibly as late as the 1940s or even the early 1950s. . . . The Sinner's Prayer must not be understood as the means by which a person is saved. (pgs. 3-4, 43-44, 69, 125, *The Sinner's Prayer: An Historical and Theological Analysis*, Paul H. Chitwood. Ph. D. Diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2001. Elec. acc. <http://faithsaves.net/the-sinners-prayer/>)

Spirit powerfully working in their lives, but never truly repent and believe on Christ, and consequently be eternally damned (Heb 6:4-9). The Bible warns about “another Jesus,” a false “Jesus” that cannot save because associated with “another gospel,” a false gospel (2 Cor 11:4). A “Jesus” that gives salvation to those who pray, rather than to those who believe, is not the Redeemer of the Bible, for the real Christ never said He would save those who said the “sinner’s prayer,” but promised many times to give eternal life to those who trust in Him (Jn 3:16, 18, 36; 5:24; 6:47; 11:25-26). Nevertheless this false “Jesus” is associated with “another spirit” that counterfeits the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 11:4) and is able to give the lost many powerful religious experiences.

You need to recognize that your own heart is “deceitful above all things” (Jer 17:9). Furthermore, the “Devil . . . deceiveth the whole world” (Rev 12:9), “blind[ing] the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them” (2 Cor 4:4). Millions of Satan’s demons, working in conjunction with human indwelling sin, are easily capable of creating all sorts of marvelous but damningly deceptive feelings and emotions in the lost. The frightening ease through which people can be follow lies explains why Scripture is full of warnings about spiritual deception.⁷⁰⁹ Vast multitudes of people who said Jesus was their Lord, enjoyed marvelous spiritual experiences, and performed great works in His name will hear, in horror, Christ say to them: “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Mt 7:21-23). Some who read this pamphlet, but reject its warning and trust that they are saved because of their experiences when they asked Jesus into their heart, will be among them. How you felt when you asked Jesus into your heart does not matter in the least. The only thing that matters is the plain teaching of God’s Word about salvation: “repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mr 1:15).

13.) *If you tell people to ask Jesus into their hearts, and they never are saved because you confused them, you will be accountable for their damnation.*

Scripture is clear that you are only “pure from the blood of all men” if you “have not shunned to declare unto [them] all the counsel of God” (Ac 20:26-27; Jam 3:1; Eze 3:18-21; 33:6-9). Clarity on the gospel is not some insignificant and non-essential matter. If, instead of clearly setting forth Christ’s substitutionary death, and salvation through repentant faith in Him, you tell people to ask Jesus into their hearts to be saved, you should expect to be accountable to the infinitely holy God for their eternal damnation. You will be guilty, not of physical murder, but of a sin infinitely worse—the spiritual murder of people you gave your distorted “gospel” to, whether people in the world, adults or youth in your church, members of your family, or even your own children. You will face an incomprehensibly horrible and tragic surprise when you have

⁷⁰⁹ For example, see Mt 13:22; 24:4, 5, 11, 24; Mr 4:19; 7:22; 13:5-6; Lu 21:8; Rom 1:29; 3:13; 7:11; 16:18; 1 Cor 3:18; 6:9; 15:33; 2 Cor 4:2; 6:8; 11:13; Gal 6:3, 7; Eph 4:14, 22; 5:6; Col 2:8; 1 Th 2:3; 2 Th 2:3, 10; 1 Ti 2:14; 2 Ti 3:13; Ti 1:10; 3:3; Heb 3:13; Ja 1:22, 26; 2 Pe 2:13; 1 Jn 1:8; 3:7; 2 Jn 7; Rev 12:9; 13:14; 18:23; 19:20; 20:3, 8, 10.

to give an account to God.

14.) *If you asked Jesus to come into your heart instead of repenting and believing in Christ, you will be eternally damned.*

Friend, you need to recognize that there is only one way you can get into God's kingdom and have everlasting life—faith alone in the Christ who died and rose again as your own personal Lord and Savior. The means through which you can personally receive the salvation Christ purchased on the cross is not prayer, faith and prayer, faith that God will answer your prayer, or faith plus prayer that you mean with all your heart (Pr 16:25). These is many “a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof [is nonetheless] death” (Pr 16:25). To personally receive any benefit from Christ's redemptive work you must come directly to Him in a helpless and dependent trust (Jn 6:37). There is no other true gospel—only many false gospels (Gal 1:8-9). Heed God's Word: “He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (Jn 3:18). All those who do not trust in Christ alone through faith alone will burn in hell for all eternity, regardless of whether they asked Jesus into their heart or not. There are vast numbers of people in hell this very moment who have asked Jesus into their hearts. “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves” (2 Cor 13:5), lest you join them in torment for ever and ever.

What About Repeating the “Sinner's Prayer”?

Some people recognize that there is no Scriptural authority whatsoever for asking Jesus to come into one's heart, but affirm, nonetheless, that people ought to repeat the “sinner's prayer” in order to be saved, based, as they suppose, on Romans 10:9-10 and 10:13. Romans 10:9-10 supposedly teaches that one must confess with his mouth, that is, as 10:13 allegedly clarifies, pray and ask for salvation, and then one will receive forgiveness for his sins. Those who repeat the sinner's prayer are given assurance with Romans 10:13 and told that if they meant what they said, they are now Christians. However, neither Romans 10, nor any other passage of Scripture, teaches anything of the kind.⁷¹⁰

First, while Scripture commands the lost to repent and believe the gospel (Mr 1:15), and warns that those who do not repent and believe will perish (Lu 13:3; Jn 3:18), the Bible never commands the lost to repeat the “sinner's prayer” in order to receive forgiveness, nor warns that those who fail to say the prayer will be damned. Promising the lost that they will enter heaven if they repeat the “sinner's prayer,” but will be damned if they refuse to say it, is proclaiming the traditions of men instead of the truth of

⁷¹⁰ The material below is mainly abridged from “Romans 10:9-14: Sinner's Prayers for Salvation?” at <http://faithsaves.net/soteriology/>. Anyone who wants a more detailed exposition of Romans 10 in relation to the question of the “sinner's prayer” is highly encouraged to view this composition.

God.

Second, the Gospel of John, the only specifically evangelistic book of the Bible (Jn 20:31), never teaches or implies that the the lost must pray a sinner's prayer to receive pardon from God. On the contrary, the Gospel of John employs the verb *believe* 100 times,⁷¹¹ making the truth exceedingly clear that the lost must place their faith in the Son of God to be saved. Furthermore, 1 John, the inspired book written to explain how one can have assurance of salvation (1 John 5:13), never states or hints that assurance is in any way connected to having prayed a "sinner's prayer" or that those who have not prayed such a prayer should lack assurance. 1 John promises assurance to those who believe on Jesus Christ (5:1) and consequently love and serve God and other Christians (3:7-19; 4:7).⁷¹² If salvation and assurance were actually associated with having repeated the "sinner's prayer," one would be driven to the impossible conclusion that God's perfect Word was unclear about the way of salvation, but the writings of imperfect modern men make clear the supposed truth not clearly found anywhere in Scripture.

Third, during His three year ministry, the Son of God brought many people to faith in Himself without ever commanding them to pray. Christ said to a sinful woman who, in repentance, came to Him and washed His feet with her hair, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace" (Lu 7:50, cf. 37-49). The Lord said "her sins, which are many, are forgiven" (v. 47), although no record of her saying a "sinner's prayer" is recorded. The Lord said to a Samaritan leper who believed in Him, "thy faith hath made thee whole" (Lu 17:19, cf. 17:15-18), although he had never said a "sinner's prayer." He said to a woman with an issue of blood who, unlike the crowd that surrounded Him physically, came to Him spiritually in faith (cf. Jn 6:35, 37), "Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole" (Mat 9:20-22), although she had said no "sinner's prayer," or any kind of prayer whatever. The Lord Jesus said, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee" to a man sick of the palsy when He "saw th[e] faith" of the man and his four friends (Mr 2:5). Nothing in the text indicates that the forgiven man prayed anything. Zaccheus was converted in a tree (Lu 19:6), a Samaritan woman was converted while conversing with the Lord by a well (John 4:1-42), a centurion whose servant Christ healed (Mat 8:10-13), and many others, were justified by faith without reciting anything like a "sinner's prayer." Crowds of people would simply believe on the Lord Jesus while

⁷¹¹ John 1:7, 12, 50; 2:11, 22-24; 3:12, 15-16, 18, 36; 4:21, 39, 41-42, 48, 50, 53; 5:24, 38, 44, 46-47; 6:29-30, 35-36, 40, 47, 64, 69; 7:5, 31, 38-39, 48; 8:24, 30-31, 45-46; 9:18, 35-36, 38; 10:25-26, 37-38, 42; 11:15, 25-27, 40, 42, 45, 48; 12:11, 36-39, 42, 44, 46-47; 13:19; 14:1, 10-12, 29; 16:9, 27, 30-31; 17:8, 20-21; 19:35; 20:8, 25, 29, 31. Note that the *belief* John discusses is a repentant faith that will lead to a changed life (3:19-21; 5:29; 8:30-32; 15:6) in submission to the King of the heavenly kingdom (3:3, 5; 12:13), not an unrepentant, rebellious "belief." The Greek verb for *believe* can even be translated "commit" (2:24; cf. Rom 3:2; Tit 1:3), for saving faith involves repentant surrender to Christ as Lord. Compare "'The just shall live by faith'—Faith and Salvation in All Its Apects," at <http://faithsaves.net/the-just-shall-live-by-faith/>.

⁷¹² To learn more about Biblical assurance of salvation, see Bible Study #6, "The Christian: Security in Christ and Assurance of Salvation," at <http://faithsaves.net/Bible-studies/>.

listening to His preaching, without ever praying anything (Jn 8:30). Likewise, the book of Acts records that “many” people believed on Christ while listening to apostolic preaching (10:27, 43-48). When Peter, for example, recounted the justification of such persons, not a word was said about their repeating a “sinner’s prayer” (11:14-18). The Apostle baptized those who had simply believed on Christ, recognizing that they had been born again, although they had said no “sinner’s prayer” (Acts 10:47-48). Besides the Apostles, other New Testament preachers simply preached repentance and faith in Christ and baptized those who had believed, although no “sinner’s prayer” was ever recited (8:35-38). The example of the Lord Jesus and His servants in the apostolic churches demonstrates that the lost are simply to be called to repentance and faith, rather than being told that they must repeat the “sinner’s prayer” to be forgiven of their sins.

Fourth, Romans agrees with the rest of Scripture that people are justified or declared righteous before God simply by faith in Christ as Lord and Savior, regardless of whether they repeat a “sinner’s prayer.” The book is clear that “the gospel of Christ . . . is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth . . . for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith” (Rom 1:16-17). People receive the righteousness of God and are declared just in the sight of God simply by faith: “the righteousness of God . . . is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe . . . God hath set forth [Christ] to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins . . . that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. . . . Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (Romans 3:22, 25, 28; see also 3:30-31, 4:1-5:2; 9:30-33; 10:4-17, 11:20, 23, 13:11, 15:13; 16:26). It would be very strange for Paul to teach the necessity of prayer for justification before God in one passage in Romans 10 while teaching justification by direct faith in Christ in vast numbers of passages, not only in the general body of his epistles (cf. 1 Cor 1:21; Gal 2:16; Eph 2:8-9, Phil 3:9, etc.), but in Romans itself.

What, then, is the “confession” of Romans 10:9-10? If we consider Romans 10:9-14 in context, the answer is clear:

9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. 12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. 13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. 14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

One notes that Romans 10:10 does not say that “with the mouth prayer unto God, asking to be forgiven, is made,” but “with the mouth confession is made.” Confessing with the mouth is not the repetition of a “sinner’s prayer” in private to God, whether in one’s heart or out loud, but is public confession and testimony with one’s mouth for Christ before men—a mark that one has already become a true Christian. The *confession* of Romans

10:9-10 is the same as the *confession* of Matthew 10:32-33, where Christ declares: “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.” The vast majority of verses in the New Testament with the verb translated *confess* in Romans 10:9-10 refer to public testimony before men, and not a single one of the passages with the verb refers to a lost person engaging in prayer, asking for his sins to be forgiven.⁷¹³ The fact that the confession must be made “with the mouth” provides further proof. Advocates of the “sinner’s prayer” very rarely argue that those who say the prayer in their hearts without moving their lips or saying anything out loud are still lost—repeating the prayer inwardly is considered as effective as speaking it out loud. However, the word *mouth*, in its 79 appearances in the New Testament, never once refers to some sort of symbolic, inward “mouth” through which one prays in his heart.⁷¹⁴ Therefore, the word in Romans 10:9-10 necessarily refers to one’s actual, literal mouth—so if the passage were about saying the “sinner’s prayer,” everyone who did not say the prayer out loud, moving his lips, would be lost—including all who suffer from the disability of being mute. The fact is that the passage refers to employing one’s actual mouth to confess Christ before men and has nothing whatever to do with the repetition of a “sinner’s prayer.”

The question then arises: “Why does Romans 10:10 affirm that ‘confession is made unto salvation’?” Surely the verse cannot be an affirmation that everyone is yet unforgiven and on his way to hell who has not yet publicly spoken up for Christ—that would contradict the many clear Biblical testimonies to justification by faith alone. Such an idea would contradict the testimony of the very next verse, which promises: “Whosoever believeth on [Christ] shall not be ashamed” when he stands before God (10:11). Justification by public confession of Christ would also contradict the statement earlier in the chapter that “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (10:4). What, then, does the statement mean? The recognition that *salvation* can refer to a number of different things in the Bible makes the answer clear. *Saved* can refer, among other things, to physical deliverance or salvation from death (Mt 8:25), to the moment of justification, when one’s sins are forgiven and he is counted righteous

⁷¹³ The complete list of texts with the verb *confess*, *homologeo*, is: Matt 7:23; 10:32; 14:7; Luke 12:8; John 1:20; 9:22; 12:42; Acts 23:8; 24:14; Rom 10:9–10; 1 Tim 6:12; Titus 1:16; Heb 11:13; 13:15; 1 John 1:9; 2:23; 4:2–3, 15; 2 John 1:7.

⁷¹⁴ When the word *mouth* appears with reference to mankind in the New Testament, reference is made to an actual mouth the overwhelming majority of the time. The only times the word is not literal are the uncommon instances where it is employed as an anthropomorphism for God, or used in the Greek idiom for the edge (“mouth”) of a sword (Luke 21:24; Hebrews 11:34). Not a single text refers to some sort of non-literal human “mouth” that does not actually open and say words: Matt 4:4; 5:2; 12:34; 13:35; 15:8, 11, 17–18; 17:27; 18:16; 21:16; Luke 1:64, 70; 4:22; 6:45; 11:54; 19:22; 21:15, 24; 22:71; John 19:29; Acts 1:16; 3:18, 21; 4:25; 8:32, 35; 10:34; 11:8; 15:7; 18:14; 22:14; 23:2; Rom 3:14, 19; 10:8–10; 15:6; 2 Cor 6:11; 13:1; Eph 4:29; 6:19; Col 3:8; 2 Th 2:8; 2 Tim 4:17; Heb 11:33–34; James 3:3, 10; 1 Pet 2:22; 2 John 1:12; 3 John 1:14; Jude 1:16; Rev 1:16; 2:16; 3:16; 9:17–19; 10:9–10; 11:5; 12:15–16; 13:2, 5–6; 14:5; 16:13; 19:15, 21.

because of Christ and is saved from sin's penalty (Lu 7:50), and to the moment when one enters heaven and is finally and forever saved from the presence of sin (1 Cor 3:15). In Romans 10:9-10, the Bible teaches that one first "believeth unto righteousness," that is, at the moment one trusts in the crucified and risen Christ, his sins are forgiven, he is justified or declared righteous because of what the Lord Jesus did on the cross, and he becomes a Christian. After being justified, the Christian, because he has a new and holy nature, confesses Christ with his mouth before men. This new nature, which evidences itself in good works such as confessing Christ, shows he will, at the return of Christ or his death, receive "salvation"; that is, he will enter into heaven. This use of *salvation* for heaven is found frequently elsewhere in Romans. For example, Romans 5:9 states: "being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him"; believers are now *justified*, but final *salvation* refers to entry into heaven. Romans 13:11, referring to Christ's return, affirms: "now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." Here again, people who are already believers have not yet received *salvation*; that awaits the return of Christ, when Christians are taken up to be with Him. Those that have been redeemed have been freed from the power of sin (Rom 6) and consequently will practice holiness and righteousness (1 Jn 3:3, 7; Heb 12:14), confessing Christ with their mouths and standing for Him instead of hating, rejecting, and opposing Him (Rom 10:9-10). Clearly, Romans 10:9-10 refers to simple belief in Christ as Lord and Savior as a prerequisite to justification, which is followed by a Christian lifestyle marked by holiness and good works such as publicly confessing the Lord Jesus with one's mouth. The passage has nothing whatever to do with the lost praying a "sinner's prayer" as a prerequisite to justification.

What about Romans 10:13—is the verse a promise that lost people who say the "sinner's prayer" will be justified? Considered in context, the answer is a clear "no." First, while "calling on the Lord" actually does refer to prayer, unlike the *confession* of 10:9-10, nothing in the context indicates that a specific type of prayer like the "sinner's prayer" is in view. In fact, *calling on the Lord* in the Bible refers to any sort of Christian prayer, whether thanking God for food, asking for help in a difficult situation, or offering Him praise because of His glorious character. An examination of parallel passages clearly demonstrates that *calling on the Lord* speaks of the many different kinds of petition and praise that fill the lives of the people of God, rather than referring to the repetition of a specific "sinner's prayer" by the lost through which they supposedly become God's own (Gen 12:8; 13:4; 21:33; 26:25; 1 Ki 8:43; 18:24-26; 2 Ki 5:11; 1 Chr 16:8; Ps 80:18; 99:6; 105:1; Is 12:4; 41:25; 64:7; Jer 10:25; Lam 3:25; Zeph 3:9; Acts 7:59; 9:14, 21; 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Tim 2:22; 1 Pet 1:17). The righteous are those who call on the Lord in their life; the wicked are those who do not (Job 27:10; Ps 14:4). Second, the Bible is clear that the prayers of the lost are "sin" and an "abomination" to God; a sinner has no access to God until he is justified by faith and has the Lord Jesus as his Mediator (Ps 109:7; Pr 15:8, 29; 28:9; Ro 8:8; 14:23; Tit 1:15-16; Heb 11:6). The lost cannot be justified by

praying the “sinner’s prayer” because their prayers are rejected until they believe on Christ and have been reconciled to the Father by the blood of His Son. Third, Romans 10:13 is a quotation of Joel 2:32, and the verse in Joel is not about the lost repeating a “sinner’s prayer” in order to be justified, but about those who are already believers, and who consequently are people who pray, entering the future kingdom at the time of Christ’s return. The Hebrew word employed in Joel 2:32’s promise that people who call on the Lord “shall be delivered” is never used of the lost receiving justification by praying the “sinner’s prayer”—on the contrary, it refers in all of its 63 instances to deliverance from physical death.⁷¹⁵ Joel 2:32 is not a promise that the lost who say the “sinner’s prayer” will become Christians, but a promise that those who are people of prayer will not be slain at Christ’s return, but will live to enter His glorious coming reign over the earth, and so receive future salvation. Since the New Testament never takes the Old Testament out of context—God never misuses His own Word—Romans 10:13 cannot be about the lost praying the “sinner’s prayer” to be justified but must, like Joel 2:32, be a promise that those who belong to God are people of prayer who will enter Christ’s future kingdom. Finally, the idea that Romans 10:13 refers to unbelievers repeating the “sinner’s prayer” ignores the very next verse. Romans 10:14 is crystal-clear that only those who have already believed and become Christians⁷¹⁶ can call on the Lord: “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?” Nobody can begin a life of prayer, a life of calling on the Lord, until he is already a Christian. Romans 10:12-14 proves that God is not partial to either Jews or Gentiles (10:12). Rather, all those who believe are justified, regardless of their nationality, and the holy hearts of the justified give them a desire to pray to their heavenly Father, who will bring them into His eternal dwelling place in the future (10:13-14). Romans 10:13 is not the prayer of the unbeliever, but of the Christian; the *salvation* under consideration is not the initial forgiveness of sin at the moment of conversion, but the future glory of heaven; and the text speaks not of the one-time repetition of a “sinner’s prayer,” but of the lifestyle of

⁷¹⁵ Joel 2:32 contains the Hebrew verb *malat* in the *Niphal* form. This verb in the *Niphal* appears elsewhere in the Hebrew text in: Gen 19:17, 19–20, 22; Jud 3:26, 29; 1 Sam 19:10, 12, 17–18; 20:29; 22:1, 20; 23:13; 27:1; 30:17; 2 Sam 1:3; 4:6; 1 Ki 18:40; 19:17; 20:20; 2 Ki 10:24; 19:37; 2 Chr 16:7; Est 4:13; Job 1:15–17, 19; 22:30; Ps 22:6; 124:7; Pr 11:21; 19:5; 28:26; Eccl 7:26; Is 20:6; 37:38; 49:24–25; Jer 32:4; 34:3; 38:18, 23; 41:15; 46:6; 48:8, 19; Eze 17:15, 18; Dan 11:41; 12:1; Am 9:1; Zech 2:11; Mal 3:15.

⁷¹⁶ One cannot claim that Romans 10:14 refers to a *belief* that falls short of saving faith until it is somehow activated by saying the sinner’s prayer. The *believing* must refer to actual justifying faith for the following reasons. First, every time the verb *believe* (Gk. *pisteuo*) appears in the immediate context of 10:13, it refers to saving faith (Romans 9:33; 10:4, 9, 10, 11, 16). Second, this Greek verb is never used of a non-saving, merely intellectual acknowledgment of facts, a “belief” that a lost man can have in any of the 21 instances *believe* appears in Romans. Third, the verb is never used in any of its 56 occurrences in the Pauline epistles for a non-saving “faith” in Christ (Ro 1:16; 3:2, 22; 4:3, 5, 11, 17–18, 24; 6:8; 9:33; 10:4, 9–11, 14, 16; 13:11; 14:2; 15:13; 1 Cor 1:21; 3:5; 9:17; 11:18; 13:7; 14:22; 15:2, 11; 2 Cor 4:13; Gal 2:7, 16; 3:6, 22; Eph 1:13, 19; Philip 1:29; 1 Th 1:7; 2:4, 10, 13; 4:14; 2 Th 1:10; 2:11–12; 1 Ti 1:11, 16; 3:16; 2 Ti 1:12; Ti 1:3; 3:8; Heb 4:3; 11:6). Therefore, Romans 10:14 must of necessity refer to saving faith, a saving faith that exists before the calling of Romans 10:13 begins.

prayer that characterizes the sincere believer. God's blessing those who call on His name is not a promise that the lost who say the "sinner's prayer" will be forgiven of their sin, but a promise that Christians, as people of prayer, will be brought home to live forever with the One they love and pray to.

What Must I Do?

This study began with the question, "Will I be saved if I ask Jesus to come into my heart or repeat the 'sinner's prayer'?" God's Word makes the answer to that question clear. Nobody, including you, has ever been saved because he did these things, and nobody, including you, will become a Christian by doing such things in the future. If you recite the "sinner's prayer" or ask Jesus to come into your heart but never repent and believe the gospel, you will without a doubt perish eternally. There are vast numbers of souls in hell today who accepted the Satanic delusion that repeating a prayer was the means through which they would become Christians. There are millions of people who have asked Jesus into their hearts but give no more evidence that they are new creatures (2 Cor 5:17) than did Judas Iscariot—all these will eternally perish unless they truly come to Christ. There are countless others who are religious, moral, and unsaved, because they have never truly embraced Christ in a repentant faith, instead seeking to channel His salvation through prayer. Friend, it does not matter if you meant every word you said with your whole heart when you said the "sinner's prayer." If you think prayer must be added to faith to become God's child, you are lost, whether you have said the "sinner's prayer" once or ten thousand times. You have adopted a false gospel, just like those who assert baptism, communion, prayer to Mary, speaking in tongues, or any other combination of works, are needed to be counted righteous for Christ's sake. Reject your false gospel and, in faith, come to Jesus Christ today!

On the other hand, if you have truly come to Christ, and so have been brought into a living, life-changing union with Him, you do not need to lack the blessed assurance God wants for His children because of anything connected with the "sinner's prayer." You are eternally secure in the Father's hands (Jn 10:27-30), even if you never asked Jesus into your heart; even if you said the "sinner's prayer" but cannot recall what words you said; even if you are worried about whether you were sincere enough when you said it. All of that is totally irrelevant. The Bible gives us examples of people who trusted in Christ and were justified while praying (Lu 18:13)⁷¹⁷ and without praying (Jn 8:30).

⁷¹⁷ There is nothing wrong with suggesting to one who is seeking salvation that he find a place alone and seek the Lord, crying as did the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner," as long as it is very clearly stressed that faith, not prayer, is the means through which the redemption that is in Christ Jesus is received, that the prayers of the unregenerate are corrupted by sin and not acceptable to God, and that the call of the gospel is to come directly to the Lord Jesus Christ through the sole instrumentality of repentant faith in His Person and work. While there is nothing wrong with those seeking salvation praying, reading the Bible, coming to church and listening to preaching, and engaging in other similar acts, they must not be informed

There is nothing wrong with the lost praying while coming to Christ in repentant faith, and there is nothing wrong with receiving the Lord Jesus as one's own Savior and Lord, turning from sin to trust in Him, without praying anything. If prayer helps someone to come to Christ, that is wonderful, as long as he remembers that God did not inspire a command that sinners pray to be saved; He commanded them to believe in His Son, and live! If you have believed on the Son—a decision that will always result in a changed life—you do not need to doubt your salvation because of anything associated with the “sinner’s prayer.” What you need to do is make sure that you are serving the Lord with an upright heart as a member of a Bible-believing and practicing church⁷¹⁸ and helping that church in its holy work of clearly preaching the gospel to every single person in your local community and around the world.

Perhaps you say, “I am not sure if I am saved. Have I truly trusted in Christ, or have I simply said a prayer or asked Jesus into my heart?” It is extremely important that you are not wrong on this point—it is the difference between the infinitely terrible torments of hell and the infinitely glorious and everlasting pleasures of God’s presence in heaven! If you are not sure if you are saved, it will not do you any good to say the “sinner’s prayer” again or ask Jesus into your heart one more time. Instead, consider the following. 1.) You must be willing to accept and act on the truth, whatever it is. The Lord Jesus revealed the truth to those willing to receive it but hid the truth from those who were not willing to receive and act on it (Jn 7:17; 12:38-40). 2.) The answer will be found in the Word of God, for the Word is what the Holy Spirit uses to create and confirm faith (Rom 10:17; Eph 6:17). Pray that God will show you the truth in His Word (Ps 25:4; 86:11). Carefully read and study the Gospel of John, for it was written to show people how to have eternal life (Jn 20:31). Carefully read and study 1 John, for it was written to show Christians how to have assurance (1 Jn 5:13). Carefully study the explanation of the gospel in this booklet. Study carefully what the Bible teaches about

that God has promised to save all those who sincerely ask. Having the lost repeat the words of a prayer after a convert-maker will very likely do them no good, but eliminate their convictions and give them false assurance, and so produce great evil. If the lost are to pray, they must be told to look to Him who was “lifted up [on the cross], that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life,” (John 3:14-18), and they must seek Him until they find peace through faith in His blood and righteousness. The example of the tax collector in the temple illustrates what sort of prayer the unconverted man can pray. The verb “be merciful” in the passage is related to the words rendered “propitiation” in Rom 3:25 and in 1 Jn 2:2; 4:10. The repentant tax collector’s prayer was not for some general mercy from God, but came from his looking to the place of sacrifice, the place where God’s wrath was propitiated or appeased in the temple, and thus was in line with the Old Testament faith in the coming Messiah and the true sacrifice that would be accomplished by Him. It should also be noted that the publican did not say one time, in the manner of the modern “sinner’s prayer,” “Lord, be merciful to me. Thank you for saving me. Amen,” but he sought the Lord, looking to the coming sacrifice of the Messiah, until he found peace through believing, and went to his house justified. He continued in prayer and seeking, until, enabled by God’s powerful grace, he placed his faith in the Savior and received pardon through the blood of atonement.

⁷¹⁸ See “Bible Study #7: The Church of Jesus Christ” at <http://faithsaves.net/Bible-studies/> for a study of what a true church is; a directory where one can find such a church is also available.

sin, about God and His grace, and about the gospel.⁷¹⁹ Read classic, Biblical presentations of the gospel, the kind that true churches and Christians employed before the modern development of the “sinner’s prayer” methodology.⁷²⁰ Separate from all religious organizations that corrupt the gospel (2 Cor 6:14-7:1; Gal 1:6-9; 2 Jn 7-11); instead, faithfully attend the services and carefully consider the preaching and teaching at a Bible-believing and practicing church where the gospel is purely and clearly taught (Heb 10:25). Such a church is a great place to get godly, Biblical counsel from the pastors and other spiritually wise members in the congregation (Pr 11:14); God can give them spiritual ability and discernment to help you diagnose the needs of your soul (Heb 13:17). Do not stop seeking (Lu 13:24) until you either get full assurance from the Spirit through the Word that you are indeed a child of God, or the Lord shows you that you are still lost—and if the Lord shows you that you are lost, immediately repent and believe the gospel: “behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor 6:2).

⁷¹⁹ Bible Studies #3-6 at <http://faithsaves.net/Bible-studies/> are a great place to start.

⁷²⁰ For example, *Sinners in the Hands of An Angry God* by Jonathan Edwards, *The Blood of Jesus* by William Reid, *The Almost Christian* by Matthew Mead, and *All of Grace* by Charles Spurgeon; these resources, and many others, are available at: <http://faithsaves.net/resources-about-salvation/>.

Images and Pictures of Jesus Christ Forbidden by Scripture

Historically, Baptists have rejected the use of all images in worship, including images of Jesus Christ. The London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689 states:

The light of nature shews that there is a God, who hath lordship and sovereignty over all; is just, good and doth good unto all; and is therefore to be feared, loved, praised, called upon, trusted in, and served, with all the heart and all the soul, and with all the might. But the acceptable way of worshipping the true God, is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imagination and devices of men, nor the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representations, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scriptures. (Chapter 22:1)

In this prohibition of images of all kinds, including those of Jesus Christ, historic Protestant documents agree. For example, the *Westminster Larger Catechism* states:

The sins forbidden in the second commandment are, all devising, counseling, commanding, using, and any wise approving, any religious worship not instituted by God himself; the making any representation of God, of all or of any of the three persons, either inwardly in our mind, or outwardly in any kind of image or likeness of any creature whatsoever; all worshiping of it, or God in it or by it; the making of any representation of feigned deities, and all worship of them, or service belonging to them; all superstitious devices, corrupting the worship of God, adding to it, or taking from it, whether invented and taken up of ourselves, or received by tradition from others, though under the title of antiquity, custom, devotion, good intent, or any other pretense whatsoever; simony; sacrilege; all neglect, contempt, hindering, and opposing the worship and ordinances which God hath appointed.

As noted by the *Catechism*, the second commandment is central to the question:

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of *any thing* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. (Exodus 20:4-6)

Here God forbids any to worship Him with “pictures . . . [or] images” (Num 33:52). This prohibition forbids the making of any pictures of God Himself, as well as practices such as bowing down before statues or pictures (Ezekiel 8:10), even with the intent to worship God, not them. John 4:24 says, “God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” All physical images of God necessarily misrepresent Him—as an invisible Spirit, He is immaterial and cannot be pictured. The Lord commands mankind to offer Him spiritual worship as commanded in His Word, not worship with images. Since Jesus Christ is God, no images of Him should be made. The Trinity is undivided, and prohibitions of images of God include not God the Father and God the Holy Ghost only, but also God the Son. Furthermore, no image could be made to represent Jesus Christ’s Divine nature, since that is invisible and spiritual. Nor can any image correctly represent the awe-inspiring glorified body He received after His resurrection. One who saw His glorified humanity fell at his feet as dead (Revelation 1:10-18); no image can make this happen. No image correctly represents His human nature during His earthly ministry, for the Bible records nothing of His appearance at that time (compare 1 Peter 1:8; 2 Corinthians 5:16). Besides, Christ’s human nature is not divided from His Divine nature; He is one Person with two natures, and no image can, therefore, correctly represent Him as the Person He is. The common pictures of Christ with long hair are even worse—indeed, they are a Satanic attempt to imply that He was sinful, since “if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him” (1 Corinthians 11:14). If you have attempted to worship God using images, including images of Christ, you have broken the second commandment—and worship with an “image . . . the LORD thy God hateth” (Deuteronomy 16:22). Rather than making pictures of Christ, view Jesus Christ in His ineffable glory by faith through the Word—for then the Holy Spirit will progressively change you into His moral likeness (2 Cor 3:18). Do not degrade Christ by making or using images of Him. Do not have such images in your house. Do not use images of the Son in children’s ministries. You can either cover up pictures of Him if you use children’s curricula that have such images, or use a curriculum—[such as this one](#)—that does not contain them. Do not use such images for any other purpose in God’s church. If you have done so in the past, not having thought about whether what you were doing was right, now is the time to confess your sin (1 John 1:9) and stop. From this point forward, do not make, use, condone, promote, or contribute in any way to the use of images of the Son of God.

For more information, note the resources [here](#).

—TDR

7 comments:

[d4v34x](#) said...

Point well taken about images of God and, specifically, Jesus, in worship or otherwise, but does merely covering or omitting pictures of Jesus from Children's curricula really comply with this principle if used in a Sunday School or Children's Church setting? Don't those images pose problems as well?

[5:06 AM](#)

Thomas Ross said...

Dear

D4,

I agree that it would be better to not have the images in the curriculum at all, but if a church comes to a conviction against images of Christ and has a curriculum already that has such images, I think if they cover/black out/cover with paper, etc. the images of Christ, but keep using the rest of a storybook that has stories about Daniel and the lion's den, the apostles, etc. I think that is not sinning. I think that the difference between making a picture of Christ versus, say, Jonah and the whale is very significant. First, Jonah does not have a Divine nature that cannot be pictured, nor is he one in essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Second, a picture of Jonah preaching in Nineveh is not designed to cause reverence. If a page with a picture of Jonah fell out of a storybook and someone accidentally stepped on the picture, it would not be a big deal—nobody would care, except for the fact that a page in the storybook was damaged. On the other hand, if someone accidentally stepped on a picture of Christ, it would cause those who were not opposed to such images to think that taking such a step was a dangerous sin. The image of Christ is supposed to engender love and other holy affections—which is idolatry when caused by the image, rather than by a true view of the Son of God by faith—while the image of Jonah is not. There are other differences. If one doesn't want to use any pictures of any Bible character at all in any church setting, that is certainly just fine, but a picture of Enoch and of the Son of God are not the same. By the way, reverence can be stirred up by images of Christ—or images of pagan gods—for one can enflame himself with idols, Isaiah 57:5. The Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox individual who is filled up with all sorts of affections by worshipping in front of his image of Jesus Christ, or Mary, or in front of eucharistic bread, etc. is having a real religious experience, although not a Christian one, just as is the Hindu who is stirred into a frenzy in front of his image of the blue elephant god or a snake.

[8:37 PM](#)

[d4v34x](#) said...

Ah, I see the distinction you are making re: the inspiration of reverence notion and and unimaginable Divine essence.

In your opinion, would the RPW apply for curriculum images?

6:43 AM

Thomas Ross said...

Dear

D4,

I think the regulative principle would apply in anything that is worship, and an image of Christ, if it is not designed to excite reverence for and love for Christ, is (at best) useless and a misrepresentation of Christ, while if it is designed to excite such love and reverence, it is sinful. If one covers up/blots out/erases an image from a curriculum, it is not really in the curriculum anymore, and the kids don't see any image of Christ. At my mother's house, when we dug up the garden, we found an idol of a Roman Catholic "saint" buried in the ground to help the grass grow. We threw the idol away, and the garden was just fine. We were not promoting idolatry by having a garden that used to have an idol in it. If one gets rid of images from an otherwise good curriculum, I don't think it is sinful to use such a curriculum, although those who publish it and produce the images have a different matter on their hands.

12:37 PM

Matthew said...

Thanks for this post!

12:56 PM

Anonymous said...

I am shocked by this discovery. Images of Jesus are not allowed. I have adored Jesus' picture for years. I do have them in my home. Now, I am learning, it is forbidden in the Bible to have them. I was just at my stepdad's church and not only were their pictures of Jesus but also of his mother Mary and a wooden statue of the crucified Jesus. I have a mini Nativity scene with a baby Jesus and Joseph and Mary in it. I am sad to learn that those things I had such high regard for, are not to be kept in my home or condoned at all in my life. All my life, I have revered them and now, I have to turn my back on what I thought was right. For God, I will do this and pray that HE forgive me and help me to leave those former beliefs in my past. I feel so shaken by this revelation, because everything I must get rid of, gave me such joy in the past. Does anyone understand how I feel?

2:44 AM

Thomas Ross said...

Dear

Anonymous,

Thank you for your honest confession. While I know practically nothing about you and this may already be taken care of in your life, I would encourage you to check out the resources that show you that you can be 100% for sure that you have eternal life at: <http://sites.google.com/site/faithalonesaves/salvation>

Thanks for commenting.

Are You Worshipping JEHOVAH?

Many people today claim to be Christians and claim to love God. They would assume that they worship Jehovah. In fact, a majority of people would likely respond to this question, “Yes, I worship God; I worship Jehovah!”

It is one thing to say you worship Jehovah, but it is an entirely different thing to actually do so. Jesus said in Matthew 15:7-8, “*Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.*” We may claim to love, worship, and follow Jehovah. We may think that we worship Him because we always use the name *Jehovah* to refer to God Almighty. But just using Jehovah’s name, or even claiming to defend the honor of Jehovah’s name, in no way proves that one truly worships Him.

The Bible tells us that someone may think he is worshipping Jehovah and yet be entirely mistaken. Jesus said that “*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven . . . Many will say . . . Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then I will profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*” (Mt 7:21-23). If we had asked these people, “Are you worshipping Jehovah?” they certainly would have claimed they were; but they were really working iniquity.

In light of these facts, let us go to the Scriptures to determine whether we are worshipping Jehovah or simply “deceiving [our] own selves” (James 1:22).

What is Worship?

“Worship” can be defined as “homage rendered to God which it is sinful (idolatry) to render to any created being” (*Easton’s Bible Dictionary*). No god besides Jehovah can be worshipped without committing idolatry (Ex 34:14; Mt 4:10).

Just understanding what worship is does not mean we are actually worshipping. Scripture gives some necessary qualities in order for worship to be accepted.

How does one Worship?

Two key texts help us know how to worship Jehovah. The first is John 4:23-24: “*But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*” Worshipping in spirit means worshipping with your whole being. God is not pleased without true heart-felt worship. Many perform the rituals or routine practices of their religious organizations yet are not worshipping God from their heart.

Worship must also be done “in truth.” This means that it matters to Jehovah what we believe and even in what form we worship Him—it must be in agreement with His explicit commandment (Lev 10:1). Everything must be done “in truth.” The Bible, the Word of God, is truth (Jn 17:17). If we do not practice Biblical worship, we cannot be acceptable to Jehovah.

The second key text telling us how to worship is 1 Chronicles 16:29-30: *“Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come before him: worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness. Fear before him, all the earth.”* Worship includes giving. Bringing offerings and giving glory, honor, and strength to Jehovah accompanies true worship. Some of the offerings which please God are mentioned in Heb 13:15-16: *“By him (Jesus) therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”* Praising and thanking Jehovah, doing good, helping others, prayer (Ps 141:2)—these are “spiritual sacrifices” (1 Pet 2:5) pleasing to God. These are ways to worship Jehovah.

The phrase “worship . . . in the beauty of holiness” encompasses all of the spirit, which must permeate true worship. A holy life in and of itself is worship. One who Jehovah sees as sinful cannot offer Him acceptable worship (Is 29:13ff.). Worship not according to truth also cannot be considered holy. Worship is not merely a feeling, but an action of service to God accompanied by the attitudes of humility, reverence, love, and fear. Jehovah wants our lives as individuals to be living sacrifices to Him (Rom 12:1-2) and He wants us to worship with other believers in a corporate way (Heb 10:25). We should therefore consider . . .

Is The Watchtower Society Jehovah’s Prophet and The Only True Religion?

The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (WTS) says, “Make haste to identify the visible theocratic organization of God that represents his king, Jesus Christ. It is essential for life. Doing so, be complete in accepting its every aspect.” (The Watchtower, October 1, 1967). It claims that salvation is found only in its organization, and requires absolute obedience to everything it teaches. The WTS also states, “we cannot find the Scriptural guidance we need outside the ‘faithful and discreet slave’ organization” (The Watchtower, Feb. 15, 1981), by which it means itself. Furthermore, it affirms that it is 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 magazine, April 1, 1972). Let us test this claim, keeping in mind that Jehovah said that a true prophet will be 100% accurate; one false prophecy makes one a false prophet and worthy of death (Deut 18:15-22). The WTS predicted that “full end of the times of the gentiles, i.e., the full end of their lease of dominion, will be reached in A.D. 1914; and that the date will be the farthest limit of the rule of imperfect men” (The Time Is At Hand, 1888, p. 76, 77) and “In view of this strong Bible evidence concerning the Times of the Gentiles, we consider it an established truth that the final end of the kingdoms of this world, and the full establishment of the kingdom of God, will be accomplished by the end of A.D. 1914” (The Time Is At Hand, 1902 edition, p. 99). When 1914 came and went, the WTS predicted that “In view of this strong Bible evidence concerning the Times of the Gentiles, we consider it an established truth that the final end of the kingdoms of this world, and the full establishment of the kingdom of God, will be accomplished near the end of A.D. 1915” (The Time Is At Hand, 1915 edition, p. 99). When 1915 came and went, the WTS predicted that “There will be no

chance of escaping from destruction, through the nations. . . . The trouble is due to the dawning of the Day of Christ, the Millennium. It is the Day of Vengeance . . . which will break like a furious morning storm in 1918" (The Finished Mystery, 1917, p. 404), and "in the year 1918, when God destroys the churches wholesale and the church members by million, it shall be that any that escape shall come to the works of Pastor Russell to learn the meaning of the downfall of Christianity." (The Finished Mystery, 1917 edition, p. 485). 1918 came and went. The WTS also predicted that "And the mountains were not found. Even the republics will disappear in the fall of 1920. Every kingdom of earth will pass away, be swallowed up in anarchy." (The Finished Mystery, 1917 edition, p. 258). When that did not happen, the WTS predicted that "we may expect 1925 to witness the return of these faithful men of Israel from the condition of death, being resurrected" (Millions Now Living Will Never Die, 1920, p. 88). 1925 came and went. The WTS hoped that they were just a little behind schedule, so in 1930 a "house at San Diego, California . . . was built . . . and named 'Beth Sarim,' meaning, 'House of the Princes.' It is now held in trust for the occupancy of those princes [Abraham, Isaac, David, etc.] on their return" (The New World, p. 104). The house was for "the visible representatives on the earth who will have charge of the affairs of the . . . among those who will thus be the faithful representatives and visible governors of the world will be David, Israel; and Gideon, and Barak, and Samson, and Jephthae, and Joseph, formerly the ruler of Egypt, and Samuel the prophet and other faithful men who were named with approval in the Bible at Hebrews the eleventh chapter. The condition herein is that the said Watchtower Bible and Tract Society shall hold said title perpetually in trust for the use of any or all of the men above named as representatives of God's kingdom on earth and that such men shall have possession and use of said property hereinabove described as they may deem for the best interest for the work in which they are engaged. . . . the said Joseph F. Rutherford [the president of the WTS] in such lease or other paper writing shall have the right and privilege of residing on said premises until the same be taken possession of by David or some of the other men herein named and this property and premises being dedicated to Jehovah and the use of his kingdom it shall be used as such for ever" (deed of Beth Sarim, dated 24 December 1929). While this prediction got the WTS president a beautiful mansion to live in while his followers suffered in poverty during the Great Depression, Abraham, David, etc. never showed up to claim the property (although a homeless man tried one time, saying he was David). Although the WTS was going to hold it "perpetually" and "for ever," they sold it and dropped the idea about the resurrection of the people in Hebrews 11 in the 1940's. Undismayed, the WTS predicted that "Universal war is absolutely certain to come and that soon, and no power can stop it. . . . during the few remaining months until the breaking of that universal cataclysm the powers that rule the nations of the earth will continue to make treaties and tell the people that by such means they will keep that world peace and bring about prosperity." (Universal War Near, 1935, p. 3, 26-27). The world did not end "a few months" after 1935, so the WTS then stated that the end would come so soon that nobody should get married: "Those . . . who now contemplate marriage, it would seem, would do better if they wait a few years, until the fiery storm of Armageddon is gone" (Face the Facts, 1938, p. 46, 47, 50). Indeed, in 1941 there were only "remaining months before Armageddon" (Watchtower Sept. 15, 1941, p. 288). When that one failed, the WTS predicted that the world was going to end in 1975: "Eight years from the Autumn of 1967

would bring us to the Autumn of 1975, fully 6,000 years into God's seventh day, his rest day" (Watchtower May 1, 1968 p. 271). "The immediate future is certain to be filled with climatic events, for this old system is nearing its complete end. Within a few years at most the final parts of Bible prophecy relative to these last days will undergo fulfilment resulting in the liberation of surviving mankind into Christ's glorious 1000 year reign!" (Watchtower, 1/5/1968). The world failed to end in 1975, so now the WTS predicts that the world will end before the 1914 generation passes away: "Today, a small percentage of mankind can still recall the dramatic events of 1914. Will that elderly generation pass away before God saves the earth from ruin? Not according to Bible prophecy. 'When you see all these things,' Jesus PROMISED, 'know that he is near at the doors. Truly I say to you that THIS generation will by no means pass away until all these things occur.' - Matthew 24:33, 34" (Watchtower May 1, 1992 page 3: The Year That Shocked The World). Now their literature is starting to drop the 1914 generation date, for there are just about nobody from that generation still around. Are these the predictions of a true prophet? Why is the WTS wrong so many, many, times? Why does the Bible say a true prophet is never wrong, but the WTS predictions are never *right*? If they have been wrong so many times, could they be in error today as well? The WTS tries to prove that it is Jehovah's "faithful and discreet slave" by referencing Mt 24:45-46. The problem is that this passage is speaking about every true believer. It has nothing whatsoever to do with any organization. Where does Scripture say that Charles Taze Russell, the founder of the WTS, would introduce the true religion in 1872, it would be centered in Brooklyn, New York, and be governed by a Governing Body, a group of men who claim the same sort of Divine guidance as the Pope of Rome? Did Jehovah have no followers before 1872? Following Brooklyn, NY "is essential for life"? Where does Scripture say that salvation is only found in the WTS, or any other organization? We need to test everything using the Bible, and only the Bible—on its own, Scripture is able to make the believer "*perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*" (2 Tim 3:16-17). No "prophet" organization is needed to understand God's Word. The WTS states, "From time to time, there have arisen from among the ranks of Jehovah's people 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." (Watchtower Magazine, August 15, 1981). In other words, if you start only believing God's Word, instead of the WTS, you soon find out that they are not teaching what Jehovah says in the Bible! But who is it better to believe—Jehovah and the Bible, or an organization that, based on Deut 18:15-22, is a false prophet? The question then arises . . .

Which Bible?

Any doctrinal study must be based in the Bible. The traditional English Bible for the last 400 years has been the King James Version (KJV). It is based on the New Testament (NT) Greek text known as the Received Text, which represents the overwhelming majority of Greek manuscripts (MSS). The KJV has been used by everyone in the English speaking world who wishes to have an accurate version of Scripture. The Watchtower society, and nobody else, uses the New World Translation (NWT). Why such a difference?

The King James Bible was translated by nearly 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. Information about them is available to the public and published in many books (i. e., *The Translators Revived*, Alexander McClure). The NWT was made by an anonymous “New World Bible Translation Committee.” The seven men on the committee were Fred Franz, Nathan Knorr, Milton Henschel, Albert Schroeder, Karl Klein, and George Gangas. The majority of them were high school drop-outs, none had ever graduated from college, only one of them, Fred Franz, had taken any courses in Greek in his life. He had taken one 2 credit hour course in New Testament Greek and studied non-Biblical, classical Greek. None of the “translators” had ever taken any courses in Hebrew (or Aramaic) in their lives. They knew just about as much Hebrew as a Hebrew national hot dog. No wonder the Watchtower tries to hide the identity of the WTS “translators.” (Proof for the claims in this last sentence can be found on pg. 50, *Crisis of Conscience*, Raymond Franz, and pg. 64, *Kingdom of the Cults*, Walter Martin (1977 ed.); contact the church at the end of this pamphlet for free photocopied documentation. Note that Raymond Franz was a member of the WTS Governing Body for years and believed WTS doctrine; he was not a born-again Christian or someone trying to make stuff up to attack the WTS). Nobody 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.

Examples of the many corruptions in the NWT include:

- 1.) Mark 9:44, 46, where God wrote “*where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*” These verses are in thousands of Greek MSS, in 99%+ of the evidence, as well as in ancient translations (see *Textual and Translation Notes on the Gospels*, Jay P. Green, Sr). The NWT rejects the evidence and takes these verses out—it does not believe that people go to a place where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.
- 2.) In Zech 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 Jn 19:37 shows that this verse refers to the death of Christ, proving that Jesus is Jehovah, the NWT changes Zech 12:10 to “*the One whom they pierced,*” although this is impossible in Hebrew.
- 3.) 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.
- 4.) In Lu 23:43 Christ there promises the thief dying with Him, “*Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.*” The WTS does not believe that Christ and the thief were together in Paradise that day, so it moves the comma from after “thee” to after “today,” despite the fact that every single time the Greek construction representing “Verily I say unto thee” appears in the NT, it is always followed by a comma (cf. Matt. 5:26; 26:34; Mr 14:30; John 3:5, 11, 13:38, etc.)
- 5.) 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 WTS 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 Tetragrammaton 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 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 the Tetragrammaton 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 any of the 5,000+ Greek NT MSS in existence. The Greek says *Kurios* or *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 Cor 3:17). The NWT and the WTS 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.*”

On account of these facts, as we move on in our study, we will use God’s Word, the KJV. All of us are obligated to test all things with the Bible. Truth does not fear investigation, but error shuns the light. If we want to worship correctly, we must consider . . .

Who are we to Worship?

This may seem like a strange question. In light of the fact that Jehovah must be worshipped in truth, however, nothing could be more important. When Satan tried to get Jesus to worship him, Jesus responded by saying, “*it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*” (Mt 4:10) Jesus was referencing Deut 6:13, which shows us that Jehovah alone is to receive worship. Certainly, if any god, any person (even self), or any thing is worshipped besides Jehovah, false worship, and

consequently terrible sin, is occurring. In fact Jehovah's servants are very careful not to receive worship, but to direct all worship to Him alone. Peter and Paul both refused worship (Ac 10:26; 14:14-15). Angels do not receive worship (Rev 22:8-9). We must only worship Jehovah.

But what about Jesus? Some people worship and even pray to Jesus. Are they practicing false worship and thereby sinning against Jehovah? To answer this question we must first honestly acknowledge that the Bible says . . .

Jesus received worship

If you will recall, Jesus taught we must only worship Jehovah. However, Hebrews 1:6 says, "*And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.*" Here God the Father commands all the angels, including the archangel Michael, to worship the "firstbegotten"—Jesus Christ! The apostles also "came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God" (Mt 14:33). Jehovah's people worshipped Jesus in Lk 24:52: "*And they worshipped him (Jesus), and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.*" Jesus Christ is also worshipped in Mt 2:2, 8, 11; 8:2; 9:18; 15:25; 20:20; 28:9; 17; Mr 5:6; Jn 9:38; etc. In fact, worship is directed to the Lord Jesus more often in the New Testament than it is directed explicitly to the Father!

The NWT tries to hide this fact by mistranslating Heb 1:6, "*And let all God's angels do obeisance to him.*" However, even the 1961 edition of the NWT (as used in the 1969 *Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures* says, "*And let all God's angels worship him.*" Every time the standard Greek word for "worship," *proskuneo*, is used in reference to God the Father, the NWT translates it as "worship" (cf. Rev 5:14; 7:11; 11:16; 19:4; Jn 4:20). Yet every time the same word is used in reference to Jesus Christ (as in the earlier examples) the NWT mistranslates it "do obeisance." The KJV is simply consistent, translating *proskuneo* as *worship* every time the word appears in Scripture.

If Jesus receives worship, which is only to be offered to Jehovah, what does that imply? Jesus is not Jehovah, right? Well...

What about the Bible?

The Watchtower society is right when it says, "So our entire future hinges on our knowing the true nature of God, and that means getting to the root of the Trinity controversy. Therefore, *why not examine it for yourself?*" (Should You Believe in the Trinity?" 1989 ed, pg. 3. Italics added). The Bible itself says in 2 Jn 9, "*Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God.*" It is vitally important to be correct about the doctrine (teaching) of Christ. If you are wrong, you cannot worship Jehovah in truth, and you are no follower of His.

Many people say they believe the Bible, yet they do not obey it, or they explain parts of it away. A real belief in the Word results in the attitude, "The Bible says it. That settles it." Since the Bible is the perfect Word of God, it is our only authority in determining Jehovah's truth.

Some things the Bible tells us must be believed even though they are hard for us to understand. Can anyone really comprehend the fact that God never had a beginning? No! We believe it because the Bible says it. Can we understand why humans can be

redeemed but angels cannot? Again, we just believe the Bible. When it comes to the identity of Jesus Christ, we must let God's Word speak for itself.

1 Thessalonians 4:21 says, "*Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.*" This means we are commanded to test all things according to the Bible, and accept that which is proven good. Are you willing to have your beliefs tested by Scripture? If not, why not?

Since the Bible tells us Jesus was worshipped, and it also tells us only Jehovah is to be worshipped, we must look closer at what the Bible teaches concerning Jesus' identity. This will help us understand why Jesus could receive worship. But, first . . .

Who is Jehovah?

Psalm 83:18 helps us understand the essence of Jehovah: "*That men may know that thou whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth.*" From this verse we understand that Jehovah is the ultimate Sovereign over all. He is the One in charge. In short, Jehovah is God. What attributes, actions and descriptions are ascribed to Jehovah that differentiate Him from all created beings?

Attributes

ETERNALITY. Jehovah has always existed. He is truly eternal, without beginning or end. Ps 90:2 and Hab 1:12 teach this truth concerning Jehovah.

OMNIPOTENCE. Jehovah is "all powerful." God's boundless and infinite power is taught in Is 40:26, 28-29 and Jer 32:17. He is Almighty (Rev 11:17).

OMNISCIENCE. Jehovah is "all knowing." The Bible clearly teaches that God is all wise and absolute in His knowledge. Is 40:28; Ps 147:4-5; and Ps 139:1-6 teach this.

OMNIPRESENCE. Jehovah is "everywhere present." God infinitely permeates space, filling the entire universe. Prov 15:3; Jer 23:23-24 and Ps 139:7-10 clearly teach this mind-boggling truth.

IMMUTABILITY. Jehovah is "unchangeable." He does not deteriorate and He cannot improve, for He is already perfect. His nature and will are constant. Mal 3:6 and Ps 102:26-27 teach this.

These are some of the chief attributes of Jehovah. These are not mere facts about Him; rather they define His nature—who He is. We have seen what Jehovah is like. Now let us see what kinds of things He does—His actions. For the purpose of this study, just a few of Jehovah's actions will be discussed.

Actions

1. He created all things. Gen 1:1; Is 44:24.
2. He sustains the world. Neh 9:6.
3. He will judge mankind. Ps 98:9; Joel 3:12.
4. He can forgive sins. Jer 31:34; Is 43:25
5. He can give eternal life. Is 26:19ff; Dan 12:2; 1 Sam 2:6.
6. He will raise all the dead. Eze 37:12-14.
7. He receives worship. Ex 34:8; Ps 96:9; Is 45:23.

Descriptions

We have learned much about Jehovah from studying His nature. The many descriptions, names, and titles of Jehovah add an extra dimension to our study. They provide us with an excellent picture of who Jehovah is. Since whole books are devoted to this subject (and since this is not a book), the following list cannot be exhaustive.

1. I AM. Ex 3:13-14.
2. Holy One. Is 45:11; Ps 71:22
3. The Only Savior. Is 43:11; Is 45:21.
4. The First and Last. Is 44:6; Is 41:4.
5. King of Kings. 1 Tim 6:15; Ps 95:3.
6. Mighty God. Is 10:21; Hab 1:12.
7. The Rock. Deut 32:3-4, 30-31.
8. The Stone of Stumbling. Is 8:13-15.
9. The Great God. Dan 2:45; Ps 95:3
10. The One above all. Ps. 97:9.
11. Lord over All. 1 Chr 29:11-12.
12. Lord of Lords. Deut 10:17.
13. King of Glory. Ps 24:7.
14. The Judge. Gen 18:25; Joel 3:12.
15. The Shepherd. Is 40:10-11; Ps 23:1.
16. The Light. Ps 27:1.
17. Alpha and Omega. Rev 21:6-7
18. The Light & Glory of Israel. Is 60:19.
19. The Redeemer. Ps 130:7-8; Hos 13:14.
20. Lord of Glory. Is 42:8.
21. The One who searches the hearts. Jer 17:10; 11:20.
22. The One who created all things for Himself. Prov 16:4.
23. The Almighty. Gen 17:1; Ex 6:3
24. God. Is 43:12; Is 45:21.

The evidence is in; we know who Jehovah is. God the Father clearly claims the right to possess the name Jehovah, since the attributes, actions, and descriptions mentioned above apply to Him. But do they apply to Him alone? Can anyone else claim the right to have the name Jehovah? To answer this question, let us consider . . .

Who is Jesus?

To discuss Jesus' nature, it must first be declared that Jesus became a man. Yes, He was born a human in Bethlehem; He human nature was identical to ours (1 Tim 2:5; Rev 1:13). As man, He was limited and dependent upon the Father (Jn 14:28; Mr 13:32; 1 Cor 15:28; Lu 2:52). Yet Scripture teaches that Jesus did not originate in Bethlehem—He is more than a mere man. As we go through this study this will become more apparent. Thus, when studying Jesus Christ, one must remember that there is a human side to Jesus, and there is also that other side. To study this other dimension of Jesus' nature, let us examine His attributes, actions, and descriptions.

Attributes

ETERNALITY. The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ has always existed—He never had a beginning. Mic 5:2 declares, “*(his) goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.*” Is 9:6 says Jesus is “the everlasting Father,” for He has from eternity past had fatherly attributes (Heb 2:13), although, of course, He is not the Person of God the Father. Nonetheless, Is 9:6 shows He is “everlasting.” Col 1:17 declares “*He is before all things.*” Jn 1:1 teaches that Jesus existed before the “beginning,” before creation began (Prov 8:23), while Jn 17:5 teaches that Jesus was with Jehovah “before the world was.”

OMNIPOTENCE. The Bible teaches that the Son has the same power the Father possesses. Jn 5:19 states, “*what things soever [the Father] doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.*” Is 9:6 calls Jesus “*the Mighty God,*” the same title being given to Jehovah (see name #6 for Jehovah). Heb. 1:3 says “*He upholdeth all things by the word of his power.*” He has “*all power*” in Mt 28:18. He is “*Almighty*” (Rev 22:12-13+1:8).

OMNISCIENCE. Scripture clearly teaches that Jesus has all knowledge. “*He knew what was in man,*” and, in His Divine nature He “*(knew) all things*” (Jn 2:25; 16:30; 21:17). Col. 2:3 affirms, “*In whom (Christ-v. 2) are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*”

OMNIPRESENCE. Scripture also affirms that Jesus is not bound by the limits of space but is everywhere present. When he came as a man, he chose to be found in a body in one physical location. Yet even then He was not limited, for He declared Himself to be “*in heaven*” even while talking to Nicodemus (Jn 3:13). He is in the midst of two or three gathered in His name everywhere in the world at the same time (Mt 18:20). He dwells in the hearts of all His people everywhere (Eph 3:17; Jn 14:23; 17:23; Gal 2:20). Jesus “*filleteth all in all*” (Eph 1:23).

IMMUTABILITY. The quality of being unchangeable is also ascribed to the Son of God in Scripture. While even the heavens change, Jesus Christ does not. Heb 1:10-12 states, “*They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; 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.*” This passage is spoken of Jehovah in Ps 102:25-27, but here it is spoken of Jesus Christ. Heb 13:8 likewise says “*Jesus Christ [is] the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.*”

Jesus Christ possesses the same attributes as Jehovah. But what about His actions?

Actions

The actions of Jehovah that were discussed earlier were those only the one true God can do—but every one of these exclusively Divine actions is attributed to Jesus Christ.

1. Jesus created all things. Col 1:16; Jn 1:3.
2. Jesus sustains the world. Heb 1:3, Col 1:17.
3. Jesus will judge mankind. Jn 5:22-23; 2 Tim 4:1; Rev 20:11-15.
4. Jesus can forgive sins. Mk 2:5-10.
5. Jesus can give eternal life. Jn 10:28.
6. Jesus will raise all the dead. Jn 5:21; Jn 6:39-40; Jn 11:25.
7. Jesus receives worship. Mt. 28:9; Phil. 2:9-11; Rom 14:10-12; Heb 1:6.

Jesus has the attributes, does the actions of Jehovah. Does He have the same descriptions?

Descriptions

Each of these descriptions of Jehovah is specifically attributed to Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

1. I AM. Jn 8:58.

Jesus' use of this title (*ego eimi*) to refer to Himself resulted in an attempt by the hearers to stone Him. This proves that the Jews understood these Greek words to be a title of God. See also Jn 6:20; 9:9; 8:24, 28; 13:19; 18:6.

2. Holy One. Acts 3:14.
3. (The Only) Savior. 2 Tim. 1:10; Php 3:20; Ac 4:12.
4. The First and Last. Rev 1:17; 22:12-13.
5. King of Kings. Rev 19:16
6. Mighty God. Is 9:6.
7. The Rock. 1 Cor 10:4.
8. The Stone of Stumbling. 1 Pet 2:6-8.
9. The Great God. Tit 2:13.
10. The One above all. Jn 3:31.
11. Lord over All. Acts 10:36; Rom 10:12.
12. Lord of Lords. Rev 17:14.
13. King of Glory. Mt 25:31-34; 1 Cor 2:8.
14. The Judge. Mt 25:31-46; 2 Tim 4:1; 2 Cor 5:10; Rom 14:10-12.
15. The Shepherd. Jn 10:11; Heb 13:20; 1 Pet 2:25.
16. The Light. Jn 8:12; 1:4-9.
17. Alpha and Omega. Rev 22:12-13.
18. The Light & Glory of Israel. Lu 2:32.
19. The Redeemer. Rev 5:9; Tit 2:13-14.
20. Lord of Glory. 2 Pet 3:18; 1 Cor 2:8; Heb 1:3.
21. The One who searches the hearts. Rev 2:23.
22. The One who created all things for Himself. Col 1:16.
23. The Almighty. Rev 1:8, 11; 22:12-13.
24. God. Jn 1:1; Jn 20:28; Acts 20:28; Rom 9:5; 1 Tim 3:16; Tit 2:13; Heb 1:8; 2 Pet 1:1; 1 Jn 5:20; Jude 4.

Now, it must be obvious to anyone that two cannot both be "The First and the Last," or "the Savior." In fact, both of these titles are shown to be Divine titles applicable only to Jehovah in Is 44:6, Is 45:21, and Is 43:11. Yet here we have 24 names, not just 2! If Jesus has the same attributes, actions, and descriptions as Jehovah, then he must also BE Jehovah! He must be able to claim the right to possess that name.

This is also shown to be the case through the NT's quoting (or clearly alluding to) OT passages which refer specifically to Jehovah and applying them specifically to Jesus Christ. Notice the following . . .

OT Passages Quoted in the NT which EQUATE JESUS & JEHOVAH

• Num 21:4-7 relays the story of God's judgment on Israel (with fiery serpents) because they had "*spoken against the LORD* (Jehovah)." 1 Cor 10:9 however, says

“Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.” Speaking against Jehovah is the same as tempting Christ! Jesus is Jehovah!

- Ps 68 is addressed to God (v. 7, 9, 10, 24, 28, 35), whose name is “JAH” (v. 4, a shortened form of Jehovah). Verse 18a says, *“Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men...”* But Eph 4:7-8 says *“But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.”* The apostle Paul says Jesus did what Psalm 68 said Jehovah was to do!

- Ps 102:25-27 is addressed to God (vs. 24), and to Jehovah (vs. 1) and describes Jehovah’s creation and immutability. Heb 1:10-12 states this passage is about the Son. Indeed, Paul in Hebrews 1:10 begins his quote of Ps 102:25-27 with “Thou, Lord,” reaching back to Ps 102:12, “thou O LORD [Jehovah],” deliberately stating Jesus is Jehovah.

- In John 1:23 (cf. Mark 1:1-3), John the Baptist said, *“I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.”* He had quoted from Is. 40:3 where “Lord” is “LORD (Jehovah).” But whom did John prepare the way for? Jesus Christ, obviously! The following verses in John 1 make that abundantly clear. John was also said to be the promised forerunner who would go before Jehovah. His father, Zacharias, prophesied this in Lu 1:76, where he applies Mal 3:1 to John. John went before Jesus Christ, and yet that fulfilled the prophecy that John would go before Jehovah.

- Joel 2:32 makes the wonderful promise that all who call upon the name of Jehovah will be saved. Paul quotes this verse in Rom 10:13 to prove that all who call on the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved (cf. 1 Cor 1:2). So the name of Jesus must be equivalent to the name of Jehovah. In fact, Acts 4:12 says that only in Jesus’ name can anyone be saved.

- Rom 14:10-12 says, *“For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, as I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.”* Isa 45:22-23 is being quoted and it is clear that Jehovah is speaking (see 45:21). Yet Romans takes this prophecy concerning Jehovah and cites it as proof that we will all stand before Jesus Christ’s judgment seat. Also, “Christ” at the end of v. 10 is clearly parallel with “God” at the end of v. 12! This prophecy is also in view when Phil 2:9-11 describes the scene of every knee bowing and every tongue confessing that Jesus Christ is Lord. So bowing and confessing to Jesus is equivalent to bowing and confessing to Jehovah.

- Zech 12:10 describes the day when Jehovah brings judgment on all the earth. Jehovah Himself is speaking (v. 1, 4), and He says, *“they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn.”* When was Jehovah pierced? John 19:37 tells us it was when He was on the cross. Rev 1:7 also states, speaking of Jesus (v. 5 and 6), *“Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.”* Jesus will fulfill this prophecy concerning Jehovah, because He is Jehovah.

- Zech 14:2-9 describes the time when Jehovah will fight against all nations (v. 2-3) and establish His kingdom over all the earth (v. 9). Rev 19:11-20:4 describes the same events, but Jesus is doing the fighting (v. 13-15, 21). (Note that Zech 14:4 mentions Jehovah’s “feet.” He must have become flesh to have feet). Jehovah establishing His

kingdom over all the earth becomes Jesus doing the same (19:15b, 20:4). Is 40:10 also mentions that Jehovah “*will come...(and) his reward is with him.*” Jesus applied this prophecy to himself when He said, “*Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me*” (Rev. 22:12).

- Jn 12:37-41 reads, “*But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? And to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things spake Esaias, when he saw his glory and spake of him.*” Isaiah spoke the words in vs. 40 when he saw “his glory, and spake of him.” Whose glory? Jn 12:35, 36, and 42 make it extremely clear that it was Jesus’ glory. The “him” of v. 42 has to be the same as the “him” of v. 41, and the “he” of v. 37 must be “Jesus” in v. 36. This becomes very important when you realize that the words in Jn 12:40 are recorded in Isaiah 6:10 during the very vision in which Isaiah exclaimed, “*mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts*” (Is. 6:5; see 6:1-10). So the book of Isaiah says Isaiah saw Jehovah, but the book of John says Isaiah saw Jesus. Jesus must be Jehovah!

We have just completed a thorough study comparing Jesus with Jehovah, which leads us to conclude that Jesus is Jehovah. Jer 23:5-6, “*Behold, the days come saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.*” Jehovah says that the Messiah will be called *Jehovah our Righteousness*! These verses leave no room for doubt—Jesus is Jehovah.

Further Consideration

Since Jesus rightfully bears the name Jehovah, it must be concluded that Jesus is God. Further, this truth provides a solid basis for believing and understanding the doctrine of the Trinity. This conclusion, however, flies in the face of the teaching of the WTS. Since the Deity of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity are greatly attacked by the WTS, further consideration must be given to these two points.

More PROOF of the Deity of JESUS

It hardly seems necessary to further prove the Deity of Christ after it has been established that He is Jehovah. Yet, a few more points will bring the doctrine of Christ into greater clarity. Due to limitations of space, however, this elaboration must be brief and will center on the Incarnation, Sonship, and claims of Christ.

INCARNATION—Jesus, who has eternally existed as Jehovah, became a man. This is mysterious, yet wonderful. Since Jehovah said He would seek that which was lost in Eze 34:16, Jesus became man through the virgin birth, in order “*to seek and to save that which was lost*” (Lk 19:10). 1 Tim. 3:16 states, “*God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.*” Phil. 2:5-8 teaches that Jesus was “*in the form of God*” yet emptied Himself and “*took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the*

likeness of men.” Understanding that Jesus willingly limited Himself helps one understand how Jesus’ humanity relates to His Deity. He was one Person with two natures—a fully human nature which was just as human as we are, and a fully Divine nature which was just as much God as His Father. In his humanity He was inferior to God the Father, but in His Deity He was equal in nature to the Father.

SONSHIP---Jesus is called “the Son of God” over and over again in the New Testament. “Son of God” in and of itself is a title of Divinity. When the chief priests heard Christ confess He was the Son of God, they condemned Him for blasphemy, for claiming to be God (Mr 14:61-64; see also Jn 19:7; 5:31-32). In Matt 14:33, when Christ’s disciples become fully convinced that Jesus is the Son of God, they worship Him.

Since God the Father, by nature, is unchanging, His very essence and identity have and will always remain constant. If there was a time when Jesus was not the Son of God (i.e. did not exist), then there was a time when God was not the Father.

Sonship does not convey inferiority in nature. You and your father are both equally human, both are made in the image of God, both pay taxes, and both are equally responsible to obey the law. You have different roles, but are equal in nature.

CLAIMS---In Jn 5:17-18, Jesus was “making himself equal with God.” (Note that this was the declaration of the apostle John, not of the Jews alone, although they understood it; Jn 10:30-33). Jesus said He and the Father deserved equal honor (Jn 5:23), knowing that Jehovah said He would not give His glory to any other (Is 42:8; 48:11). Jn 1:1 states, “the Word was God.” It is grammatically impossible for this to state that Jesus was only “a god”—and, besides, this would affirm that there were two gods, instead of only one God. (There are many false gods, 1 Cor 8:5, but only one true God, Is 44:6). The WTS argues that Jn 1:1 should read “a god” because *Theos* does not have an article—supposedly the Father is *Ho Theos*, “the God,” but Jesus is *Theos*. However, in Jn 1:6, 12, 13, 18, and hundreds of other verses in the NT, the Father is called *Theos* without the article. Furthermore, Jesus is called *Ho Theos*, “the God,” in Jn 20:28 and Heb 1:8—so even if the WTS argument in Jn 1:1 were possible, the NT elsewhere calls Christ both *Theos* and *Ho Theos*, just as it does the Father.

Before leaving the Deity of Christ, it is interesting to note that in the NT, both Jesus and God the Father are called “the true God” (Jn 17:3; 1 Jn 5:20).

The DOCTRINE of the TRINITY

Although the word *Trinity* does not appear in the Bible, the teaching clearly does. Scripture affirms that God is one in essence with three distinct personalities. Since Jesus is God, and the Father is God, and (as we shall see) the Holy Spirit is God, this understanding must follow. But be careful not to misunderstand this doctrine. It does not say that the Father is the same Person as the Son and as the Holy Spirit (If that were the case a simple text showing Jesus speaking to the Father would refute the whole doctrine). A Trinitarian recognizes that there is only one God, yet the Father, Son, and Spirit are distinct personalities. The WTS likes to misrepresent Trinitarianism as if it taught the Father was the Son was the Spirit, for such an unBiblical notion is easy to refute, while Trinitarianism cannot be refuted, since it is what the Bible teaches. God thus has fellowship with Himself (Matt. 3:17, Jn. 17:5, 21), much like we discuss things with ourselves and approve or disapprove of ourselves. Yet this analogy, like all analogies,

falls short. God is infinitely above us and beyond our comprehension; He says, *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts”* (Is 55:8-9; cf. Is 40:12-26; Rm 11:33-34). The question is not if our weak minds can fully comprehend how the tri-unity of God, but if the Word of God teaches it. Having dealt with the Father and the Son already, we will here consider the Deity of the Holy Spirit, and some proofs for the Trinity.

The Holy Spirit is a personal Being, possessing intellect, will, and emotion, not an impersonal force: Is 63:10; 1 Cor 2:10-13; Acts 13:2 (here the Holy Spirit refers to Himself as “me” and “I”). Speech and actions the OT ascribes to Jehovah are, the NT tells us, the words and deeds of the Spirit, so the Holy Spirit is Jehovah (Heb 3:7-12/Ps 95:6-11; Is 6:9-10/Ac 28:25-27; Jer 31:33-34/Heb 10:15-17; Dt 6:16/Acts 5:9). The Spirit was involved in the creation of the world (Gen 1:2; Job 33:4). The “Spirit of the LORD” is “the God of Israel” (2 Sam 23:2-3). To “lie to the Holy Ghost” is to lie “unto God” (Ac 5:3-4). Blasphemy is “impious, and irreverent speech against God” (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*) but the Holy Spirit, unlike any created being, can be blasphemed (Mr 3:29), since 2 Cor. 3:17 declares *“the Lord is that Spirit”* (2 Cor 3:17). These are just a few of many proofs of the Deity of the Holy Spirit.

Scripture refers to a plurality within the unity of God (Gen 1:26; Is 6:8). This plurality in unity is that of “the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Mt 28:19; cf. 1 Cor 12:4-6; 2 Cor 13:14; Eph. 2:18). There *“are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one”* (1 Jn 5:7).

What about Worship?

We started this pamphlet with the question, “Are you worshipping Jehovah?” Just because we say we are does not make it so. We explained what worship must be for Jehovah to accept it. Then we talked about who we are to worship. We saw that the Bible says Jesus was worshipped. We have now concluded that the Bible affirms that Jesus is Jehovah—He is God.

Are you worshipping Jehovah—are you worshipping Jesus? All those who are “saints” and “sanctified” *“call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.”* (1 Cor 1:2). Saved people call upon the name of the Lord Jesus—they pray to and worship Him (Rom 10:12-14).

For worship to be acceptable to God, it must be according to truth (Jn 4:24). If you do not abide in the Biblical teaching of Jesus Christ, you do not have either the Father or the Son (2 Jn 9), but are guilty of idolatry.

Having concluded this study, what are its . . .

Ramifications

1. The WTS does not worship Jehovah, but is a false prophet, and must be rejected.

The WTS is teaching “another Jesus” and “another gospel” (2 Cor 11:4), and as such is “accursed” (Gal 1:6-9). *“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. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds" (2 Jn 9-11). Since the WTS has a false doctrine of Christ, it does not know God. We must therefore not receive or support it, but, out of love for Jehovah, separate from it.

2. Jesus Christ is God, Lord, and Savior, and demands your worship.

You cannot worship Jehovah unless your sins are removed. The central theme of Scripture concerns Jesus Christ's coming to reconcile sinners with God. Man was created to worship Jehovah, but he rebelled against Him. By "*one man's [Adam's] disobedience many were made sinners*" (Rom 5:19); when Adam sinned, we all sinned in him. Even when conceived, you were sinful (Ps 51:5; 58:3). You have a terrible sinful nature: "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*" (Jer 17:9). This sinful nature is so bad that, apart from God's grace, "*there is none that seeketh after God*" (Rom 3:11). "*There is none righteous, no, not one . . . They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one*" (Rom 3:10, 12). The standard is, "*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect*" (Mt 5:48)—how miserably short have you fallen!

The "*wages of sin is death*" (Rom 6:23). *Death* in Scripture refers to *separation*; spiritual death is the separation of the sinner from God (Eph 2:1), physical death is the separation of the soul and spirit from the body (Gen 35:18; Ac 7:59-60), and the second death is separation from God in everlasting fiery torment (Rev 20:14-15; Rev 21:8). Because of your sin, you are at this moment spiritually "*dead in trespasses and sins*" (Eph 2:1), and are headed for physical death, when you will not be annihilated, but will "*dwell with the devouring fire . . . with everlasting burnings*" (Is 33:14; Mt 25:41; 3:12; Jude 7), and you "*shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night*" (Rev 14:10-11).

Jesus Christ, however, "*came into the world to save sinners*" (1 Tim 1:15). When He died on the cross (not on a pole; His hands had "nails" in them, Jn 20:25), God the Father "*made him (Jesus) to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*" (2 Cor 5:21). Jesus suffered and died to pay in full for all your sins. He then rose in the same (though transformed) flesh and bones body from the dead. He did not rise only as some immaterial spirit being (Jn 2:18-22; Lu 24:39), but He has a real, glorified human body even now (Phil 3:21). God's Law demands perfect righteousness for entry into heaven, but Christ died as your Substitute so that His death and shed blood could pay for your sin. You can have His righteousness put to your account, and so be counted righteous in God's sight for the Savior's sake. You can be saved, not through your own works, but through His work; not by your attempts to obey the law, but His perfect obedience to it and death to satisfy it. "*Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us*" (Gal 3:13). "*Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but [made alive] by the Spirit*" (1 Pet 3:18). Since by "*one offering he hath perfected for ever*" those that are washed in His blood (Heb 10:14), there are no good

works that you can do to save yourself, or to keep yourself saved. This is why Scripture teaches, *“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us”* (Tit 3:5), *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast”* (Eph 2:8-9), *“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified [declared righteous] by faith without the deeds of the law”* (Rom 3:28). *“Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began”* (2 Tim 1:9), *“But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness”* (Rom 4:5).

Jehovah commands, *“repent ye, and believe the gospel”* (Mr 1:15). Agree with God that your *“damnation is just”* (Rom 3:8), and turn from your sins and self-righteous confidence in your works to trust in Jesus Christ alone for eternal life. Rely on His promise, *“He that believeth on me hath everlasting life”* (Jn 6:47). All who trust Christ are immediately and eternally saved—and once one is saved he is always saved, for *“neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* (Rom 8:38-39; Jn 10:27-30). Only when you receive the gospel will you be able to truly worship Jehovah.

3. If you deny that Jesus is God, you will be lost eternally.

Jesus said, *“If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins”* (Jn 8:24). Eternal life is knowing the true God (Jn 17:3). Only Jehovah can save—if you reject the Deity of Christ (2 Jn 9) and of the Holy Spirit (Ac 19:2) you follow a false god.

For more information, a free Bible study (in-home or by-mail), answers to any questions you might have on Biblical truths, or to fellowship with a congregation of believers who love and serve Jehovah, contact or visit:

Ought We to Pray to the Person of the Holy Spirit?

There is a significant controversy today among Baptist separatists about the propriety of prayer addressed directly to the Person of the Holy Spirit. There are many arguments that are made in favor of prayer to the Person of the Holy Ghost that are very problematic, savoring more of allegorical eisegesis than careful exegesis of Scripture—the kind that the Spirit who inspired the Word would want us to employ. I have read enough of these painful misinterpretations of Scripture, and would spare readers from similar agony, and so bypass them in silence. A simple and unbiased applications of the principles of sound hermeneutics is sufficient to deal with such Scripture-twisting. If you who read this believe that one ought to pray directly to the Person of the Spirit, and you want to convince others of your orthopraxy, you would do well to bypass these invalid arguments—they will simply turn those who care deeply about the Bible away from your position.

The argument that Mr. so-and-so believed in prayer to the Spirit, and when he so prayed good things happened as a result, is also invalid. If Mr. so-and-so saw thousands of people saved, I am very glad about it. If the records of his life are actually more hagiographical than accurate, then such is unfortunate. In either case, whatever happened or did not happen with him has no authority whatsoever in determining whether believers ought to pray directly to the Person of the Spirit. Scripture alone is sufficient for the doctrine and practice of prayer.

Until recently, the best argument I had, were I to wish to argue in favor of prayer addressed directly to the Spirit, was simply that He is God, and therefore He is worthy of prayer. I believed that this would be the best argument, and that it should be left at that. No eisegesis need apply. While I was sympathetic to this argument, I did not believe that it was convincing or conclusive.

The arguments against prayer directly to the Person of the Holy Spirit include the following. 1.) There are no examples of prayer addressed directly to His Person in Scripture. Since Scripture is our sufficient rule for faith and practice, we ought to pray in the way God has commanded and modeled in the Bible. These commands and models did not include prayer directly to the Person of the Spirit. Therefore, believers ought not pray directly to the Holy Spirit. 2.) Prayer directly to the Person of the Spirit is a practice of the charismatic movement, and so is a dangerous false teaching.

Prayer directly to the Person of the Spirit was practiced long before the rise of the charismatic movement, so argument #2 is not conclusive. However, argument #1 is strong. Based on argument #1, while I am sympathetic to those who pray directly to the Person of the Spirit because of the truth of His equality of nature in the holy Trinity, it

has been my practice to refrain from praying directly to the Spirit, trusting that God knows best how He wants us to worship Him.

2 Corinthians 13:14 has been used by many modern writers as an argument for prayer directly to the Person of the Spirit: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, *be* with you all. Amen.” Typically, I have heard the argument framed as follows:

As to the direct worship of the Holy Spirit, 2 Corinthians 13:14 is more than sufficient to bear the weight of the doctrine. Whatever “fellowship” means when applied to the Father and to the Son also means the same when applied to the Holy Spirit. We “commune” or have “fellowship” with the Father and Son by our prayers and praise. The same is true of our fellowship with the Holy Spirit. (pg. 429, The Trinity: Evidence and Issues, Robert A. Morey. Iowa Falls, IA: World, 1996)

That is, since the word *koinonia*, “communion/fellowship” in 2 Corinthians 13:14, is employed of communion or fellowship with the Father and the Son in 1 John 1:3, and fellowship with the Father and the Son include prayer directly to their Persons (Matthew 6:9-13; Acts 7:59; 1 Corinthians 1:2), then the “communion of the Holy Ghost” must include prayer directly to His Person.

While this argument is attractive, in that it appeals to Scripture rather than to Mr. So-and-so, and it is not a blatant and painful piece of eisegesis, it is nonetheless invalid. 1 John 1 refers to communion “with” the Father and the Son, (*koinonia* + *meta*), while 2 Corinthians 13:14 refers to the communion “of” the Spirit (*koinonia* in the genitive case). The semantic structure is not identical. After studying out all the New Testament *koinonia* texts and the syntax of 2 Corinthians 13:14 in the study [here](#), it was clear that while 2 Corinthians 13:14 teaches that we do indeed have fellowship with the Holy Spirit, prayer directly to His Person cannot be established solely based on the argument above. “Fellowship” + the genitive is used even of *koinonia* with impersonal objects (e. g., “the fellowship of the ministering to the saints,” 2 Corinthians 8:4); prayer to “the ministering of the saints,” whatever that could mean, is not proven by 2 Corinthians 8:4; nor does the “communion of the Holy Ghost” prove that one is to pray directly to His Person because of the argument above, although believers certainly do have communion with the Holy Spirit as He stirs them up to behold the beauty and glory of the Father through the Son, as He works in them to pray with groanings that cannot be uttered, and so on.

It should be recognized also that opposition to prayer to the Spirit is not an affirmation that He is in any way less than true God. On the contrary, He is one in essence with the Father and the Son, and He consequently possesses in full all the Divine attributes, with His sole identifying particularity in the ontological Trinity (“God as He is in Himself”) being the Spirit’s eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son, even as the Son’s identifying particularity is to be eternally begotten of the Father, and the Father’s identifying particularity is to be neither begotten nor proceeding. In the economic Trinity (“God as He is toward us”), the Persons assume roles that reflect their ontology, so that

blessings come to us from the Father through the Son by the Spirit, and we come to the Father through the Son by the Spirit. An affirmation that one is not to pray directly to the Person of the Spirit is not a denial of His full Deity, His glory, or His worthiness of worship, adoration, reverence, and honor—just as He is of equal authority with the Father and the Son as God, as proven by the baptismal formula of Matthew 28:19, so God the Holy Ghost is unquestionably worthy of worship. The question is not His worthiness, but whether He wishes for us to glorify Him by praying directly to Him, or whether He wishes to receive glory as we approach that God who is solely one in His undivided essence by coming to the Person of the Father through the Son by the Spirit. There is no jealousy or envy between the Persons of the Trinity, and when we worship the Father, we glorify the Son and the Spirit also, for the one God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (By the way, if the argument in this passage seems deep to you, foreign, or hard to follow, I commend to you the college level course on Trinitarianism available [here](#). Too many Baptists today are woefully ignorant of the character of the blessed Trinity.)

However, I have recently come across two stronger arguments for prayer directly to the Person of the Holy Spirit. In reading John Owen's glorious devotional classic, *Communion with God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost* (which, if you haven't read it, you are definitely missing out—get it [here](#)), a required textbook for the Trinitarianism class I am teaching, I noticed that Owen believed that, while prayer should generally be addressed to the Father, it was lawful also to pray directly to the Person of the Spirit. I wanted to see what Owen's case was, and I consequently asked a bunch of Owen and Puritan scholars what Owen's case was. The first of the stronger arguments for prayer to the Spirit can be summed up as follows. 1.) Since the Holy Spirit is worthy of and must be worshipped, since He is God, and prayer is an act of worship, it is fitting, on occasion, to directly invoke the Spirit in prayer. Now it is true that the Holy Spirit is worshipped, for baptism is an act of worship, and baptism is performed in the name of or with the authority of the Holy Spirit; the Spirit's equal glory with the Father and the Son is recognized and glorified whenever a disciple is immersed in the name of the Trinity (Matthew 28:19). But is prayer directly to the Person of the Spirit a necessary consequence of the fact that the Holy Spirit is worshipped? Below are the pro-and-con arguments, reproduced below from my interaction with an Owen scholar who is arguing for the lawfulness of prayer to the Spirit. What do you think—does he prove his case, or is my traditional position against prayer directly to the Person of the Spirit hold? Read the dialogue below prayerfully, testing everything by Scripture, and then tell us what your conclusion is. The second argument Owen makes will, Lord willing, be examined next Friday here at *What is Truth*. If certain terms, such as *hupostasis* or *ad extra*, or *ontological*, etc. are unfamiliar to you, watch or listen to the lectures on Trinitarianism in my class [here](#).

Dear Dr. ----,

Thank you for your help. I am teaching a college class on the Trinity right now, and we are going to be discussing distinct communion with the Persons of the

Trinity soon, using Owen as our text. (The course lectures up to this point are online here: <http://faithsaves.net/trinitarianism/>)

In my particular theological tradition there is a debate upon the propriety of prayer directly to the Person of the Holy Spirit. (There is no debate on the truth of the Trinity, on the fact that the three Persons are truly equal, worthy of worship, etc.; the question is whether the Spirit, in the economic Trinity, wishes to be directly addressed in prayer or whether He wants us to commune with Him by His working in us to pray fervently to the Father through the Son; of course, the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive). The main argument against prayer addressed directly to the Person of the Spirit is the lack of Biblical examples for this practice. I have seen people arguing that there are Biblical examples, but they really seem to require a lot of twisting of passages and nonliteral exegesis. . . . I am sympathetic to the idea of prayer addressed directly to the Person of the Holy Spirit; I even studied out the various koinonia texts and wrestled with the type of genitive that is found in “communion of the Holy Ghost,” desiring to find evidence for the practice. (My study is online here: <http://faithsaves.net/theology-proper-christology-and-pneumatology/> and here: <http://sites.google.com/site/thross7>). However, I just don’t see it in 2 Cor 13:14, and my belief in the sufficiency of Scripture for our worship does not allow me, in good conscience, to recommend prayer addressed directly to the Spirit unless I see a clear basis for it in Scripture. I would like to be convinced by Owen’s argument above, but I just don’t see how it is convincing. Do you have any thoughts that can help? . . .

Thomas, . . . [r]egarding [p]rayer to the Holy Spirit, here are a few thoughts.

Let me begin by answering confessionally, not because of any inherent authority in our confessions, but because they are a good starting point as a faithful summary of biblical truth. The persons in the Godhead are the same in substance and equal in power and glory. This is why the Westminster Confession and the London Baptist Confession both begin their chapters on religious worship by noting that the Triune God is the proper object of worship (second paragraph in both documents). When we worship the Father, we worship the Son and the Holy Spirit also, since the one true and living God is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These confessions each note that prayer is a part of worship. The WCF notes that prayer is a “special part” of religious worship and the LBC says that prayer is “one part of natural worship.” I am not sure about the reason for the change from the former statement to the latter, other than possibly to reflect the idea that while worship is limited to what Scripture requires, the light of nature also teaches the prayer is a duty.

When we worship God, we worship all three divine persons. Prayer is part of the worship that we give to God. When we pray to the Father and worship the Father in our prayers, then we worship all three persons of the Godhead. In this respect, the Father represents the majesty of the entire Godhead, as he often does in Scripture when the generic term “God” refers most frequently to the Father. Every prayer to the Father as it is an act of worship is a prayer to the Son and the Holy Spirit. We cannot deny that we pray to the Holy Spirit in this regard without denying his identity as a divine person.

However, when we pray to the Father, through the Son (in his name), by the help of the Spirit (Rom. 8, etc.) we respect the personal properties of each divine person. I always tell my congregation that we have the freedom to pray to each divine person since prayer is an act of worship and all three persons possess the whole deity. Yet there are also good reasons why the normal Scripture pattern is to call God Father (let alone the example that Christ taught us in the Lord’s Prayer). Just as the gospel originates with the Father’s plan, so our highest privilege in prayer is calling God Father and he is the person whom we address immediately. Adoption virtually summarizes all of the benefits of our redemption and calling God Father places this fact in the foreground. We pray in Christ’s name because he is the only Mediator between God and men and no one comes to the Father except through him. We pray by or with the help of the Holy Spirit because his office is to glorify Christ by convincing the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment and uniting to Christ by faith. This is why preaching in demonstration of the Spirit and of power involves preaching Christ and him crucified. Our prayers and every other act of worship reflect how the divine persons work particularly in our redemption. But the fact that the entire Godhead is the object of our worship means that we worship all three persons in prayer.

In short, my answer is that it is lawful to pray to the Holy Spirit as God, but that we should ordinarily pray in the order that Christ taught us with respect to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is lawful, but it is not normal. I cannot see how we can deny treating the Holy Spirit as the object of prayer together with the Father and the Son without denying the historic doctrine of the Trinity. On the other hand, when we pray we must not only regard the unity of the Godhead, but the distinction of the persons and their order of operation in our lives. Owen holds these things together wonderfully and gives us a model of how to hold communion with the entire Godhead jointly and the persons distinctly. This is largely the genius of his approach.

One last comment: You stated several times that you cannot find examples of prayer to the Holy Spirit in Scripture. I know that not all Baptists agree over whether we should accept the principle of “good and necessary consequence” in interpreting the Bible. However, there is some irony in requiring Scriptural

examples when we are discussing the doctrine of the Trinity, since virtually the entire doctrine stands or falls upon good and necessary consequence. The doctrine of the Trinity is a carefully worded conclusion from stringing together a series of theological inferences based on the deity of each person (and not always by express statements of the deity of Christ and the Spirit), their personal distinctions, their interrelation with each other, and their work in eternity and in time. Strictly speaking, if we limit Scripture proof to examples alone, then there would be no doctrine of the Trinity to speak of. . . .

I am grateful, dear brother, that you take the Scriptures so seriously and I can tell that you greatly desire to honor the Lord in limiting your faith and practice to his Word. I hope my comments are helpful to you in some measure and I will pray that the Lord would bless you as you continue to wrestle through this question.

Every blessing in Christ,

Dear -----,

Thank you for your reply. . . . Certainly the Holy Spirit, as homoousios with the Father and the Son, is worthy of worship. I agree also that as the Divine essence is undivided, worship of any Person is worship of the entire Trinity. . . . In the sense that all prayer respects the undivided essence, all prayer is addressed to the Holy Spirit. I have no problem with necessary consequences if they are truly necessary—certainly a condemnation of idols made by Isaiah in his day also condemns idolatry in our day. I do not wish to argue that there are no good and necessary consequences in the construction of the doctrine of the Trinity, although I think that 1 John 5:7 is canonical, part of what God has preserved “pure in all ages,” as the WCF states, for reasons explained at <http://faithsaves.net/bibliology/>.

What I am not convinced of is that prayer directly to the Person of the Spirit is either a direct affirmation of Scripture or a truly a good and necessary consequence. I don't see why . . . the fact that the Holy Spirit is worthy of worship means that He wants us to directly pray to Him, rather than holding communion with Him as He reveals to us the things of the Father and the Son as an economic consequence of His ontological procession. The Son is truly God, but we don't pray to the Son through the Father, but to the Father through the Son, and no necessary consequence of Trinitarianism indicates that it is lawful for us to pray to the Son through the Father (although prayer to the Son is clearly lawful, cf. Acts 7:59-60; 1 Cor 1:2). If the Spirit wants us to worship Him as we worship the undivided Trinity, and worship Him through being led by Him in our prayers to

the Father through the Son, worship Him by recognizing His authority as equal to that of the Father and Son in the baptismal ceremony, and worship Him by trusting in His strength to mortify sin, etc., but He does not want us to worship Him by praying directly to His hypostasis--that is, not to pray to the Spirit through the Son, but to the Father through the Son by the Spirit, how does this endanger the Trinity? . . . Again, I appreciate your response. I would like to have holes in my argument exposed and shot down, if they are there. I am probably going to have to address the question of prayer directly to the Spirit in my Trinitarianism course lectures in the relatively near future--and these lectures are going to be placed on the Internet and made available for billions of people--so I don't want to say something that is not Biblical. Thanks again.

For the glory of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

Thomas

. . .

Thomas,

I think that I understand your position a bit better now. Based on what you have said, I think that your view is not heretical and I am sorry if I came across as implying as much. Just a quick thought since you believe that we must worship all three persons of the Godhead. If we must worship all three persons, then this would include every aspect of worship. This goes back to my original argument. If prayer is a special part of religious worship, then we must pray to the Spirit as an act of worship. . . . I think that because prayer is a part of religious worship, and each divine person is the object of religious worship, then we must allow prayer to the Holy Spirit.

That being said, I ordinarily tell our congregation that we should recognize the importance of how the NT teaches us to pray. As you noted, it is important to pray to the Father, through the Son, by the Holy Spirit. There is only one clear NT example of a prayer directly to Jesus. This shows that while it is lawful to pray to him directly, it is not normal. This would require an entirely separate discussion why this is the case, but you appear to grasp this fairly well already.

One note about Muller. It has been a while since I have read that volume, but I do keep reading primary source material on the Trinity in Reformed orthodoxy. I think that it is not so much that the term God refers most commonly to the entire Trinity in the NT, but that the term God most commonly refers to the Father as representing the majesty of the entire Trinity. This is why, for example, when we

call on God as Father, we implicitly worship the Son and the Spirit as being the one true God. This is why I can in good conscience say that I treat the Spirit as the object of prayer even though I rarely pray to him directly so that I can follow the NT pattern (which indicates that whichever position you end up adopting, we should end up in a similar place in practice).

There is a lot more to say, but you probably have enough to think through in your studies.

I agree that it is a sobering fact that we must stand before people and in essence declare, “thus says the Lord.” What is particularly humbling is that though I am studying to gain some expertise in systematic theology, I do not believe that I have ever read an entire work on systematic theology where I agree with everything the author has said. What does this say about the flaws in my own theology! “Who can know his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults.”

I will pray that the Lord would bless your studies and your labors to the blessing of your student’s souls.

Have a blessed Lord’s Day.

In Christ,

Dear -----,

Thanks for the reply. The argument that since the Holy Spirit is worthy of worship, His Person should be/can be directly invoked in the act of worship called prayer, is probably the best argument I have heard for prayer directly to the Holy Spirit. If this is indeed a conclusive argument, I trust I am willing to adopt it. This is the counter-response that came to mind after thinking about your affirmation. Some acts of worship do not respect the Persons of the Trinity in the same way; for example, the Lord’s Supper is done “in remembrance of” Christ, not specifically of the Father or the Holy Spirit (although, of course, they were involved just as they are in all ad extra Trinitarian acts). If acts of worship can be Person-specific, and some acts of worship are not appropriately done in relation to one or more of the Persons (as in the Supper), then it is not truly a necessary consequence of the worthiness of God the Spirit of worship that He wishes for us to worship Him by direct invocation of His hypostasis in prayer. Is my attempt to make your argument from necessary consequence not truly necessary valid? I’d be happy to hear your thoughts. Certainly we can do worse with our time than think about how the blessed Trinity is to be worshipped. . . .

I can see the fact that the Father is the fons Deitas as an explanation of the very frequent application of the title "God" to Him; what Muller mentioned as an extant belief, and what I am not sure I have a clear example of in Scripture, is a NT reference where "Father" refers to the entire Trinity rather than the first Person specifically; if "Our Father which art in heaven" is a reference to the entire Trinity in the Sermon on the Mount, rather than a reference to the first Person in particular, it certainly has real life significance.

Thank you for your time and your good thoughts,

Thomas

[From ----- to me]:

Sorry for not getting back to you sooner. I have two quick thoughts to add:

1. I still think that Muller is not saying that the Reformed taught that the term "Father" was a reference to the entire Trinity, but that the Father included the entire Trinity by implication. The Father in this sense represents the majesty of the Godhead and when we worship the Father, then we worship the Son and the Spirit with the Father. In this regard, the Father represents the common deity of the Son and the Spirit, but not their distinct personal subsistences. This is an important distinction, since it would otherwise give the impression of some form of modalism in Reformed orthodoxy. In other words, "our Father" in the sermon on the mount is a reference to the Godhead of the entire Trinity, but it is not a reference to the entire Trinity. It remains a reference to the first person in particular without excluding the Son and the Spirit as the common object of worship. When we address the Father in prayer, we address him as a divine person. We respect his personal subsistence and order of operation when we call him Father. Yet because we worship the Father as God in prayer, then also worship the whole Godhead simultaneously because the only God that exists is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is why I said that we can respect the personal properties of each divine person while simultaneously treating each divine person as the object of worship.

2. The Lord's Supper is a very good illustration of the principles that I have in view. As you mentioned, there is a special emphasis on the Son in the Lord's Supper. We respect his personal properties as the Son of God and we also remember him and commune with him in his work as Mediator. However, this is not the same thing as saying that the Son is the exclusive object of worship in the Lord's Supper (or in any other act of worship). As our respective confessions of faith rightly state, the entire Trinity is always the proper object of worship. This is

true in the Lord's Supper just as much as it is in prayer and in every other act of worship. If the triune God alone is the proper object of worship in general, then all three divine persons are the proper object of worship in every particular part of worship as well. In the Lord's Supper, we worship the Father for sending the Son and spreading the feast before us (this idea is somewhere in Sibbes's sermons on 2 Cor. 4). We worship the Son for giving himself for us and for our salvation. We worship the Spirit for producing spiritual communion with Christ in the [ordinance] and for uniting us savingly to Christ. Christ may be the central focus of the Lord's Supper and the direct object of our attention, but we cannot worship him in the Supper without worshiping the Father and the Spirit as well. However, we worship all three persons in a way that respects their personal properties.

3. All of this relates to the original question of prayer. If the Spirit is God equal with the Father and the Son, and prayer is an act of divine worship to God, then the Spirit is clearly the object of worship in prayer. However, much as the Son receives the central focus of the Lord's Supper, so the Father is the central focus of our prayers (In his two sermons on Eph. 2:18 in vol. 9, Owen actually argues that the person of the Father is the central focus of every act of religious worship. These sermons are an excellent parallel to Communion with God, only with a more narrow focus on public worship. These two sources combined provide the structure for my PhD work.). This means that in terms of divinity and as an act of worship, every prayer is directed to the Holy Spirit together with the Father and the Son. The question remains whether we should address him directly in our prayers. My answer is that it is appropriate to do so, as long as we respect the personal properties of the Father and the Son as well. In other words, if we address the Spirit directly in prayer, we must do so recognizing that it is the Father who answers our prayers, through his Son, by the Spirit. An example that I can think of that would be appropriate would be to ask the Spirit to interced[e] within us in our prayers with groanings that cannot be uttered so that we may cry out to the Father in Christ's name. We could offer the same prayer to the Father, asking him to send us the Spirit in Christ's name to help us in our prayers. I can conceive of a similar example regarding the work of the Spirit in preaching, etc. While I would not reject this kind of prayer to the Holy Spirit (and some of our hymns, such as come tho[u] almighty king, express this kind of prayer to the Spirit), my ordinary practice would still be to address the Father directly, in Christ's name, in dependence on the Holy Spirit.

4. We must be careful to distinguish but not to separate the deity and the personality of all three persons in our prayers. We may only address the persons of the Godhead in prayer because they are divine persons, and when we address the persons we address them as divine persons. This point merely confirms and draws on everything that I have stated above, but it again reinforces the idea that it is not only the triune God who is the object of worship, but divine persons in whom the

entire Godhead resides. The only way I can conceive of denying the lawfulness of prayer to the Holy Spirit is either to deny that prayer is an act of worship, or to deny that all three divine persons are the proper object of worship. Again, in light of your statement that all three persons are the object of worship, I do not mean by this logical conundrum to imply that you are heretical if you take a different position. With the limited light and knowledge that the Lord has given me, I am trying to point out the potential contradictions involved in holding such a view as I see them.

I sincerely hope and pray that the Lord will use these thoughts to help you think and pray through these issues. I have chosen trinitarian theology as a special area of "expertise" and study, just as the triune God himself is the center of my affections as a believer. Even then, the more I study and know our God, the less I feel that I understand him. May the Lord bless us both as we press on to know him and make him known better.

Blessings in Christ,

So, that is our discussion. Who has the better of it? More importantly, whose position is Scriptural?

--TDR

4 comments:

[Jon Gleason](#) said...

Interesting discussion, Brother Ross.

I'll just make one comment at this point on a rather minor aspect of the discussion: "and what I am not sure I have a clear example of in Scripture, is a NT reference where "Father" refers to the entire Trinity rather than the first Person specifically;"

There is one NT reference that seems relatively clear to me. II Corinthians 6:16-18 obviously has reference to the Holy Spirit because of Paul's previous letter to the same recipients (I Cor. 3:16-17; 6:19). Yet, "Father" is used by the One speaking, and those spoken words began in verse 16 with that which the readers would have immediately understood to be referring to the Spirit.

This usage is consistent with several Old Testament passages where "Father" clearly is a general title reflecting God's care and provision for His people, rather than an exclusive reference to the First Person of the Trinity. And there seem to be several Old

Testament passages / allusions here, so it seems that Paul is carrying that OT usage forward into a NT context.

This does not prove in the least that this is the usage of "Father" in the Lord's Prayer. But I don't think we can safely say that "Father" in the NT never refers to the entire Trinity.

[4:24 AM](#)

[Frank](#) said...

What if the communion of the Holy Spirit in 2 Cor 13:14 is not worship nor prayer? I would take the passage to refer to the illumination by the Spirit to the inspired Word to the Corinthians that was penned by Paul. You have the grace of enablement (of Christ), the revelation of knowledge of His love (of God), and the enlightenment of understanding (of Spirit). This seems consistent with other passages that deal with the economic Trinity. Just a thought of consideration.

[6:57 AM](#)

[KJB1611](#) said...

BTW, I'm going to continue my series on "the just shall live by faith"

[9:12 AM](#)

[KJB1611](#) said...

This post should be read in conjunction with part 2, here:

http://kentbrandenburg.blogspot.com/2013/04/ought-we-to-pray-to-person-of-holy_19.html

[3:06 PM](#)

[Post a Comment](#)

Friday, April 19, 2013

Ought We to Pray to the Person of the Holy Spirit? part 2

This is the second (and last) part of my discussion of whether or not it is appropriate to pray to the Person of the Holy Spirit. Part 1 is [here](#). Owen, in his classic *Communion with God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, argues that it is indeed appropriate. Briefly, what Owen affirms is that Biblical benedictions are originally a form of invocation or prayer, so that the Divine benedictions that mention all three Persons of the Trinity demonstrate that prayer to each of the Persons is appropriate. Thus, consider the following texts:

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)

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; 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. (Revelation 1:4-5)

Owen argues that these benedictions involve invocation of the three Persons mentioned. Therefore, Scripture provides warrant for prayer to the Holy Spirit, as well as to the Father and the Son.

While sympathetic to Owen and recognizing his tremendous theological prowess, my initial reaction to this argument was negative. Owen is not infallible, of course—his arguments for, say, paedobaptism or limited atonement are erroneous. Consider the following sentence: “May you receive grace in the eyes of the judge, and peace with your boss at work.” Why would 2 Corinthians 13:14 or Revelation 1:4-5 actually involve prayer to the Father, Son, and Spirit, but a statement like my preceding example not require prayer to one’s boss or a human judge? Are they not identical? Thus, I found Owen’s argument unconvincing.

However, things are not quite so simple. Maybe the two statements are not really identical. Consider the explanation of Owen’s argument for prayer or invocation undergirding Divine benedictions below, from *Commentary on Hebrews 7:7* (“And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.”) I have put my comments in below in brackets [like this]. I would highly advise looking up the passages Owen references, as they definitely contribute to his argument:

But what if Abraham was thus blessed by Melchisedec, doth this prove that he was less than he by whom he was blessed? It doth so, saith the apostle, and that by virtue of an unquestionable general rule: [“And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.” . . . The words prevent an objection, which is supposed, not expressed; and therefore are they continued with those foregoing by the conjunction *de*, as carrying on what was before asserted by a further illustration and confirmation of it. And there is in them,

1. The *manner* of the assertion; and,
2. The *proposition* itself: —

1. The manner of it is in these words . . . “Without,” beyond, above, “all reasonable contradiction.” A truth this is that cannot, that will not be gainsaid, which none will deny or oppose; as that which is evident in the light of nature, and which the order of the things spoken of doth require. . . .

2. The proposition thus modified, is, That “the less is blessed of the greater;” that is, wherein one is orderly blessed by another, he that is blessed is therein less than, or beneath in dignity unto, him by whom he is blessed, as it is expressed in the Syriac translation. Expositors generally on this place distinguish the several sorts of benedictions that are in use and warrantable among men, that so they may fix on that concerning which the rule here mentioned by the apostle will hold unquestionably. But as unto the especial design of the apostle, this labor may be spared: for he treats only of sacerdotal benedictions; and with respect to them, the rule is not only certainly true, but openly evident. But to illustrate the whole, and to show how far the rule mentioned may be extended, we may reduce all sorts of blessings unto four heads: —

(1.) There is *benedictio potestativa*; that is, such a blessing as consists in an actual *efficacious collation* on [conference on], or communication of the matter of the blessing unto, the person blessed. Thus God alone can bless absolutely. He is the only fountain of all goodness, spiritual, temporal, eternal, and so of the whole entire matter of blessing, containing it all eminently and virtually in himself. And he alone can efficiently communicate it unto, or collate [confer] it on any others; which he doth as seemeth good unto him, “according to the counsel of his own will.” All will grant, that with respect hereunto the apostle’s maxim is unquestionable; — God is greater than man. Yea, this kind of blessing ariseth from, or dependeth solely on, that infinite distance that is between the being or nature of God and the being of all creatures. This is God’s blessing . . . an “addition of good,” as the Jews call it; a real communication of grace, mercy, privileges, or whatever the matter of the blessing be.

(2.) There is *benedictio autoritativa*. This is when men, in the name, that is, by the appointment and warranty, of God, do declare any to be blessed, pronouncing the blessings unto them whereof they shall be made partakers.

And this kind of blessing was of old of two sorts:

[1.] *Extraordinary*, by virtue of especial immediate inspiration, or a spirit of prophecy.

[2.] *Ordinary*, by virtue of office and institution. In the first way Jacob blessed his sons; which he calls a declaration of “what should befall them in the last days,” Genesis 49:1. And such were all the solemn patriarchal benedictions; as that of Isaac, when he had infallible direction as to the blessing, but not in his own mind as to the person to be blessed, Genesis 27:27-29. So Moses blessed the children of Israel in their respective tribes, Deuteronomy 33:1. In the latter, the priests, by virtue of God’s ordinance, were to bless the people with this authoritative blessing:

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron, and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The LORD bless thee, and keep thee; the LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them,” Numbers 6:22-27.

The whole nature of this kind of blessing is here exemplified. It is founded in God’s express institution and command. And the nature of it consists in “putting the name of God upon the people;” that is, declaring blessings unto them in the name of God, praying blessings for them on his command. [That is, Owen argues that *this type* of blessing involves both the declaration of blessing to men and the invocation of God for blessing. Men declare God’s blessing and invoke Him for it; the One invoked, or in the case of the Trinitarian Divine Persons, the Three who bless are the Three invoked.] Wherefore the word “bless” is used in a twofold sense in this institution: Verse 23, “Ye shall bless the children of Israel,” is spoken of the

priests; verse 27, “I will bless them,” is spoken of God. The blessing is the same,—declared by the priests, and effected by God. They blessed *declaratively*, he *efficiently*. And the blessing of Melchisedec in this place seems to have a mixture in it of both these. For as it is plain that he blessed Abraham by virtue of his sacerdotal office, — which our apostle principally considereth, — so I make no question but he was peculiarly acted by immediate inspiration from God in what he did. And in this sort of blessing the apostolical maxim maintains its evidence in the light of nature.

(3.) There is *benedictio charitativa*. This is, when one is said to bless another by praying for a blessing on him, or using the means whereby he may obtain a blessing. This may be done by superiors, equals, inferiors, any or all persons mutually towards one another. See 1 Kings 8:14, 55, 56; 2 Chronicles 6:3; Proverbs 30:11. This kind of blessing, it being only improperly so, wherein the act or duty is demonstrated by its object, doth not belong unto this rule of the apostle. [While the *benedictio charitativa* does not relate to Hebrews 7:7, if one looks at the texts Owen quotes here, it is clear that prayer to the God who gives the blessing is involved in the *benedictio* on the people. Thus:

14 And the king turned his face about, and blessed all the congregation of Israel: (and all the congregation of Israel stood;) 15 And he said, Blessed *be* the LORD God of Israel, which spake with his mouth unto David my father, and hath with his hand fulfilled *it*, saying, . . .

Here, the benediction upon the people is the invocation of the Blessing One for the blessing. Note the same thing below:

55 And he stood, and blessed all the congregation of Israel with a loud voice, saying, 56 Blessed *be* the LORD, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant. 57 The LORD our God be with us, as he was with our fathers: let him not leave us, nor forsake us: 58 That he may incline our hearts unto him, to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and his statutes, and his judgments, which he commanded our fathers. 59 And let these my words, wherewith I have made supplication before the LORD, be nigh unto the LORD our God day and night, that he maintain the cause of his servant, and the cause of his people Israel at all times, as the matter shall require: 60 That all the people of the earth may know that the LORD *is* God, *and that there is none else*. 61 Let your heart therefore be perfect with the LORD our God, to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandments, as at this day. (1 Kings 18:55-61)

Solomon’s blessing the people was his prayer to God for God to bless them. The same holds for 2 Chronicles 6:3, and Proverbs 30:11 appears to be another definite example of this *benedictio charitativa*.]

(4.) There is *benedictio reverentialis*. Hereof God is the object. So men are said often to “bless God,” and to “bless his holy name:” which is mentioned in the Scripture as a signal duty of all that fear and love the Lord. Now this blessing of God is a declaration of his praises, with a holy, reverential, thankful admiration of his excellencies. But this belongs not at all unto the design of the apostle, nor is regulated by this general maxim, but is a particular instance of the direct contrary, wherein, without controversy, the greater is blessed of the less. It is the second sort of blessings [the *benedictio autoritativa*] that is alone here [in Hebrews 7:7] intended; and that is mentioned as an evident demonstration of the dignity of Melchisedec, and his pre-eminence above Abraham.

Obs. 4. It is a great mercy and privilege, when God will make use of any in the blessing of others with spiritual mercies. — It is God alone who originally and efficiently can do so, who can actually and infallibly collate a blessing on any one. Therefore is he said to “bless us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things,” Ephesians 1:3. There is no one blessing but he is the sole author and worker of it. But yet, also, he maketh use of others, severally, in various degrees of usefulness, for their communication. And this he doth, both to fill up that order of all things in dependence on himself, wherein he will be glorified; and

also to make some partakers in his especial grace and favor, by using them in the collation of good things, yea, the best things, on others. For what greater privilege can any one be made partaker of, than to be an instrument in the hand of God in the communication of his grace and goodness? And a privilege it is whose exercise and improvement must be accounted for. I speak not, therefore, of them whose benedictions are euctical [“Euctical . . . Expecting a wish; supplicatory.” *Webster’s Dictionary*] and charitative only, in their mutual prayers; but of such as are in some sense authoritative. [Yet notice that all these kinds of benediction have prayer undergirding them.] Now, a man blesseth by the way of authority, when he doth it as an *especial ordinance*, as he is called and appointed of God thereunto. Peculiar institution gives peculiar authority. So parents bless their children and households, and ministers the church: —

1. Parents bless their children in the name of the Lord several ways: . . . By *prayer* for them. So David blessed his household, 2 Samuel 6:20. For besides the duty of prayer absolutely considered, there is in those prayers, by the appointment of God, an especial plea for and application of the promises of the covenant unto them which we ourselves have received. So it is expressed in the prayer of David, 2 Samuel 7:29. “Therefore now let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue for ever before thee: for thou, O Lord GOD, hast spoken it: and with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for ever.” . . .

2. Ministers bless the church. It is part of their ministerial duty, and it belongs unto their office so to do:

(1.) They do it by *putting the name of God upon the church*. This was the way whereby the priests blessed the people of old, Numbers 6:27. And this putting the name of God upon the church, is by the right and orderly celebration of all the holy ordinances of worship of his appointment. . . .

(4.) How they bless the church by *prayer and example*, may be understood from what hath been spoken concerning those things with respect unto parents. The authority that is in them depends on God’s especial institution, which exempts them from and exalts them above the common order of mutual charitative benedictions.

(5.) They bless the people *declaratively*; as a pledge whereof it hath been always of use in the church, at the close of the solemn duties of its assemblies, wherein the name of God is put upon it, to bless the people by express mention of the blessing of God, which they pray for upon them. But yet, because the same thing is done in the administration of all other ordinances, and this benediction is only euctical, or by the way of prayer, I shall not plead for the necessity of it. . . .

Thus, Owen’s argument is that the *benedictio authoritativa*, *charitativa*, and *reverentialis* all involve prayer to God for the benediction invoked upon those that receive it. His argument from 2 Corinthians 13:14 and Revelation 1:4-5 for the lawfulness of prayer to the Holy Spirit, is, therefore, that the authoritative benediction of blessing upon the church recorded in these passages involves prayer to that God who is invoked in the texts for the specific blessings mentioned. Thus, 2 Corinthians 13:14 involves a prayer to the Holy Spirit that He will produce communion in the saints, and Revelation 1:4-5 a prayer to the Holy Spirit that He will produce grace and peace in the saints. What about my counter-example, “May you receive grace in the eyes of the judge, and peace with your boss at work”? This would be a *benedictio charitativa* which actually involves an invocation of God; namely, that God would give the person receiving the benediction favor in the eyes of a human judge and peace with his human boss. Stated in a Trinitarian fashion like 2 Corinthians 13:14, the statement would be: “May the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit give you grace in the eyes of the judge, and peace with your boss at work.” And this, Owen would argue, does indeed presuppose the invocation of or prayer to all three Persons of the Godhead.

What do you think of Owen's argument? Is he right? Why or why not?

-TDR

8 comments:

[KJB1611](#) said...

Part 1 should be read also; no more parts are coming, I think.

[7:59 AM](#)

[KJB1611](#) said...

Texts of this sort might also be related to Owen's argument--I ran across this today. In 2 Samuel 16:16, the Hebrew *yehi hamelek*, "Let live the king," is not directly a prayer, but the KJV renders it as "God save the king" because God is the one who would allow the king to live, so an implicit invocation of God is involved in the statement. Something similar is found in the Greek *me genoito* and its Hebrew equivalent, the "Let it never be" of Romans 11:1 and other texts; "Let it never be" means "God forbid," for God is the one who will not allow it to be; compare my study of "God forbid" as an accurate translation at <http://faithsaves.net/bibliology/> .

[9:41 PM](#)

[Kent Brandenburg](#) said...

Hi

Thomas.

All this proves, as I read it, is that we look to the three Persons of the Trinity for the blessing on our lives. Those texts do not read as instructing to address prayer to the Holy Spirit, such as, "Sweet Holy Spirit..." That's taking it too far. Jesus taught to address the prayers to the Father, and we must interpret the benediction texts, passages that don't read like a prayer, neither are called prayer, in light of the actual teaching on prayer. If you had not offered Owen's argument, it would not have occurred to me, because it would clash with what Jesus taught.

[11:20 PM](#)

[George Calvas](#) said...

The work of the Spirit is to make known the truth and character of the Father and Son, through the words of God, by the Holy Ghost which abideth in us. It is the Holy Ghost, Christ in us, that gives us access to the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ while he ministers and upholds the word of his power.

What Owens wrote is a bunch of intellectual bloating and using "proof-texting" to support a position that is not tenable by the whole of scripture.

5:14 AM

KJB1611 said...

Dear

Pastor

Brandenburg,

Thank you for taking the time to read Owen's post and commenting. Certainly a benediction is not a direct prayer, but that fact does not prove that benedictions are not indirect prayers. Owen would not argue that the model is prayer to the Spirit—it is to the Father through the Son by the Spirit—but that Matthew 6 is the model does not prove that all deviations from the model are unlawful in every situation. There are many prayers in the Psalter—which are certainly lawful for us to pray—that do not follow the pattern of Matthew 6, and many inspired prayers recorded in the NT that do not follow the pattern of Matthew 6. While prayer to the Person of the Son is not the model in Matthew 6, it is clearly lawful, as Stephen prayed to Christ in Acts 7 without sinning and all the saints are said to pray to Christ in 1 Cor 1:2. If Paul can properly derive doctrine from “seed” versus “seeds” in Galatians, then whatever legitimate implications are present in the benediction texts do actually have doctrinal significance. If there is a legitimate doctrinal implication about the lawfulness of invocation of the Spirit from benediction texts, the model in Matthew 6 is not changed, nor is it by any means contradicted—Owen would entirely agree with the idea that Matthew 6 is the model—it would simply prove that prayer to the Spirit is lawful, while prayer to the Father is still the model.

Owen's case that benedictions are forms of indirect invocation looks quite strong to me; the example in the post from 1 Kings, for example, seems quite clear—Solomon “blessed” the people by invoking God and praying to Him for a blessing. In addition to the texts referenced by Owen, the category of passages I mentioned in my previous comment, those like 2 Sam 16:16 and Romans 11:1, certainly seem to me to provide further support. I don't have a good case against Owen's argument, and I don't think it is sufficient to invoke the model of Matthew 6 unless we can prove that Matthew 6 is the ONLY lawful way that we can pray at any time, which will be very difficult to prove.

George,

Thanks for taking the time to comment.

It is easier to simply say that Owen is guilty of “intellectual bloating” than to prove that it is so.

I very much hope that you do not really believe that the Holy Ghost is Christ in us, for if you do believe that the Person of the Son is the Person of the Holy Spirit, you would be a modalist idolator and not a Christian, for Christians believe in the Trinity. I trust that what you wrote was simply a slip of the pen, and that you really believe that Christ in us is the second Person in believers, and the Holy Ghost in us is the third Person in believers, just as the Father also is in believers (John 14:21) while remaining the first Person and not being either the second or third Persons.

John Owen on Communion with the Triune God

The saints have distinct communion with the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

—JOHN OWEN¹

The doctrine of the Holy Trinity was foundational for the theology of John Owen (1616–1683)—as Richard Muller observed to be true among orthodox Reformed theologians generally. Owen asserted that if you take away the doctrine of the Trinity, “the foundation of all fruits of love and goodness is lost to the soul.”² Sinclair Ferguson calls Owen “a deeply Trinitarian theologian.”³ Carl Trueman writes, “Throughout his works—whether those dealing with God, redemption, or justification—the doctrine of the Trinity is always foundational.”⁴

What did John Owen mean by the Trinity? In his lesser catechism, Owen wrote, “Q. *Is there but one God?* A. One only, in respect of his essence and being, but one in three distinct persons, of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.”⁵ In his greater catechism, Owen defined “person” as “a distinct manner of subsistence or being, distinguished from the other persons by its own properties.” These distinguishing properties he gave as:

- The Father is the “only fountain of the Godhead (John 5:26, 27; Eph. 1:3).”⁶
- The Son is “begotten of his Father from eternity (Ps. 2:7; John 1:14; 3:16).”
- The Spirit is said “to proceed from the Father and the Son (John 14:17; 16:14; 15:26; 20:22).”⁷

In another place, Owen summarized the doctrine of the Trinity as follows: “that God is one; that this one God is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; that the Father is the Father of the Son; and the Son, the Son of the Father; and the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of the Father and the Son; and that, in respect of this their mutual relations, they are distinct from each

¹ John Owen, *Communion with God*, in *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold (repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), 2:9. This composition is a reproduction of chapter 6 of *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life*, J. R. Beeke & M. Jones. Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012. It is reproduced at <http://faithsaves.net> with permission from Reformation Heritage Books. Portions of the chapter in *A Puritan Theology* were adapted from Joel R. Beeke, *The Quest for Full Assurance: The Legacy of Calvin and His Successors* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1999), 173–87; and Paul M. Smalley, “Sweet Mystery: John Owen on the Trinity,” *Puritan Reformed Journal* 3, no. 1 (2011): 81–112.

² Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 4, *The Triunity of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 145, 148.

³ Sinclair Ferguson, “John Owen and the Doctrine of the Person of Christ,” in *John Owen: The Man and His Theology*, ed. Robert W. Oliver (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R, 2002), 82.

⁴ Carl R. Trueman, *John Owen: Reformed Catholic, Renaissance Man* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 124.

⁵ Owen, *Two Short Catechisms*, in *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold (repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), 1:467.

⁶ Owen often referred to the Father as the “fount” or “fountain” in the Godhead, but not as the “cause” of the other divine persons. In this regard he stood in the same tradition as Thomas Aquinas and the Latin fathers as opposed to Athanasius, Basil, and Theodoret. Aquinas recognized that the language of “cause” could imply that the Son was created, whereas “fount” indicated identical substance. Muller, *Post-Reformation*, 4:46.

⁷ Owen, *Two Short Catechisms*, in *Works*, 1:472.

other.”⁸

Regarding the three divine persons, he wrote, “they are distinct, living, divine, intelligent, voluntary principles of operation or working, and that in and by internal acts one towards another, and in acts that outwardly respect the creation and the several parts of it. Now, this distinction originally lieth in this, that the Father begetteth the Son, and the Son is begotten of the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceedeth from both of them.”⁹

Though Owen defended the doctrine of the Trinity at length,¹⁰ he did not regard it as merely a matter of disputation or confessional fidelity. Carl Trueman wrote, “Owen demonstrates that most delightful aspect of precritical theology: its essentially ecclesiastical and practical purpose.... It was theology done within the church for the benefit of the church.”¹¹ Trueman observed that this was especially true of the doctrine of the Trinity: “the Trinity stood at the heart of Christian soteriology and thus must stand at the heart of Christian worship as well.”¹²

God had revealed Himself as the Trinity so that men might walk with Him in obedience, love, fear, and happiness as He required of them.¹³ Whereas the Remonstrants viewed the Trinity as a doctrine neither fundamental nor profitable,¹⁴ Owen saw it as both fundamental to saving faith and very profitable for the spiritual experience of believers. For Owen viewed Christian experience as communion with the mysterious God, and so his theology was, in Robert Letham’s words, “a superb example of a synthesis of metatheoretical constructs, catholic exegesis and dogma, and practical pastoral piety.”¹⁵ It is likely that Owen influenced the Savoy Declaration (1658) where it added to the text of the Westminster Confession (2.3) this statement: “Which Doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all our Communion with God, and comfortable Dependence upon him.”¹⁶

Ferguson wrote that in Owen’s theology, “the Christian life is nothing less than fellowship with God the Trinity, leading to the full assurance of faith.”¹⁷ What did Owen mean by communion or fellowship with God? It is the mutual exchange of spiritual benefits between God and His people based on the bond between them in Christ. Owen wrote,

Now, communion is the mutual communication of such good things as wherein the persons holding that communion are delighted, bottomed upon some union between them.... Our communion, then, with God consisteth in his communication of himself to us, with our returnal unto him of that which he

⁸ Owen, *A Brief Declaration and Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity as also of the Person and Satisfaction of Christ*, in *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold (repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), 2:377.

⁹ Owen, *Doctrine of the Trinity*, in *Works*, 2:405.

¹⁰ Owen, *Doctrine of the Trinity*, in *Works*, 2:366–419; *Vindiciae Evangelicae; or, The Mystery of the Gospel Vindicated and Socinianism Examined*, in *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold (repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), 12:169–333.

¹¹ Trueman, *John Owen*, 128.

¹² Trueman, *John Owen*, 123.

¹³ Owen, *Doctrine of the Trinity*, in *Works*, 2:378, 406.

¹⁴ Muller, *Post-Reformation*, 4:154–55.

¹⁵ Robert Letham, “John Owen’s Doctrine of the Trinity in Its Catholic Context and Its Significance for Today,” in *Where Reason Fails* (London: Westminster Conference, 2006), 14.

¹⁶ Savoy Declaration, chap. 2, sec. 3, cited in Kelly M. Kapic, *Communion with God: The Divine and the Human in the Theology of John Owen* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 156.

¹⁷ Sinclair B. Ferguson, *John Owen on the Christian Life* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), 74.

requireth and accepteth, flowing from that union which in Jesus Christ we have with him.¹⁸

Ian Hamilton commented, “In communion, God gives Himself to His people, and they give to Him what He requires and accepts—their love, trust, obedience, and faithfulness.”¹⁹ Owen carefully distinguished between union with Christ (the unchangeable relationship of our salvation) and communion with God (the variable experience of that relationship).²⁰

Owen picked up on a theme found in Augustine, namely, communion as the “enjoyment,” or possession of and delighting in the *triune* God. In Augustine’s “On Christian Doctrine,” one chapter is titled, “The Trinity the true object of enjoyment.” There, Augustine wrote, “The true objects of enjoyment, then, are the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, who are at the same time the Trinity, one Being, supreme above all, and common to all who enjoy Him.”²¹

Owen embraced this idea of enjoying the Trinity and amplified it through the concept of distinct communion with each divine person.²² Owen found scriptural support for “distinct communion” in such texts as John 14:23; 1 Corinthians 1:9; 12:4–6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 John 1:3; 5:7; and Revelation 3:20. Sinclair Ferguson wrote of Owen’s use of such passages, that “Owen adds the axiom that all the activity of faith has reference to one distinct person of the Trinity, as do all receptions of grace. This is what he means by fellowship or communion. Thus the Father communicates by original authority, the Son from a purchased treasury, and the Spirit in immediate efficacy. This is the classical doctrine of *Appropriations*.”²³ Owen carefully guarded the unity of the Godhead by clarifying that distinct communion is not exclusive communion with any one person, but communion primarily *appropriated* by that person according to his distinct property and role.²⁴

J. I. Packer explained, “Communion with God is a relationship in which Christians receive love from, and respond in love to, all three persons of the Trinity.”²⁵ In this regard, Owen avoided the problematic tendency of Christians especially in the West to stress the “undifferentiated Godhead” over against relating to each of the persons of the Trinity.²⁶ Rather than trying to relate to an impersonal essence or, worse, an abstract collection of attributes, believers should relate to each person of the Godhead in a distinctly personal way.

Owen developed his view of communion with the Trinity at some length in one

¹⁸ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:8.

¹⁹ Ian Hamilton, “Communion with God,” in *Reformed Spirituality*, ed. Joseph A. Pipa Jr. and J. Andrew Wortman (Taylors, S. C.: Southern Presbyterian Press, 2003), 63.

²⁰ Kelly M. Kapic, “Communion with God by John Owen (1616–1683),” in *The Devoted Life: An Invitation to the Puritan Classics*, ed. Kelly M. Kapic and Randall C. Gleason (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2004), 169.

²¹ Augustine, “On Christian Doctrine” (1.5), in *The Works of Aurelius Augustine*, ed. Marcus Dods (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1892), 9:10.

²² Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:9.

²³ Ferguson, *John Owen on the Christian Life*, 75–76.

²⁴ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:18–19.

²⁵ J. I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1990), 204. Cf. Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:10–16.

²⁶ Kapic, *Communion with God*, in *The Devoted Life*, 148.

particular treatise known as *Communion with God* (1657). In this chapter, we will examine this treatise in its historical and theological setting and then explore Owen's specific teaching on communion with each divine person of the Trinity.

Communion with God in Historical Context

The theme of communion with God was critically important to Owen's generation of Puritan divines. Their preoccupation with the subject of communion between God and His people was not an attempt to humanize God or to deify man, however.²⁷ Rather, Owen and his colleagues wanted to explain, within a trinitarian framework, how God deals with needy sinners. The divines were not so much concerned with religious experience as an end in itself as they were with religious experience as a revelation of God and His astonishing grace. Packer rightly states, "In modern spiritual autobiography [for example], the hero and chief actor is usually the writer himself; he is the centre of interest, and God comes in only as a part of his story. His theme is in effect '*I—and God*'. But in Puritan autobiography, God is at the centre throughout. He, not the writer, is the focus of interest; the subject of the book is in effect '*God—and me*.'" ²⁸

Owen's theme of communion with each of the divine persons was likewise a familiar one in Puritan literature.²⁹ In *The Object and Acts of Justifying Faith*, for example, Thomas Goodwin (1600–1680) wrote of an intimate connection between assurance of faith and communion with the Trinity:

Sometimes a man's communion and converse is with the one, sometimes with the other; sometimes with the Father, then with the Son, and then with the Holy Ghost; sometimes his heart is drawn out to consider the Father's love in choosing, and then the love of Christ in redeeming, and so again the love of the Holy Ghost, that searcheth the deep things of God, and revealeth them to us, and taketh all the pains with us; and so a man goes from one witness to another distinctly.... We should never be satisfied till all three persons lie level in us, and all make their abode with us, and we sit as it were in the midst of them, while they all manifest their love unto us.³⁰

However, Owen's *Communion with God* was unique in working the idea of communion with distinct persons of the Trinity into a complete systematic treatise. That is what prompted Daniel Burgess to write, "This treatise ... is the only one extant upon its great and necessary subject."³¹ Brian Kay says, "Owen breaks new ground ... by showing how the Christian's devotional response to God takes on a distinctively

²⁷ Dale Arden Stover, "The Pneumatology of John Owen: A Study of the Role of the Holy Spirit in Relation to the Shape of a Theology" (PhD diss., McGill University, 1967), 304–5.

²⁸ J. I. Packer, "The Puritan Idea of Communion with God," in *Press Toward the Mark: Papers Read at the Puritan and Reformed Studies Conference, 19th and 20th December, 1961* (London: n.p., 1962), 7.

²⁹ See any Puritan commentary on the Song of Solomon (Richard Sibbes, John Dove, Nathaniel Homes, James Durham, and John Collinges). The latter wrote 909 pages on chapter 1 and 530 on chapter 2 on the communion of Christ and His church as represented by the communion of the bridegroom and his bride (John Collinges, *The Intercourses of Divine Love betwixt Christ and the Church* [London: A. Maxwell for Tho. Parkhurst, 1676]).

³⁰ Thomas Goodwin, *The Works of Thomas Goodwin*, ed. Thomas Smith (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1864), 8:378–79.

³¹ Daniel Burgess, "To the Reader," in *Of Communion with God*, by John Owen, in *Works*, 2:4.

trinitarian shape.”³²

Communion with God was favorably received from the time of its 1657 printing, but the 1674 reprinting prompted a rather inept attack from William Sherlock (c. 1641–1707).³³ Owen responded with *A Vindication*³⁴ but seemed genuinely surprised that this work should be subject to such an attack, since it was “wholly practical, designed for popular edification, without a direct engagement into things controversial.” He added, “I do know that multitudes of persons fearing God, and desiring to walk before him in sincerity, are ready, if occasion require to give testimony unto the benefit which they received thereby.”³⁵

Communion with God was popular among Dutch Reformed Christians as well. It was translated into Dutch by J. H. Hofman and published in 1717.³⁶ For many of English and Dutch descent, the work merited Daniel Burgess’s commendation: “The very highest of angel’s food is here set before thee.”³⁷ No doubt this book was also angelic food for Owen, who was at the time of its writing extremely busy serving as vice chancellor at Oxford University.³⁸

Andrew Thomson’s criticism that Owen carried the idea of distinct communion between the believer and each of the persons of the Godhead beyond Scripture³⁹ did not do justice to Owen’s careful, biblical scholarship. Reginald Kirby’s assessment was more accurate: “Owen is but setting forth what is the experience of those who do enter into communion with God, and shows that the doctrine of the Trinity has its basis in human experience as well as Divine revelation.”⁴⁰

Owen’s concept of communion with “distinct persons” was innocent of Dale Stover’s charge that “when God is known in this philosophical way, then epistemology is inevitably detached from soteriology.”⁴¹ As we shall see, Owen’s *Communion with God* actually merged the knowledge of God and the history of God’s saving acts spiritually and biblically. His treatise was much more a sermon than a philosophy lecture.

For Owen, communion between a believer and any person of the Trinity represented a living relationship of mutual exchange. This mutual communication must be in and through Christ, for without Christ no communion between God and man can exist. Dewey Wallace wrote that, for Owen, all such “communion is entered only through the

³² Brian K. Kay, *Trinitarian Spirituality: John Owen and the Doctrine of God in Western Devotion* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 113–14.

³³ William Sherlock, *A Discourse Concerning the Knowledge of Jesus Christ and Our Union and Communion with Him* (London: J. M. for Walter Kettilby, 1674). Sherlock later published other works on the Trinity as well as a very popular book, *Practical Discourse Concerning Death* (London: for W. Rogers, 1689).

³⁴ Owen, *A Vindication of Some Passages in a Discourse Concerning Communion with God*, in *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold (repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), 2:275–365.

³⁵ Owen, *Vindication ... Concerning Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:277.

³⁶ J. van der Haar, *Van Abbadie tot Young, Een Bibliografie van Engelse, veelal Puritaanse, in het Nederlands vertaalde Werken* (Veenendaal: Uitgeverij Kool, 1980), 89.

³⁷ Burgess, “To the Reader,” in *Communion with God*, by John Owen, in *Works*, 2:4.

³⁸ See Andrew Thomson, “Life of Dr. Owen,” in Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold (repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), 1:lxix–lxxiii; Reginald Kirby, *The Threefold Bond* (London: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, n.d.), 25.

³⁹ Thomson, “Life of Dr. Owen,” in Owen, *Works*, 1:lxix.

⁴⁰ Kirby, *Threefold Bond*, 25.

⁴¹ Stover, “The Pneumatology of John Owen,” 304.

‘door’ of ‘grace and pardoning mercy,’ purchased for the elect by the merit of Christ.”⁴² From the outset, Owen established a christological focus for his trinitarian framework. He said fellowship, or communion with God, “consisteth in his *communication of himself unto us, with our return unto him* of that which he requireth and accepteth, flowing from that *union* which in Jesus Christ we have with him.”⁴³ Ferguson observed that for Owen “both the union with Christ which gives the Christian his status before God, and the communion with God which is the fruit of that status, are thus subsumed under the notion of communion, and this is the sense in which Owen generally employs the expression.”⁴⁴

Owen did not stress Christ at the expense of the Father and the Spirit, however, in a false, imbalanced christomonism. For Owen, theocentricity and christocentricity walked together as friends, not as rivals. F. R. Entwistle noted, “It is sometimes suggested that modern, Christological theology is more honouring to Christ than the older Trinitarianism, and in such a suggestion lies its appeal to the Christian. But this is not so. Owen’s full Trinitarianism is not less honouring to Christ: to give glory to the Father and the Spirit does not detract from the glory of the Son.”⁴⁵ As Richard Daniels commented, “True Trinitarian thinking, it would seem, must be Christocentric, and Christocentric thinking, Trinitarian.”⁴⁶

Within that framework, Owen taught distinct roles or economies for the Father, Son, and Spirit. He said the First Person, the Father, is *initiator*, who chooses whom He will save, and how. The Second Person is the Son and Word of God, who images the Father’s nature and does His will as Mediator to *redeem* sinners. The Third Person proceeds from the first two as their *executive*, conveying to God’s elect their sure salvation.

Repeatedly Owen taught that there is a divine economy of operation where each person takes a role in the work of God, a role that reflects the personal relations in the Trinity. The Father acts as origin, authority, fountain, initiator, and sender; the Son acts as executor of the Father’s will, treasury of His riches, foundation, worker, purchaser, and accomplisher; the Spirit acts as completer, finisher, immediate efficacy, fruit, and applier. This is not to divide God’s works and distribute them among the three persons—the external works of the Trinity are undivided—but rather to recognize that in every work of God all three persons cooperate in distinct ways.⁴⁷

Since all three persons are active in salvation, conferring distinct benefits according to their roles, the believer should distinctly acknowledge each person. “There is no grace whereby our souls go forth unto God, no act of divine worship yielded to Him, no duty or obedience performed, but they are distinctly directed unto Father, Son and Spirit.”⁴⁸

Having set Owen’s treatise in its context, we will next examine Owen’s specific teaching regarding communion with the triune God.

Distinct Communion with God in Three Persons

⁴² Dewey D. Wallace Jr., “The Life and Thought of John Owen to 1660: A Study of the Significance of Calvinist Theology in English Puritanism” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1965), 265.

⁴³ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:8.

⁴⁴ Ferguson, *John Owen on the Christian Life*, 75.

⁴⁵ F. R. Entwistle, “Some Aspects of John Owen’s Doctrine of the Person and Work of Christ,” in *Faith and a Good Conscience* ([London]: Puritan and Reformed Studies Conference, 1962), 51.

⁴⁶ Richard Daniels, *The Christology of John Owen* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2004), 5.

⁴⁷ Owen, *Works*, 1:219–20; 2:15–19, 198–99, 228; 3:92–94, 393; 10:163–79.

⁴⁸ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:15.

In formulating the distinct manner of communion believers enjoy with each person of the Trinity, Owen drew upon 2 Corinthians 13:14, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.”

Communion with the Father: Love

The saints have particular communion with the Father in “his love—free, undeserved, and eternal love” (1 John 4:8–9; 2 Cor. 13:14; John 16:26–27; Rom. 5:5–6).⁴⁹ The Father’s love is “the fountain from whence all other sweetnesses flow,” and the source of all grace.⁵⁰ Owen highlighted the sovereign, divine quality of the Father’s love as exalted above all human love, describing it in these ways:

- “*Eternal*. It was fixed on us before the foundation of the world. Before we were, or had done the least good, then were his thoughts upon us.”
- “*Free*. He loves us because he will; there was, there is, nothing in us for which we should be beloved.”
- “*Unchangeable*. Though we change every day, yet his love changeth not.”
- “*Distinguishing*. He hath not thus loved all the world... Why should he fix his love on us, and pass by millions from whom we differ not by nature ...?”⁵¹

Thus, Owen said, the Father’s love is different from ours, even our spiritual love for Him. Owen wrote, “It is the love of him who is in himself all-sufficient, infinitely satiated with himself and his own glorious excellencies and perfections; who hath no need to go forth with his love unto others, nor to seek an object of it without [outside] himself.... He had his Son, also, his eternal Wisdom, to rejoice and delight himself in from all eternity.”⁵² The Father does not love the saints out of loneliness or need, but out of his abundant all-sufficiency and joy in His Son.

The Father’s love is “a love of bounty,” but our love for God is “a love of duty.” The love of the Father is “antecedent love,” always going before ours; our love for the Father is “consequent love,” always our response to Him. Even when God rebukes and disciplines His children, He loves them the same. “What then?” Owen anticipated the objection, “loves he his people in their sinning? Yes; his people, not their sinning.”⁵³

Careful not to present Christ’s love as winning over a reluctant Father’s love, Owen insisted that divine love has its deepest roots in the bosom of the Father. The Father delights to bestow divine love on the elect (Phil. 1:28), Owen said. And Scripture’s references to the love of God most frequently mean the love of the Father. Christ’s words, “The Father himself loveth you” (John 16:27), assure the believer of God the Father’s role in his salvation.⁵⁴ Kay writes, “The Father does not first love his people because of Christ’s mediation, rather, Christ’s mediation is the outworking of the Father’s prior love. For Owen, the love of the Father is the impetus for the whole plan of salvation, including his sending of the Son.”⁵⁵

⁴⁹ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:19.

⁵⁰ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:22.

⁵¹ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:33–34.

⁵² Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:32.

⁵³ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:28–30.

⁵⁴ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:20.

⁵⁵ Kay, *Trinitarian Spirituality*, 127.

The Father's love calls for a response in believers "to complete communion with the Father in love" by receiving his love and making "suitable returns unto him." They receive it "by faith." Here Owen carefully qualifies his statement so as not to encourage "an immediate acting of faith upon the Father, but by the Son," citing John 14:6.⁵⁶ His trinitarian theology remains Christ-centered by constantly acknowledging Christ as the only Mediator between God and man.

But looking to the Son we see the Father, as we see the sun by the beams of light which shine from it. Owen wrote, "Jesus Christ in respect of the love of the Father, is but the beam, the stream, wherein though actually all our light, our refreshment lies, yet by him we are led to the fountain, the sun of eternal love itself [i.e., the Father]. The soul being thus by faith through Christ ... brought unto the bosom of God, into a comfortable persuasion, and spiritual perception and sense of his love, there reposes and rests itself." Thus believers are always to trust the Father as "benign, kind, tender, loving, and unchangeable therein ... as the Father, as the great fountain and spring of all gracious communications and fruits of love."⁵⁷

In receiving the Father's love through Christ, the believer returns the Father's love in his heart to the heart of the Father, from whom it originated. This returned love consists of rest, delight, reverence, and obedience.⁵⁸ When the Christian encounters obstacles in loving God, he must contemplate the nature of the Father's love, Owen said. First, the believer must remember not to invert God's order of love, thinking that the believer's love comes first. Second, he should meditate on the eternal quality and unchangeableness of the Father's love. Third, he should remember that the cross of Christ is the sign and seal of God's love, assuring him that the Father's *antecedent* love wins his *consequent* love through the Mediator.⁵⁹ He who returns to the Father with such meditations will find assurance of the Father's love. As Owen wrote: "Never any one from the foundation of the world, who believed such love in the Father, and made returns of love to him again, was deceived.... If thou believest and receivest the Father as love, he will infallibly be so to thee."⁶⁰ Owen's warmth in expounding the love of the Father should explode the caricature that Reformed theology is a sterile exercise in Aristotelian logic where God's love is marginal.⁶¹

Communion with the Son: Grace

How do the saints enjoy communion with Christ? Owen turns again to 2 Corinthians 13:14: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all." Whereas believers commune with the Father in love, they commune with the Son in "grace." Christ is the Mediator of the new covenant, and the new covenant is the covenant of grace. Grace is in Him and everywhere ascribed to Him (John 1:14). The believer receives grace by receiving Christ. As John 1:16 says, "Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." Christ's mission is the essence of

⁵⁶ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:22.

⁵⁷ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:23. The sun and the fountain are rare examples of Owen making use of patristic trinitarian metaphors. Cf. Kapic, *Communion with God*, 169–70.

⁵⁸ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:28.

⁵⁹ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:29.

⁶⁰ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:36–37.

⁶¹ Kapic, *Communion with God*, 168.

grace.⁶²

Christ invites believers to commune with Him. Owen quoted the words of Christ, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Rev. 3:20). To sit at the table with Christ, Christ enjoying His graces in the saints, and the saints feasting on Christ’s glory—this for Owen was the height of spiritual delight, worthy of the most sensual poetic expressions of the Song of Songs.⁶³ Fellowship with Christ feeds the soul with sweetness, delight, safety, and comfort.⁶⁴ Owen analyzed the grace of Christ more specifically in terms of, first, “personal grace,” focusing on the person of Christ and, second, “purchased grace,” focusing on the work of Christ.⁶⁵

1. Communion with Christ in His Personal Grace

By “personal grace,” Owen did not mean Christ’s deity considered abstractly or the physical appearance of His human body, but the spiritual beauty of the God-man as our grace-filled Mediator (cf. Ps. 45:2).⁶⁶ He then proceeded to illustrate from the Song of Solomon Christ’s incarnation and “fulness to save ... by the unction of the Spirit” (citing John 1:16; 3:34) and “his excellency to endear, from his complete suitableness to all the wants of the souls of men.”⁶⁷

The saints enjoy communion with Christ in His personal grace “by the way of a conjugal relation ... attended with suitable conjugal affections”—that is, as spiritual husband and wife.⁶⁸ It begins when “Christ gives himself to the soul,” and the saints “receive, embrace, and submit unto the Lord Jesus, as their husband, Lord, and Savior.”⁶⁹ This stirs the affections of mutual delight, mutual “valuation” (esteem). Christ’s “pity, or compassion,” evokes the church’s response of “chastity,” Christ’s “bounty,” the church’s response of “duty” or a life of holiness.⁷⁰ One remarkable facet of this Puritan’s teaching is his emphasis on the Lord’s enjoyment of His people: “The thoughts of communion with the saints were the joy of his heart from eternity.”⁷¹

Just as is true with regard to his exposition of the Father’s love, Owen’s treatment of communion with Christ in His personal grace should destroy any misconception of Reformed orthodoxy as an emotionally desiccated, hyper-intellectual endeavor. Kay says, “Owen wants to somehow emphasize that the forensic and covenantal actions of Christ are, in the end, in service of a personal, face-to-face dealing between two lovers, a groom and his bride.”⁷² Owen employed doctrine to stir up the affections into flames of love for

⁶² Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:47; 3:414.

⁶³ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:40.

⁶⁴ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:44.

⁶⁵ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:47–48. Later in this treatise Owen referred back to the “two heads” of the grace of Christ, namely, “the grace of his person, and of his office and work.” *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:263.

⁶⁶ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:48.

⁶⁷ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:51–52.

⁶⁸ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:54. Owen cited Song of Solomon 2:16; Isaiah 54:5; 61:10; 62:5; Hosea 2:19–20; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:25.

⁶⁹ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:56, 58.

⁷⁰ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:118. Cf. pp. 118–54 for Owen’s full explanation of each element of affection.

⁷¹ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:118.

⁷² Kay, *Trinitarian Spirituality*, 161.

Christ.

In explaining the conjugal relationship between Christ and His people, Owen drew upon the poetry of the Song of Solomon. Owen wrote of the Song, “The more general persuasion of learned men is, that the whole is one holy declaration of that mystically spiritual communion, that is between the great Bridegroom and his Spouse, the Lord Christ and his church, and every believing soul that belongs thereunto.”⁷³ This is not to say that Owen based his Christology or even its experimental aspects on the Song of Solomon. Rather, he saw its poetry as illustrating the believer’s experience of communion with Christ. This experience is defined by other Scriptures, especially those revealing the objective work of redemption. Ferguson noted, “He does not subjectivize Christ to the point of mysticism, but rather tries to describe the subjective experience of the objective Christ to whom the rest of Scripture bears witness.”⁷⁴

Christ woos and wins His bride in an ever-deepening relationship. In this spiritual marriage, believers guard their enjoyment of Christ by guarding their hearts against resting in anything other than “the Lord Our Righteousness” (Jer. 23:6). Owen wrote, “This does he who hath communion with Christ: he watcheth daily and diligently over his own heart that nothing creep into its affections to give it any peace or establishment before God, but Christ only.”⁷⁵

2. Communion with Christ in His Purchased Grace

Purchased grace for Owen is “all that righteousness and grace which Christ hath procured ... by any thing that he hath done or suffered, or by any thing he continueth to do as mediator.”⁷⁶ We have communion with Christ in His work because “there is almost nothing that Christ hath done, which is a spring of that grace whereof we speak, but we are said to do it with him”—whether suffering crucifixion, dying, being made alive, rising, or sitting in the heavenly places.⁷⁷

In particular, “purchased grace” consists of the three graces of (1) “acceptation with God” (justification), (2) “sanctification from God,” and (3) “privileges with and before God” (adoption and its benefits).⁷⁸ To purchase our acceptance with God, Christ obeyed not for His own sake but for us; He suffered not for His own sins but for ours. Presently Christ offers the “very precious” promises of the gospel in “much kindness,” and sends His Holy Spirit so that the dead hear His voice and live.⁷⁹ The saints respond by grieving over sin, abandoning hope in their own righteousness, rejoicing in Christ’s righteousness, and consciously exchanging the one for the other.⁸⁰ In this way, as Hamilton writes, they

⁷³ John Owen, “To the Reader,” in *The Song of Solomon*, by James Durham (repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1997), 21.

⁷⁴ Ferguson, *John Owen on the Christian Life*, 78.

⁷⁵ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:146.

⁷⁶ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:154. For Owen’s usage of and safeguards on the expression “purchased grace,” see Ferguson, *John Owen on the Christian Life*, 86–88.

⁷⁷ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:155. He cited Romans 6:4; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 2:5–6; Colossians 2:12–13; 3:1, 3; 2 Timothy 2:11.

⁷⁸ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:169. The Westminster Shorter Catechism (Q. 32) similarly defined the principal benefits in this life of effectual calling to be “justification, adoption, and sanctification.”

⁷⁹ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:173–75.

⁸⁰ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:187–94. Pages 176–87 consist of Owen’s answers to objections against substitutionary atonement and the imputed righteousness of Christ.

are “approving and embracing the divine way of salvation” revealed in the gospel of Christ.⁸¹

For the grace of “sanctification,” the Lord Jesus intercedes with the Father to obtain the Holy Spirit for His own on the basis of His purchase, and sends forth that Spirit into the hearts of the saints to produce in them habitual grace and every actual good work.⁸² The saints look to Christ as their “great Joseph,” who dispenses heaven’s food to them.⁸³ They look to His blood shed at Calvary not only for atonement but also for purification from all uncleanness; they look to His blood sprinkled on their souls through the promises; and they look to His Spirit to dwell in them, continually to quicken or vivify them, and act through them in every holy motion of the soul.⁸⁴ Owen said Christ “is to be himself in them as a well of water springing up to everlasting life.... This is their way, this their communion with Christ; this is the life of faith, as to grace and holiness.”⁸⁵

In the purchased grace of “privilege” Christ leads His followers into the enjoyment of the spiritual liberties of the sons of God.⁸⁶ Owen wrote, “Adoption is the authoritative translation of a believer, by Jesus Christ, from the family of the world and Satan into the family of God, with his investiture in all the privileges and advantages of that family.”⁸⁷ Through Christ the Christian experiences liberty from sin’s penalty and its enslaving power. He also experiences liberty in his new family privileges such as the lively power to obey with delight, the rights to the ordinances of the household of faith, the hope of a future inheritance, the provision of a loving Father, boldness with God, and correction through fatherly discipline.⁸⁸ Though adoption is an act of God the Father (1 John 3:1), Owen included it under communion with Christ because the believer obtains adoption by union with Christ.⁸⁹

In the conclusion of his treatment of communion with the Son, Owen outlined what Kelly Kavic called “the fullness of fellowship with the Son made possible through adoption.”⁹⁰ Owen wrote that with the Son of God we have the following:

- “fellowship in *name*; we are (as he is) sons of God”
- “fellowship in *title* and right; we are heirs, co-heirs with Christ”
- “fellowship in *likeness* and conformity; we are predestinated to be like the firstborn of the family”
- “fellowship in *honour*; he is not ashamed to call us brethren”
- “fellowship in *sufferings*; he learned obedience by what he suffered, and every son is to be scourged that is received”
- “fellowship in his *kingdom*; we shall reign with him.”⁹¹

⁸¹ Hamilton, “Communion with God,” in *Reformed Spirituality*, 68.

⁸² Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:197–202.

⁸³ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:203.

⁸⁴ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:203–7.

⁸⁵ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:206.

⁸⁶ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:207–15. Cf. 2:173; Ferguson, *John Owen on the Christian Life*, 89–90, 97.

⁸⁷ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:207.

⁸⁸ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:211–22.

⁸⁹ Sinclair B. Ferguson, “Doctrine of the Christian Life in the Teaching of Dr John Owen (1616–83)” (PhD diss., University of Aberdeen, 1979), 175–76.

⁹⁰ Kavic, *Communion with God*, in *The Devoted Life*, 177.

⁹¹ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:222, emphasis original.

Owen elsewhere explained that the Lord's Supper offers a special opportunity for believers to commune with their Lord. He wrote, "There is, in the ordinance of the Lord's supper, an especial and peculiar communion with Christ, in his body and blood, to be obtained."⁹² The Supper is designed by God to focus our faith specifically on the human sufferings and death of God's Son, sent by the Father's love, required by God's justice, and planned to make known the glory of God.⁹³

Two-thirds of Owen's treatise on communion with God is taken up with the topic of distinct communion with the Son. Though all communion between God and man involves all three divine persons, the Son is especially prominent. This fits with Owen's understanding of the Son as the appointed Mediator in the covenant. Christ is the God-man, and all communion with God was purchased by Him and is mediated through Him alone.

Communion with the Spirit: Comfort

Owen wrote, "The foundation of all our communion with the Holy Ghost [consists] in his mission, or sending to be our comforter, by Jesus Christ."⁹⁴ Owen understood the title *parakletos* to mean "comforter," Christ's answer to the disciples' sorrow over His imminent departure (John 16:6–7). Though the elect experience the Spirit's regeneration passively as so many dry bones (Ezek. 37:1–14), believers put their trust in the promises of the comfort of the Spirit and pray for Him and His work in them (Gal. 3:2, 14; John 7:37–39; Luke 11:13).⁹⁵ Thus believers have a responsibility to seek the Spirit.

Owen cataloged the effects of the Comforter in believers, showing repeatedly that the Spirit teaches believers about the love and grace of God toward them. Owen identified nine ways in which the Spirit communes with the believer: (1) the Spirit helps the believer remember the words of Christ and teaches what they mean; (2) the Spirit glorifies Christ; (3) He pours out the love of God in the Christian's heart; (4) He witnesses to the believer that he is a child of God; (5) He seals faith in the Christian; (6) as the earnest of our inheritance, He assures the believer of salvation; (7) He anoints the believer; (8) as the indwelling Spirit He sheds the love of God abroad in the believer's heart; and (9) He becomes to him the Spirit of supplication.⁹⁶

These works of the Holy Spirit produce consolation, peace, joy, and hope in believers.⁹⁷ The Holy Spirit produces real effects in the experience of believers, experience revolving around Christ as revealed in Scripture. Thus Owen rejected both the rationalists who dismissed the experiential work of the Spirit and the fanatics whose "spirit" disregarded the Word and Christ.⁹⁸

One example of the work of the Spirit is His witness in "the court of conscience," testifying that the believer is a child of God (Rom. 8:16). Owen described this by way of

⁹² Owen, *Sacramental Discourses*, in *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold (repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), 9:523.

⁹³ Owen, *Sacramental Discourses*, in *Works*, 9:525–26.

⁹⁴ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:222.

⁹⁵ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:224–25, 231–32.

⁹⁶ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:236–49.

⁹⁷ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:250–53. He cited Acts 9:31; Romans 14:17; 15:13; Galatians 5:22; 1 Thessalonians 1:6.

⁹⁸ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:254–58.

the drama of courtroom prosecution and defense:

The soul, by the power of its own conscience, is brought before the law of God. There a man puts in his plea, that he is a child of God, that he belongs to God's family; and for this end produceth all his evidences, every thing whereby faith gives him an interest in God. Satan, in the meantime, opposeth with all his might; sin and law assist him; many flaws are found in his evidences; the truth of them all is questioned; and the soul hangs in suspense as to the issue. In the midst of the plea and contest the Comforter comes, and, by a word of promise or otherwise, overpowers the heart with a comfortable persuasion (and bears down all objections) that his plea is good, and that he is a child of God.... When our spirits are pleading their right and title, he comes in and bears witness on our side; at the same time enabling us to put forth acts of filial obedience, kind and child-like; which is called "crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:6).⁹⁹

Owen explained that the court case may last long before it is settled—even years, as Owen himself experienced¹⁰⁰—but when "the Holy Ghost by one word stills the tumults and storms that are raised in the soul, giving it an immediate claim and security, it knows his divine power, and rejoices in his presence."¹⁰¹

Consider also Owen's description of how the Holy Spirit is an *earnest* to the believer (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:13–14). He defined an earnest as "part of the price of any thing, or part of any grant, given beforehand to assure the person to whom it is given that at the appointed season he shall receive the whole that is promised him."¹⁰² God gives believers the Holy Spirit as the earnest of their inheritance of eternal life. Owen explained, "The full inheritance promised, is the fullness of the Spirit in the enjoyment of God." The Spirit is given to us now "for the fitting of us for enjoyment of God in some measure," thus a portion and foretaste of our inheritance.¹⁰³ In the Holy Spirit, our present grace is integral with our future glory.

The subjective earnest of the Spirit complements the objective promises of the Scriptures in promoting the assurance of believers.¹⁰⁴ Owen wrote, "So is he in all respects completely an earnest,—given of God, received by us, as the beginning of our inheritance, and the assurance of it. So much as we have of the Spirit, so much we have of heaven."¹⁰⁵

Given all the manifold work of the Holy Spirit in God's elect, what does it mean to have communion with the Spirit? What is the essence of His consolation and comfort?

⁹⁹ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:241.

¹⁰⁰ Owen remarked, "I myself preached Christ some years, when I had but very little, if any, experimental acquaintance with access to God through Christ; until the Lord was pleased to visit me with sore affliction, whereby I was brought to the mouth of the grave, and under which my soul was oppressed with horror and darkness; but God graciously relieved my spirit by a powerful application of Psalm 130:4, 'But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared;' from whence I received special instruction, peace, and comfort, in drawing near to God through the Mediator." Quoted in prefatory note to "A Practical Exposition upon Psalm CXXX," by John Owen, in *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold (repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), 6:324.

¹⁰¹ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:242. The court of conscience image was also used by Dutch theologians like Alexander Comrie (1706–1774).

¹⁰² Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:243–44.

¹⁰³ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:245.

¹⁰⁴ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:245.

¹⁰⁵ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:246.

The Spirit comforts believers by bringing them into fellowship with the Father and the Son. Owen wrote,

All the consolations of the Holy Ghost consist in his acquainting us with, and communicating unto us, the love of the Father and the grace of the Son; nor is there any thing in the one or the other but he makes it a matter of consolation to us: so that, indeed, we have our communion with the Father in his love, and the Son in his grace, by the operation of the Holy Ghost.¹⁰⁶

This explains the *binary* description of communion in the Scripture with which Owen opened this treatise on *trinitarian* communion: “Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3b; see also John 14:23; 17:3). The Holy Spirit is implied, and not excluded; He is the immediate agent of fellowship with the Father and the Son.

Although Owen does not explicitly say so, this seems to take up the third element of the Scripture he has quoted regarding communion with the Father and with the Son, 2 Corinthians 13:14: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all.” Whereas we have communion with the Father in His “love,” and with the Son in His “grace,” communion with the Spirit is simply called “communion,” for in the Spirit believers commune with the Father and the Son. Thus, as Ferguson says, the Spirit enables prayer to the Father through the Son, so that Christian prayer penetrates “into the very nature of the economic Trinity, and the character of the inter-Trinitarian relationship.”¹⁰⁷ Ontologically, the Spirit’s operation of bringing believers into fellowship with the Father and the Son derives from His eternal procession or being breathed forth (John 20:22), as it were, from both persons.¹⁰⁸ The Holy Spirit comes to us as the Spirit of God the Father and the Spirit of God the Son.

We might picture this principle in terms of descent and ascent, as Owen did in his discourse on the Holy Spirit. Owen said that God’s grace descends to us from the Father, through the Son, and finally in the Holy Spirit’s work within us. Likewise, the work of the Spirit in believers is the beginning of their ascent through the Son to the Father. The believer cannot rest merely in the Holy Spirit, for the Spirit leads him to cry, “Abba! Father!”¹⁰⁹ These steps of descent and ascent should not be viewed as levels of being within the Godhead, or stages in time, but as an order in relationships within the Trinity as all three persons cooperate in the divine enterprise of salvation.

In this way, the Holy Spirit communes with believers according to the promise of the Lord Jesus in John 16:14–15: “He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.” Owen explained this text: “Thus, then, is he a comforter. He reveals to the souls of sinners the good things of the covenant of grace, which the Father hath provided, and the Son purchased.”¹¹⁰

Owen presented three general ways a man should respond to the Spirit. He should not “grieve” the Spirit (Eph. 4:30; Isa. 63:10), but instead “pursue universal holiness” to

¹⁰⁶ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:262.

¹⁰⁷ Ferguson, *John Owen on the Christian Life*, 228.

¹⁰⁸ Owen, *Pneumatologia, or, A Discourse concerning the Holy Spirit*, in *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold (repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), 3:55.

¹⁰⁹ Owen, *Pneumatologia*, in *Works*, 3:200.

¹¹⁰ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:239.

please Him. Neither should he “quench” the Spirit’s gracious operations in his soul (1 Thess. 5:19), but be “careful and watchful to improve them all to the end aimed at.” Finally, he should not “resist” (Acts 7:51) the Spirit’s “great ordinance of the word,” but instead humbly subject himself to the gospel ministry of the church—that is, “fall low before the word.”¹¹¹ In this way, the believer offers a depth of submission to the Holy Spirit that can only be called true worship.

Owen called believers to “ask [for the Spirit] daily of the Father in the name of Jesus Christ. This is the daily work of believers ... to ask him of the Father as children do of their parents daily bread [cf. Luke 11:11–13].”¹¹² Owen continued, “And as, in this asking and receiving of the Holy Ghost, we have communion with the Father in his love, whence he is sent; and with the Son in his grace, whereby he is obtained for us; so with himself, on the account of his voluntary condescension to this dispensation. Every request for the Holy Ghost implies our closing with all these. O the riches of the grace of God!”¹¹³

Conclusion: The Sweetness of a Personal Relationship with the Trinity

The Trinity is therefore a doctrine to be savored in personal Christian experience. Owen wrote, “What am I the better if I can dispute that Christ is God, but have no sense or sweetness in my heart from hence that he is a God in covenant with my soul?”¹¹⁴

Packer aptly summarized Owen’s teaching by writing, “This, then, according to Owen, should be the pattern of our regular communion with the three persons of the Godhead, in meditation, prayer, and a duly ordered life. We should dwell on the special mercy and ministry of each person towards us, and make our proper response of love and communion distinctly to each. Thus we are to maintain a full-orbed communion with God.”¹¹⁵

Furthermore, the experience of God as the Trinity confirms and strengthens faith in the doctrine of the Trinity. Owen wrote,

And this is the nature of all gospel truths, they are fitted and suited to be experienced by a believing soul. There is nothing so sublime and high ... but that a gracious soul hath an experience of an excellency, reality, power, and efficacy in it all.... What is so high, glorious, and mysterious as the doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity? Some wise men have thought meet to keep it veiled from ordinary Christians, and some have delivered it in such terms as that they can understand nothing by them. But take a believer who hath tasted how gracious the Lord is, in the eternal love of the Father, the great undertaking of the Son in the work of mediation and redemption, with the almighty work of the Spirit creating grace and comfort in the soul; and hath had an experience of the love, holiness, and power of God in them all; and he will with more firm confidence adhere to this mysterious truth, being led into it and confirmed in it by some few plain testimonies of the word, than a thousand disputers shall do who only have a

¹¹¹ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:264–68.

¹¹² Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:272.

¹¹³ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:272.

¹¹⁴ Owen, “The Preface to the Reader,” in *Vindiciae Evangelicae*, in *Works*, 12:52.

¹¹⁵ Packer, “The Puritan Idea of Communion with God,” 12.

notion of it in their minds.¹¹⁶

On the other hand, Owen insisted that the Christian's experience of God be molded by God's trinitarian self-revelation. Why is the biblical doctrine of the Trinity crucial for Christian experience? First, the doctrine of the Trinity regulates our *worship* of God. If our worship is to please God, then it must be our faithful response to what God has spoken about Himself. This is our spiritual worship of God, communion with the three divine persons. As Owen expanded Ephesians 2:18, "Through him (that is, Jesus Christ, the Son of God) we have access by one Spirit (that good and holy Spirit the Holy Ghost) unto God, that is the Father."¹¹⁷ He warned, "If either we come not unto it by Jesus Christ, or perform it not in the strength of the Holy Ghost, or in it go not unto God as Father, we transgress all the rules of this worship."¹¹⁸

Second, trinitarian spirituality is the only truly *evangelical* spirituality. While we might be able to conceive of a Creator without reference to the Trinity, the economy of salvation immediately brings to light the interactions of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit because the Son has come uniquely as the incarnate Mediator. God's works in general (such as creation), Owen said, "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."¹¹⁹ The persons of the Trinity necessarily cooperate in the works of creation and providence but are not outwardly manifested in trinitarian relationships. But this is not the case in the gospel of our salvation. Christ's office as Mediator both reveals the Trinity and regulates our response to the gospel according to the Trinity. We cannot draw near to the Father except through the Son by the enablement of the Spirit.¹²⁰ Owen says, "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."¹²¹ In other words, spirituality without the Trinity is spirituality without the gospel—mere natural religion.¹²²

Third, the doctrine of the Trinity makes spirituality profoundly *relational* and guards it from becoming a mystical experience of an impersonal, even pantheistic deity. This doctrine of one God in three *persons* makes our relationship with God deeply *personal*. This is essential for true communion, for Owen defined communion as the sharing of good and delightful things between persons united with one another.¹²³ Owen's doctrine of divine communion highlights the mutual interactions between God and His people. In these interactions, the sovereign Lord leads and believers respond, yet both God and men

¹¹⁶ Owen, "A Practical Exposition upon Psalm CXXX," in *Works*, 6:459.

¹¹⁷ Owen, "The Nature and Beauty of Gospel Worship," in *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold (repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), 9:57. For the ease of the reader we have removed Owen's quotation marks around the biblical phrases.

¹¹⁸ Owen, "The Nature and Beauty of Gospel Worship," in *Works*, 9:57.

¹¹⁹ Owen, *Pneumatologia*, 3:198.

¹²⁰ Owen, *Pneumatologia*, 3:199–200. See the discussion of this text in Kay, *Trinitarian Spirituality*, 103–6.

¹²¹ Owen, *Pneumatologia*, 3:200.

¹²² Owen argued that since present human knowledge of God apart from special revelation is "but a tiny particle of the knowledge enjoyed by newly-created man in his first state of innocence," and since Adam before the fall knew only the covenant of works and nothing of the promise of Christ, "then it follows with certainty that salvation cannot come from natural theology." John Owen, *Biblical Theology*, trans. Stephen P. Westcott (Morgan, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria, 1994), 45 (1.6).

¹²³ Owen, *Communion with God*, in *Works*, 2:8.

move together in personal embrace.

John Owen's doctrine of trinitarian communion presents us with an excellent model of a Reformed Christianity that is richly and warmly biblical, doctrinal, experiential, and practical. Kay described it with the perhaps surprising phrase, "devotionally exercised Protestant Scholasticism," writing that Owen's covenant theology was pregnant with emotional interactions with God.¹²⁴ As Owen said,

There was no more glorious mystery brought to light in and by Jesus Christ than that of the holy Trinity, or the subsistence of the three persons in the unity of the same divine nature.... And this revelation is made unto us, not that our minds might be possessed with the notions of it, but that we may know aright how to place our trust in him, how to obey him and live unto him, how to obtain and exercise communion with him, until we come to the enjoyment of him.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Kay, *Trinitarian Spirituality*, 124.

¹²⁵ Owen, *Pneumatologia*, in *Works*, 3:158.

Spirit Baptism: A Completed Historical Event

An Exposition and Defense of the Historic Baptist View of Spirit Baptism

by Thomas D. Ross

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⁷²¹ Ephesians 4:5 is evaluated in the section “Was Spirit baptism a completed historical phenomenon at the time Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, or is it an event that takes place regularly throughout the entire dispensation of grace?”

I. Introduction

Spirit baptism is an important Biblical doctrine. Wrong views of the event do not only constitute Pneumatological error but lead to various other errors in systematic theology, such as false ecclesiology (developing, e. g., from a wrong view of 1 Corinthians 12:13). Furthermore, incorrect views of the baptism of the Holy Ghost lead to confusion in the intensely practical matter of sanctification. Entire religious movements, such as Pentecostalism, have arisen in large part from unbiblical views of Spirit baptism. Thus, one's ability to glorify God, and to love Him with the heart, soul, and mind, is strengthened by a correct comprehension of Spirit baptism, and weakened by erroneous views of it.

II. Statement of views

Many conflicting views of Spirit baptism compete for adherents in the modern religious milieu. One prominent view, which will be referenced below as the *post-conversion special power* (PCP) view, affirms that the baptism of the Holy Ghost, which it avers continues to take place today, occurs after the point of conversion in the life of some, but not all, Christians. The baptism is said to bestow a variety of special benefits or powers. The adumbration of these benefits or powers varies greatly based on the theological paradigm of specific PCP advocates.⁷²² In contrast, what this composition

⁷²² Some of the major divisions of the post-conversion special power position are: 1.) The Wesleyan view, which connected Spirit baptism with an experience of entire sanctification and perfect love; 2.) A large variety of Methodist and revivalist views, which developed from the Wesleyan doctrine, such as the doctrine of the Oberlin evangelist and Pelagian Charles Finney's belief that Spirit baptism brought special holiness and empowerment, a view that influenced the post-conversion empowerment views of Spirit baptism held by men such as D. L. Moody, R. A. Torrey, and John R. Rice. The early Keswick employment of Spirit baptism language for what it later generally called Spirit filling also bears a substantial relationship to the earlier Oberlin position. 3.) The classical Pentecostal view, which developed under Wesleyan, Methodist, and revivalist influences, connects the baptism with the ability to speak in tongues. 4.) The Oneness Pentecostal view, which likewise associates the baptism and tongues speaking, but affirms that it is absolutely necessary to salvation and that it occurs only after one has believed, repented, and been baptized with a "Jesus only" formula in order to obtain the remission of sins. It should be noted that this fourth view is somewhat different from the first three divisions listed in that it affirms that all Christians receive Spirit baptism, because one must, after being baptized with a "Jesus only" formula, receive Spirit baptism and speak in tongues to become a Christian. No true Christian can hold view four, as it entirely corrupts the gospel and all who hold it are accursed of God (Galatians 1:8-9). True believers can hold the first three views, although these views are erroneous. Note also pgs. 9-14, *Holy Spirit Baptism*, Anthony A. Hoekema (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972) for the special benefits and powers bestowed in what the book terms the Neo-Pentecostal view. John R. Van Gelderen tries to combine the PCP and UCD positions in "The Baptism of the Holy Spirit" (pgs. 13-18, *Revival* magazine, 1:2009).

will term the *universal-church dispensational* (UCD) view holds⁷²³ that at the moment of faith and regeneration, the Holy Spirit baptizes a believer into the universal, invisible church—the body of Christ.⁷²⁴ The UCD and PCP views⁷²⁵ agree that Spirit baptism continues to take place today, but the UCD position, contrary to the PCP, affirms that all believers have been Spirit-baptized, and maintains that Spirit baptism is not intrinsically connected with any visible signs or special powers.

A third view, which will be termed the *historic Baptist* view,⁷²⁶ affirms that the baptism of the Holy Ghost is a phenomenon restricted to the first century and connected with the sending of the Holy Spirit by Christ on the day of Pentecost as recorded in the book of Acts. This position, contrary to both the UCD and PCP doctrines, denies that anyone receives Spirit baptism today, although it affirms that the Holy Spirit indwells all believers immediately at the point of faith and regeneration (Romans 8:9, 14; Galatians 4:5-6). In agreement with the PCP position but against the UCD view, the historic Baptist position affirms that the Bible teaches that Spirit baptism took place after regeneration. In agreement with some PCP advocates, the historic Baptist position connects Spirit baptism with miracles, signs, and wonders. Furthermore, while advocates of the historic Baptist position agree that Scripture contains dispensational distinctions,⁷²⁷ their ecclesiology, against the UCD doctrine and the generality of PCP advocates,⁷²⁸

⁷²³ Disagreements among UCDs exist, although the divisions are not as wide as the chasms that separate proponents of many of the subdivisions in the PCP position. See “Dispensationalists and Spirit Baptism,” Larry D. Pettegrew, *Master’s Seminary Journal* 8 (Spring 1997): 29-46.

⁷²⁴ In the words of Lewis Sperry Chafer (*Systematic Theology: Pneumatology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1976 (reprint ed.), pgs. 142-143, vol. 6, chap. 11): “[T]he Spirit’s baptism . . . is a joining of the believer to, the bringing into, the Body of Christ—in other words, the forming of that organic relation between Christ and the believer which is expressed by the words *in Christ* and which is the ground of the Christian’s positions and possessions. . . . The members are a unity, being in one Body . . . joined to its Head . . . [t]hey are said to be *baptized* into this Body by one Spirit. . . . The central truth is that one Spirit baptizes all—every believer—into the one Body. What is thus accomplished for every believer is a part of his very salvation, else it could not include each one.”

⁷²⁵ Individual advocates of the UCD or PCP position are also referenced below as UCDs or PCPs.

⁷²⁶ Documentation for the affirmation that this view is the classical Baptist position is found below in the section “Historic Baptist support for a first century fulfillment of Spirit baptism and for interpreting 1 Corinthians 12:13 as a reference to the church ordinances.” Note the brief exposition of the historic Baptist view in *Landmarks of Baptist Doctrine*, Robert Sargent (Oak Harbor, WA: Bible Baptist Church Publications, n. d.), vol. II:4, pgs. 293-299.

⁷²⁷ Baptists believed in doctrines connected with modern dispensationalism before the days of John Darby and the popularization of the system within Protestantism; thus history documents, e. g., that English Baptist pastor Benjamin Keach was put on trial in the 1600s as a heretic because he believed in a literal millennium (see *The Baptist Heritage Journal*, Vol. 1, #1, Baptist Heritage Press, 1991, “The Tryal of Mr. Benjamin Keach,” pgs. 129-140).

⁷²⁸ While the overwhelming majority of advocates of the PCP doctrine believe in a universal, invisible church, such an ecclesiological position is not key to their position on Spirit baptism, as it is to the UCD. If there is no universal, invisible church, the UCD position is absolutely impossible.

denies that the doctrine of a universal, invisible church is Scriptural, affirming instead that the word *church* pertains solely to the local, visible assembly.⁷²⁹ Since the doctrine of a universal, invisible church, developed especially by Augustine of Hippo in his battles against the Anabaptist Donatists and assumed within the Protestant movement by the Magisterial Reformers, is the position of almost all non-Baptist, Protestant religious denominations, this third view is held nearly exclusively by Baptists. Thus, it is properly termed *Baptist*. Furthermore, since many modern Baptists, especially those who have abandoned the militant separatism of the New Testament (NT), are influenced more by the broad spectrum of Protestant evangelicalism than by classical Baptist systematics, and have consequently abandoned much historic Baptist doctrine and practice, including its position on Spirit baptism, in favor of UCD or PCP positions, this third position is properly termed *historic* among Baptists because of its historical dominance in past centuries, despite its decline among many today that claim the Baptist name.⁷³⁰

⁷²⁹ See endnote 79 for works refuting universal ecclesiology and establishing a local-only position.

⁷³⁰ Indeed, such has been the falling away from the old Baptist doctrine of Spirit baptism that evangelicals affiliated with churches in bodies such as the modern Southern Baptist Convention are almost universally ignorant of its existence, as are many neo-fundamentalist and truly fundamental Baptist churches connected with larger bodies such as the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches or the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship, although the historic Baptist position remains dominant among the generality of unaffiliated Baptist separatists. Baptist pastors trained in parachurch institutions generally affiliated with generic fundamentalism (such as Bob Jones University) often are never even presented with the historic Baptist position, while those trained in church-run fundamental Baptist colleges and local-church specific Baptist Bible institutes tend to both learn about and embrace the historic Baptist position on Spirit baptism.

Baptists who read only neo-evangelical or non-historic Baptist compositions on Spirit baptism will probably never even have the historic Baptist position presented to them. For example, in critiquing the PCP position in favor of a UCD view of 1 Corinthians 12:13, the evangelical J. I. Packer wrote, “Can it be convincingly denied that 1 Corinthians 12:13 . . . refers to one aspect of what we may call the ‘conversion-initiation complex’ with which the Christian life starts, so that according to Paul every Christian as such is Spirit-baptized? Surely it cannot. The only [emphasis added] alternative to this conclusion would be to hold, as the late R. A. Torrey influentially did, that Paul here speaks of a ‘second blessing,’ not mentioned in his letters elsewhere, which he knew that he and all the Corinthians had received, though some Christians today have not” (pg. 163, *Keep in Step with the Spirit: Finding Fullness in Our Walk with God*, 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005). Packer goes on to (effectively) critique the PCP view of 1 Corinthians 12:13. What is noteworthy is that he presents his UCD position as the “only” alternative. The historic Baptist position is entirely ignored. Packer is typical of evangelical books and articles on Spirit baptism, as even a cursory examination will verify. Journal articles such as “Dispensationalists and Spirit Baptism,” Larry D. Pettegrew, *Master’s Seminary Journal* 8 (Spring 1997): 29-46 ignore the historic Baptist view, despite historic Baptist acceptance of dispensational distinctions. Dictionary articles such as “Baptism of the Holy Spirit,” by Craig Blomberg in the *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (ed. Walter A. Elwell. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996) ignore the historic Baptist position. Evangelical books such as *Baptism & Fulness: The Work of the Holy Spirit Today*, John R. W. Stott, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1978) and *Holy Spirit Baptism*, Anthony A. Hoekema (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972) ignore the historic Baptist position. It is noteworthy, however, that Hoekema admits that the passages concerning Spirit baptism in the gospels, as well as Acts 1:5, refer to Pentecost alone, stating: “This outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost Day . . . was a historical event of the greatest importance—unique, unrepeatable, once-for-all. It may be thought of as an event comparable in magnitude to the

resurrection of Jesus Christ. . . . In Jerusalem the Holy Spirit was poured out on the 120 disciples . . . in fulfillment of the promise of the Father; this outpouring was a great salvation-history event[.] . . . In this sense, therefore, Pentecost can never be repeated, and does not need to be repeated. . . . [T]he expression ‘to be baptized in the Spirit’ is used in the Gospels and in Acts 1:5 to designate the once-for-all, historical event of the outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost Day. In this sense the baptism of the Spirit is never repeated” (pg. 17-20, cf. 15-29). However, Hoekema then argues for a UCD perspective based on Acts 11:16 and 1 Corinthians 12:13, interacting with the PCP doctrine but engaging in no interaction at all with the historic Baptist position. His bibliography (pgs. 94-95) lists no books by historic Baptists, so it appears that his affirmations on the Spirit baptism texts in the gospels and in Acts 1:5 agree with the conclusions of the classic Baptist doctrine simply from the force of grammatical-historical interpretation, and potentially without any knowledge on his part of the existence of the view.

Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Re-examination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in relation to Pentecostalism Today by James D. G. Dunn (Chatham, England: SCM Press, 1970) may be considered as representative of treatments of Spirit baptism by those less conservative than historic Baptists, fundamentalists, or evangelicals. Dunn writes:

Of particular interest to the NT scholar is the Pentecostal’s teaching about the baptism in the Spirit, for in it he claims to have discovered the NT pattern of conversion-initiation—the only pattern which makes sense of the data in Acts—and also the principal explanation for the amazing growth of the early Church. But does the NT mean by baptism in the Holy Spirit what the Pentecostal understands the phrase to mean? Is baptism in the Holy Spirit to be separated from conversion-initiation, and is the beginning of the Christian life to be thus divided up into distinct stages? Is Spirit-baptism something essentially different from becoming a Christian, so that even a Christian of many years’ standing may never have been baptized in the Spirit?

These are some of the important questions which Pentecostal teaching raises, and it will be the primary task of this book to re-examine the NT in the light of this teaching with a view to answering these questions. Put in a nutshell, we hope to discover what is the place of the gift of the Spirit in the total complex event of becoming a Christian. This will inevitably involve us in a wider debate than merely with Pentecostals. For many outside Pentecostalism make a straightforward identification between a baptism in the Spirit and the Christian sacrament of water-baptism, while others distinguish two gifts or comings of the Spirit, the first at conversion-initiation and the second at a later date, in Confirmation or in the bestowal of charismata. I shall therefore be defining my position over against two and sometimes three or four different standpoints. . . . I hope to show that for the writers of the NT the baptism in or gift of the Spirit was part of the event (or process) of becoming a Christian, together with the effective proclamation of the Gospel, belief in (εἰς) Jesus as Lord, and water-baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus; that it was the chief element in conversion-initiation so that only those who had thus received the Spirit could be called Christians; that the reception of the Spirit was a very definite and often dramatic *experience*, the decisive and climactic experience in conversion-initiation, to which the Christian was usually recalled when reminded of the beginning of his Christian faith and experience. We shall see that while the Pentecostal’s belief in the dynamic and experiential nature of Spirit-baptism is well founded, his separation of it from conversion-initiation is wholly unjustified; and that, conversely, while water-baptism is an important element in the complex of conversion-initiation, it is neither to be equated or confused with Spirit-baptism nor to be given the most prominent part in that complex event. The high point in conversion-initiation is the gift of the Spirit, and the beginning of the Christian life is to be reckoned from the experience of Spirit-baptism.” (pgs. 3-4)

One notes that Dunn equates Spirit baptism and the gift of the Spirit and adopts other elements of the UCD view while corrupting the doctrine of conversion by mixing in baptism in water and other heresy as a consequence of his non-evangelical, anti-inerrancy, semi-sacramentalist position. (Compare his statement that “[W]ater-baptism can properly be described as the vehicle of faith; but *not* as the vehicle of the Spirit. It enables man to approach God . . . but otherwise it is not the channel of God’s grace.” Pg. 100, *Ibid*. Dunn states that Paul’s sins were forgiven at the time of his baptism, pg. 75, and argues against the view that baptism is a sign of a conversion which has already taken place, pg. 145, 226-227. His acceptance of forms of higher criticism is obvious throughout his book.) Dunn also interacts with the PCP position and rigid sacramentalism in his book, speaking of his “debate with Pentecostal and sacramentalist” (pgs. 21, 170), but he never acknowledges the existence of the historic Baptist view. Advocates of the historic Baptist doctrine do not appear in his index of modern authors and works (pgs. 230-236). Similarly, neo-orthodox theologian Frederick Dale Bruner in his *A Theology of the Holy Spirit* never mentions or interacts in any way with the historic Baptist view of Spirit baptism. Bruner can nevertheless assert: “To be literal, being ‘baptized with the Holy Spirit’ is not a doctrine which Acts teaches for the on-going church since the phrase occurs only at the crisis initiations of the Jews and the Gentiles into the church. After Caesarea the phrase disappears from the vocabulary of Acts” (pg. 195). However, being ignorant of the true view, and

While the prominence of the UCD and PCP doctrines throughout the gamut of denominational affiliations within evangelicalism and fundamentalism leads to large amounts of interaction between their advocates, as manifested in books, journal articles, and other studies comparing the merits of the two, the modern restriction of the historic Baptist doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Ghost to the most conservative elements within the Baptist movement has led to most advocates of the PCP and UCD doctrines ignoring it, often because of ignorance of its existence. This abandonment is unfortunate, since, as the remainder of this composition will demonstrate, the historic Baptist view, not the PCP or UCD doctrine, is taught in the Bible.

III. Proof for the Historical View

A. Spirit Baptism in the Old Testament

being an unregenerate person, Bruner goes on to argue that Spirit baptism takes place at the moment of water baptism. Non-evangelical writers, like many of their modern fundamental and evangelical counterparts, are entirely ignorant of the historic Baptist view of Spirit baptism.

Most ironically, the book *Perspectives on Spirit Baptism* (gen. ed. Chad Brand; authors Ralph D. Colle, H. Ray Dunning, Larry Hart, Stanley Horton, & Walter Kaiser, Jr. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2004) ignores the historic Baptist view, although it contains chapters presenting and then critiquing what are termed the Sacramental, Wesleyan, Charismatic, Pentecostal, and Reformed views of the baptism of the Holy Ghost. The book ignores the historic Baptist position despite asserting that it “presents in counterpoint . . . the basic common beliefs on Spirit baptism which have developed over the course of church history with a view toward determining which is most faithful to Scripture.” Amazingly, the book is edited by a Southern Baptist professor at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and published by the same Southern Baptist Convention that, only a half century earlier, had a president and long time professor at the very same seminary that advocated the historic Baptist view in the classic and widely circulated *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*.

Thus, as indicated, the historic Baptist position is advocated in the article “Baptism of the Holy Spirit” within the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (gen. ed. James Orr. orig. pub. Eerdmans, 1939; elec. acc. *Online Bible For Mac* software, Ken Hamel). The article’s author, E. Y. Mullins, was professor and later president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary at the turn of the nineteenth century, and, from 1921-1924, president of the very Southern Baptist Convention that in modern times either ignores or repudiates his doctrine of Spirit baptism. “The question is often raised whether or not the baptism of the Holy Spirit occurred once for all or is repeated in subsequent baptisms. The evidence seems to point to the former view to the extent at least of being limited to outpourings which took place in connection with events recorded in the early chapters of the Book of Acts. . . . [Evidence is then presented in favor of the conclusion that Spirit baptism was limited to the events in Acts.] . . . [N]owhere in the epistles do we find a repetition of the baptism of the Spirit. This would be remarkable if it had been understood by the writers of the epistles that the baptism of the Spirit was frequently to be repeated. There is no evidence outside the Book of Acts that the baptism of the Spirit ever occurred in the later New Testament times. In 1 Corinthians 12:13 Paul [makes] . . . reference . . . not to the baptism of the Spirit, but rather to a baptism into the church.” The historic Baptist view ignored by the modern Southern Baptist Convention was also affirmed by other prominent Southern Baptists in the time of Mullins, such as B. H. Carroll, professor of theology and Bible at Baylor University and Seminary from 1872-1905 and professor and president of the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary from 1908-1914. (See the appendix: “Excerpts from the sermons ‘The First Pentecost’ and ‘The Church, The Habitat of the Holy Spirit’ by B. H. Carroll.”)

When the Lord Jesus baptized the church with the Spirit on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, Peter, in Acts 2:16-21, proved the legitimacy of the events of the day by quoting Joel 2:28-32:

28 And it shall come to pass afterward, *that* I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: 29 And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. 30 And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. 31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come. 32 And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.⁷³¹

This text sets forth the Old Testament prediction of Spirit baptism. Its exegesis consequently provides important insights for the understanding of Spirit baptism in its New Testament fulfillment.

One notes that the Old Testament prediction of Spirit baptism was not connected with regeneration, but with those who were already converted (and were thus the Lord's "servants and handmaids" before the Spirit was poured out upon them). Spirit baptism, Joel predicted, would be connected with miraculous powers, signs, and wonders (2:28-30). The reference⁷³² to Joel 2:28ff. in Acts 2 did not bring salvation and forgiveness to

⁷³¹ Quoted by Peter as Καὶ ἔσται ἐν ταῖς ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις, λέγει ὁ Θεός, ἐκχεῶ ἀπὸ τοῦ πνεύματός μου ἐπὶ πᾶσαν σάρκα· καὶ προφητεύσουσιν οἱ υἱοὶ ὑμῶν καὶ αἱ θυγατέρες ὑμῶν, καὶ οἱ νεανίσκοι ὑμῶν ὁράσεις ὄψονται, καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι ὑμῶν ἐνύπνια ἐνυπνιασθήσονται καὶ γε ἐπὶ τοὺς δούλους μου καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς δούλας μου ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκείναις ἐκχεῶ ἀπὸ τοῦ πνεύματός μου καὶ προφητεύσουσι. καὶ δώσω τέρατα ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ἄνω, καὶ σημεῖα ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς κάτω, αἷμα καὶ πῦρ καὶ ἀτμίδα καπνοῦ· ὁ ἥλιος μεταστραφήσεται εἰς σκότος, καὶ ἡ σελήνη εἰς αἷμα, πρὶν ἢ ἔλθεῖν τὴν ἡμέραν Κυρίου τὴν μεγάλην καὶ ἐπιφανῆ· καὶ ἔσται, πᾶς ὃς ἂν ἐπικαλέσῃται τὸ ὄνομα Κυρίου σωθήσεται.

⁷³² Acts 2 is at most a partial, but certainly not the ultimate, fulfillment of the prediction of Joel 2:28-32. The eschatological events of the Tribulation and Millennium, referenced in Ezekiel 39:27-29 and Zechariah 12:10, the only Old Testament references besides Joel 2:28-29 to the Spirit being massively poured out (פָּשַׁח), constitute the ultimate fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32 as well, when the Jewish remnant in mount Zion and Jerusalem will receive miraculous physical deliverance (The noun פְּדוּתָא, "deliverance" in 2:32, refers to physical deliverance, not spiritual salvation, in all 28 of its OT appearances, as does the verb פָּדָה in the Niphal, "delivered" in 2:32, all 63 times it is found in the OT) from the armies of the Antichrist (Joel 2:32; neither Joel 2:32 nor Romans 10:13 is a promise that unconverted sinners who say a prayer will be regenerated; see "An Exegesis and Application of Romans 10:9-14 for Soulwinning Churches and Christians," Thomas Ross, <http://sites.google.com/site/thross7>). The sun did not turn into darkness, nor the moon into blood, on the day of Pentecost—but they will during the Tribulation period, the seventieth week of Daniel. J. Dwight Pentecost explains well the fulfillment of Joel 2 in the Tribulation on pgs. 444, 486-490, *Things To Come*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1958. Concerning Acts 2, Pentecost explained: "Peter is not citing the experience [in Acts 2] as the [ultimate] fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, so that [the disciples] must be considered to be in the [eschatological] kingdom, but rather Peter is citing Joel's prophecy to substantiate the fact, which Israel knew through her Scriptures, that such an experience as [the baptism of the] Spirit was possible" (pg. 470, *Things To Come*).

Concerning the use of Joel 2:28-32 by Peter in Acts 2, Paul Feinberg helpfully comments:

In Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost he quotes Joel 2:28-32 in support of what God is doing on that day. . . . Acts 2:16-21, as a fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32, is *one* referent of Joel 2:28-32. This is supported by the introductory formula "this is that" (Acts 2:16). Second, Acts 2:16-21 is not the *complete* referent

the 120 members of the pre-Pentecost church who received the baptism with the Spirit (Acts 1:15; 2:1) but brought, as promised, “power” (Acts 1:8; *dunamis*, δύναμις). An analysis of *dunamis* in Acts demonstrates that it is always connected with Divinely-bestowed miraculous power.⁷³³ Consistent with this use of *dunamis*, in Joel 2:28

(fulfillment) of Joel 2:28–32. This can be seen from the *sense* of the OT prediction, and from the fact that section two of the prophecy was not fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost. Third, the amplification or expansion of the promise in Joel to include the church is justified in terms of the OT text itself and antecedent theology. To put it another way, the application of the text to the church is not simply an *ad hoc* resolution of the matter. There is indication in the Joel 2:28–32 text that the application of the promise is to extend beyond the ethnic bounds of the nation. 2:28 says, “I will pour out my Spirit on *all people*” (עַל-כָּל-בָּשָׂר). There are those who hold that this expression refers exclusively to the nation of Israel. However, I think that the best evidence supports usage broader than ethnic Israel. עַל-כָּל-בָּשָׂר occurs thirty-two times outside of Joel in the OT. In twenty-three of these occasions the reference is to Gentiles alone (e.g., Deut 5:26; Isa 49:26; 66:16; Zech 2:13). In the majority of its uses it serves as a reference to everyone regardless of race, sex or age. This outpouring, then, even in its promise, is to be upon some who are not Jews.

Moreover, the promise of the outpouring of the Spirit in Joel is an *amplification* of the promise given to Abraham (Gen 12:1–3). God’s promise to Abraham included promises to Abraham personally, to his descendants, and to *all* the peoples of the earth. Thus, when a part of the referent (fulfillment) of these promises turns out to be the church, we should not be surprised. Furthermore, Paul says that these promises were spoken to Abraham and his seed, namely Christ. That is, the Abrahamic promises find their *fulfillment* in Christ. Since the church is related to Christ, we should not be surprised that Paul can call its members “children of Abraham” (Gal 3:7) and “Abraham’s seed” (Gal 3:29) and make them “heirs according to the promise” (Gal 3:29). Having established the church’s relationship to the Abrahamic promises, it would be wrong to think that this in any way invalidated the right of those who are Abraham’s physical seed to these promises, or to think that both Israel and the church have the same relationship to these promises. The church has *direct* access to the promises of spiritual blessing because the spiritual blessings are said to be universal in their application, while its access to the national blessings promised to Israel is only *indirect* through the church’s relationship to Israel’s Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ. . . .

The sense of the OT text must be determined within its historical and cultural setting, and that sense is determinative for the NT fulfillment. . . . Where a promise or prediction is expanded or amplified, the amplification does not preclude the original addressees as a part of the referent (fulfillment) of that promise. *Expansion* does not require *exclusion*. Exclusion from any promise must be based upon some explicit or implicit statement of subsequent Scripture. Therefore, a concern for those to whom the prediction was given will always be necessary. . . . Where a promise or prediction is expanded or amplified, the amplification is justified in the text itself or in antecedent theology or both. This grows out of the belief that God has a unified plan and that plan is known to him, even if he reveals it to his creatures progressively. . . . The sense of any text is adequate for its fulfillment referents. That is, knowing the sense of a promise should put one in a position to recognize a fulfillment. The relationship between prediction and fulfillment is not arbitrary. This is rooted in the belief that God has intended his word as a revelation, something that could not be true if there was no linguistic relationship between promise and fulfillment. . . .

[T]he unity of the two Testaments does not require the *uniformity* of the two Testaments. Unity does not preclude *diversity*. The two Testaments may be unified just as certainly through discontinuity as through continuity. Both continuity and discontinuity are a part of the unity of the biblical revelation. There is both continuity and discontinuity between Israel and the church; and, if I understand Scripture correctly, there will be both continuity and discontinuity in the future between the church and Israel. (pgs. 126–128, *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship between the Old and New Testaments : Essays in honor of S. Lewis Johnson, Jr.*, ed. J. S. Feinberg. Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1988).

Feinberg’s comments on the עַל-כָּל-בָּשָׂר, the “all flesh,” of Joel 2:28, are valid. Note the complete list of references: Genesis 6:12–13, 17, 19; 7:16, 21; 8:17; 9:11, 15–17; Leviticus 17:14; Numbers 16:22; 18:15; 27:16; Deuteronomy 5:26; Job 12:10; 34:15; Psalm 65:3; 136:25; 145:21; Isaiah 40:5; 49:26; 66:16, 23–24; Jeremiah 12:12; 25:31; 32:27; 45:5; Ezekiel 21:4, 9–10; Daniel 4:9; Joel 3:1; Zechariah 2:17. See also pgs. 96–98, *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New*, Walter Kaiser. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1985.

⁷³³ Acts 2:22; 3:12; 4:7–10, 33; 6:8; 8:10, 13; 10:38; 19:11; cf. Luke’s uses of the word in his “former treatise” (Acts 1:1; Luke 1:1–4): Luke 1:35; 4:36; 5:17; 6:19; 8:46; 9:1; 10:13; 19:37; 24:49; also 1 Corinthians 12:29, δυνάμεις, “workers of miracles”; cf. 1 Corinthians 12:10, 28; Hebrews 2:4; Matthew 11:20–23; 13:54, 58; etc. This would be “the power that works wonders,” def. 1b in Danker, Frederick

William (ed.), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd. ed. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000 (henceforth cited as BDAG). “δύναμις [like τέρας, σημεῖον, μεγαλεῖον, ἔνδοξον, παράδοξον, and θαυμάσιον] . . . have this in common, that they are all used to characterize the supernatural works wrought by Christ in the days of his flesh; thus σημεῖον, John ii. 11; Acts ii. 19; τέρας, Acts ii. 22; John iv. 48; δύναμις, Mark vi. 2; Acts ii. 22; μεγαλεῖον, Luke i. 49; ἔνδοξον, Luke xiii. 17; παράδοξον, Luke v. 26; θαυμάσιον, Matt. xx. 15; while [δύναμις, τέρας, and σημεῖον are] the most usual [and] are in like manner employed of the same supernatural works wrought in the power of Christ by his Apostles (2 Cor. xii. 12); and of the lying miracles of Antichrist no less (2 Thess. ii. 11). They will be found, on closer examination, not so much to represent different kinds of trades, as miracles contemplated under different aspects and from different points of view. . . . [M]iracles are also ‘powers’ (δυνάμεις = ‘virtutes’), outcomings of that mighty *power* of God, which was inherent in Christ, Himself that “great Power of God” which Simon blasphemously allowed himself to be named (Acts viii. 8, 10); these powers being by Him lent to those who were his witnesses and ambassadors. . . . [In] our Version δυνάμεις is translated now “wonderful works” (Matt. vii. 22); now “mighty works” (Matt. xi. 20; Luke x. 13) and still more frequently “miracles” (Acts ii. 22; 1 Cor. xii. 10; iii. 5) . . . the word . . . point[s] . . . to new and higher *forces* (ἐνέργειαι, ἐνεργήματα, 1 Cor. xii. 6, 10), ‘powers of the world to come’ (Heb. vi. 5), which have entered and are working in this lower world of ours. . . . With this is closely connected the term μεγαλεῖα, only occurring at Luke i. 49 (= ‘magnalia’) and at Acts ii. 11, in which, as in δυνάμεις, the miracles are contemplated as outcomings of the *greatness* of God’s power and glory.” (pgs. 339-344, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, Richard C. Trench. London: 1880, elec. acc. *Accordance Bible* software).

The noun δύναμις is usually translated *power* (77x out of 120 uses); *mighty work* (11x) is the second most common rendering. The word is translated *miracle* in Mark 9:39; Acts 2:22; 8:13; 19:11; 1 Corinthians 12:10, 28-29; Galatians 3:5; Hebrews 2:4. When δύναμις is used of miracles, it emphasizes the *power* or *capability* involved. While the word is employed in senses where the performance of a miracle is not in view, in every such case a particular act is not under consideration (Matthew 6:13; 22:29; 24:29-30; 25:15; 26:64; Mark 9:1; 12:24; 13:25-26; 14:62; Luke 21:26-27; 22:69; Romans 1:20; 8:38; 1 Corinthians 14:11; 15:24; 15:56; 2 Corinthians 1:8; 4:7; 6:7; 8:3; 12:9; Ephesians 1:21; 2 Thessalonians 1:7; Hebrews 6:5; 7:16; 11:34; 1 Peter 3:22; 2 Peter 2:11; Rev 1:16; 3:8; 4:11; 5:12; 7:12; 11:17; 12:10; 15:8; 17:13; 18:3; 19:1). When a particular act is specified with δύναμις, the act in question is always miraculous—non-miraculous works are never clearly identified with δύναμις. Thus, the word is regularly used of the performance of miraculous acts (Matthew 7:22; 11:20, 21, 23; 13:54, 58; 14:2; Mark 6:2, 5, 14; 9:39; Luke 10:13; 19:37; Acts 2:22; 8:13; 19:11; 1 Corinthians 12:10, 28-29; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Galatians 3:5; 2 Thessalonians 2:9; Hebrews 2:4), and in other uses the word is clearly associated and related to the performance of miracles (Mark 5:30; Luke 1:17 (a legitimate instance, despite John 10:41, where σημεῖον, not δύναμις, is employed; John led many to miraculous regeneration—he led many to turn from disobedience to wisdom so that Israel could be prepared for the Lord, as Elijah also had done; cf. 1 Kings 18:39. John’s work of bringing many to regeneration through his preaching as a prophet was a miracle as δύναμις, but not as σημεῖον.); 1:35; 4:14; 4:36; 5:17; 6:19; 8:46; 9:1; 10:13, 19; 24:49; Acts 1:8; 3:12; 4:7, 33; 6:8; 8:10; 10:38; Romans 1:4, 16; 9:17; 15:13; 15:19; 1 Corinthians 1:18; 24; 2:4-5; 4:19-20; 5:4; 6:14; 12:10; 15:43; 2 Corinthians 13:4; Ephesians 1:19; 3:7; 3:16, 20; Philippians 3:10; Colossians 1:11, 29; 1 Thessalonians 1:5; 2 Thessalonians 1:11; 2 Timothy 1:7-8; 3:5; Hebrews 1:3; 11:11; 1 Peter 1:5; 2 Peter 1:3, 16; Revelation 13:2). The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (ed. Kittel, pg. 230, vol. 7) notes that “in the plural δυνάμεις even became a technical term for ‘miracles’ in the NT,” an affirmation supported by the evidence (Matthew 7:22; 11:20-21, 23; 13:54, 58; 14:2; Mark 6:2, 14; Luke 10:13; 19:37; 21:26; Acts 2:22; 8:13; 19:11; 1 Corinthians 12:10, 28-29; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Galatians 3:5; Hebrews 2:4; 6:5—the sole exceptions are instances where does not refer to acts at all, Matthew 24:29; Mark 13:25; Luke 21:26; Romans 8:38; 1 Peter 3:22). The best argument against δύναμις referring specifically to the miraculous would be the class of texts where the word is employed in association with Christian salvation, a category which is inclusive of sanctification and of the bestowal of spiritual gifts (Romans 1:16; 15:13; 1 Corinthians 1:18; Ephesians 1:19; 3:7, 16, 20; Philippians 3:10; Colossians 1:11, 29; 1 Thessalonians 1:5; 2 Thessalonians 1:11; 2 Timothy 1:7, 8; 3:5; 1 Peter 1:5; 2 Peter 1:3). However, it is better to conclude from the existence of this category that regeneration is a miraculous work of Divine power, and the Spirit’s power in progressively eradicating indwelling sin in Christians, producing spiritual fruit, and performing other works associated with salvation is a similar work of Divine

supernatural prophecy, dreams, and visions are the fruits of the prediction “I will pour out my spirit.” The recipients of Spirit baptism in Acts two received supernatural powers to speak in tongues and do other miracles, and Peter employs the quote from Joel in Acts 2:15-21 to justify the Spirit-produced speaking in unlearned foreign languages (2:6-11) that had amazed and enthralled the onlooking unconverted Jewish crowds (2:14-16). Joel did not predict a Spirit baptism that was temporally simultaneous with the invisible inward works of regeneration, conversion, and justification, but a post-justification bestowal of power to do visible signs and wonders on those within God’s institutional covenant community. Acts 2 therefore records a bestowal of such miraculous power by means of Spirit baptism on those who were already saved and baptized church members.

Furthermore, Joel did not predict that the Spirit would be regularly outpoured upon individuals who, day by day, year by year, came to faith in the Messiah and were converted; he predicted a massive, one-time outpouring⁷³⁴ of the Spirit upon the generality of the covenant community. This does not suit the UCD insistence that Spirit baptism takes place at the point of individual regeneration for all believers for the duration of the church age. Nor does the PCP belief that Spirit baptism continues to occur as individuals experience special post-conversion crises throughout the church age find support in Joel 2:28-32. The text is, however, entirely consistent with the historic Baptist position that Spirit baptism was a first century gift from Christ to the corporate church, a completed event fulfilled in the first century as recorded in the book of Acts.

The only other two texts that connect the Spirit (*ruach*, רוּחַ) and the verb rendered *pour out* (*shafach*, שָׁפַךְ) in Joel 2:28-29 are Ezekiel 39:29 and Zechariah 12:10. Both texts refer to events that pertain to the eschatological future for Israel (as, indeed, does Joel 2:28-32 in its ultimate fulfillment). Neither passage contains an “all flesh”

power, rather than *a priori* concluding that Christian salvation is non-miraculous, and from this *a priori* establishing a category, otherwise not clearly attested in the New Testament, where δύνανται refers to non-miraculous actions. The identification of salvation with the miraculous is clearly supported elsewhere in Scripture with texts that indicate that personal *regeneration* is in the same category as a work of Divine power with the transformation, the cosmic regeneration, involved in establishing the Millennial earth (Matthew 19:28; Titus 3:5; παλιγγενεσία) or the fact that both bringing into being a universe and bringing into being a clean heart are works of *creation* (Genesis 1:1; Psalm 51:10; בָּרָא). See endnote 52.

⁷³⁴ The verb שָׁפַךְ, employed in Joel 2:28, 29 (MT 3:1-2), does not “does not mean a gradual pouring as required, but rather a sudden, massive spillage . . . this definition can be seen clearly in אֶת־רוּחִי אֶשְׁפָּךְ Ezk 39:29, אֶת־רוּחִי אֶשְׁפָּךְ Joel 3:1-2 and ... וְשָׁפַכְתִּי רוּחִי הַזֶּה Zech 12:10 [the only OT references to שָׁפַךְ in connection with רוּחַ]” (*The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Ludwig Koehler & Walter Baumgartner, rev. Walter Baumgartner & Johann Jakob Stamm, trans. & ed. M. E. J. Richardson. New York, NY: Brill, 2000, elec. acc. *Accordance Bible Software*).

expansion,⁷³⁵ as Joel 2:28 does, that reasonably incorporates Gentiles. Furthermore, neither Ezekiel 39:29 nor Zechariah 12:10 is referenced in the New Testament as being fulfilled in or relating to Spirit baptism, nor does anything in the New Testament indicate that the latter passages pertain to events in the church age. Isaiah 44:3, which employs a different verb for *pour* (*yatsaq*, יָצַק) than Joel 2:28-29, is also a promise to Israel (44:1) which relates to the Millennium, not to the NT church. It has no necessary connection with the doctrine of Christian Spirit baptism as explicated in Acts 2 and Joel 2. Other Old Testament texts likewise speak of special works of the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 32:15; 34:16; etc.), but these are all also references to His blessings upon Israel, not the church. While a general analysis of the work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament is a valuable and important task,⁷³⁶ it goes beyond the bounds of the current study, in which Old Testament passages are relevant only as they pertain to the New Testament phenomenon of Spirit baptism. Consequently, while advocates of Reformed covenant theology can and regularly do, consistently with their theological system and spiritualization of Old Testament prophecy, employ texts that pertain to Israel as if they had to do with the NT church,⁷³⁷ believers who hold to a literal, dispensational hermeneutic, and who consequently recognize the Biblical distinction between Israel and the church, ought not so to do.

⁷³⁵ However, the “your sons and your daughters” of Joel 2:28 refers, in its original context, to Jewish sons and daughters—Jehovah will pour out His Spirit upon the entire covenant community of Israel in the Tribulation period, and in Acts 2, the “all flesh” (Acts 2:17) of the entirety of the pre-Pentecost church membership of 120 (Acts 1:15) received Spirit baptism. The Jewish character of Joel 2:28-32 does not mean, however, that the sons and daughters of others are necessarily excluded.

The giving of the Spirit to all the covenant community in Joel 2:28-32, which produced prophecy, is comparable to Numbers 11:24-29; in the Pentateuch Jehovah “took of the spirit that was upon [Moses] . . . and gave it unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, *that*, when the spirit was upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease.” When Joshua wanted to forbid this prophesying, Moses said, “[W]ould God that all the LORD’s people were prophets, *and* that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!” Moses’ prayer is answered in the fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32, when all the Lord’s people have His Spirit and therefore prophesy. Consider also the typological aspect to Moses as a type of Christ when the seventy received the Spirit after the Lord “took of the spirit that *was* upon [Moses]” and gave it to them, as Christ received the Spirit from the Father and gave Him to the church (John 3:34; Acts 2:33).

⁷³⁶ cf. *The Holy Spirit: A Comprehensive Study of the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit*, John F. Walvoord (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1958), pgs. 18-54, 227-235.

⁷³⁷ Such spiritualization is evident in the gamut of Reformed commentators and writers; see, e. g., John Calvin or Matthew Henry’s comments on Isaiah 44. Similarly, after employing Isaiah 44:3 and other texts as if they related to the work of the Spirit on Christians of the age of grace, and insisting that the Millennial vegetation described in Isaiah 35:1 is really speaking about the Holy Spirit making Christians grow, Arthur Pink laments, “the spiritual meaning of these [Old Testament] passages is commonly unperceived today, when carnal dispensationalists insist on the ignoring of all figures, and the interpreting of everything ‘literally.’” (pgs. 227-228, *The Holy Spirit*, Arthur W. Pink. elec. acc. Christian Library Series vol. 8, Arthur Pink Collection. Albany, OR: AGES Software (ver. 1.0), 2000).

The Old Testament, as evidenced in an examination of the passage (Joel 2:28-32) Peter quoted in Acts two to explain the baptism of the Holy Ghost, supports the historic Baptist view of the doctrine, rather than the UCD or PCP position. Spirit baptism was predicted as a post-conversion gift for the collective body of God's covenant community, not an event simultaneous or synonymous with regeneration. It would not apply the invisible grace of justification to the legal standing of sinners but bestow power to perform visible miracles to saints. It was not a personal, individual event that would occur regularly and gradually as individuals came to the Redeemer in repentance, but a one-time corporate gift for those already part of the people of God. The promise of Spirit baptism was fulfilled for the church on the Day of Pentecost, in those who had already been converted and immersed upon profession of faith.

B. Spirit Baptism in the Gospels

The only references in the gospels to Spirit baptism⁷³⁸ are found in Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; and John 1:33. All of these are upon the lips of John the Baptist. John, the first Baptist preacher, prepared the way for the Lord Jesus by preaching the gospel and immersing people who had been saved, preparing people for Christ's coming and His gathering of the church during His earthly ministry.⁷³⁹ John's baptism is that

⁷³⁸ The phrase is employed only in these verses. Luke 11:13 is also related and is discussed below.

⁷³⁹ Christ started His church during His earthly ministry (Matthew 18:17) from people converted and baptized by John the Baptist (John 1:35-37). He promised that His assembly would overcome the powers of hell from the time of His earthly ministry to the end of the age (Matthew 16:18). Obviously already extant, the church was "added unto" on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41, 47) with the conversion of three thousand men. The common idea adopted by UCDs that the church started on Pentecost is unbiblical. No verse anywhere states that the church began on that day. The Lord referred to His church twice in the gospels (Matthew 16:18; 18:17), without any indication whatever that it did not yet exist. Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom, had the church as His bride before Pentecost (John 3:29; cf. 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:22-33). "God hath set . . . in the church, first apostles" (1 Corinthians 12:28), but the Lord appointed the apostles far before Pentecost (Mark 3:13-19; Matthew 10:2-4). Christ sang in the midst of the church (Hebrews 2:12), but His only recorded singing took place at the institution of the Lord's supper (Matthew 26:30)—an ordinance given to the church before Pentecost (Matthew 26:26-31; 1 Corinthians 11:2, 17-34). Before Pentecost Christ was the shepherd/pastor of His church (John 10:14), which was already His flock (a term for the church; Matthew 26:31; Luke 12:32; Acts 20:28-29; 1 Peter 5:2-3), until He appointed Peter to pastor His first assembly after His resurrection (John 21:15-17). His church had a business meeting (Acts 1:15-26), a membership roll (Acts 1:15), a treasurer (John 12:6; 13:29), baptism (John 4:1-2), the Lord's supper (Matthew 26:26-31), church discipline (Matthew 18:15-18), the power to bind and loose (Matthew 18:17-18), and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) before it was "added unto" on Pentecost (Acts 2:41, 47). On the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 the church simply received the permanent indwelling of the Spirit and public recognition as the new institution for the course of the age of grace (cf. Exodus 40:35; the tabernacle; 2 Chronicles 7:1; Solomon's temple; Ezekiel 43:4-5; the Millennial temple).

In relation to the only really significant objection to a pre-Pentecost foundation of the church, the question of how the assembly could begin before the official inauguration of the New Covenant with the death of Christ, Dr. Ron Tottingham writes, "[The objectors ask how] could you have a 'new program'

practiced by Christ's church and perpetuated from the first century until today⁷⁴⁰ by true Baptist churches; his baptism was not some other sort of non-Christian baptism.⁷⁴¹ When

(church) until you have the shedding of the 'the blood of the covenant,' of He who is the Life and Head of a 'new and living' institution? . . . Hebrews 9:14-18 . . . What is the answer which those . . . would give . . . who would hold that Christ established the first Church during His personal ministry upon earth[?] . . . The New Testament Church [was not] 'of force' [Hebrews 9:17] until after the Resurrection. Even Christ still went to the temple [during His earthly ministry]. . . . Hebrews nine only states that the covenant of the Levitical ordinances lasted until the true Blood of Christ was shed. . . . The New Testament Church could not be ready for service at its 'baptism' at Pentecost unless it was built, or 'framed,' prior. Who ever heard of moving into a house [cf. 1 Peter 2:5] (the Holy Spirit moved upon and into the church at Pentecost) without a floor, frame, and more? . . . How then could the church begin before the New Covenant began? By being built [by] the Master Himself during His own personal ministry upon the earth. Then when he died as Testator of the New Covenant, His church of the New Testament (covenant) was ready and waiting to be 'baptized' [with] the Holy Spirit and begin [its] ordained service" (*The Door-Step Evangel*, 24:2 (March-April 2008) pgs. 1ff. (pub. Empire Baptist Temple/Great Plains Baptist Divinity School, Sioux Falls, SD)).

⁷⁴⁰ Christ promised that "the gates of hell shall not prevail" against His congregations (Matthew 16:18), but He would be with them "always, *even* unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20, cf. 1 Corinthians 11:26), since God would get "glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages" (Ephesians 3:21; cf. also "The Great Commission in Scripture and History," Thomas Ross. <http://sites.google.com/site/thross7>). Consequently, there has never been a day since Christ started His church in the first century that faithful assemblies of believers have not been upon the earth. Any religious organization or denomination that originated in a period subsequent to the first century consequently cannot be the church that Jesus founded. In addition to the unscriptural practices of Catholicism, history clearly evidences that the Roman Catholic denomination evolved over a period of centuries and has very little resemblance to the church the Lord Jesus started; it therefore cannot be the true church of Jesus Christ. The various Protestant denominations, such as Lutheranism, Anglicanism, Methodism, and Presbyterian and other Reformed groups, came into existence nearly 1,600 years too late to be the church Jesus founded, and the various splinter groups that have emerged since the Reformation, such as the Pentecostal denominations (Assemblies of God, Church of God in Christ, etc.), the followers of Alexander Campbell (Church of Christ, Disciples of Christ, etc.), Mormonism, Seventh Day Adventism, etc., also negate any claim to be Christ's church by their origin, as they do by their anti-Biblical doctrines. However, assemblies that believed and practiced the Bible, as do good Baptist churches today, have maintained a continual existence under a variety of names (Anabaptists, Waldenses, Donatists, Novatians, Cathari, Christians, etc.) from the first century to the present. They certainly did not originate at the time of the Reformation, as the following quotations demonstrate: 1.) Cardinal Hosius (Catholic, a member of the Council of Trent, A. D. 1560): "If the truth of religion were to be judged by the readiness and boldness of which a man of any sect shows in suffering, then the opinion and persuasion of no sect can be truer and surer than that of the Anabaptists since there have been none for these twelve hundred years past, that have been more generally punished." This Catholic prelate, living at the time of the Reformation, admitted that the Baptists had been in existence since A. D. 360; of course, allowing them an origin any more ancient would make his position very uncomfortable. 2.) Mosheim (Lutheran, A. D. 1755), said, "The true origin of that sect which acquired the name of Anabaptists, by their administering anew the rite of baptism to those who came over to their communion . . . is hid in the remote depths of antiquity, and is consequently extremely difficult to be ascertained." 3.) Dr. J. J. Durmont & Dr. Ypeig (Reformed writers specifically appointed by the King of Holland to ascertain if the historical claims of the Baptists were valid), concluded in A. D. 1819 that Baptists were "descended from the tolerably pure evangelical Waldenses. . . . They were, therefore, in existence long before the Reformed Church of the Netherlands. . . . We have seen that the Baptists, who were formerly called Anabaptists, and in later times Mennonites, were the original Waldenses; and who have long in the history of the Church, received the honor of that origin. On this account the Baptists may be considered the only Christian community which has stood since the Apostles; and as a Christian society which has preserved pure the doctrine of the gospel through all ages." 4.) Alexander Campbell (founder of the "Disciples of Christ" and "Church of Christ" denominations, A. D. 1824): "I would engage to show

“John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins[,] [then] there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins” (Mark 1:4-5). The Baptist preached to those he immersed that “there cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and

that baptism as viewed and practiced by the Baptists, had its advocates in every century up to the Christian era . . . clouds of witnesses attest the fact, that before the Reformation from popery, and from the apostolic age, to the present time, the sentiments of Baptists, and the practice of baptism have had a continued chain of advocates, and public monuments of their existence in every century can be produced.” See pgs. 83-96, *A History of Baptists*, John T. Christian, vol. 1 (Texarkana, TX: Bogard Press, 1922), and *History of Baptists*, G. H. Orchard (Texarkana, TX: Bogard Press, 1987), pgs. iii-xxiv, for the original sources of the quotations here listed, and for further information. Quotations and other evidence from non-Baptist or anti-Baptist authors of like effect could be greatly multiplied (e. g., the Reformed writer Leonard Verduin stated: “No one is credited with having invented the Anabaptism of the sixteenth century for the simple reason that no one did. . . . There were Anabaptists, called by that name, in the fourth century” (pgs. 189-190, *The Reformers and Their Stepchildren*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965). Baptist historians naturally affirm their own succession as well. The historical fact that Baptist churches have existed from the first century to the present confirms the truth, established by their Biblical doctrine and practice, that they are the churches founded by the Lord Jesus Christ. Consequently, all other “churches” are guilty of schism and division from the Lord’s true assemblies and have no Divine authority to baptize, carry on the work of God, or exist at all. Nor is it surprising that non-Baptists are mistaken on the doctrine of Spirit baptism, as the doctrine authenticates Christ’s true church, a spiritual organism of which they are not a part.

⁷⁴¹ The New Testament dispensation began with John, not on the day of Pentecost in the book of Acts (Mark 1:1-4; Matthew 11:13; Luke 16:16; Matthew 11:5; Mark 8:35)—otherwise Jesus Christ did not preach New Testament doctrine, the four gospels are not for Christians, the apostles, who were obviously saved before the book of Acts (Luke 10:20), were not Christians, and other equally absurd conclusions follow. John the Baptist preached about the Deity of Christ (John 1:23; Isaiah 40:3), His substitutionary death (John 1:29), repentance (Matthew 3:2), hell (Matthew 3:10-12), Christ’s bride, the church (John 3:29; Ephesians 5:32), etc. He required confession of sin (Matthew 3:6) and evidence of salvation (Matthew 3:8) before he would baptize people, so he baptized only believers, not infants. He immersed, not sprinkled or poured (Mark 1:5, John 3:23, etc.), and his baptism pictured Christ’s coming death, burial, and resurrection (John 1:31). He had God’s authority to baptize (Matthew 21:24-27), just as the church has that authority today (Matthew 28:18-20). The apostles had John’s baptism (Acts 1:22), but they were never “rebaptized” when some supposedly different Christian baptism originated—nor were any other converts ever “rebaptized.” When Christ commanded His church to go into all the world, preach, baptize, and disciple converts (Matthew 28:17-20; Mark 16:15-16, etc.), He spoke to those who had received John’s baptism and were familiar with no other immersion.

The alleged support for a distinction between John’s baptism and Christian baptism in Acts 19:1-7 is invalid. The individuals of Acts 19 were spurious “converts,” not real disciples of John the Baptist. They did not believe in the Trinity, and so were unsaved (John 17:3), for they had never even heard of the Holy Spirit (19:2), although John preached about Him (Matthew 3:11). Their spurious discipleship is indicated by the fact that the plural word “disciples,” *mathetai*, is nonarticular in 19:1—unlike every single one of the 25 other references in the book of Acts to the word (1:15; 6:1-2, 7; 9:1, 19, 26, 38; 11:26, 29; 14:20, 22, 28; 15:10; 18:23, 27; 19:1, 9, 30; 20:7, 30; 21:4, 16). Paul does not tell these “disciples” that John’s baptism has passed away and Christian baptism has now been inaugurated; he tells them what John the Baptist really said (19:4), upon which they believed John’s message as expounded by Paul and submitted themselves to baptism (19:5-7). Note that a truly born-again man with John’s baptism is not “rebaptized” in the immediately preceding context (18:24-28), simply instructed in the further developments of truth (for the fact that the gospel dispensation began with John does not mean that everything about God’s new method of dealing with people was instantly perfectly developed). Acts 18:24-9:7 supports, not undermines, the fact that Christian baptism is John’s baptism.

unloose. I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost” (Mark 1:7-8). John thus identified the recipients of Spirit baptism with believers who had received his immersion in water. Spirit baptism was not received only by the apostles, but was for the church as an institution, the entire body of immersed believers. John’s identification was in line with Old Testament predictions, which affirmed that men and women, old and young, would receive Spirit baptism (Joel 2:28-29). The context of Matthew 3:11⁷⁴² and Luke 3:16⁷⁴³ likewise identify those who believe the gospel and are immersed with the recipients of Spirit baptism. When the Baptist, as recorded in John 1:19-33, specifically speaks to unbelieving and unbaptized individuals, to unconverted “priests and Levites . . . of the Pharisees,” he does not say that they will be baptized with the Holy Ghost.

While one who believes that the baptism with fire of Matthew 3:11 and Luke 3:16 refers to the damnation of the unconverted in hell⁷⁴⁴—a position that appears initially plausible because of the connection of the word “fire” in Matthew 3:11 to that in 3:12⁷⁴⁵—can still agree with the conclusions made above concerning the connection

⁷⁴² In Matthew, the “you” baptized with water are the “you” baptized with the Spirit in Matthew 3:11. Note the connection made by the μέν/δέ clause: ἐγὼ μὲν βαπτίζω ὑμᾶς ἐν ὕδατι εἰς μετάνοιαν ὃ δὲ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος ἰσχυρότερός μου ἐστίν, οὗ οὐκ εἰμὶ ἰκανὸς τὰ ὑποδήματα βαστάσαι· αὐτὸς ὑμᾶς βαπτίσει ἐν Πνεύματι Ἁγίῳ καὶ πυρὶ. While preaching to unconverted Pharisees and Sadducees does appear in the preceding context (3:7ff.), those baptized with water in Matthew are those of the multitudes who repent and confess their sins (Matthew 3:6), not the unconverted. A comparison with the other gospel accounts confirms what can be deduced from the Matthean narrative.

⁷⁴³ One who would affirm that the preceding context of the verse refers to all the “people,” saved and unsaved, rather than to baptized believers alone, and thus does not make an association between the church and Spirit baptism, should consider that the “you” who are to be baptized “with the Holy Ghost” are the “you” who are baptized with water in Luke 3:16, and these are only the ones who bear the fruits of repentance (v. 8). Furthermore, a reference to the “people” does not require that unbelievers in the promised land are included, since 3:21 refers to a time when “all the people were baptized,” and clearly Luke does not mean that, contradicting 3:8, John baptized pagans, the immoral, and, indeed, every last person in the whole region, converted or not. The fulfillment of Spirit baptism as recorded in Acts fits the predictions in the gospels—Christ baptized with the Spirit believers who had already been immersed in water. Compare endnote 69.

⁷⁴⁴ See pg. 236, *Christology of the Old Testament*, E. W. Hengstenberg, trans. James Martin, vol. 4, 2nd ed. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1858, for an argument in favor of fire baptism as hell based on the analogy of Malachi 3:2.

⁷⁴⁵ It should be noted in relation to this argument, the strongest one for connecting fire baptism and eternal damnation, that the fact that the Lord Jesus will do what is stated in v. 11, and will also do what is stated in v. 12, do not make the two synonymous. Verse twelve refers to the eschatological gathering of the saints to glory and the related damnation of the lost. Spirit baptism does not denote anything in v. 12. Nor does fire baptism, either in the synonymous or in the eternal torment view, have anything to do with the eschatological gathering of the saints as wheat into the garner at harvest time. Thus, an affirmation that the judgment of v. 12 defines fire baptism as eschatological damnation must explain why the entry of believers into glory is not Spirit baptism, and thus why v. 12 defines the fire baptism of v. 11 but does not define the Spirit baptism of the same verse.

between Spirit baptism and the church, the position that baptism with fire is synonymous with Spirit baptism deserves serious consideration and should be considered correct for a number of reasons. First, the reader of the gospels could very easily conclude that they were synonymous. One who simply reads “I indeed baptize you with water . . . but . . . he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and *with* fire” (Matthew 3:11; *Ego men baptidzo humas en hudati . . . de . . . autos humas baptisei en Pneumati Hagio kai puri*, ἐγὼ μὲν βαπτίζω ὑμᾶς ἐν ὕδατι . . . δὲ . . . αὐτὸς ὑμᾶς βαπτίσει ἐν Πνεύματι Ἁγίῳ καὶ πυρί; cf. Luke 3:16) could very easily think that the same “you,” the “you” that receives water baptism, also receives both the Spirit and fire. Baptism *Pneumati Hagio kai puri* would reasonably be viewed as being received by the same individuals at the same time, as both “Spirit” and “fire” follow a single *en* in connection with the single verb “baptize.”⁷⁴⁶ Furthermore, the *men/de* clause confirms the association of the several

Some have argued that the “garner” of Matthew 3:11 is the universal, invisible church, so that, allegedly, one either is baptized by the Holy Spirit into the invisible church and so enters the garner at the moment of regeneration or receives the baptism of fire and eternal torment. However, the garner is the New Jerusalaem or the final phase of the kingdom of God that is entered eschatologically, not the church of the present dispensation to which people are supposedly added day by day through Spirit baptism. The only other instance where ἀποθήκη has a non-literal reference to a garner or barn is Matthew 13:30 (cf. the complete list of references: Matthew 3:12; 6:26; 13:30; Luke 3:17; 12:18, 24) where the reference is not to the church age, but to the “harvest” in the “end of the world” when the lost are cast into the lake of fire and in the New Jerusalem “the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Matthew 13:30; 40-42). The wheat is not gathered into the garner day by day, but at one time at the end of the world; the latter, not the former, first the pattern of farming in first century Judaism: “Only when all the chaff has been separated from the grain is the latter collected (using the ‘winnowing-shovel’ [KJV ‘fan,’ Matthew 3:12]) and stored away for use, while the chaff is burned” (pg. 115, *The Gospel of Matthew*, R. T. France. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007). The gathering of the saints into the “garner” of Matthew 3:12 is not Spirit baptism into the allegedly universal, invisible church in this dispensation, but the final gathering of all the saints into the New Jerusalem when the lost are finally sent into the lake of fire.

⁷⁴⁶ In the words of Henry Alford on Matthew 3:11, “To separate off πνεύματι ἁγίῳ as belonging to one set of persons, and πυρί as belonging to another, when both are united by ὑμᾶς, is in the last degree harsh, besides introducing confusion into the whole. The members of comparison in this verse are strictly parallel to one another: the baptism by water . . . and the baptism by the Holy Ghost and fire” (*Alford’s Greek Testament: An Exegetical and Critical Commentary*, Henry Alford, vol. 1. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1980 (reprint of 1874 ed.)). Similarly, the *Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (ed. Frank E. Gaebelien; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990) notes on Matthew 3:11, “Many see this as a double baptism, one in the Holy Spirit for the righteous and one in fire for the unrepentant (cf. the wheat and chaff in v.12). Fire (Mal 4:1) destroys and consumes. There are good reasons, however, for taking ‘fire’ as a purifying agent along with the Holy Spirit. The people John is addressing are being baptized by him; presumably they have repented. More important the preposition *en* (‘with’) is not repeated before fire: the one preposition governs both ‘Holy Spirit’ and ‘fire,’ and this normally suggests a unified concept, Spirit-fire or the like. . . . Fire often has a purifying, not destructive, connotation in the OT (e.g., Isa 1:25; Zech 13:9; Mal 3:2-3). John’s water baptism relates to repentance; but the one whose way he is preparing will administer a Spirit-fire baptism that will purify and refine.” James D. G. Dunn writes, “There are not two baptisms envisaged, one with Spirit and one with fire, only one baptism in Spirit-and-fire. Second, the two baptisms . . . are to be administered to the same people — ὑμᾶς” (pg. 11, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*).

One notes further that when a verb or verbal is associated with ἐν followed by two prepositional objects, as in the αὐτὸς ὑμᾶς βαπτίσει ἐν Πνεύματι Ἁγίῳ καὶ πυρί of Matthew 3:11, the two objects are in the NT either universally or close to universally temporally simultaneous. For example, in

instances of “you” in the verse. Second, Acts 1:5 refers back to Luke 3:16. Why would not the entire action of the verse, the “Holy Spirit and fire” baptism, happen at the same time? Third, in Acts 2:3-4, the baptism with the Spirit and the appearance of “fire” on the heads of those Spirit-baptized happens at the same moment. Would not Theophilus, reading Luke-Acts, recall Luke 3:16 and think that this was the baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire? Fourth, the gospel accounts in Mark 1:8 and John 1:33 both record only baptism with the Spirit; fire is not mentioned. This fact suggests that there is one baptism with the Spirit and fire, since neither Mark nor John believed the reader needed

John 4:24’s τοὺς προσκυνοῦντας αὐτόν, ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ δεῖ προσκυνεῖν, worship in both spirit and truth takes place at the same time. In Matthew 4:16’s τοῖς καθημένοις ἐν χώρα καὶ σκιᾷ θανάτου, the people sat in both the region and shadow of death at the same time. In Luke 4:36, ἐν ἔξουσίᾳ καὶ δυνάμει ἐπιτάσσει τοῖς ἀκαθάρτοις πνεύμασι, Christ commanded the unclean spirits with both authority and power at the same moment. The syntax of Matthew 3:11 is thus in favor of the view that the baptism of the Spirit and of fire takes place at the same time—the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. To make the baptism of the Spirit a Pentecostal phenomenon and the baptism of fire a much later act of casting the lost into the lake of fire does not suit the syntax nearly as well. There is no way that one can make Christ’s baptism with the Spirit happen at the same time as the judgment of the lost in hell. Compare the syntax of Matthew 3:11 to Matthew 4:16; Luke 4:36; 7:25; John 4:24; Acts 2:46; Ephesians 1:8; 4:24; 6:4, 18; Colossians 1:9; 2:18, 23; 1 Thessalonians 4:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13, 17; 3:8; 1 Timothy 2:2, 7; 2 Timothy 1:13; 4:2; 2 Peter 3:11; Revelation 18:16.

The natural association in Matthew 3:11 explains the presence of the view that the baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire refers to the single event of Pentecost in the patristic period. “Moreover, Christ is said to baptize with fire: because in the form of flaming tongues He poured forth on His holy disciples the grace of the Spirit: as the Lord Himself says, *John truly baptized with water: but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire, not many days hence*” (John of Damascus, *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, IV:9). Lampe mentions texts where Origen, Cyril of Alexandria, Maximus Confessor, and Didymus of Alexandria interpret as identical the baptism of the Spirit and fire (βάπτισμα, IX, *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, ed. G. W. Lampe).

Of course, this is not the only view found in the significant doctrinal and practical diversity of extant patristic writers. Basil, *On the Spirit*, 15:36, refers the baptism of fire to the eschatological judgment of believers, alluding to 1 Corinthians 3:13, a view also expressed as a possibility by John of Damascus following the quotation from IV:9 of *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* above. Unfortunately, this patristic view of fire baptism as eschatological instead of Pentecostal may be a reference to the developing doctrine of purgatory; compare Gregory Nazianzen, *Orations* 39:19. Taking a different view, Eusebius, following Origen, refers to martyrdom as baptism by fire (*Church History*, 6:4:3; cf. Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1910), Volume 2, *Ante-Nicene Christianity*, 2:27). While a comprehensive analysis of all extant patristic literature was not undertaken, neither the works represented in the *Church Fathers: Translations of The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*, ed. Alexander Roberts & James Donaldson, nor in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff, series I & II, (elec. acc. *Accordance Bible Software*; orig. elec. text in the *Christian Classics Ethereal Library*) give any evidence for the view that fire baptism was reserved for those who did not receive Spirit baptism, and thus that the baptism of fire was specifically the damnation of the lost, nor does Lampe indicate the existence of such a view in the patristic period (cf. βάπτισμα, IX, *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, ed. G. W. Lampe).

As the view that the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost took place at Pentecost is extant in the patristic period, so in the medieval period Anabaptists affirmed that just as water baptism “can pertain to none but the intelligent and believing,” so “the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost . . . was administered to the apostles by God Himself from heaven, [and] this did not at all relate to infants, seeing that all who were thus baptized, spake with tongues and magnified God. Acts 2:3, 4” (pg. 234, *The Martyr’s Mirror*, Thieleman J. Van Braght. 2nd Eng. ed. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1999).

to hear about fire baptism as a distinct event; simply mentioning Spirit baptism covered both “Spirit and fire.”⁷⁴⁷ Fifth, in Acts, only a record of Spirit baptism as a fulfillment of John’s preaching is recalled from the gospels (Acts 1:5; Luke 3:16) and recorded (Acts 2), suggesting that baptism with the Spirit and fire was a single event predicted by John. Sixth, the parallel between Spirit baptism’s validation of the church and the coming of the *shekinah* on the Old Testament tabernacle and temple⁷⁴⁸ supports the unity of the two

⁷⁴⁷ Such an affirmation must not be taken to imply that John the Baptist did not truly say the actual words in the different gospels, but rather that the other NT writers, under inspiration, did not record the “and fire” phrase.

⁷⁴⁸ As explicated below in the section “Spirit baptism in Acts.”

Consider also the related comments of John Owen, commenting on the descent of the Spirit on Christ in the form of a dove, and on His coming upon the church at Pentecost:

The shape [of the Spirit] that appeared was that of a dove, but the substance itself, I judge, was of a fiery nature, an ethereal substance, shaped into the form or resemblance of a dove. It had the shape of a dove, but not the appearance of feathers, colors, or the like. This also rendered the appearance the more visible, conspicuous, heavenly, and glorious. And the Holy Ghost is often compared to fire, because he was of old typified or represented thereby; for on the first solemn offering of sacrifices there came fire from the Lord for the kindling of them. Hence Theodotion of old rendered $\pi\acute{\iota}\rho\acute{\iota}\varsigma$, Genesis 4:4, “The LORD had respect unto Abel, and to his offering,” by $\epsilon\upsilon\epsilon\pi\acute{\upsilon}\rho\iota\sigma\epsilon\nu\ \acute{\omicron}\ \theta\epsilon\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$, “God fired the offering of Abel;” sent down fire that kindled his sacrifice as a token of his acceptance.

However, it is certain that at the first erection of the altar in the wilderness, upon the first sacrifices, “fire came out from before the LORD, and consumed upon the altar the burnt-offering and the fat; which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces,” Leviticus 9:24. And the fire kindled hereby was to be perpetuated on the altar, so that none was ever to be used in sacrifice but what was traduced from it. For a neglect of this intimation of the mind of God were Nadab and Abihu consumed, Leviticus 10:1, 2. So was it also upon the dedication of the altar in the temple of Solomon: “Fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt-offering and the sacrifices,” 2 Chronicles 7:1; and a fire thence kindled was always kept burning on the altar. And in like manner God bare testimony to the ministry of Elijah, 1 Kings 18:38, 39. God by all these signified that no sacrifices were accepted with him where faith was not kindled in the heart of the offerer by the Holy Ghost, represented by the fire that kindled the sacrifices on the altar. And in answer hereunto is our Lord Jesus Christ said to offer himself “through the eternal Spirit,” Hebrews 9:14. It was, therefore, most probably a fiery appearance [of the dove] that was made. And in the next bodily shape which he assumed it is expressly said that it was fiery: Acts 2:3, “There appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire;” which was the visible token of the coming of the Holy Ghost upon them. And he chose, then, that figure of tongues to denote the assistance which, by the miraculous gift of speaking with divers tongues, together with wisdom and utterance, he furnished them withal for the publication of the gospel. And thus, also, the Lord Christ is said to “baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire,” Matthew 3:11. Not two things are intended, but the latter words, “and with fire,” are added $\acute{\epsilon}\xi\eta\gamma\eta\tau\iota\kappa\acute{\omega}\varsigma$, and the expression is $\acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \delta\iota\acute{\alpha}\ \delta\upsilon\omicron\iota\nu$, — with the Holy Ghost, who is a spiritual, divine, eternal fire. So God absolutely is said to be a “consuming fire,” Hebrews 12:29, Deuteronomy 4:24. And as in these words, “He shall baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire,” there is a prospect unto what came to pass afterward, when the apostles received the Holy Ghost with a visible pledge of fiery tongues, so there seems to be a retrospect, by way of allusion unto what is recorded, Isaiah 6:6, 7; for a living or “fiery coal from the altar,” where the fire represented the Holy Ghost, or his work and grace, having touched the lips of his prophet, his sin was taken away, both as to the guilt and filth of it. And this is the work of the Holy Ghost, who not only sanctifieth us, but, by ingenerating faith in us, and the application of the promise unto us, is the cause and means of our justification also, 1 Corinthians 6:11, Titus 3:4-7, whereby our sins on both accounts are taken away. So also his efficacy in other places is compared unto fire and burning: Isaiah 4:4, 5, “When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning.” He is compared both to fire and water, with respect unto the same cleansing virtue in both. So also Malachi 3:2.

baptisms. Seventh, while one who believes baptism with fire is eternal torment affirms that one either receives Spirit baptism or fire baptism, the disciples in Acts never told anyone that, since they did not receive Spirit baptism, they were going to get fire baptism. Eighth, while Spirit baptism was a one-time event, the lost who die are cast into hell moment by moment, day by day, so the baptism with fire would seem not to be a one-time event, but something daily repeated, indeed, something that is occurring continually worldwide. Parallelism between the two would then be minimal. One who wished to extenuate this difficulty might argue that the baptism with fire refers to the postmillennial future after the Great White Throne judgment, when all the lost in Hades are cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:11-15). In that case, while all the lost, throughout the entire Old Testament and into the Millennium, get cast into the lake of fire and thus allegedly receive fire baptism, only the tiny fraction of church age saints connected with the events in Acts receive Spirit baptism, thus making the two baptisms most discontinuous. John the Baptist also did not prophesy that all the lost would receive the baptism of fire—at the very least, people in the Old Testament dispensation are not referred to in his preaching. Were fire baptism the eternal torment of all the lost of all ages, its fulfillment would be strikingly different than its prediction. Ninth, no passage states that the eternal state of the lost is a fulfillment of the baptism of fire—the conclusion is an implication drawn from what are not foolproof premises. Tenth, the allusion to Malachi’s prediction concerning John the Baptist, which undergirds Matthew 3:11-12, refers to two different types of fire, a sanctifying fire that separates some among the people of God to a special purpose (Malachi 3:1-3; cf. Isaiah 1:25; Zechariah 13:9) and a different kind of fire associated with the damnation of the wicked (Malachi 4:1). A fulfillment of Malachi that mentions a baptism with the Holy Ghost and fire that sets apart the church for a specific purpose and an unquenchable fire that the wicked will receive in the eschaton is entirely consistent with the Old Testament. Therefore, the Old Testament background eliminates the initially plausible conclusion that the baptism of fire of 3:11 must necessarily be the fiery eternal damnation mentioned in 3:12. Last, maintaining that fire baptism is synonymous with Spirit baptism, on the historic Baptist view elucidated below, makes both Spirit and fire baptism, like literal immersion in water, ecclesiological, not soteriological events. Christ gathered His church from those who had received the baptism of John, and it is the same church that received the baptism with the Spirit in

Hence, as this is expressed by “the Holy Ghost and fire” in two evangelists, Matthew 3:11, Luke 3:16; so in the other two there is mention only of the “Holy Ghost,” Mark 1:8, John 1:33, the same thing being intended (pgs. 98-100, *Pneumatologia: A Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit*, elec. acc. Christian Library Series vol. 9, John Owen Collection. Rio, WI: AGES Digital Software, 2005).

Acts 2. John made “ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:17) by bringing them to salvation and then baptizing them, so that they could be part of the congregation Christ was gathering (John 3:29), which the Savior later authenticated by baptizing His assembly with His Spirit. For one to affirm that fire baptism is damnation in hell is to move this latter baptism from the realm of ecclesiology to that of soteriology and eschatology. As literal baptism is not a means of receiving salvation, so no metaphorical reference to baptism in the New Testament is ever clearly soteriological. The cumulative weight of the reasons above lead to the conclusion that, while the position that the baptism with fire is the eternal damnation of the lost appears initially plausible, the position that the baptism with the Spirit and fire is a single event received by the church in Acts 2 is clearly preferable.

The translation of the Authorized Version that Christ “shall baptize you *with* the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 3:11, etc.) is superior in its particular context to a rendering of *Baptisei en Pneumati Hagio*, βαπτίσει ἐν Πνεύματι Ἁγίῳ, as “he shall baptize you *in* the Holy Ghost.” A comparison of the gospel texts on Spirit baptism indicate that both the simple dative and the dative with *en* specify the same category of usage in the text. For example, in Luke 3:16 the dative *hudati* (ὕδατι) parallels *en Pnumati Hagio kai puri*, ἐν Πνεύματι Ἁγίῳ καὶ πυρί. Acts 1:5 likewise parallels John’s baptism *hudati* with baptism *en Pneumati Hagio*. Note also the simple dative *puri* (πυρί) in Matthew 3:12 and Luke 3:17. The simple datives are best taken as examples of a “dative of means/instrument [by, by means of, with] . . . [where] the dative substantive is used to indicate the means or instrument by which the verbal action is accomplished. This is a very common use of the dative, embracing as it does one of the root ideas of the dative case (viz., instrumentality) . . . before the noun in the dative, [one should] supply the words *by means of*, or simply *with*.”⁷⁴⁹ While the instrumental dative is very common, there is a great “scarcity of . . . usage [for the] . . . locative of place without a preposition . . . [so that the grammarian] Blass indeed remarks that the ‘local dative’ does not occur in the N. T.”⁷⁵⁰ If there are few simple datives representing a dative or locative of place in New Testament Greek, or perhaps none at all, but the instrumental idea for the dative form without a preposition is very common, then the presumption that the baptisms in Matthew 3 and the parallel passages are “with” water, “with” the Holy Ghost, and “with” fire, rather than “in” these three, is very strong. Similarly, *en Pneumati* constitutes a use

⁷⁴⁹ Pgs. 162-3, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, Daniel Wallace. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996.

⁷⁵⁰ Pg. 521, A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1934.

of *en* with the dative indicating instrument or means.⁷⁵¹ Thus, in Spirit baptism “Christ is the agent . . . and the Holy Spirit is the means . . . that the Lord uses to baptize . . . *Pneumati Hagio* clearly indicates means in Mark 1:8 (as in several other passages dealing with Spirit-baptism).”⁷⁵² Furthermore, *en pneumati* regularly possesses the sense of means or instrumentality in the LXX; the locative idea of sphere is significantly less common.⁷⁵³ Indeed, the locative sense is not clearly present in any passage in the Greek Old Testament where *en pneumati* refers to the Holy Spirit.⁷⁵⁴ The related *en puri* (cf.

⁷⁵¹ Cf. pgs. 372ff. of Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, and BDAG definition #5 for ἐν as a “marker introducing means or instrument, *with*, a construction that begins w. Homer [and with] . . . wide currency in [the New Testament and early Christian] lit[erature].” Note that in Revelation 17:14, a verse listed in BDAG under definition #5, the destruction of a city by an army is said to be by “burn[ing the city] with fire” (κατακαύσουσιν ἐν πυρί), a usage very similar to the instrumental ἐν with πυρί for burning cities in Baruch 1:2; 1 Esdras 1:52; 1 Maccabees 5:5.

⁷⁵² Pg. 374, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, Wallace. Wallace thought that “perhaps” the preposition indicated sphere as well, but that it definitely signified means. He thus translated the passages as “with,” not “in” the Holy Spirit. It should be noted that the affirmation that baptism “with” the Holy Ghost is the correct translation does not exclude the idea that the Spirit is indeed the medium of Christ’s baptism with the third member of the Trinity, as water is the medium in the ordinance of believer’s immersion. Rather, the rendering *with* simply emphasizes the substance in which the baptism takes place; that is, the substance employed in baptism is water, the Spirit, or fire. This fact does not in any way change the fact that a *baptism* is by definition an *immersion*, since *baptidzo* signifies *immersion* without the aid of any preposition.

⁷⁵³ It is, however, still present, e. g. Ecclesiastes 7:9: Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger will rest in the bosom of fools. μὴ σπεύσῃς ἐν πνεύματί σου τοῦ θυμοῦσθαι ὅτι θυμὸς ἐν κόλπῳ ἀφρόνων ἀναπαύσεται.

⁷⁵⁴ 1 Chronicles 28:12: And the pattern of all that he had **by the spirit**, of the courts of the house of the LORD, and of all the chambers round about, of the treasures of the house of God, and of the treasures of the dedicated things: καὶ τὸ παράδειγμα ὃ εἶχεν ἐν πνεύματι αὐτοῦ τῶν αὐλῶν οἴκου κυρίου καὶ πάντων τῶν παστοφορίων τῶν κύκλῳ τῶν εἰς τὰς ἀποθήκας οἴκου κυρίου καὶ τῶν ἀποθηκῶν τῶν ἁγίων.

Nehemiah 9:30: Yet thou didst bear long with them many years, and didst testify to them **by thy Spirit** by the hand of thy prophets: but they hearkened not; so thou gavest them into the hand of the nations of the land. καὶ εἰλκυσας ἐπ’ αὐτοὺς ἔτη πολλὰ καὶ ἐπεμαρτύρω αὐτοῖς ἐν πνεύματί σου ἐν χειρὶ προφητῶν σου καὶ οὐκ ἠνωτίσαντο καὶ ἔδωκας αὐτοὺς ἐν χειρὶ λαῶν τῆς γῆς.

Isaiah 4:4: When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof **by the spirit** of judgment, and **by the spirit** of burning. ὅτι ἐκπλυνεῖ κύριος τὸν ῥύπον τῶν υἱῶν καὶ τῶν θυγατέρων Σιών καὶ τὸ αἷμα ἐκκαθαριεῖ ἐκ μέσου αὐτῶν ἐν πνεύματι κρίσεως καὶ πνεύματι καύσεως.

Ezekiel 11:24: And the Spirit took me up, and brought me to the land of the Chaldeans, to the captivity, in a vision **by the Spirit of God**: and I went up after the vision which I saw. καὶ ἀνέλαβέν με πνεῦμα καὶ ἤγαγέν με εἰς γῆν Χαλδαίων εἰς τὴν αἰχμαλωσίαν ἐν ὁράσει ἐν πνεύματι θεοῦ καὶ ἀνέβην ἀπὸ τῆς ὁράσεως ἧς εἶδον.

Ezekiel 37:1: And the hand of the Lord came upon me, and the Lord brought me forth **by the Spirit**, and set me in the midst of the plain, and it was full of human bones. καὶ ἐγένετο ἐπ’ ἐμὲ χεὶρ κυρίου καὶ ἐξήγαγέν με ἐν πνεύματι κύριος καὶ ἔθηκέν με ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ πεδίου καὶ τοῦτο ἦν μεστὸν ὀστέων ἀνθρωπίνων.

Micah 3:8: But truly I am full of power **by the spirit** of the LORD, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin. ἐὰν μὴ ἐγὼ ἐμπλήσω ἰσχὺν ἐν πνεύματι κυρίου καὶ κρίματος καὶ δυναστείας τοῦ ἀπαγγεῖλαι τῷ Ἰακώβ ἀσεβείας αὐτοῦ καὶ τῷ Ἰσραὴλ αμαρτίας αὐτοῦ.

Matthew 3:11, *baptisei en Pneumati Hagio kai puri*, βαπτίσει ἐν Πνεύματι Ἁγίῳ καὶ πυρί) also very frequently possesses the sense of instrumentality or means in the LXX.⁷⁵⁵ However, such metaphorical language for Spirit baptism does not exclude any locative sense in Spirit baptism, nor does Christ's pouring out the Holy Ghost from heaven, which resulted in Spirit baptism, exclude the Spirit's "fill[ing] all the house where [the 120 in the church] were sitting" (Acts 2:2) and thus immersing the church in His overwhelmingly powerful presence.⁷⁵⁶ Nevertheless, syntax and context demonstrate

Zechariah 1:6: But do ye receive my words and mine ordinances, all that I command **by my Spirit** to my servants the prophets, who lived in the days of your fathers; and they answered and said, As the Lord Almighty determined to do to us, according to our ways, and according to our practices, so has he done to us. πλὴν τοὺς λόγους μου καὶ τὰ νόμιμά μου δέχεσθε ὅσα ἐγὼ ἐντέλλομαι **ἐν πνεύματί** μου τοῖς δούλοις μου τοῖς προφήταις οἱ κατελάβοσαν τοὺς πατέρας ὑμῶν καὶ ἀπεκρίθησαν καὶ εἶπαν καθὼς παρατέτακται κύριος παντοκράτωρ τοῦ ποιῆσαι κατὰ τὰς ὁδοὺς ὑμῶν καὶ κατὰ τὰ ἐπιτηδεύματα ὑμῶν οὕτως ἐποίησεν ὑμῖν.

Zechariah 4:6: And he answered and spoke to me, saying, This is the word of the Lord to Zorobabel, saying, not by mighty power, nor by strength, but **by my Spirit**, saith the Lord Almighty. καὶ ἀπεκρίθη καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς με λέγων οὗτος ὁ λόγος κυρίου πρὸς Ζοροβαβελ λέγων οὐκ ἐν δυνάμει μεγάλη οὐδὲ ἐν ἰσχύι ἀλλ' ἢ **ἐν πνεύματί** μου λέγει κύριος παντοκράτωρ.

Zechariah 7:12: And they made their heart disobedient, so as not to hearken to my law, and the words which the Lord Almighty sent forth **by his Spirit** by the former prophets: so there was great wrath from the Lord Almighty. καὶ τὴν καρδίαν αὐτῶν ἔταξαν ἀπειθῆ τοῦ μὴ εἰσακούειν τοῦ νόμου μου καὶ τοὺς λόγους οὓς ἐξαπέστειλεν κύριος παντοκράτωρ **ἐν πνεύματι** αὐτοῦ ἐν χερσὶν τῶν προφητῶν τῶν ἔμπροσθεν καὶ ἐγένετο ὀργὴ μεγάλη παρὰ κυρίου παντοκράτορος.

(Note: English renderings above come either from the 1851 translation of the LXX by Sir Lancelot Charles Lee Brenton or from the KJV. Note also Solomon 17:37 in the Apocrypha, καὶ οὐκ ἀσθενήσει ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ θεῷ αὐτοῦ ὅτι ὁ θεὸς κατειργάσατο αὐτὸν δυνατὸν **ἐν πνεύματι** ἁγίῳ καὶ σοφὸν ἐν βουλῇ συνέσεως μετὰ ἰσχύος καὶ δικαιοσύνης).

⁷⁵⁵ Three examples out of the 110 verses with the phrase are:

Numbers 31:10: And they burnt with fire all their cities in the places of their habitation and they burnt their villages **with fire**. καὶ πάσας τὰς πόλεις αὐτῶν τὰς ἐν ταῖς οἰκίαις αὐτῶν καὶ τὰς ἐπαύλεις αὐτῶν ἐνέπρησαν **ἐν πυρί**.

Judges 9:52: And Abimelech drew near to the tower, and they besieged it; and Abimelech drew near to the door of the tower to burn it **with fire**. καὶ ἦλθεν Αβιμελεχ εἰς τὸ πύργου καὶ ἐξεπολέμησαν αὐτόν καὶ ἤγγισεν Αβιμελεχ εἰς τῆς θύρας τοῦ πύργου ἐμπρῆσαι αὐτόν **ἐν πυρί**.

1 Kings 16:18: And it came to pass, when Zimri saw that the city was taken, that he went into the palace of the king's house, and burnt the king's house over him **with fire**, and died. καὶ ἐγενήθη ὡς εἶδεν Ζαμβρι ὅτι προκατεῖλημπται αὐτοῦ ἡ πόλις καὶ εἰσπορεύεται εἰς ἄντρον τοῦ οἴκου τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ ἐνεπύρισεν ἐπ' αὐτόν τὸν οἶκον τοῦ βασιλέως **ἐν πυρί** καὶ ἀπέθανεν.

The complete list of references is: Exodus 12:10; 19:18; 32:20; 34:13; Leviticus 4:12; 6:23; 7:17, 19; 8:32; 13:52, 55, 57; 16:27; 19:6; 20:14; Numbers 31:10, 23; Deuteronomy 1:33; 9:21; 12:31; 13:17; 18:10; Joshua 7:15; 8:19, 28; 11:6, 9, 11; 16:10; Judges 1:8; 9:49, 52; 12:1; 14:15; 15:6; 20:48; 1 Samuel 30:1, 3, 14; 2 Samuel 14:30-31; 23:7; 1 Kings 16:18; 18:24, 36-37; 2 Kings 8:12; 16:3; 17:17, 31; 21:6; 23:10; 1 Chronicles 14:12; 21:26; 2 Chronicles 33:6; 35:13; 36:19; Nehemiah 1:3; 2:3; Psalm 45:10; 73:7; 139:11; Amos 4:10; 7:4; Micah 1:7; Nahum 2:4; Habakkuk 2:13; Zephaniah 1:18; 3:8; Zechariah 9:4; Isaiah 10:17; 44:16, 19; Jeremiah 7:31; 19:5; 21:10; 28:32; 30:18; 36:22; 39:29; 41:2, 22; 44:8, 10; 45:17-18; 50:13; 52:13; Ezekiel 5:2, 4; 21:36-37; 22:21, 31; 36:5; 38:19; 1 Esdras 1:52; 1 Maccabees 1:56; 5:5, 35, 44; 11:61; 16:10; 4 Maccabees 9:22; 18:12 Sirach 2:5; 8:10; 45:19; Solomon 12:4; Baruch 1:2.

⁷⁵⁶ Commenting on the connection of the fact that *baptidzo* signifies *immersion* and the baptism of the Spirit, B. H. Carroll wrote:

that the rendering of the Authorized Version and of English Bibles back to Tyndale⁷⁵⁷ is correct in affirming that Christ performs Holy Ghost baptism *with* the Spirit.

Luke 11:13, although not employing the words “Spirit baptism,” likewise refers to the once-for-all coming of the Spirit recorded in Acts 2; no reference to any post-regeneration crisis, along the lines of the PCP position, are in view. Luke-Acts indicates that Christ personally had spoken to the disciples about Spirit baptism while on earth

The baptism in the Spirit was a figurative baptism. I mean the word baptism is used in a figurative and not in a literal sense. . . . If I immerse one in a creek or baptistery, that is a literal baptism; but if I see a friend of mine in distress, in deep anxiety, groaning, sighing, weeping, full of pain, no ease, no peace, no hope, I say he is baptized in suffering. That is figurative. Just as the Lord Jesus Christ said, ‘I have a baptism to be baptized in, and now am I straitened till it be accomplished[!]’ I have suffering to pass through so deep and overwhelming that you may compare the suffering to an immersion in suffering. That is a figurative use of the word. If one dip another in a tank of oil, that is a literal baptism, a literal use of the word. But if it be one whose notes of hand are all over the community, whose property is all mortgaged, who has no reality that is not already encumbered, I say that man is baptized in debt, that is a figurative use of the word. He is overwhelmed in debt.

Now when John the Baptist says, ‘I baptize you in water,’ that is a literal baptism, ‘but Jesus will baptize you in the Holy Ghost,’ that is a figurative use of the word. The Holy Ghost is not a liquid element, but you may use the word figuratively; when they are in the house, and the sound that indicates His presence fills that house, and they themselves are filled with the Spirit, permeated throughout by the indwelling Spirit of God, figuratively you say that is a baptism in the Holy Ghost. That figurative use of the word is one of the commonest known to the Greek classics. I could cite you a hundred instances of it. So that the baptism in water, that is the literal; the other, that is the figurative. And because the literal is a burial, a sinking out of sight, so an overwhelming influence may figuratively be said to be a baptism in that influence.” (pgs. 42-43, *The Three Baptisms*, B. H. Carroll, elec. acc. in the AGES Christian Library Series, Vol. 11, B. H. Carroll Collection. Rio, WI: 2006).

Some paedobaptists argue that *baptidzo* can signify *pouring* because the Spirit’s being poured out is allegedly a synonym with Spirit baptism, thus equating *pouring* and *baptism*. This argument has severe problems. If the Holy Ghost’s being “poured out” or “shed forth” on men (ἐκχέω, Acts 2:17-18, 33; 10:45) demonstrates that *baptidzo* means *pour*, then the references, in association with the baptism of the Holy Ghost, to the Spirit “coming upon” (ἐπέρχομαι, Acts 1:8) people, “falling” on them (ἐπιπίπτω, Acts 8:16; 10:44; 11:15-17), “coming” upon them (ἔρχομαι. . . ἐπί, 19:6), and being “received” (λαμβάνω, Acts 10:47; 19:2) by them would prove that *baptidzo* also means come upon, fall, receive, and come—the word would be a veritable nose of wax which could be twisted any which way at will, and would mean so much that it meant nothing at all. The Scriptural distinction in prepositions, where the Spirit falls “upon” (ἐπί) and is poured “out” (ἐκ) while baptism/immersion is *en* (ἐν) water and the Spirit, but one is never “baptized out” or “baptized upon,” for example, would also be neglected. Finally, the Spirit’s being poured out from heaven is synonymous with His being sent by the ascended Christ after He sat down at the right hand of the Father (Acts 2:33; John 15:26; 16:7). The Spirit’s being poured out or sent from heaven had, as its result on earth, the church’s receiving the baptism of the Holy Ghost. That is, the result of the heavenly sending or pouring out was the earthly baptism or immersion. The baptism is not a synonym of the sending or pouring, but a consequence of it. To attempt to invalidate the simple fact of the Greek language that *baptidzo* means *immerse*, and never *pour* or *sprinkle*, by confusing the terms that are employed in association with Spirit baptism, is entirely invalid. For conclusive evidence that *to baptize* means *to immerse*, see pgs. 386-444, “Christian Baptism,” in *Principles and Practices for Baptist Churches*, Edward T. Hiscox (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, orig. pub. 1894); pgs. 18-167, *Baptism in its Mode and Subjects*, Alexander Carson, (5th rev. ed., Philadelphia, PA: American Baptist Publication Society, 1860; elec. acc. <http://books.google.com>).

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Cf. Matthew 3:11 in the Tyndale Bible, “He shall baptise you with ye holy gost and with fyre.”

(Acts 1:4), but Luke 11:13 constitutes the only previous reference in Luke's inspired record to which Acts 1:4 can refer. During Christ's earthly ministry and before Pentecost, as recorded in the gospels, the potential existed for the Spirit to be asked for, to come for a particular purpose as He did in the Old Testament, and then to leave (cf. Judges 3:10; 6:34; 11:29). Before Pentecost, the Spirit was promised (Luke 11:13; John 14-16), temporarily given so that in the period of Christ's bodily absence, but before the permanent arrival of the Spirit in Acts 2, a member of the Godhead would be with the church (John 20:22; cf. 16:7; 14:16-18),⁷⁵⁸ and prayed for in the period between the promise of His permanent coming and its fulfillment (Acts 1:14). Finally, the Holy Ghost permanently came to indwell the saints when Spirit baptism took place in Acts 2.⁷⁵⁹ No record exists in Acts of any post-Pentecost prayers along the lines of Luke 11:13

⁷⁵⁸ The church had a Comforter, a *παράκλητος*, before the Pentecostal coming of the Spirit—Christ Himself, the Son of God, was their Comforter, for the Holy Ghost was “another Comforter” (John 14:16; cf. 1 John 2:1).

⁷⁵⁹ Lewis Sperry Chafer, commenting on John 14:16–17, wrote: “The promise of Christ—‘I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter’ (*Παράκλητος*)—may well be set over against Christ’s word recorded in Luke 11:13, ‘If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?’ This assurance was uttered early in Christ’s ministry and, being so great an innovation over the relationships provided in Old Testament times to which the disciples were alone accustomed, evidently was never entered into by them. After His ministry is well concluded and before He departs out of this world, He declares that He will pray the Father and for the very presence of the Spirit for which they had failed to pray. The provisions included in Christ’s prayer are more extensive and anticipate at least two age-characterizing realities: (1) That the Spirit should be given as an indwelling Person to each of the eleven men present. They, according to Old Testament usage, had been accustomed to think of the Spirit as bestowed only for very specific purposes by the sovereign will of God. That the Spirit might be given to all men of faith and without exception was wholly new to them. Thus was introduced one of the greatest features of the new dispensation that was then coming into view—a feature too often overlooked by theologians, that the Spirit is given to all believers from the least of them to the greatest of them. Though emphasized constantly in the Epistles, this fact of the indwelling Spirit is here announced by Christ for the first time. (2) The second age-characterizing feature is the truth that the indwelling of the Spirit in the child of God is an unchangeable fact. Christ prayed that the Spirit might abide with believers forever, and that prayer is answered as definitely and certainly as the prayer that the Spirit should come at all. Thus it is assured that the Spirit indwells and that He abides in the heart forever. This same truth John again asserts in his first Epistle, ‘But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you’ (1 John 2:27). This truth, it will be observed, determines much in the doctrine of the security of those who are saved. The Christian may grieve the Spirit, but he will never grieve Him away; he may quench the Spirit (in the sense that the Spirit is suppressed), but the Spirit will never leave the heart into which He has come to abide. (pgs. 117-118, “The Teachings of Christ Incarnate, Part 3: The Upper Room Discourse.” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 109:434 (April 1952) 103-136). Elsewhere Chafer insightfully commented on Luke 11:13, “Because [Luke 11:13] is located in the New Testament and because it was spoken by Christ, many have concluded that this passage must be incorporated into the general doctrine of the Spirit’s relation to the Christian. Great error and misunderstanding have thus been engendered. . . . The passage under consideration conditions reception of the Holy Spirit upon asking, whereas the Christian, as has been seen, receives the Holy Spirit without any asking as a part of his salvation and when he believes. The Spirit, consequently, is now given to those who do no more than believe. In the dispensational divisions of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit . . . the period between the baptism of Christ and the day of Pentecost was characterized by transition, and in that period Christ offered the Spirit to those who would ask for Him. This provision of His was so in

for the benefit of those who already possessed the indwelling Spirit, since the onset of His permanent abode in the saints made the dispensationally transitional action of praying for Him no longer necessary or appropriate.

Indeed, since Christ Himself prayed for the Spirit to come to permanently indwell the saints (John 14:16-17), the Father has certainly heard His Son's prayer as Mediator and, in light of the fact of Luke 11:13, has given the Spirit to the saints. The Spirit was "the promise of the Father" (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4), which Christ received from Him when He asked (Acts 2:33), and which the Father consequently gave to the saints for Christ's sake at Pentecost. If, before the Spirit permanently indwelt believers, the Father gave the Holy Ghost to those who asked for Him, how much more would He give the Spirit permanently to the saints when the Son asked for Him on their behalf? To affirm that one must still ask for the Spirit today, based on a misunderstanding of Luke 11:13, actually denies the efficacy of the prayers of that blessed Savior and Mediator who said, "thou [Father] hearest me always" (John 11:42), for He has already asked for and received the Spirit and given Him to His own.

Thus, Luke 11:13 refers to the receipt of the Spirit Himself⁷⁶⁰ by those who, in the time period when Christ spoke those words, asked for Him.⁷⁶¹ No reference to greater

advance of the relation which the Spirit sustained to the saints in Old Testament times, to which relationship the apostles were in some measure adjusted, that there is no record that they ever ventured on to this new ground; accordingly, at the end of His earth-ministry, Christ said: 'I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever' (John 14:16). This introduces an entirely different relationship to the Spirit. The disciples were not now to receive the Holy Spirit in answer to their own petition, but in answer to the petition of Christ. Thus it is indicated that the Holy Spirit has now been given because of Christ's prayer and to all who believe. As 1 Samuel 16:14 and Psalm 51:11 serve to demonstrate that the experience of the Old Testament saints cannot be made the norm of Christian experience, in like manner Luke 11:13, which was for the disciples between Christ's baptism and the Day of Pentecost, cannot be made the norm of present experience" (*Systematic Theology: Pneumatology* (pgs. 130-131, vol. 6, chap. 10). Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1976 (reprint ed.).

⁷⁶⁰ The nonarticularity of Πνεῦμα Ἅγιον in Luke 11:13 does not by any means establish that a reference to anything less than the Person of the Holy Spirit, the third member of the Godhead, is in view. While Nigel Turner in his *Grammatical Insights into the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1965) advocated the "generalization with regard to the significance of the article in references to the Holy Spirit in Luke's writings . . . that 'as a general rule, and subject to conditions, whenever the Holy Spirit has the definite article the reference is to the third person of the Trinity (expressed either as to *Pneuma to hagion* or as to *hagion Pneuma*), but when the article is absent the reference is to a holy spirit, a divine influence possessing men' (p. 19) . . . [this] must . . . be called in question. Turner . . . mentions, but does not exhaust, complicating factors, factors so complicating . . . as to leave little room for assurance in pressing his rule. When one considers the fact also . . . [certain other] clear and indubitable references to the Holy Spirit [that] . . . would dispose the reader . . . to take *hagion Pneuma* . . . in Acts as the Holy Spirit, one's doubt about Turner's rule must increase. In addition to all this, the application of the supposed rule to particular passages will be found to yield very unsatisfactory results" (John H. Skilton, book review of Turner's *Grammatical Insights into the New Testament*. *Westminster Theological Journal* 29:2 (May 1967) p. 218). Turner was a theological modernist (although not on the most radical wing of liberalism) who believed in "distancing himself from the doctrine of verbal inspiration (a question [he affirmed was] 'beset by innumerable difficulties')" (pg. 104, *Trinity Journal* 3:1 (Spring 1982) p. 104, Book Review by M. Silva of

Christian Words, by Nigel Turner. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1980.), and “Turner defers to certain critical hypotheses which are unacceptable to conservative students . . . the Pastorals are treated separately from Paul . . . and the Johannine literature is treated in three units” (pg. 273, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 135:539 (Jul 78), Book Review by Zane C. Hodges of *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, by James Hope Moulton. Vol. 4: Style, by Nigel Turner. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1976). Nigel Turner’s view that nonarticular Πνεῦμα Ἅγιον is something less than the Person of the Holy Ghost is not the product of Spirit-led exegesis, since he was an unsaved, natural man (1 Corinthians 2:14), nor is it required by a correct understanding of Greek grammar. Πνεῦμα Ἅγιον is a monadic noun phrase, referring specifically to the Person of the Holy Spirit in the Trinity, and thus, like other monadic nouns, and in a fashion like that of proper names, it is definite without the article. Daniel Wallace wrote: “A one-of-a-kind noun does not, of course, require the article to be definite (e.g., “sun,” “earth,” “devil,” etc.). One might consider πνεῦμα as monadic when it is modified by the adjective ἅγιον. If so, then the expression πνεῦμα ἅγιον is monadic and refers only to the Holy Spirit” (pgs. 248-250, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, Daniel Wallace). A. T. Robertson stated: “In the N. T. . . it is [very] common to find simply θεός, especially in the Epistles. . . . [T]he word is treated like a proper name and may have [the article] (Ro. 3:5) or not have it (8:9). The same thing holds true about πνεῦμα and πνεῦμα ἅγιον, κύριος, [and] Χριστός. . . . [As the] word θεός, like a proper name, is freely used with and without the article . . . [s]o also πνεῦμα and πνεῦμα ἅγιον may occur with and without the article. . . . Κύριος, like θεός and πνεῦμα, is often practically a proper name in the N. T.” (pgs. 761, 795-6, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*). Likewise, James Elder Cumming in his *Through the Eternal Spirit: A Biblical Study on the Holy Ghost* (Chicago, IL: Revell, 1896), elec. acc. <http://books.google.com>, “Appendix II: On the Use of the Greek Article Before the Names of the Spirit of God” pgs. 286-296) discusses and refutes the arbitrary, unsound, and contradictory views of those who build doctrine, often on modernistic assumptions, from an alleged distinction between articular and nonarticular πνεῦμα ἅγιον. After documenting a variety of contradictory theories by proponents of a distinction, Cumming writes, “May I venture now to call attention to the strangely vague, arbitrary, and not very consistent rules laid down? . . . [C]an we find in the use of the Article an indication of the distinction between the Person of the Holy Ghost and His influences[?] . . . [W]e must answer, No. The use is so irregular, and so much at the discretion of the writer, that no such intention can be traced. . . . I venture to submit . . . that there is no such distinctive use of the Article in the New Testament in connection with the mention of the Holy Ghost as to warrant us in finding a theological or spiritual reason for its presence or absence; and that all such pressure of . . . rules . . . as has been attempted, is misleading and unfounded” (pgs. 286, 294-296).

To affirm from the nonarticularity of Πνεῦμα Ἅγιον that power of or works from the Spirit are in view in Luke 11:13, rather than the Person of the Spirit Himself, requires one not only to ignore the syntactical facts of Greek monadic nouns but also the other 49 instances of the phrase Πνεῦμα Ἅγιον in the NT, each of which refers to “the Holy Spirit” and cannot in accordance with sound exegesis be reduced to anything less (Matthew 1:18; 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 1:15, 35, 41, 67; 2:25; 3:16; 4:1; 11:13; John 1:33; 7:39; 20:22; Acts 1:2, 5; 2:4; 4:8, 31; 6:3, 5; 7:55; 8:15, 17, 19; 9:17; 10:38; 11:16, 24; 13:9, 52; 19:2; Romans 5:5; 9:1; 14:17; 15:13, 16; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 12:3; 2 Corinthians 6:6; 1 Thessalonians 1:5-6; 2 Timothy 1:14; Titus 3:5; Hebrews 2:4; 6:4; 1 Peter 1:12; 2 Peter 1:21; Jude 1:20). In some verses, trying to reduce Πνεῦμα Ἅγιον from “the Holy Ghost” to something like “power from the Holy Ghost” is entirely nonsensical (e. g., Romans 15:13; 1 Thessalonians 1:5). Nor is there any reason to conclude that anything less than the Person of the Spirit is in view in nonarticular OT verses that refer to the Holy Spirit, רוּחַ קְדוֹשׁ (Isaiah 63:10-11; Psalm 51:11). Old Testament phrases like “the Spirit of the LORD” (רוּחַ יְהוָה, Judges 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14; 1 Samuel 10:6; 16:13-14; 19:9 (still definite although here a shorthand meaning יְהוָה נִצָּחַת רָעָה רוּחַ) 2 Samuel 23:2; 1 Kings 18:12; 22:24; 2 Kings 2:16; 2 Chronicles 18:23; 20:14; Isaiah 11:2; 40:7, 13; 59:19; 61:1; 63:14; Ezekiel 11:5; 37:1; Hosea 13:15; Micah 2:7; 3:8) are always definite although always nonarticular because of the nature of the Hebrew construct phrase—this fact holds even when the phrase refers to something besides the Holy Ghost such as the wind (cf. Hosea 13:15). Similarly, the equivalent NT phrases Πνεῦμα Κυρίου “the Spirit of the Lord” (Luke 4:18; Acts 5:9; 8:39; 2 Corinthians 3:17) and Πνεῦμα Θεοῦ, “the Spirit of God” (Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 7:40; cf. Matthew 12:28; Rom 8:14; 15:19; 1 Corinthians 12:3; 2 Corinthians 3:3), are monadic and definite even when non-articular.

ability to exercise spiritual gifts, or any other ministries or blessings from the Holy Ghost which will abide throughout the age of grace, is indicated by the verse. Christ promised that the Father would give, not blessings by the Spirit, or gifts from the Spirit, but, in response to urgent and continued prayer as recorded in Acts 1:14 (cf. Acts 8:15),⁷⁶² would “give the Holy Spirit” Himself. Luke 11:13 contrasts human parents, who repeatedly give good gifts to their children,⁷⁶³ with God the Father, who, in Spirit baptism (as a one-time, yet future event in Luke 11:13),⁷⁶⁴ would give the Person of the Holy

If nonarticularity for the Holy Spirit refers not to His Person, but merely to power or works from Him, one wonders if nonarticularity in references to the Greek Πατήρ such as “Our Father which art in heaven” (Matthew 6:9), “O Father, Lord of heaven and earth” (Matthew 11:26), “Father, forgive them” (Luke 23:34), “the Father which hath sent me” (John 5:30), “Holy Father” (John 17:11), “one God and Father of all” (Ephesians 4:6), and “the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:11) denote not the Person of God the Father, but merely power from or works done by Him; or if the nonarticular υἱός in “O Lord, thou Son of David” (Matthew 15:22), “Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (Mark 1:1), “the Son of the Highest” (Luke 1:32), “the Son of man” (John 5:27), and many similar verses do not refer to the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, but only to power or works from Him.

One should also note the convincing parallels where articularity and nonarticularity for Πνεῦμα Ἅγιον are clearly shown to refer to the same events and actions on pgs. 68-70, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, Dunn. His conclusion is correct: “Where πνεῦμα ἅγιον confronts us in the NT it never designates a charismatic endowment without the Holy Spirit, but the Spirit himself.”

⁷⁶¹ Thus, the verse indicates that the “heavenly Father [would] give the Holy Spirit *to them that ask him*.” The direct object of the verb *give* is the Holy Spirit. The indirect object, those who receive the Spirit, are *them that ask*. No reference to the Holy Spirit being given to or ministering to people other than those who are doing the asking is contained in the verse. John 16:7-11 is a promise Christians can and should take to the Lord in prayer that the lost will be convicted of their sin by the Spirit—but if they employ Luke 11:13 to that end they are pleading what the text does not say.

⁷⁶² Thus, Luke 11:13 promises the Holy Spirit to “to them that ask,” τοῖς αἰτοῦσιν, the repeated action being expressed by the present participle.

⁷⁶³ Their action is expressed by διδόναι, a present active infinitive, expressing iterative action.

⁷⁶⁴ Thus the future active indicative δώσει is employed. The Greek future, “with reference to *aspect*, . . . seems to offer an *external* portrayal, something of a temporal counterpart to the aorist indicative” (pg. 567, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, Wallace). Thus, one would expect an aoristic, point-action sort of idea for the future tense of δίδωμι as employed in Luke 11:13. While the future tense presents an action as a whole, it is true that the use of the future on its own does not eliminate the possibility of progressive or durative action within the aoristic presentation (cf. the uses of δίδωμι in Matthew 13:12; 24:24, 29; 25:29; Mark 4:25; 13:22, 24; Luke 8:18; 19:26), but the definite majority of the appearances of the future of δίδωμι indicate one-time action (Matthew 4:9; 7:7, 11; 10:19; 12:39; 16:4, 19, 26; 20:4; 21:43; Mark 6:22-23; 8:12, 37; 12:9; Luke 1:32; 4:6; 6:38; 11:8-9, 13, 29; 16:12; 20:16; 21:15; John 4:14; 6:27, 51; 11:22; 14:16; 16:23; Acts 2:19, 27; 13:34-35; 24:26; Romans 14:12; James 1:5; 1 John 5:16; Revelation 2:7, 10, 17, 23, 26, 28; 3:21; 4:9; 11:3; 21:6). Thus, while the promise of Luke 11:13 could have partial fulfillment in anyone who so asked and sought for Him in the gospels, the ultimate fulfillment of the verse took place on Pentecost, for before then “the Holy Ghost was not yet *given*; because that Jesus was not yet glorified” (John 7:39). It should be also noted that “an example [of πνεῦμα such as] οὐπω ἦν πνεῦμα (Jo. 7:39) merely illustrates the use of πνεῦμα like θεός as substantially a proper name” (pg. 795, A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1934).). Compare also the Appendix, sermon #2, “The Church, The Habitat of the Holy Spirit” on John 7:39.

While the background NT usage of δίδωμι would weight one in favor of one-time action as he approaches Luke 11:13, the immediate context provides very strong corroboration. The Spirit is affirmed to be a one-time gift given in response to repeated prayer (Acts 1:14), just as four verses earlier in 11:9, the

Spirit.⁷⁶⁵ While, at the time of the Lord's discourse in Luke 11, parents were providing good gifts to their children, the Father's permanent giving of the Holy Spirit had not yet taken place, and it would not occur until the record of Spirit baptism in Acts, when Christ, having asked the Father for the Holy Ghost, gave the indwelling Spirit to His people.

As an examination of the grammar of Luke 11:13 itself supports a reference to Spirit baptism and the initial receipt of the Spirit, so the fulfillment of the verse in Acts also demonstrates that the Father's gift of the Holy Spirit is not a repeated event, but the one-time action of the initial receipt of the Spirit, first by Spirit baptism during the transitional period in Acts, and then in regeneration throughout the dispensation of grace. One-time, non-continuous action, expressed by the Greek aorist, is the consistent language of Acts (Acts 5:32; 15:8) and the rest of the Bible (Romans 5:5; 2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:8; 2 Timothy 1:7; 1 John 3:24)⁷⁶⁶ for the giving of the Spirit. Only in 1 John 4:13 is God's gift of the Spirit to an individual not expressed with the aorist; in that verse the perfect tense indicates that the Spirit was given in the past at a moment in time, and continues to dwell within His saints. There are no instances in the New Testament where continuing action tenses are employed for a particular individual's

central affirmation of the pericope containing 11:13, "ask . . . seek . . . [and] knock" are repeated actions, but "shall be given . . . shall find . . . shall be opened" refer to one-time future events in response to the continued asking, seeking, and knocking. The iterative present tense verbs and one-time future tense responses in verses 9 and 13 are parallel (cf. also 11:26, ἐπιζητεῖ and δοθήσεται; James 1:5, αἰτεῖτω . . . καὶ δοθήσεται).

⁷⁶⁵ Subsequent to this transitional action referenced in Luke 11:13, where the Holy Spirit was initially bestowed in the baptism of Acts 2 in response to continued prayer, the Holy Spirit would be, for the course of the age of grace, given permanently and unchangeably at the moment of regeneration (1 John 4:13; note the perfect tense, δέδωκεν, in "he hath given us of his Spirit"). However, this fact does not relate the promise of Luke 11:13 to those living today, because Spirit indwelling is temporally simultaneous with faith in Christ (cf. Romans 8:9); the Spirit is not today a gift given subsequent to regeneration as a response to continued prayer.

⁷⁶⁶ Ephesians 1:17 is not listed (although it also has an aorist of δίδωμι, albeit an aorist optative), because the verse is not about the Holy Spirit. The Received Text δόντα in 1 Thessalonians 4:8 is the inspired and preserved reading, found in 97% of Greek MSS including Codex A. The reading διδόντα is a textual corruption.

Attempting to support a type of Reformed revivalistic PCP doctrine, Iain Murray argued, "On Ephesians 1:17 Bishop Moule wrote: 'We are not to think of the 'giving' of the Spirit as of an isolated deposit of what, once given, is now locally in possession. The first 'gift' is, as it were, the first point in a series of actions, of which each one may be expressed also as a gift.'" Were it not for this truth, prayer for the Spirit (Luke 11:13) would be meaningless" (pg. 19, *Revival and Revivalism: The Making and Marring of American Evangelicalism, 1750-1858*, Iain H. Murray. Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1994). The Greek tenses employed in Scripture for the giving of the Spirit contradict the position of Moule and Murray that the Spirit's bestowal as a gift is not once and for all at regeneration. Consequently, in the dispensation of grace after the completion of the event of Spirit baptism, Murray's statement of the consequence of invalid premises on his part is correct—prayer for the Spirit is indeed meaningless.

being given the Holy Ghost.⁷⁶⁷ In striking contrast, spiritual gifts from the Holy Ghost are expressed consistently with continuing action tenses.⁷⁶⁸ The recorded Scriptural fulfillment of the prayers indicated in Luke 11:13 demonstrates that, as the Lord intended, the saints prayed in the book of Acts for the coming of the Spirit (Acts 1:14; 8:15), and their prayers were answered in Spirit baptism (Acts 2:33; cf. Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4). Just as no Spirit-indwelt person in Acts ever prays that he would receive the Spirit, as mentioned in Luke 11:13, so the prayer specified in the verse is not appropriate for the universally Spirit-indwelt Christians (Romans 8:9) of today.⁷⁶⁹ Those who are already indwelt by the Holy Ghost have no need to ask for Him whom they already have.⁷⁷⁰

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Acts 8:18-19 (And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost; θεασάμενος δὲ ὁ Σίμων ὅτι διὰ τῆς ἐπιθέσεως τῶν χειρῶν τῶν ἀποστόλων δίδεται τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιον, προσήνεγκεν αὐτοῖς χρήματα, λέγων, Δότε καὶ μοὶ τὴν ἐξουσίαν ταύτην. ἵνα ὃ ἂν ἐὰν ἐπιθῶ τὰς χεῖρας, λαμβάνῃ Πνεῦμα Ἅγιον.) does not constitute an exception. The present passive δίδεται in v. 18 is distributive, "the use of the present tense for individual acts distributed to more than one object" (pg. 520, Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*). Each person upon whom the Apostles laid hands received the Holy Ghost, but each person received Him, the "gift of God" (8:20), only once. Simon was also in spiritual darkness in this matter (v. 19; cf. v. 20-24).

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See Acts 2:4, ἐδίδου, imperfect tense; the Spirit was continuing to give utterance; 1 Corinthians 12:7, δίδεται, present tense, the manifestation of the Spirit is being given; 1 Corinthians 12:8, the word of wisdom is being given (δίδεται, present tense) by the Spirit. Note also Christ, fulfilling His Mediatorial office, was continually given boundless measures of the Spirit from the Father (οὐ γὰρ ἐκ μέτρου δίδωσιν ὁ Θεὸς τὸ Πνεῦμα), John 3:34.

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While writers are far from unanimous on Luke 11:13 (cf. the views and their advocates delineated on pgs. 96-97, "Rethinking The Role Of The Holy Spirit In The Lives Of Old Testament Believers," Gary Fredricks. *Trinity Journal* 9:1 (Spring 1988) 81-104), the conclusions advanced above are also made by others. For example, Merrill F. Unger wrote, "Christ while on earth taught that the Father, in answer to prayer, would 'give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him' (Luke 11:13). This promise, of course, was pre-Pentecost and was spoken under the old economy, when the Spirit of God came upon men and departed, according to divine sovereign will. For a man to ask for, much less receive, the Spirit was a staggering new thing to a Jew, in advance of the fulfillment of Joel 2:28, 29, and there is no evidence that any asked for the Spirit, claiming this promise. To apply this teaching to this present age is to forget Pentecost and the fact that every believer now has the indwelling Spirit. It was the ascended Christ who asked the Father for the Spirit as the ascension Gift (John 14:16), and no believer now . . . indwelt with the Spirit as he is, need ever ask for Him. He possesses Him, and never because he has prayed or asked for Him, but because he has Him as a free gift by virtue of simple faith in the crucified and risen Savior" (pg. 363, "The Baptism with the Holy Spirit," part 2. *Bibliotheca Sacra* 101:403 (Jul 44), 357-374. It should be noted that agreement on Luke 11:13 does not mean that Unger, or others cited, agreed with the historic Baptist view of Spirit baptism presented in this composition). Charles Ryrie wrote, "Luke 11:13 . . . might seem to indicate that the Spirit may be given and taken away repeatedly[.] . . . However, it must be recognized that [this verse, as with 1 Samuel 16:14 and Psalm 51:11, is] pre-Pentecostal. And that is very important, for it is not until Pentecost that we can expect any normalcy in the operation of the Spirit in this age. After all, the Lord Himself recognized the pre- and post-Pentecostal difference as late as the upper room discourse where the majority of the promises concerning the coming and ministry of the Spirit were given. Therefore, even if the Spirit was removed from the lives of people before Pentecost, the fact that this happened before Pentecost rules out carrying over such experience into the post-Pentecostal era" (*The Holy Spirit* (Chicago: Moody, 1965) pgs. 70-71). "Luke 11:11-13 stresses that the Father will give the Holy Spirit (cf. Matt 7:11 "good things"). This link between the Holy Spirit and prayer is seen also in Acts 1:14 where Luke portrays

C. Spirit baptism in Acts

The first chapter of Acts evidences that the predictions by John the Baptist that the Messiah would baptize with the Holy Ghost were fulfilled on the day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts chapter two. Referencing these predictions, the risen Christ appeared to His disciples, “to whom . . . he shewed himself alive after his passion . . . being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: and, being assembled together with *them*, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, *saith he*, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence” (Acts 1:3-5). Spirit baptism, which would take place “not many

the disciples praying before they receive the Pentecostal gift of the Spirit in Acts 2. Thus, Talbert states: ‘Indeed, the evangelist would see this promise of Jesus in Luke 11:13 as the basis for Pentecost.’ The gift of the Spirit represents the coming of the kingdom of God” (pg. 690, “Theology Of Prayer In The Gospel Of Luke,” Kyu Sam Hana, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 43:4 (Dec 00) 675-695). Strong notes that “The Plymouth Brethren . . . object to praying for the Holy Spirit, because he was given on Pentecost” (*Systematic Theology*, Augustus Strong, part 7 (Ecclesiology) 1:2, elec. acc. Systematic Theologies, vol. 17, Rio, WI: AGES Digital Software library, 2006). Reformed, non-dispensational writers (e. g. Thomas Boston, Stephen Charnock, Robert Dabney, Jonathan Edwards, Thomas Manton, Matthew Poole, etc.) seem to almost universally affirm that Luke 11:13 indicates that the Spirit should be prayed for today, while dispensationalists (e. g. Lewis Sperry Chafer, cited above in endnote 38, Ryrie and Unger as cited in this endnote, etc.) often affirm that He has now come to permanently indwell saints and that Luke 11:13 is a pre-Pentecost promise.

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It is important to mention that this fact does not mean Christians should refrain from asking for blessings from the Spirit, a greater work of the Spirit upon them to strengthen them spiritually, for greater measures of conviction of sin from Him, or similar sorts of requests. What is affirmed is that none of these requests relate to Luke 11:13, a verse that refers to Spirit baptism and the now completed dispensational transition connected to the Pentecostal gift of the Holy Ghost. Nevertheless, no prohibition for prayer for powerful works from the Spirit is argued for by an affirmation that the prayer of Luke 11:13 was dispensational and fulfilled in the book of Acts. Such works from the Spirit are good things, and the believer’s “Father which is in heaven give[s] good things to them that ask him” (Matthew 7:11; a parallel passage, to be sure, but a different occasion—note the differences specified in Luke 11:1 and Matthew 4:23-5:1; in the words of John Gill, commenting on Luke 11:1, “The following directions concerning prayer, though they agree with those in Mt 6:9, etc. yet were delivered at another time, and in another place, and upon another occasion: Christ was then in Galilee, now in Judea: he gave the former directions unasked for, these at the request of one of his disciples; the other were given as he was preaching, these immediately after he had been praying; as soon as he had done a work he was often employed in, as man and mediator, on account of himself, his disciples, cause, and interest: and this was done). Indeed, the Father will the more freely give glorious blessings by His Spirit when the people of God employ the promises of the Word that actually relate to what they are praying about—thus, recognizing what Luke 11:13 truly teaches should lead to more answers to prayer for mighty works from the Holy Spirit as verses that actually promise such (cf. John 16:8-11) are pleaded. Sound exegesis of the work of the Spirit will contribute to, not hinder, genuine blessings from on high and revival; poor exegesis contributes to spiritual confusion instead of revival.

days”⁷⁷¹ after Christ’s ascension at the conclusion of the forty-day period when the Lord appeared to His church after His resurrection, was “the promise of the Father.” While the Apostle John records an extensive discourse by Christ concerning the coming of the Comforter in the act of Spirit baptism (John 14-16; cf. 7:37-39), only Luke 11:13, in the Gospel written by Luke, records speech by Christ about Spirit baptism before His death, while Luke 24:49 records Christ’s post-resurrection back to the promise of Luke 11:13⁷⁷² that the Father would give the Holy Spirit. The “promise of the Father” mentioned in Acts 1:4 is the “promise of my Father” of Luke 24:49, the Holy Spirit, who would bring the church “power from on high” (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8) to assist in her witnessing work (John 15:26-27; Acts 1:8) when He was sent by the ascended Christ as One to take His place on earth. When the church received the baptism of the Holy Ghost on Pentecost, she received the “power” spoken of in Acts 1:8; no individually received second blessing at a post-conversion crisis, along the lines of the PCP doctrine, is envisaged in Acts 1:8. Indeed, since Acts 1:8 employs the word *dunamis*, the verse is most likely a reference, not to the universal power that the Spirit gives to His saints in the church age in gospel preaching and Christian living, but to the miraculous power to perform signs and wonders that accompanied the Pentecostal outpouring of Acts 2 (cf. *dunamis* as “miracles” in 2:22).⁷⁷³ Acts chapter one thus affirms that the promised baptism of the Holy Ghost predicted by John and the Lord Jesus in the gospels would take place in Acts chapter two.

⁷⁷¹ The “not many days hence” (οὐ μετὰ πολλὰς ταύτας ἡμέρας, 1:5) was fulfilled at the conclusion of the “in those days” (ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ταύταις, 1:15) period when “the day of Pentecost was fully come” (ἐν τῷ συμπληροῦσθαι τὴν ἡμέραν τῆς Πεντηκοστῆς, 2:1).

⁷⁷² Note the anaphoric article in τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν τοῦ πατρὸς (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4), referring back to the specific promise of Luke 11:13.

⁷⁷³ See the section “Spirit Baptism in the Old Testament” and endnote 13. Out of 25 appearances of δύναμις in Luke-Acts (Luke 1:17, 35; 4:14, 36; 5:17; 6:19; 8:46; 9:1; 10:13, 19; 19:37; 21:26, 27; 22:69; 24:49; Acts 1:8; 2:22; 3:12; 4:7, 33; 6:8; 8:10, 13; 10:38; 19:11), only one clearly refers to non-miraculous power in preaching and evangelism (Luke 1:17; cf. John 10:41), where miraculous regeneration is nonetheless in view. Every clear reference to δύναμις in Acts is connected with miracles, as are the large majority of uses in Luke.

Even if one wished to affirm that Acts 1:8 refers to power for Christian service universally received by believers today at the moment of regeneration rather than to ability to perform signs and wonders, throughout the course of the church age when a saint has received “the gift of the Holy Ghost” by possessing His indwelling Person at the moment of regeneration, he already has all power to perform spiritual service within him. The Christian possesses “all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph 1:3); therefore, no “second blessing” of the PCP sort is possible because of the glorious gifts given believers at the great “first blessing” when they became children of God. Believers certainly should, for greater effectiveness in Christian service, yield more fully to God, but they cannot get a PCP sort of “second blessing” as a consequence. While Acts 1:8 refers to first century miraculous power, not to power given to saints at regeneration, even if reference were to the latter, the verse would provide no support whatever to PCP theology.

In Acts two, on the day of Pentecost, the ascended Christ sent the Comforter from heaven and baptized the church⁷⁷⁴ with the Holy Spirit. The corporate nature of this baptism is emphasized, among other indicators, through the consistent use of plural word forms (2:1-4, 6-7, 11, 13-15, 17-18, 32, etc.) and the mention that the Spirit, under the figure of wind, “filled all the house” where the 120 were (Acts 2:2), and gave every member of the church tongues of fire and miraculous tongues (2:3-4).⁷⁷⁵ The church, unified (v. 1, 41-47) and blessed by Christ, is emphasized at the beginning and end of the chapter (2:1, 47).⁷⁷⁶ The arrival of the glory of God and the special presence of Jehovah, shown here by the permanent entrance of the Spirit into the church in the baptism “with the Holy Ghost and with fire” (Luke 3:16), parallels the coming of the fiery *shekinah* glory (Exodus 24:17) upon the tabernacle (Exodus 40:34-38; Leviticus 9:24), and upon Solomon’s temple (1 Kings 8:10-11; 2 Chronicles 5:13-14; 7:1-3),⁷⁷⁷ even as His glory will come into the future Millennial temple (Ezekiel 43:2-5; 44:4). Spirit baptism validated the church as God’s institution for *latreia*—that is, holy service and worship—

⁷⁷⁴ See endnote 19. It is clear that the entire church, not the apostles alone, received the tongues of fire and the miraculous gift of speaking in unlearned languages on Pentecost, not only from the syntax of Acts 2:3-4, but also from the fact that more than twelve language groups were represented (2:9-11) yet each group heard in its own native tongue (2:5-11).

⁷⁷⁵ Alvah Hovey, president of the Newton Theological Institution in the latter half of the nineteenth century, a Baptist college, thought that the “tongues of fire . . . could only symbolize a supernatural utterance of truth from God. This interpretation is established by the words that follow: ‘And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.’ Moreover, it appears that the subject of their communication was ‘the wonderful works of God’” (pg. 36, *Doctrine of the Higher Christian Life Compared With the Teaching of the Holy Scriptures*, by Alvah Hovey). Dr. Hovey’s idea is thought-provoking.

⁷⁷⁶ The corruption that removes the final words of the Greek text of the chapter, “to the church” (τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ, v. 47) rejects the testimony of over 97% of Greek MSS evidence.

⁷⁷⁷ The glory of the postexilic temple rebuilt under the leadership of Ezra was greater than that built by Solomon, although the *shekinah* never entered it, because the incarnate Son of God did (Haggai 2:9; Luke 2:27). Likewise, the glory of the church, because of Christ’s presence in her midst in his human body during His earthly ministry (cf. Hebrews 2:12; Matthew 26:30), and because of His presence as omnipresent God (Matthew 28:20; Revelation 1:13; 2:1) after His resurrection (John 20:22) and ascension (Acts 2), is a greater glory than that of the tabernacle and the temple. Indeed, if the coming of the Son into the postexilic temple for a short time made that edifice greater than Solomon’s temple, how much more does His permanent dwelling in the church exceed all that came before in glory? Christ, who possesses the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, tabernacles in the literal human body He has united to Himself (John 1:14), but in similar manner does He tabernacle in “his body,” the church, “the fulness of him that filleth all in all” (Ephesians 1:23; cf. 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 1 Timothy 3:15). How should the people of God treasure their membership and worship in their particular Baptist congregations! *Jehovah shammah*, Ezekiel 48:35. In them they can see the closest earthly parallel to the ineffable and eternal glory that is their portion in the antitypical Holy of Holies, the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:11, 23). The reverent love that the saints have for their Holy One and Redeemer should lead to like passionate love for His church.

Similarly, as the saints’ individual bodies are temples of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20) and the dwelling places of the Trinity (John 14:23; Colossians 1:27)—believers must keep their bodies holy.

as the glory of God validated the tabernacle and Solomon's temple.⁷⁷⁸ And, as the coming of the *shekinah* on the institution for worship in the Old Testament was a one-time act with continuing results of the abiding presence of Jehovah, so Spirit baptism was a one-time act with the abiding result of the presence of the Triune God in the church.

The 120 members of the pre-Pentecost church (Acts 1:15), upon being baptized with the Spirit, received miraculous power to speak in tongues, prophesy,⁷⁷⁹ and do other

⁷⁷⁸ “On the day of Pentecost the Lord demonstrated beyond any question that He was publicly inaugurating His new institution of divine presence (Mt. 18:20, 28:19-20; Rev. 1:13-20), worship and service--the local church. The Jews needed to be convinced through divine accreditation with signs and wonders (Mt. 12:38; I Cor. 1:22) that the Lord was done with the Zerubbabel-Herod Temple (Mt. 23:38), and that His new institution would be the Lord's ekklesia (cf. Mt. 16:18; Rev. 3:1 ff.). As the glory of the Spirit of the Lord filled the Tabernacle, the Solomon Temple, and will fill the Millennial Temple, so too His Spirit ‘filled all the house where they were sitting’ (Acts 2:2)” (“Ye Are The Body of Christ,” Dr. Thomas M. Strouse. Emmanuel Baptist Theological Seminary, Newington, CT. elec. acc. http://www.faithonfire.org/articles/body_of_christ.html).

Franz Delitzsch notes: “[T]he head is, according to Scripture, evidently the noblest part of man; standing in the closest relation as well to soul and spirit in the man, as to all psychic-spiritual influences which arise to the man. Because in the head, the human organism culminates, Christ is called the κεφαλὴ of the church His body, (see especially Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 2:19; comp. 1 Corinthians 11:3); and for the same reason, ראש is the general metaphorical appellation of him who is most exalted, the most excellent, the chief. He who blesses lays his hand upon the head of the person to be blessed (Genesis 48:14; comp. 49:26; Proverbs 10:6), and he who consecrates, on the head of the person to be consecrated (Jeremiah 8:10); so that from thence, blessing and consecration, like the anointing oil (Psalm 133:2, comp. Leviticus 8:12), should flow down upon the whole natural condition, and pervade it. Precisely for the same reason, tongues of fire are distributed on the heads of the apostles, and they became thus full of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:3): it was their heavenly laying on of hands (מִנִּיחָה) (pgs. 300-301, *A System of Biblical Psychology*, 2nd English ed., trans. Robert Ernest Wallis. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1885).

⁷⁷⁹ Note the emphasis placed upon prophesying in Acts 2:18 in comparison with the source of Joel 2:29. Furthermore, Luke-Acts employs the verb προφητεύω uniformly for a miraculous gift of inspired speech (Luke 1:67; 22:64; Acts 2:17, 18; 19:6; 21:9). For that matter, the verb προφητεύω appears 28 times in 27 verses in the New Testament, but none of these texts clearly refers to uninspired discourse (Matthew 7:22; 11:13; 15:7; 26:68; Mark 7:6; 14:65; Luke 1:67; 22:64; John 11:51; Acts 2:17-18; 19:6; 21:9; 1 Corinthians 11:4-5; 13:9; 14:1, 3-5, 24, 31, 39; 1 Peter 1:10; Jude 1:14; Revelation 10:11; 11:3). The related noun προφητεία is found 19 times in the New Testament (Matthew 13:14; Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:10; 13:2, 8; 14:6, 22; 1 Thessalonians 5:20; 1 Timothy 1:18; 4:14; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Revelation 1:3; 11:6; 19:10; 22:7, 10, 18-19). None of these texts clearly designate anything less than speech given by inspiration. The final relevant word in the New Testament is the adjective προφητικός, which appears in 2 verses (Romans 16:26; 2 Peter 1:19). Both of these texts clearly refer to inspired Scripture. Furthermore, there are no references in the Old Testament that employ the *prophecy* word group for anything less than something that is inspired by God (or false prophecy by false prophets that claimed inspiration, 1 Kings 22:12; Jeremiah 2:8, etc.)—simple uninspired preaching is never clearly designated *prophecy*. The 16 instances of προφητεία in the LXX, both in the canonical books and the Apocrypha (2 Chronicles 15:8; 32:32; Ezra 5:1; 6:14; Nehemiah 6:12; Tobit 2:6; Sirach 0:20; 24:33; 36:14; 39:1; 44:3; 46:1, 20; Jeremiah 23:31; Daniel 11:14; 14:1), are consistent with this view. Likewise, the 117 instances of the verb προφητεύω in 103 verses in the LXX (canon + Apocrypha: Numbers 11:25-27; 1 Samuel 10:5-6, 10, 13; 19:20-21, 23-24; 1 Kings 18:29; 22:10, 12, 18; 2 Chronicles 18:7, 9, 11, 17; 20:37; 1 Esdras 6:1; 7:3; Ezra 5:1; Judith 6:2; Wisdom 14:28; Sirach 46:20-47:1; 48:13; Amos 2:12; 3:8; 7:12-13, 15-16; Joel 3:1; Zechariah 13:3-4; Jeremiah 2:8; 5:31; 11:21; 14:13-16; 19:14; 20:1, 6; 23:13, 21, 25-26, 32; 25:14; 32:13, 30; 33:9, 11-12, 20; 34:10, 14-16; 35:6, 8-9; 36:9, 26-27, 31; 39:3; 44:19; Ezekiel 4:7; 6:2; 11:4, 13; 12:27; 13:2-3, 16-17; 21:2, 7, 14, 19, 33; 25:2; 28:21; 29:2; 30:2; 34:2; 35:2; 36:1, 3, 6; 37:4, 7, 9-10, 12;

signs and wonders (2:4, 17-19, 43). In accordance with the division of the book of Acts in 1:8 into Spirit-blessed witness in “Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth,” the Spirit, who came upon and validated the church to Jews in Acts 2, performed similar works in Acts 8 with Samaritans, in Acts 10 to Gentiles within the compass of the Promised Land (10:24) who were connected to Judaism,⁷⁸⁰ and in Acts 19 to Gentiles outside of the Land with no previous connection to Judaism, representing the “uttermost parts of the earth.” As the baptism with the Spirit brought visible miraculous evidence, particularly the ability to speak in tongues, “which [those present could] see and hear” (Acts 2:33), so in Acts 8, Philip, who had already received the Spirit, did “miracles and signs” (Acts 8:13). Thus, the receipt of the Holy Ghost was again accompanied with visible evidence such as tongues speaking, which could be seen and heard (Acts 2:33), for “Simon *saw* that . . . the Holy Ghost was given” (Acts 8:18).⁷⁸¹ In Acts 10, “they of the circumcision which believed were astonished . . .

38:2, 14; 39:1) provide no clear instances of anything less than references to inspired speech. While powerful preaching should follow the pattern of inspired prophetic preaching, uninspired speech is not Biblical prophecy, except in the sense that, as it correctly interprets and applies the Word, it is “as the oracles of God” (1 Peter 4:11).

Thus, the *prophecy* spoken of by Peter in Acts 2 as a fulfillment of Joel 2 refers to a miraculous spiritual gift, not simply to non-miraculous though Spirit-empowered preaching.

⁷⁸⁰ “Cornelius the centurion [was] a just man, and one that feare[d] God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews . . . a devout *man*, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always” (Acts 10:22, 2). Both he and his entire household (cf. also 10:7) were “God-fearers,” (cf. also 13:16, 26). “Proselytes in the NT were called ‘Godfearing’ or those who ‘fear God,’ . . . In [the] synagogues were also men who were ‘devout converts to Judaism’ (Acts 13:43) and people described as ‘men who fear God,’ Gentiles who were ‘proselytes of the gate’ and not fully converted to Judaism or involved in the synagogue, but who liked its high moral character and monotheism. . . . It is undoubtedly true that for every full convert to Judaism there were many partial converts who accepted almost all of Judaism in the realm of belief and practice with the exception of circumcision. They were referred to in the 1st century as ‘those who fear (worship) God’ (*The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, gen. ed. Merrill C. Tenney. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1963, elec. acc.; Articles *Fear*, *Galatians*, *Epistle to*; *Proselyte*). Thus, although Gentiles, Cornelius and his household had strong connections to Judaism and were therefore different from those in Acts 19, who were simply Gentiles without any kind of previous Jewish connection. Note also that before Acts 10 (and some continued to act so even after that time) the church was “preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only” (Acts 11:19), while between Acts 10 and 19, Paul preached, “children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent” (Acts 13:26). After Acts 19, the church freely offered the gospel to “whosoever will” (cf. Revelation 22:17) without any kind of Jewish, Samaritan, God-fearer, or normal Gentile distinction.

⁷⁸¹ “*And when Simon saw, &c.* Whence it appears, that the Holy Ghost, or his gifts, which were received by imposition of hands, were something visible and discernible; and so something external, and not internal; otherwise they would have been out of Simon’s reach, and would not have fallen under his notice; but he saw, *that through laying on of the apostles’ hands, the Holy Ghost was given:* he saw, that upon this men began to prophesy, and to speak with divers tongues they had never learned, and to work miracles, cure men of their diseases, and the like” (Comment on Acts 8:18, John Gill, *An Exposition of the Old and New Testament*, elec. acc. *Online Bible for Mac*). “*That they might receive the Holy Ghost.* The main question here is, what was meant by the Holy Ghost? In Ac 8:20, it is called ‘the gift of God.’ The following remarks may make this plain: (1.) It was not that gift of the Holy Ghost by which the soul is

because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God” (Acts 10:45-46).⁷⁸² The coming of the Spirit here was very obviously attended with miraculous ability to speak in unlearned foreign languages. Finally, when “the Holy Ghost came on them [who had just previously believed and been saved];⁷⁸³ . . . they spake with tongues, and prophesied” (Acts 19:6). The signs and wonders of Acts 2 accredited the church to the Jews, who require a sign (1 Corinthians 1:22), as the Lord’s new institution of service, replacing the Jerusalem temple (Matthew 23:38). Likewise, the miracles of Acts 8, 10, and 19, in each of which Jews were present, demonstrated that the Lord did indeed want Samaritans and Gentiles incorporated into His newly authenticated church. With the events of Acts 19, the progression of Acts 1:8 was complete—the miraculous coming of the Spirit as the

converted, or renewed, for they had this when they believed, Ac 8:6. Everywhere the conversion of the sinner is traced to his influence. Comp. Joh 1:13. (2.) It was not the ordinary influences of the Spirit by which the soul is sanctified; for sanctification is a progressive work, and this was sudden: sanctification is shown by the general tenor of the life; this was sudden and striking. (3.) It was something that was discernible by external effects; for Simon saw [Ac 8:18] that this was done by the laying on of hands. (4.) The phrase, ‘the gift of the Holy Ghost,’ and ‘the descent of the Holy Ghost,’ signified not merely his ordinary influences in converting sinners, but those extraordinary influences that attended the first preaching of the gospel—the power of speaking with new tongues, Ac 2, the power of working miracles, etc., Ac 19:6. (5.) This is further clear from the fact that Simon wished to purchase this power, evidently to keep up his influence among the people, and to retain his ascendancy as a juggler and sorcerer. But surely Simon would not wish to purchase the converting and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit; it was the power of working miracles. These things make it clear that by the gift of the Holy Spirit here is meant the power of speaking with new tongues, (comp. 1 Cor 14) and the power of miracles . . . *Simon saw*, etc. That is, he witnessed the extraordinary effects, the power of speaking in a miraculous manner” (*Notes on the New Testament*, Albert Barnes, comments on Acts 8:15, 18 elec. acc. *Online Bible for Mac*).

⁷⁸² It is noteworthy that Peter, explaining Christ’s gift of the Spirit to the Gentiles in Acts 11:1-18, did not appeal to the OT to prove Gentiles were to receive the Spirit in the church age, as he appealed to Joel 2 for the Jews at Pentecost.

⁷⁸³ Compare the analysis of Acts 19:1-7 above in endnote 21. It is also worthy of note that, contrary to the Oneness Pentecostal twist on the PCP doctrine of Spirit baptism, Acts 19:1-7 demonstrates that the formula given in Matthew 28:19 was employed by the apostolic churches, and that Trinitarian baptism is actually baptism in Christ’s “name,” that is, with His 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 even in the act of baptism! ‘Unto what then were ye baptized?’” Oneness Pentecostals would have to imagine Paul thinking, “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.”

inauguration of permanent Spirit-indwelling for the church and all saints in the age of grace had commenced. In each instance, Acts 2, 8, 10, and 19, a particular group—Jews, Samaritans, Gentiles in the Promised Land with a connection to Judaism, and finally all other Gentiles—received the Spirit. In each instance, miraculous ability to speak in tongues and other external supernatural manifestations were evident. With the events of Acts 19, the dispensational transition of the coming of the Spirit was complete.

The Spirit's being *poured out* or *shed forth* (Acts 2:17, 18, 33), employing the Greek verb *ekkeo* (ἐκκέω), is employed in Acts 2 in connection with Spirit baptism.⁷⁸⁴ This one-time event⁷⁸⁵ where the Father, at the Son's request, poured out the Holy Ghost in accordance with the prediction of Joel 2:28-32, is employed in Luke-Acts only for the unrepeatable event of Pentecost. This NT use of *ekkeo* is consistent with the facts that the Hebrew verb *shafach* (שָׁפַח), employed in Joel 2 and discussed above, "does not mean a gradual pouring as required, but rather a sudden, massive spillage," that the LXX employs *ekkeo* to render *shafach* in the three passages where the latter verb is connected with the outpouring of the Spirit (Joel 2:28-29; Zechariah 12:10; Ezekiel 39:29), and that the Greek verb is not employed in the Greek Old Testament in connection with Spirit outpouring in any other passage. No other text in Luke-Acts connects the work of the Spirit with *ekkeo*,⁷⁸⁶ although the closely related but distinct verb *ekkunno* (ἐκκύννω)⁷⁸⁷

⁷⁸⁴ It is the opinion of this writer that there are indeed distinctions in the different terms employed for the coming of the Spirit in Acts 2, 8, 10, 19, as explicated in the following paragraphs. Some distinctions are more evident (as that *receive* refers to simply the coming of the Spirit for the purpose of indwelling, whether through Spirit baptism of one already converted before Pentecost or at the moment of regeneration after the post-Pentecost transition, in contrast to words, such as *pour out*, specifically used for the coming of the Spirit associated with miraculous phenomena) than others. However, even if one wished to maintain that the various terms analyzed below are essentially synonymous, it would not alter the fundamental nature of Spirit baptism as a historical event accompanied with signs and wonders that was completed in the first century and was synonymous with Christ's sending of the Comforter.

Note endnote 35 for the technical distinction between the Spirit's being *poured out* and Spirit *baptism*, and the comments on some of the other terms discussed in the following paragraphs.

⁷⁸⁵ There is no exegetical basis in the New Testament for praying for the Spirit to be repeatedly poured out in the church age to send revival or for any other reason. No durative, progressive verb tense is employed with the verb ἐκκέω in the New Testament for the Spirit being poured out; the future tense, which is aspectually like the aorist, is employed for the prediction of the pouring out which took place once for all at Pentecost (Acts 2:17-18; Joel 3:1-2, LXX), and the aorist is employed for the actual pouring out that took place on that day (Acts 2:33). The indwelling and renewing of the Spirit that takes place at regeneration is possibly also connected with ἐκκέω in the aorist (Titus 3:5-6). The "pour out" language is not employed in the New Testament for a work from the Spirit of deepening the saint's spiritual life, reviving a congregation, or anything of the sort. Although God may mercifully do great things for misguided saints of His, praying for the Spirit to be poured out again in the church age and similar instances of errant Pneumatology do not contribute to genuine revival. Believers should not grieve the Holy Ghost and disregard or deny the sufficiency of the glorious work God has already done in pouring out the Spirit by asking for Him to be again outpoured. Compare endnote 64.

⁷⁸⁶ Titus 3:5-6 speaks of "the Holy Ghost; which [the Father] shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Πνεύματος Ἁγίου, οὗ ἐξέχεεν ἐφ' ἡμᾶς πλουσίως, διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ

is employed in Acts 10:45 for the closely related but distinct miraculous work of the Spirit on the Gentiles in Acts 10. When “the Holy Ghost . . . [was] shed forth” or poured out, visible miracles, “which ye now see and hear,” were connected with the event (Acts 2:33). Thus, the outpouring of the Spirit was for those already converted and already church members, it took place once for the entire church age in Acts chapter two, and it was accompanied with signs and wonders. For the Spirit to be outpoured again, He would have to leave the earth, which He will not do for the entire dispensation of grace. However, after He is removed at the Rapture, He will be outpoured again on Israel in the Tribulation in the ultimate fulfillment of Joel chapter two.

In contrast to the once-for-all outpouring of the Spirit on the church for the entirety of the dispensation of grace in Acts 2, when the Spirit’s validation of Samaritans⁷⁸⁸ and Gentiles as fit members of the NT church in Acts 8 and 10 is in view,

σωτήρος ἡμῶν). Here an allusion back to Pentecost is likely, since the *historia salutis* is in view in the sentence (3:4). Consider, in light of the significance of $\overline{\Gamma}\overline{\Psi}$ as a massive outpouring and the NT rendering of the verb with ἐκχέω, that Titus 3:6 specifies that the Holy Ghost was “shed on us abundantly” (ἐξέχεεν ἐφ’ ἡμᾶς πλουσίως). The text contains a “clear allusion to the tradition of Pentecost (ἐκχέω is used with the Spirit in the NT only here and in Acts 2:17, 18, 33) . . . [to] the Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit” (pg. 166, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, James Dunn).

Even if one affirms that there is no Pentecostal allusion in Titus 3:5-6, and that Paul connects the moment of personal regeneration with the verb ἐκχέω in the text, it would not follow that there is not a distinction made in Luke-Acts between Spirit baptism and regeneration. Rather, the employment of ἐκχέω for both the historical, completed event of the sending of the Comforter—that is, Spirit baptism (Acts 2:17-18, 33)—and for the indwelling of the Spirit (Romans 8:9) associated with regeneration (Titus 3:5-6) would manifest that the Spirit baptism event constituted the transition from the Old Testament “with you” to the church age “in you” ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 14:17). After the already saved and baptized church members in Acts 2 received Spirit baptism, they were henceforward permanently indwelt by the Spirit, and this ministry of permanent indwelling is the inheritance of all believers after the conclusion of the dispensational transition associated with Spirit baptism. While Spirit baptism marked the point of dispensational transition to the permanent indwelling ministry of the Holy Ghost in the first century, the use of ἐκχέω in both Acts and Titus (where an allusion back to the events of Pentecost is most likely, in which case nowhere does the New Testament connect ἐκχέω and anything that continues throughout the dispensation of grace) certainly cannot legitimately be used to affirm that Spirit baptism is a synonym throughout the church age for the commencement of indwelling connected with regeneration.

⁷⁸⁷ BDAG, defining ἐκχέω, indicates that “beside it [is] the Hellenistic Greek form ἐκχύν(ν)ω.” Luke was perfectly able to use exactly the same forms he did in Acts 2 to express the idea of *pour out*, but he chose not to do so. While in Acts 10:45 ἐκχύννω is in the perfect tense (as it is, interestingly, in Romans 5:5), and ἐκχέω is not found in the NT in the perfect, ἐκχύννω is employed by Luke in the tenses employed for ἐκχέω in Acts 2, so the possibility that in Luke’s vocabulary some tenses simply employed the one verb form or the other is unlikely, and a deliberate choice remains the preferred explanation.

⁷⁸⁸ Charles Ryrie comments, “The best explanation of this delay [of the coming of the Spirit as recorded in Acts 8 until the imposition of hands by Peter and John] seems to lie in the schismatic nature of the Samaritan religion. Because the Samaritans had their own worship, which was a rival to the Jewish worship in Jerusalem, it was necessary to prove to [the Jews] that [the Samaritans’] new faith was not to be set up as a rival to the new faith that had taken root in Jerusalem. And the best way for God to show the Samaritan believers that they belonged to the same faith and group as Jerusalem believers (and contrariwise, the best way to show the Jerusalem leaders that the Samaritans were genuinely saved) was to delay giving of the Spirit until Peter and John came from Jerusalem to Samaria. There could be no doubt

the Spirit is said to *fall upon* (ἐπιπίπτω) them after their conversion (Acts 8:16; 10:44; 11:15). Christ baptized the church with the Spirit directly and immediately in Acts 2, and the benefits of this one-time event were transmitted mediately through the apostles to Samaritans and Gentiles in Acts 8, 10, and 19, explaining the connection of the miraculous fruits of Spirit baptism in connection with the laying on of apostolic hands. The uniqueness of Acts 2, as the actual and unrepeatable act of Spirit baptism, is supported by the appearances of tongues of fire on each member of the pre-Pentecost church (2:2-3), a miracle not repeated in the coming of the Spirit on the groups in Acts 8, 10, and 19. The Spirit fell upon the Samaritans subsequent to both faith and baptism in Acts 8, and the Greek construction employed for the Spirit's falling upon men in 8:16 suggests that the falling took place at one point in time, with abiding results.⁷⁸⁹ Furthermore, no text in Acts or elsewhere in the New Testament portrays the Spirit as repeatedly falling upon anyone.⁷⁹⁰ One would have expected the Spirit to fall upon the Gentiles in Acts 10 after their faith and baptism as well, but Peter and his Jewish brethren would never have accepted the immersion of Gentiles had the Spirit not come on them first; as it was, they "were astonished" that the Spirit had fallen upon the Gentiles (10:45) but recognized the fact as proof that God wanted them added to the church by immersion, which they consequently performed (10:47-48)—although even in this situation the addition of uncircumcised Gentiles to the church was an occasion of trouble which Peter needed to explain and defend (11:3ff.). In both Acts 8 and 10, the Spirit fell upon the Samaritans and Gentiles subsequent to the point of their faith in Christ, with an emphasis upon them as a corporate body, rather than as individuals, just as in Acts 2 and 19 the coming of the Spirit took place after saving faith.⁷⁹¹ Since Peter states, "the Holy Ghost

then that this was one and the same faith and that they all belonged together in the Body of Christ. This delay in the giving of the Spirit saved the early church from having two mother churches—one in Jerusalem and one in Samaria—early in her history. It preserved the unity of the church[es] in this early stage" (pg. 71, *The Holy Spirit*).

⁷⁸⁹ ἦν [ἐπ' . . . αὐτοῶν] . . . ἐπιπεπτωκός, a pluperfect periphrastic. "It is easy to see how in the present, and especially in the future, periphrastic forms were felt to be needed to emphasize durative action. But that was the real function of the imperfect tense. The demand for this stressing of the durative idea by ἦν and the present participle was certainly not so great. And yet it is just in the imperfect in the N. T. that this idiom is most frequent" (pgs. 887-888, A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1934).

⁷⁹⁰ The perfect tense of ἐκχύνω in Acts 10:45 likewise suggests a one-time coming of the Spirit with continuing results.

⁷⁹¹ While in Acts 8 the Spirit appears to have fallen upon each particular saved and baptized Samaritan when hands were laid on him (note the imperfect tenses in ἐπετίθουν τὰς χεῖρας ἐπ' αὐτούς, καὶ ἐλάβανον Πνεῦμα Ἅγιον in Acts 8:17), a group idea is still present. Likewise, in Acts 10:44, the Spirit fell upon the entire group at one particular moment, so unless each member of the entire group had placed his faith in the Lord Jesus at exactly the same moment, the Spirit fell upon them all not only in logical but also in temporal subsequence to their conversion. Temporal subsequence also fits the

fell on them [Gentiles, Acts 10], as on us [Jews, Acts 2] at the beginning” (Acts 11:15), the book of Acts indicates that it is appropriate to view the pouring out of the Holy Ghost on the church in Acts 2 as another instance of the Spirit falling upon a body of people. It is likely that the *falling upon* terminology emphasizes the coming of the Spirit from heaven upon a particular group of believers and is thus appropriately employed for any of the miraculous bestowals of the Spirit recorded in Acts 2, 8, 10 and 19. However, this terminology is never employed for the receipt of the Spirit by individuals at the moment of conversion; nor is it ever found apart from the miraculous bestowal of the gift of tongues; nor is it ever connected with any kind of PCP blessing on those already Spirit-indwelt.

In Acts two, the Spirit was *poured out* on the 120 pre-Pentecost church members, but Acts 2:38 promised those who “repent . . . [that they] shall *receive* [λαμβάνω] the gift of the Holy Ghost.”⁷⁹² *Receive* terminology is employed both for the indwelling of

comparison of this event to the outpouring of the Spirit in Acts 2 made in Acts 11:15-17, for faith certainly preceded Spirit baptism in Acts 2. One notes also the aorist tense participle πιστεύουσιν in 11:17, which would be consistent with temporal subsequence to the verb ἔδωκεν, thus demonstrating that the Gentiles believed before the gift of the Spirit was given, although it is true enough that aorist participles when dependent upon aorist verbs are at times temporally simultaneous.

The fact that the the Spirit fell upon the groups in Acts 2, 8, and 10 and 19 subsequent to faith, and upon the groups of Acts 2, 8, and 19 after their baptism as well (Acts 10, the only exception, is present only because the apostles would never have baptized the Gentiles at all without the miraculous validation), demolishes the UCD claim that “[n]ever in Scripture is baptism by the Spirit recorded as occurring subsequent to salvation. It is rather an inseparable part of it, so essential that it is impossible to be saved without it” (pg. 140, *The Holy Spirit: A Comprehensive Study*, Walvoord). Rather, the truth is that never in Scripture is baptism by the Spirit recorded as occurring at the same moment as saving faith, so that everyone who has been saved has been saved without it. Spirit baptism was promised to already immersed believers in the gospels (compare endnote 23), and the fulfillment in Acts fit the prediction. To support his assertion of the necessity of Spirit baptism for salvation, UCD advocate John Walvoord even affirms that “the converts on the Day of Pentecost . . . include[d] the apostles” (pg. 144, *ibid.*)! Rather, as the Head of the church was immersed in water before the Spirit descended upon and authenticated Him in connection with the beginning of His ministry (Matthew 3:13-17), so the church, Christ’s body, was first immersed in water and then baptized with the Spirit on Pentecost (Acts 2) to authenticate her as God’s new institution for the age.

⁷⁹² The grammatical structure of Acts 2:38 connects the receipt of the Holy Spirit (and thus the new birth “of the Spirit,” John 3, 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/on account of (cf. Matthew 3:11) (*eis*) the remission of sins
 ye shall receive (2nd person future indicative) . . . the Holy Ghost

Both the command to repent and the promise of receipt of the Holy Spirit are in the second person (i.e. e, “Repent [ye]” and “ye shall receive”). The command to be baptized is third person singular, as is the adjective “every one” (*hekastos*, a partitive genitive, indicating the group from which each person was derived.). Peter commands the whole crowd to repent and promises those who turn from sin to Christ the gift of the Holy Ghost. While the call to baptism was only for the “every one of you” that had already

the Spirit experienced by all believers after the transitional period connected with the baptism of the Holy Ghost in Acts, which was not connected with signs and wonders (cf. Romans 8:9), and for the commencement of His indwelling in those who experienced Spirit baptism and its concomitant speaking in tongues. Thus, the Spirit was *received* by the 3000 men converted on Pentecost, but He was *poured out* also (and in this manner likewise *received*) by the 120 members of the pre-Pentecost church. There is no evidence that the 3000 spoke in tongues or manifested any miraculous gifts when they repented, or at any subsequent point whatever, other than the certain manifestation of the miraculously bestowed new nature bestowed on all saints in regeneration (2:41-47; 2 Corinthians 5:17). Christ received from the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost (2:33), and the Son gives the Spirit to all who find salvation (2:38-39), but the “promise” (2:39) of the possession of the Holy Ghost is of Him as a Person, not of some particular manner of His coming, such as Spirit baptism with its accompanying signs and wonders. *Receipt* of the Spirit is thus specified as a gift for believers throughout the dispensation of grace; the Spirit is received at the point of conversion or regeneration (John 3:5) in Luke-Acts (Acts 2:38) and elsewhere in Scripture (John 7:39; Galatians 3:14). However, *receive* language is also used for the action of the Spirit’s falling upon men in the dispensationally transitional events accompanied with miraculous phenomena in Acts 2, 8, and 10 (Acts 8:15-19; 10:47; cf. Acts 19:2, 6; John 20:22).

The baptism of the Holy Ghost, accompanied with tongues speaking,⁷⁹³ is also associated with the Spirit’s *coming upon* (ἐπέρχομαι . . . ἐπί) the church in Acts 1:8. Consequently, this language is employed in the beginning of Acts for the miraculous coming of the Spirit and is found elsewhere in the New Testament only in the beginning

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. 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

The connection in Acts 2:38 between the receipt of the Holy Spirit and repentance, rather than baptism, overthrows attempts to find baptismal regeneration in the verse.

⁷⁹³ One could view the speaking about the wondrous works of God in different tongues in Acts two as a reversal of the Tower of Babel. It is very possible that the “Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven” (Ἰουδαῖοι, ἄνδρες εὐλαβεῖς, ἀπὸ παντὸς ἔθνους τῶν ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανόν, Acts 2:5) included at least one descendent from each of the approximately seventy “nations” into which the earth was divided after the Flood and the tower of Babel (Genesis 10:32); if so, every ethnic “nation” under heaven truly was represented at Pentecost.

of Luke's gospel, where the miraculous work of the Spirit within Mary is associated with the coming of the Son into the world (Luke 1:35).⁷⁹⁴ The miraculous coming of the Spirit associated with tongues speaking, as found in Acts 19:6, employs similar—but not identical—“coming upon” language (ἐρχομαι . . . ἐπί), found elsewhere in the NT (yet cf. Ezekiel 2:2; 3:24, 37:9; Wisdom 7:7; LXX) only in the record of Christ's baptism with its associated visibly miraculous manifestation of the Spirit (Matthew 3:16). The pneumatological *coming upon* language of Acts is thus appropriately considered as necessarily accompanied with signs and wonders.

The historic Baptist view of Spirit baptism fits the evidence found in the book of Acts. The baptism of the Holy Ghost was the validation of the church as God's new institution for worship, comparable to the coming of the *shekinah* into the tabernacle and temple in the Old Testament. Accompanied by miraculous signs and wonders, Christ baptized the church as a one-time event in Acts two on the day of Pentecost. As the Jewish church of Pentecost spread to the Samaritans (Acts 8), Gentiles connected with Judaism and in the Promised Land (Acts 10), and Gentiles without any previous Jewish connection (Acts 19), the Spirit came upon these new groups with similar signs and wonders, although mediately through the apostles as representatives and leaders of the church, in fulfillment of the outline provided in Acts 1:8. With the immediate baptism of the church by Christ in Acts 2, and the coming of the Spirit as mediated by the apostles on the groups in Acts 8, 10, and 19, Spirit baptism was complete, never to be repeated in the church age. The evidence of the book of Acts contradicts the UCD view. Spirit baptism was corporate, not individual. It was a post-conversion event, not one synonymous with conversion. It was always associated with miraculous signs and wonders including tongues, while tongues and other miraculous gifts have now ceased (1 Corinthians 13:8).⁷⁹⁵ Spirit baptism took place after the moment of faith and, with one exception, after baptism as well; it did not take place at the moment of saving faith. It was associated with the historically completed sending of the Comforter, and was very far from being an act unaccompanied by visible miraculous phenomena that is repeated until the Rapture whenever a sinner is regenerated. The evidence of the book of Acts

⁷⁹⁴ But cf. also Isaiah 32:15, LXX: ἕως ἂν ἐπέλθῃ ἐφ' ὑμᾶς πνεῦμα ἀφ' ὕψιλου καὶ ἔσται ἔρημος ὁ Χερμελ καὶ ὁ Χερμελ εἰς δρυμόν λογισθήσεται.

⁷⁹⁵ See “1 Corinthians 13:8-13 and the Cessation of Miraculous Gifts,” R. Bruce Compton (*Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 9 (2004) 97-144) for an excellent exposition of 1 Corinthians 13 that proves the Biblical cessation of tongues by the time of the completion of the canon of Scripture. Since tongues are universally conjoined with Spirit baptism, as evidenced in Acts, and since tongues have ceased, Spirit baptism must also have ceased. Could it be that miraculous gifts were limited to those who either received Spirit baptism or were alive and converted by the time of the events of Acts 2, 8, 10, and 19, and that the miraculous gifts ceased with the passing away of that generation (cf. Hebrews 2:3-4; Mark 16:17, 20)?

also contradicts the PCP view. PCPs interpret Spirit baptism as an individual, not corporate event. Most PCPs do not claim that they receive the same ability to do miracles, signs, and wonders as were found in Acts, while the evidence belies the claims of those that do so claim.⁷⁹⁶ Furthermore, the Comforter has already come to indwell the church, so Spirit baptism simply does not happen today. Only the historic Baptist doctrine of Spirit baptism fits the evidence of the book of Acts.

D. Spirit baptism: The alleged reference in 1 Corinthians 12:13

1 Corinthians 12:13 is the lynchpin upon which the structure of UCD doctrine of Spirit baptism is based.⁷⁹⁷ Deprived of the verse, it is very difficult to even attempt to defend it exegetically. The verse reads, “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.”⁷⁹⁸ UCDs argue that “in this dispensation those who place their faith in Jesus Christ have been baptized into the body of Christ, both Jew and Gentile, and are now seen as one in the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12–13). . . . According to 1 Corinthians 12:13, it is the Spirit who baptizes Jew and Gentile into one body.”⁷⁹⁹ The UCD affirms: “Every believer is baptized by the Spirit[.] . . . The Spirit forms the church . . . by baptizing all believers into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12, 13).”⁸⁰⁰ However, 1 Corinthians 12:13 teaches nothing of the kind.

⁷⁹⁶ No modern PCP advocate speaks in Biblical tongues because tongues have ceased (cf. the article referenced in the last endnote). Modern PCPs who claim to possess the apostolic gift of healing do not instantly heal everyone of every disease without fail (Acts 5:16), do not raise the dead (Acts 9:40; 20:9-10), and do not perform other truly apostolic signs and wonders.

⁷⁹⁷ In the words of the UCD John F. Walvoord: “[T]he Scriptures make it plain that every Christian is baptized by the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation. Salvation and baptism are therefore coextensive, and it is impossible to be saved without this work of the Holy Spirit. This is expressly stated in the central passage on the doctrine, ‘For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit’” (pg. 423, “The Person of the Holy Spirit Part 7: The Work of the Holy Spirit in Salvation.” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 98:392 (Oct 41) 421-447. Indeed, “1 Corinthians 12:13 . . . [is] [t]he major passage, which may be taken as the basis of interpretation of the other passages . . . [namely, the] eleven specific references to spiritual baptism . . . Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16; Romans 6:1-4; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:27; Ephesians 4:5; Colossians 2:12” (pg. 139, *The Holy Spirit: A Comprehensive Study of the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit*, John F. Walvoord).

While 1 Corinthians 12:13 is important to the PCP advocate as well, it is only so as an allegedly supportive element of the PCP position, not as the central verse for the entire theological construction.

⁷⁹⁸ καὶ γὰρ ἐν ἑνὶ Πνεύματι ἡμεῖς πάντες εἰς ἓν σῶμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν, εἴτε Ἰουδαῖοι εἴτε Ἕλληνες, εἴτε δοῦλοι εἴτε ἐλεύθεροι· καὶ πάντες εἰς ἓν Πνεῦμα ἐποτίσθημεν.

⁷⁹⁹ pgs. 193-194, “Does Progressive Dispensationalism Teach A Posttribulational Rapture?—Part I,” John Brumett. *Conservative Theological Journal*, 2:5 (June 1998).

⁸⁰⁰ Note on Acts 2:4, *Scofield Reference Bible*, ed. C. I. Scofield. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1945.

In 1 Corinthians 12:13, Paul teaches that the members of the church at Corinth, led by the Holy Spirit, were all baptized in water to join the membership of that local assembly—the particular congregation, not a non-existent universal church, being the body of Christ—and that all the members of that assembly partook of the common blessing of the Lord’s Supper. The theological division between UCDs and historic Baptists on the significance of 1 Corinthians 12:13 may be resolved into the following elenctics: a.) Is the body of Christ the visible congregation or a universal, invisible church? b.) Does Christ baptize with the Spirit, or does the Holy Spirit baptize? c.) Was Spirit baptism a completed historical phenomenon at the time Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, or is it an event that takes place regularly throughout the entire dispensation of grace?

a.) Is the body of Christ the visible congregation or a universal, invisible church?

The body of Christ, referred to in 1 Corinthians 12:13, is the particular, local assembly. It is not a universal and invisible church, because no such entity is found in the New Testament. While a discussion of the many proofs of the unscriptural nature of the universal church dogma would go beyond the boundaries of the present composition,⁸⁰¹ it will briefly be noted that the word translated *church*, *ekklesia* (ἐκκλησία), is never used for a universal, invisible entity in any of its 115 appearances in the New Testament.⁸⁰² The LXX, in accord with the significance of the word in

⁸⁰¹ Interestingly, UCD John Walvoord wrote, “The principle cause of disagreement . . . on the doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit . . . is found in the common failure to apprehend the distinctive nature of the church” (pg. 138, *The Holy Spirit: A Comprehensive Study of the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit*). The false doctrine of a universal, invisible church is indeed a tremendous barrier to a recognition of the correct view of Spirit baptism, the historic Baptist position, and an unsound prop of the UCD and PCP positions. For representative refutations of the universal church dogma, see *Ecclesia*, B. H. Carroll (Emmaus, PA: Challenge Press, n. d. reprint ed.; also available at <http://sites.google.com/site/thross7>), *The Myth of the Universal, Invisible Church Theory Exploded*, Roy Mason (Emmaus, PA: Challenge Press, 2003), and *Landmarks of Baptist Doctrine*, Robert Sargent, vol. 4 (Oak Harbor, WA: Bible Baptist Church Publications, 1990), pgs. 481-542. One notes that even non-evangelical scholars such as “James Dunn[,] [who] needs no introduction, for his prolific scholarship ensures that he is one of the most well known NT scholars in the world . . . [believes that] particular and local assemblies are the church of God in Paul, and any idea of the universal church is absent” (pg. 99, book review of *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, James D. G. Dunn. Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1998, by Thomas R. Schreiner. *Trinity Journal* 20:1 (Spring 1999)).

⁸⁰² The word appears in Matthew 16:18; 18:17; Acts 2:47; 5:11; 7:38; 8:1,3; 9:31; 11:22, 26; 12:1, 5; 13:1; 14:23, 27; 15:3-4, 22, 41; 16:5; 18:22; 19:32, 39, 41; 20:17, 28; Romans 16:1, 4-5, 16, 23; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 4:17; 6:4; 7:17; 10:32; 11:16, 18, 22; 12:28; 14:4-5, 12, 19, 23, 28, 33-35; 15:9; 16:1, 19; 2 Corinthians 1:1; 8:1, 18-19, 23-24; 11:8, 28; 12:13; Galatians 1:2, 13, 22; Ephesians 1:22; 3:10, 21; 5:23-25, 27, 29, 32; Philippians 3:6; 4:15; Colossians 1:18, 24; 4:15-16; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2:14; 2 Thessalonians 1:1, 4; 1 Timothy 3:5, 15; 5:16; Philemon 2; Hebrews 2:12; 12:23; James 5:14; 3 John 6, 9-10; Revelation 1:4, 11, 20; 2:1, 7-8, 11-12, 17-18, 23, 29; 3:1, 6-7, 13-14, 22; 22:16. The small minority of uses where an individual congregation in a particular location is not in view (cf. “Christ is the head of the

church,” Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18) do not prove the existence of a universal, invisible church any more than “the husband is the head of the wife” or “the head of the woman is the man” (Ephesians 5:23; 1 Corinthians 11:3; see below) establish that there is a single universal, invisible husband or a universal, invisible man made up of all individual husbands or men scattered all over world. Rather, these verses employ the word *church* as a generic noun, as a reference to any or every particular church (or husband, man, etc.) in the class *church* (husband, man, etc.). The common category of the “generic noun . . . focuses on the kind. . . . emphasizes class traits . . . [and] has in view . . . the class as a whole” (pg. 244, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*, Daniel B. Wallace. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996).

Examining Ephesians 5:23 somewhat more deeply, the phrase “Christ is the head of the church” is one of the very few passages that advocates of a universal church employ support their doctrine. Apart from the fact that the verse uses the noun *church* in a generic sense, one should compare the following New Testament texts:

Ephesians 5:23: ὅτι ὁ ἀνὴρ ἐστὶ κεφαλὴ τῆς γυναικός, ὡς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς κεφαλὴ τῆς ἐκκλησίας, καὶ αὐτὸς ἐστὶ σωτὴρ τοῦ σώματος. For **the husband is the head of the wife**, even as **Christ is the head of the church**; and he is the saviour of the body,

1Corinthians 11:3: θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς εἰδέναι, ὅτι παντὸς ἀνδρὸς ἡ κεφαλὴ ὁ Χριστὸς ἐστὶ κεφαλὴ δὲ γυναικός, ὁ ἀνὴρ κεφαλὴ δὲ Χριστοῦ, ὁ Θεός. 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.

The singular nouns “the husband” “the wife” “the woman” “the man” imply zero about a universal, invisible husband, wife, woman, or man. Absolutely nothing affirms the existence of a universal church in the phrase “Christ is the head of the church.” The Lord Jesus is the head of every particular local, visible congregation.

Note also 2 Kings 10:6, LXX:

καὶ ἔγραψεν πρὸς αὐτοὺς βιβλίον δευτέρον λέγων εἰ ἔμοι ὑμεῖς καὶ τῆς φωνῆς μου ὑμεῖς εἰσακούετε λάβετε **τὴν κεφαλὴν ἀνδρῶν τῶν υἱῶν τοῦ κυρίου ὑμῶν** καὶ ἐνέγκατε πρὸς με ὡς ἡ ὥρα αὐρίον εἰς Ιεζραὲλ καὶ οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ βασιλέως ἦσαν ἐβδομήκοντα ἄνδρες οὗτοι ἄδρῳ τῆς πόλεως ἐξέτρεφον αὐτούς And Ju wrote them a second letter, saying, If ye *are* for me, and hearken to my voice, **take the heads [Gk. singular, “head”] of the men your master’s sons**, and bring *them* to me at this time to-morrow in Jezrael. Now the sons of the king were seventy men; these great men of the city brought them up. (Brenton’s LXX translation—also below).

Nothing at all is implied about anything universal or invisible with the singular. Each son had his own particular head (until he lost it!). “the head of the sons” is teaches nothing other than that each son had his own head. So “Christ is the head of the church” teaches that Christ is the head of each particular church. Compare 2 Kings 10:8, where the plural is used:

καὶ ἦλθεν ὁ ἄγγελος καὶ ἀπήγγειλεν λέγων ἤνεγκαν **τὰς κεφαλὰς τῶν υἱῶν τοῦ βασιλέως** καὶ εἶπεν θέτε αὐτάς βουνοὺς δύο παρὰ τὴν θύραν τῆς πύλης εἰς πρωί. And a messenger came and told *him*, saying, They have brought **the heads of the king’s sons**. And he said, Lay them *in* two heaps by the door of the gate until the morning.

Psalms 139:10, LXX (Eng. 140:9):

ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ κυκλώματος αὐτῶν κόπος τῶν χειλέων αὐτῶν καλύψει αὐτούς. *As for the head of them that compass me*, the mischief of their lips shall cover them.

Note that both the Greek translated “them that compass” and “the head” are both singular nouns, just as in “Christ is the head of the church.” Each particular head of each particular enemy surrounding David would be judged.

Lamentations 2:15, LXX:

ἐκρότησαν ἐπὶ σὲ χεῖρας πάντες οἱ παραπορευόμενοι ὁδὸν **ἐσύρισαν καὶ ἐκίνησαν τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτῶν** ἐπὶ τὴν θυγατέρα Ιερουσαλημ ἥ αὕτη ἡ πόλις ἦν ἐροῦσιν στέφανος δόξης εὐφροσύνη πάσης τῆς γῆς. All that go by the way have clapped their hands at thee; **they have hissed and shaken their head** at the daughter of Jerusalem. Is this the city, they say, the crown of joy of all the earth?

Note that the plurality, the “all” shake the singular “head.” There was no universal, invisible head or universal, invisible person opposing Jerusalem. Each person shook his own particular head at Jerusalem.

Ezekiel 1:22, LXX:

καὶ ὁμοίωμα ὑπὲρ κεφαλῆς αὐτοῖς τῶν ζώων ὡσεὶ στερέωμα ὡς ὄρασις κρυστάλλου ἐκτεταμένον ἐπὶ τῶν περυγῶν αὐτῶν ἐπάνωθεν. And **the likeness over the heads** [Gk. singular] **of the living creatures** was as a firmament, as the appearance of crystal, spread out over their wings above.

“The head of the living creatures” meant that each particular living creature had its own particular head.

Ezekiel 10:1, LXX:

καὶ εἶδον καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐπάνω τοῦ στερεώματος τοῦ ὑπὲρ κεφαλῆς τῶν χερουβὶν ὡς λίθος σαπφείρου ὁμοίωμα θρόνου ἐπ’ αὐτῶν. And the likeness over **the heads** [Gk. singular] **of the living creatures** was as a firmament, as the appearance of crystal, spread out over their wings above.

“The head of the living creatures,” again, means each living creature had its own particular head.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 4:112 (4.6.4.112)

Καὶ ὁ μὲν ταῦτα τοῦ θεοῦ κελεύσαντος ἤκει πρὸς Βάλακον δεξαμένου δὲ αὐτὸν τοῦ βασιλέως ἐκπρεπῶς ἡξίου προαχθεὶς ἐπὶ τι τῶν ὄρων σκέψασθαι πῶς τὸ τῶν Ἑβραίων ἔχοι στρατόπεδον Βάλακος δ’ αὐτὸς ἀφικνεῖται τὸν μάντιν σὺν βασιλικῇ θεραπείᾳ φιλοτίμως ἀγόμενος εἰς ὄρος ὅπερ ὑπὲρ κεφαλῆς αὐτῶν ἔκειτο τοῦ στρατοπέδου σταδίους ἀπέχον ἐξήκοντα. When God had given him this charge, he came to Balak; and when the king had entertained him in a magnificent manner, he desired him to go to one of the mountains to take a view of the state of the camp of the Hebrews. Balak himself also came to the mountain, and brought the prophet along with him, with a royal attendance. **This mountain lay over their heads** [Gk. singular], and was distant sixty furlongs from the camp.

The singular mountain was over each person, each of whom had his own particular head.

Gospel of Peter 10:40:

καὶ τῶν μὲν δύο τὴν κεφαλὴν χωροῦσαν μέχρι τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, τοῦ δὲ χειραγωγούμενου ὑπ’ αὐτῶν ὑπερβαίνουσιν τοὺς οὐρανοὺς. [A]nd **the heads** [Gk. singular] **of the two reaching to heaven**, but that of him who was led by them by the hand overpassing the heavens.

Each particular individual here had his own particular head.

Philo, *Allegorical Interpretation* 1:71:

ὥσπερ οὖν κεφαλὴ μὲν πρῶτον τοῦ ζώου καὶ ἀνωτάτω μέρος ἐστί, For as **the head is the principle and uppermost part of the animal**,

Each singular animal had its own singular head. There was no universal head of a universal, invisible animal.

Philo, *On The Life of Moses* 2:290:

θαυμάσια μὲν οὖν ταῦτα· θαυμασιώτατον δὲ καὶ τὸ τέλος τῶν ἱερῶν γραμμάτων, ὃ καθάπερ ἐν τῷ ζῳῷ κεφαλὴ τῆς ὅλης νομοθεσίας ἐστίν. These things, therefore, are wonderful; and most wonderful of all is the end of his sacred writings, which is to the whole book of the law what **the head is to an animal**.

Likewise here, each animal had its own head.

Philo, *On Rewards and Punishments* 125:

ταῦτα δ’ ἀλληγορεῖται τροπικῶς ἐξενεχθέντα· καθάπερ γὰρ ἐν ζῳῷ κεφαλὴ μὲν πρῶτον καὶ ἄριστον, οὐρὰ δ’ ὕστατον καὶ φαυλότατον, οὐ μέρος συνεκπληροῦν τὸν τῶν μελῶν ἀριθμόν, ἀλλὰ σόβησις τῶν ἐπιποτωμένων, τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον κεφαλὴν μὲν τοῦ ἀνθρωπείου γένους ἔσεσθαι φησι τὸν σπουδαῖον εἴτε ἄνδρα εἴτε λαόν, τοὺς δὲ ἄλλους ἅπαντας οἷον μέρη σώματος ψυχούμενα ταῖς ἐν κεφαλῇ καὶ ὑπεράνω δυνάμεσιν. But all these statements are uttered in a metaphorical form, and contain an allegorical meaning. For **as in an animal the head** is the first and best part, and the tail the last and worst part, or rather no part at all, inasmuch as it does not complete the number of the limbs, being only a broom to sweep away what flies against it; so in the same manner what is said here is that **the virtuous man shall be the head of the human race whether he be a single man or a whole people**. And that all others, being as it were parts of the body, are only vivified by the powers existing in the head and superior portions of the body.

This very interesting reference by Philo shows that, as in a single animal there is a single head, so “the virtuous man,” a generic noun, not one particular man named X, is “the head of the human race,” and this is whether he “be a single man or the whole people.” The others are as “parts of the body,” are only “vivified” because of “the head” that is “the virtuous man.” The parallel to Christ as the head of the church is very clear. Nobody would think of saying that there is literally one universal, invisible virtuous man, nor

classical Greek, likewise employs *ekklesia* of local, visible assemblies, not of anything unassembled⁸⁰³ and invisible.⁸⁰⁴ While the *family of God* is a universal, invisible entity

that there is one universal, invisible body of people, since Philo's point is that whether one speaks of a single man, or a group of any size, in both situations the [generic] virtuous man is the [generic] head.

Ephesians 5:23 is the capstone of the very small number of New Testament texts that advocates of a universal church position believe provide support for their doctrine. However, the passage teaches nothing of the kind. It simply affirms that Christ is the head of every particular church, just as each particular husband is the head of his particular wife. There are no verses in the Bible where the noun *ekklesia*, church/assembly/congregation, refers to all believers as an already existing group.

⁸⁰³ cf. the verb ἐκκλησιάζω, "to hold an assembly, convene, assemble." (BDAG); "summon to an assembly" (Liddell, H. G. & Scott, R. *Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed., New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1996); "attend an assembly; attend a church service" (*Patristic Greek Lexicon* ed. G. W. Lampe (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007, 20th ed). The verb is always employed in the LXX and related *Koiné* literature (at least until after the time of the post-NT development of the concept of a catholic church) for a visible and local assembly, not some sort of invisible and unassembled "assembly." See Leviticus 8:3; Numbers 20:8; Deuteronomy 4:10; 31:12, 28; Esther 4:16 (LXX); Josephus, *Antiquities* 4:302; 6:56; 8:277; 10:93; 12:316; 17:161; 19:158; *War* 2:490; 7:47; Philo, *On the Migration of Abraham* 1:69; *On Joseph* 1:73; *On the Decalogue* 1:39; *Freedom* 1:6.

⁸⁰⁴ Deuteronomy 4:10; 9:10; 18:16; 23:2-4, 9; 31:30; Joshua 8:35; Judges 20:2; 21:5, 8; 1 Samuel 17:47; 19:20; 1 Kings 8:14, 22, 55, 65; 1 Chronicles 13:2, 4; 28:2, 8; 29:1, 10, 20; 2 Chronicles 1:3, 5; 6:3, 12-13; 7:8; 10:3; 20:5, 14; 23:3; 28:14; 29:23, 28, 31-32; 30:2, 4, 13, 17, 23-25; Ezra 2:64; 10:1, 8, 12, 14; Nehemiah 5:7, 13; 7:66; 8:2, 17; 13:1; Judith 6:16, 21; 7:29; 14:6; 1 Maccabees 2:56; 3:13; 4:59; 5:16; 14:19; Psalms 21:23, 26; 25:5, 12; 34:18; 39:10; 67:27; 88:6; 106:32; 149:1; Proverbs 5:14; Job 30:28; Sirach 15:5; 21:17; 23:24; 24:2; 26:5; 31:11; 33:19; 38:33; 39:10; 44:15; 46:7; 50:13, 20; Solomon 10:6; Micah 2:5; Joel 2:16; Lamentations 1:10.

B. H. Carroll's book *Ecclesia* provides a number of helpful instances of the classical use of ἐκκλησία [transliterating the word as *ecclesia*], documenting that the word, in classical Greek, signified "an organized assembly of citizens, regularly summoned, as opposed to other meetings." Note:

Thucydides 2:22: - "Pericles, seeing them angry at the present state of things... did not call them to an assembly (ecclesia) or any other meeting."

Demosthenes 378, 24: - "When after this the assembly (ecclesia) adjourned, they came together and planned ... For the future still being uncertain, meetings and speeches of all sorts took place in the marketplace. They were afraid that an assembly (ecclesia) would be summoned suddenly, etc." Compare the distinction here between a lawfully assembled business body and a mere gathering together of the people in unofficial capacity, with the town-clerk's statement in Acts 19:35, 40.

Now some instances of the particular ecclesia of the several Greek states -

Thucydides 1,87: - "Having said such things, he himself, since he was ephor, put the question to vote in the assembly (ecclesia) of the Spartans."

Thucydides 1,139: - "And the Athenians having made a house (or called an assembly, ecclesia) freely exchanged their sentiments."

Aristophanes Act 169: - "But I forbid you calling an assembly (ecclesia) for the Thracians about pay."

Thucydides 6,8: - "And the Athenians having convened an assembly (ecclesia) ... voted, etc."

Thucydides 6,2: - "And the Syracusans having buried their dead, summoned an assembly (ecclesia)."

This historical reading concerning the business assemblies of the several petty but independent, self-governing Greek states, with their lawful conference, their free speech. Their decision by vote, whether of Spartans, Thracians, Syracusans or Athenians, sounds much like the proceedings of particular and independent Baptist churches today (*Ecclesia*, B. H. Carroll, pgs. 35-36).

Thus, the uses of the word in the LXX and other pre-Christian works supports the evidence from the instances of ἐκκλησία in New Testament itself that the word always signifies a particular, visible assembly. "[A]n inductive study of all the *ecclesia* passages [in the LXX demonstrates] that in the Septuagint it never means 'all Israel whether assembled or unassembled, but that in every instance it means a gathering together, and assembly. . . . [T]he New Testament writers neither coined this word nor employed it in an unusual sense. The apostles and early Christians . . . wrote in Greek to a Greek-speaking world, and used Greek words as a Greek-speaking people would understand them. . . . [I]t is a fiction that *ecclesia* was used in [the New Testament in] any new, special sense. The object of Christ's *ecclesia*, and

that consists of all believers everywhere (Galatians 3:26), a *church* is a particular, local, visible congregation. The major metaphors for the church also demonstrate that the idea of a universal, invisible church is false. The church is Christ's body (1 Corinthians 12:27), His temple (1 Timothy 3:15), and His bride (2 Corinthians 11:2).⁸⁰⁵ Bodies are very local and visible—sundry piles of flesh and bones scattered around the globe do not constitute a body. A temple rests in one particular location, available for everyone to see, but bricks scattered everywhere are not a building at all. And certainly every man on his wedding day rejoices that his bride is very local and visible, not invisible or cut into little pieces which are scattered all over the earth! Christ's church is not a building, a denomination, or something universal and invisible; it is a particular assembly of baptized saints.

Furthermore, the immediate context of 1 Corinthians 12:13 demonstrates that the body metaphor refers to the particular congregation. First Corinthians 12:27, the only verse in the New Testament that defines the body of Christ, addresses the particular congregation at Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:2) and states, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." The Pauline exhortation to unity in 1 Corinthians makes it evident that the apostle employed the body metaphor to emphasize the need for real oneness among the brethren in the city of Corinth. His purpose was not to teach some sort of theoretical church-unity between believers at Corinth, Ephesus, Galatia, and everywhere else. In 12:14-27, Paul tells the members of the Corinthian congregation that each of them is required for the smooth function of the assembly—one is like an eye, the other like a hand, another like a nose, and their united functionality underneath the direction of Christ the Head (Ephesians 1:22-23) is necessary for their congregational "body" to work effectively, just as united functionality of literal body parts is necessary for a healthy human body. The local sense of "body" in verses 14-27 is directly tied to

terms of membership in it, were indeed different from those of the classic or Septuagint *ecclesia*. But the word itself retains its ordinary meaning. . . . [In contrast to *ecclesia*], the word *panegyros* [was employed to designate] a general, festive assembly of all the Greek states. This general assembly was not for war but peace . . . not for business but pleasure—a time of peace, and joy, and glory. In the happy Greek conceit all the heavenly beings were supposed to be present [at the *panegyros*]. How felicitiously does [Paul] adapt himself to the Greek use of the word [in Hebrews 12:23], and glorify it by application to the final heavenly state. . . . [Thus, there] is a general assembly . . . [in heaven where] warfare is over and rest has come [designated by *panegyros*, but never by *ecclesia*]." (pgs. 34-36, *Ecclesia*, Carroll).

⁸⁰⁵ It is true that the bride metaphor is employed for the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:2-3) as a synecdoche for all the people of God who will inhabit it. However, at that time they will all be present in the future heavenly festive assembly (Hebrews 12:23). There will indeed be this coming gathering of all the saints to the eternal heavenly City, but it will still be quite local and visible, it does not yet exist. Such a future assembly certainly does not prove that saved people on earth in the United States, Colombia, Vietnam, and the Central African Republic are somehow currently members of the same, never-assembling and invisible congregation, assembly, church, or *ekklesia*.

the statement of verse 13 by the explanatory word *for* and requires a local sense of the body metaphor in 12:13. Furthermore, universalizing the Pauline image to make members of the congregation at Corinth into parts of a body cut up into pieces all over the world would not only violate the necessarily localized nature of a living body but would do nothing to advance Paul's purpose of promoting Corinthian unity. Rather, a universal body would have further contributed to Corinthian division, as today the Protestant universal church doctrine, when adopted by Baptist churches, contributes to a neglect of, disrespect for, and a failure to adequately strive for genuine, Scriptural unity within particular assemblies. First Corinthians 12:13 cannot refer to the Spirit's placing someone into the universal, invisible church as the body of Christ, because the body of Christ is the local, visible assembly in the context of 1 Corinthians 12 and in the rest of the New Testament.

First Corinthians 12:25 states that there should be no schism in the body (cf. Ephesians 4:3-4). If all believers are the body of Christ and unity is commanded in the body, then it would be a sin for a fundamental Baptist to separate from any believer whatsoever, whether he is part of the church of Rome, is committing the grossest forms of sexual immorality, or is a terribly compromised neo-evangelical, for such separation would be sowing discord in the body of Christ. Ecclesiastical separation from any believer would be sin. However, such a conclusion directly contradicts the Biblical imperative to separate from disobedient brethren (2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14) and the example within 1 Corinthians itself of separation from an errant believer (5:1-5). The UCD position cannot consistently apply the Biblical standard of unity to its universal "church" and practice the Biblical doctrine of separation.⁸⁰⁶ Indeed, an examination of

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There are many other practical impossibilities and ecclesiological errors that come from the universal church view. Dr. Thomas Strouse has well explained a number of them:

The ramifications of the biblical teaching that the local church is the body of Christ, that Spirit Baptism was a temporary phenomenon, and that the mystical body of Christ does not exist are broad and serious. If there is no con-current Spirit Baptism and no mystical body then there is no divine authority for organizations or efforts outside of the local church to practice the Great Commission. Since the Great Commission (Mt. 28:19-20) requires evangelism, baptism, and instruction in the Word of God, para-church organizations have no divine authority for their existence. If there is no divine authority for para-church organizations then there is no divine authority for para-church Bible colleges/seminaries, mission boards, or structured church fellowships, associations or conventions. These so-called "handmaidens" to the local church have no authority "to help" the Lord's candlesticks because the latter have His presence (Rev. 1:13) as their respective Head (Eph. 1:22-23) and all power to accomplish His Great Commission (Mt. 28:19-20). The impact of these para-church "handmaidens" on the Lord's candlesticks has been biblically and theologically disastrous. Scholars operating in the realm of the "big" universal church offer unbiblical and therefore confusing theological restatements of the Scriptures. Their weak ecclesiology impacts other doctrines such as bibliology, soteriology, and eschatology. They foster notions such as "God has preserved His Word in all the extant manuscripts through the scholars of the mystical body of Christ," "all the saved are in the universal Church," and "Christ will rapture the Church." To them "true" scholarship occurs in the para-church university or seminary where theologians, trained by other para-church theologians, postulate the "truth" of Scripture. The local church is ill equipped and the pastor is ill prepared to do the real work of the ministry in

the nature of the genuine unity in orthodoxy and orthopraxy commanded within the assembly (Ephesians 4:3-16) demonstrates that the tremendous discord of doctrine and practice within the alleged universal “church” has very little to do with the Bible. Since the body of Christ is the visible and local assembly, the conflict inherent in the UCD view is removed by the historic Baptist doctrine, for an imperative for unity within an

the realm of scholarship, they maintain. These scholars, whether they have any affiliation with a local church or not, have earned doctorates from accredited para-church academic institutions, and therefore think that they have the last word on theology. Their condescending attitude toward the Lord’s assemblies is supposedly justified because they are the “doctors” of theology since they are in “the big church.” This disastrous impact undermines the authority of the Bible and usurps the ministry of the Lord’s *ekklesia*. Scripture states that the church is “the pillar and ground of the truth” (I Tim. 3:15), that the *ekklesia* is to “commit [theological training] to faithful men” (II Tim. 2:2), that the church member “is to study to shew [himself] approved unto God” (II Tim. 2:15), and that the assembly has been given Christ’s gift of “pastors and teachers” (Eph. 4:11). The local church as the divinely ordained doctrinal training institution is the Lord’s “college.” College comes from the Latin *collegium* that means a group of colleagues who have banded together around a particular guild or trade. The particular “guild” in which the local church is engaged is the scholarly pursuit of studying the Scriptures (cf. Acts 17:11). Para-church organizations not only produce disastrous results in theological academia, but also in the area of missions. Para-church mission boards usurp the privilege and responsibility of local church missions. The Great Commission is the divine mandate to plant immersionist assemblies both locally and worldwide. Only the Lord’s candlesticks can produce NT churches. Para-church mission boards cannot baptize converts and cannot commission missionary candidates. Nevertheless, these same boards develop a hierarchy of unbiblical offices, such as “missions president/director,” and dictate to “their” missionaries and to the pastors of supporting churches, their policies, practices, and doctrines. The NT teaches, in contradistinction, that the church at Antioch acted as Paul’s “mission board” and sent out Barnabas and the Apostle (Acts 13:1 ff.). To be sure, other churches such as the Philippian church helped support Paul’s missionary endeavors on his second journey (Phil. 4:15-16). Much of the same criticism could be leveled toward highly structured Baptist fellowships. The unbiblical mindset of the universal church produces the necessity for organized hierarchy outside of the local church. Fellowships, associations, and conventions, which develop organizational structure beyond the local church, end up usurping the autonomy of each of the Lord’s assemblies. The presidents, regional directors, etc., of these non-authorized structures tend to dictate to the churches resolutions which in turn become “suggested” tenets for orthodoxy and fundamentalism. Some pastors feel intimidated and hesitate to reject these suggestions, ultimately embracing the “traditions” of men (Mk. 7:7) and incorporating these tenets in their particular *ekklesia*. The NT does teach that there is a place for churches to fellowship around “the faith once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 1:3). Furthermore, the churches of Galatia were united in biblical doctrine around the Lord Jesus Christ, while retaining their respective autonomy (Gal. 1:2; 3:27-28). Once the Lord’s churches recognize that the unproved assumptions of Spirit Baptism and the mystical body of Christ have no biblically exegetical defense, then they may realize the authority, importance, and dignity the Lord gives exclusively to His candlesticks. The Scriptures teach that the church at Jerusalem had the divine authority in precept and set the precedent to practice the Great Commission. Christ gave the precept of the Great Commission to the apostles who were representatives of the 120 disciples who made up the Lord’s *ekklesia* on the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:20). This *ekklesia* began to evangelize, baptize and instruct Jews and Gentiles as the Book of Acts gives ample precedent. The Scriptures make some amazing and outstanding claims for the Lord’s churches. For instance, Paul taught that Christ, Who is Head over all His creation, completely fills His body, the local church (Eph. 1:23). He revealed that the saints in the local churches teach the angelic realm redemptive truths (Eph. 3:10). He averred that local churches, like the Ephesian church, grow up in Christ to become mature bodies through doctrinal teaching (Eph. 4:11-16). He proclaimed that the Lord Jesus Christ both loved and died for individual church members (Eph. 5:25) and that He will cleanse the church members through the washing of the word to present each *ekklesia* as glorious (Eph. 5:26-27). Elsewhere, the Apostle taught that the local church, the one with a bishop and deacons, was the pillar and ground of the truth (I Tim. 3:1-15). The Lord spoke through the Apostle John and gave His apocalyptic revelation to seven local churches (Rev. 1-3). When one realizes that the Scriptures teach the local church is the Lord’s sole institution for His presence, worship, and service, then one recognizes the glory, dignity, and honor that should be attributed to each and every one of Christ’s assemblies. (“Ye Are The Body of Christ,” Dr. Thomas M. Strouse. Emmanuel Baptist Theological Seminary, Newington, CT. elec. acc. http://www.faithonfire.org/articles/body_of_christ.html)

assembly of the Lord's people is entirely consistent with the removal of a disobedient or doctrinally errant brother from a congregation by church discipline.

An advocate of the UCD view might allege that the use of "we" in 1 Corinthians 12:13 demonstrates that Paul was claiming to be part of the same body as the Corinthians, thus validating the UCD asseveration that the body of Christ is all believers worldwide. However, there is no reason to conclude that Paul's "we" means that the apostle was part of the same body as the Corinthian church. Paul had been water baptized into one local body, just as the Corinthians had been immersed into one local body. A Baptist pastor who holds to local-only ecclesiology can easily say to Baptist brethren from other assemblies, "we have all been baptized into one body," because all those he addresses thus have indeed been immersed into the membership of the several churches in view. No implication that the various Baptist churches were truly one big church made up of all of the churches put together would follow from such a statement. Why then would Paul's "we [are] all baptized into one body" do so? Cannot Paul identify himself with his readers in such a manner in 1 Corinthians 12:13? Does he not identify with his audience in this way with some frequency in his epistles?

Even if one did not accept the explanation above for Paul's *we* in 1 Corinthians 12:13, a speaker or writer may at times employ *we* without including himself. A teacher in a classroom might say to his students, "If we break the rules, we will be in big trouble," but he clearly addressed the students alone in such a situation. A fundamentalist preacher may say, "If we do not get saved, we will go to hell," but one certainly hopes that he does not make such a statement because he is himself yet unconverted. Such a sense of *we* has New Testament support.⁸⁰⁷ The use of the first person plural pronoun in

⁸⁰⁷ For example, Romans 1:5: "By whom **we** have received grace and apostleship [ἀποστολή; cf. Acts 1:25; 1 Corinthians 9:2; Galatians 2:8]." The church at Rome was not composed of apostles. 1 Corinthians 10:22: "Do **we** provoke the Lord to jealousy? are **we** stronger than he?" Paul was not having fellowship with devils and provoking the Lord to jealousy (v. 20-21)—only segments of his audience were. 1 Corinthians 11:31: "For if **we** would judge ourselves, **we** should not be judged." This seems to be something his audience was doing; Paul was not sickly and dying from taking the Lord's Supper unworthily. Hebrews 2:1: "Therefore **we** ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which **we** have heard, lest at any time **we** should let *them* slip." Paul was not going to let slip what he had heard about the gospel and go back to Judaism. Hebrews 2:3: "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*;" Paul was not including himself in the "we" who would be damned for neglecting the great salvation. Other examples in the rest of Scripture are found of a similar use of *we*; e. g., in Acts 2:8, "And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?" (Acts 2:8), the people hearing the preaching at Pentecost did not all have the same native tongue, nor were they all from the same country. Daniel Wallace supports the possibility of the Greek first person pronoun being "used in an exclusive way . . . [meaning] 'others, but not myself'" (pg. 391, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*).

The understanding of the "we" and "one body" in Romans 12:4-5 is dependent upon the analogy of 12:4. Paul wrote, "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same

1 Corinthians 12:13 does not prove that the verse refers to a universal, invisible church.

Paul's use of both "we" and "body" in 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 refer back to the usage of 1 Corinthians 10:16-17: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we *being* many are one bread, *and* one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread."⁸⁰⁸ The thematic connection between 1 Corinthians 12:13, a verse (as explicated below) about unity around the church ordinances—including the Supper, as expressed by "drink into one Spirit," and 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, the previous passage about unity around the Supper that begins Paul's discussion of this topic (as elaborated in more depth in chapter 11)—is confirmed by the linguistic connection through the use of "cup"⁸⁰⁹ and "made drink,"⁸¹⁰ the repeated "one,"⁸¹¹ "body,"⁸¹² "we all,"⁸¹³ and the phrases referring to the unity of the many (οἱ πολλοί) into one.⁸¹⁴ First

office: 5 So we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another" (καθάπερ γὰρ ἐν ἐνὶ σώματι μέλη πολλὰ ἔχομεν, τὰ δὲ μέλη πάντα οὐ τὴν αὐτὴν ἔχει πράξιν 5 οὕτως οἱ πολλοὶ ἐν σῶμά ἐσμεν ἐν Χριστῷ, ὁ δὲ καθ' εἰς ἀλλήλων μέλη.). In Romans 12:4, Paul speaks of the physical body of the human organism. Each particular member of the church at Rome had his own particular physical body with its many body parts. Nobody would conclude from Romans 12:4 that every single member of the Roman church, and the Apostle himself, together constituted one big human body because of Paul's use of "we" and "one body." Nor should the second half of the analogy in Romans 12:5 be pressed to make Paul and the Roman church part of one allegedly universal, invisible body.

An influence from the common comparison of the polis with the human body (the body politic. . . is hard to dispute. . . In view of 1 Cor 10:16–17, an allusion to the community as expressing the corporate unity in the Lord's Supper can hardly be excluded. . . [T]he actual *experience* of community, of common participation (κοινωνία) [is emphasized]. This again is used of the Eucharist in 1 Cor 10:16, but the more typically Pauline thought is of the shared experience of the Spirit (2 Cor 13:13/14; Phil 2:1) as effecting the unity of the church, the oneness of the body (1 Cor 12:12–13; Eph 4:3, 7–13). . . [This] fits fully into the strongly charismatic emphasis of the immediate context: the simple fact is that Paul uses the body of Christ as an ecclesiological concept only in connection with charisms (Rom 12; 1 Cor 12; also Eph 4); the Christian community as the body of Christ exists for him only as the charismatic community[; that is,] . . . [o]nly in this context of the effects and gifts of grace does the apostle utilize the ancient world's figure of the one body and the variety of its members[.] . . . [T]he body imagery is actually an expression of the consciousness of community and oneness experienced by the first Christians as they met "in Christ." . . . οἱ πολλοί is the same Semitism as in 5:19, meaning "all." Here it refers to all the recipients, "all you" (v 3), with whom Paul identifies—the all of any worshipping community. That is to say, as explicitly in 1 Cor 12 (Rom 12:5 is closely parallel to 1 Cor 12:27), so here, "the body" has in view the local Christian congregation[.] (Comment on Romans 12:4-5, pgs. 723-724, *Romans 9-16*, James D. G. Dunn, vol. 38B, *Word Biblical Commentary*. Waco, TX: Word Books, 1988; elec. acc. *Accordance Bible Software*.)

The use of "we" for Paul alone in Romans 1:5, in the context of grace and spiritual gifts, specifically apostleship, should also be taken into consideration in the analysis of the "we" concerning grace and spiritual gifts in Romans 12:4-8. Romans 12:4-5, interpreted with classical grammatical-historical exegesis, provides no support whatever to the doctrine of a universal, invisible body of Christ.

⁸⁰⁸ τὸ ποτήριον τῆς εὐλογίας ὃ εὐλογοῦμεν, οὐχὶ κοινωνία τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐστίν; τὸν ἄρτον ὃν κλῶμεν, οὐχὶ κοινωνία τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐστίν; ὅτι εἰς ἄρτος, ἐν σῶμα, οἱ πολλοὶ ἐσμεν· οἱ γὰρ πάντες ἐκ τοῦ ἐνὸς ἄρτου μετέχομεν.

⁸⁰⁹ 10:16, ποτήριον.

⁸¹⁰ 12:13, ποτίζω.

⁸¹¹ 10:17; 12:12-13; εἰς.

⁸¹² 10:16; 12:13; σῶμα.

⁸¹³ οἱ . . . πάντες + 1cp verb; ἡμεῖς πάντες + 1cp verb, 12:13; cf. πάντα, 12:12.

Corinthians 10:16-17 provides a strong precontext for the use of “we” in 1 Corinthians 12:13. However, in 10:16-17 the use of the singular in the phrases “the cup” and “the bread” do not establish that every member of the Corinthian assembly, along with the Apostle Paul, together broke only a single piece of bread into tiny pieces and drank out of only a single cup when they took the Lord’s supper together (so that Paul, although not present with them, still drank from the same cup as the Corinthians and ate the same piece of bread). Rather, the words emphasize the generic category of “bread” and “cup” in connection with the generic Greek article.⁸¹⁵ One who wished to deny the categorical or generic use of the articular words “bread” and “cup” would also, for consistency, need to affirm that the assembly used the same loaf of bread every time they celebrated communion, in light of the customary present tense⁸¹⁶ verbs employed in 10:16-17 to indicate the repeated, continuing action of the celebration of the Supper.⁸¹⁷ It would be a wonder indeed, on this view, that the one piece of bread eaten by every member of the congregation every time the Supper was celebrated never was used up—it must have been exceedingly large to begin with and required a very large oven to bake. As “the bread” did not indicate that there was only one piece of bread—and certainly not a universal, invisible piece of bread—no more does “the body” of 1 Corinthians 12:13 indicate a solitary body, much less a universal, invisible body for Christ. The nouns “bread,” “cup,” and “body” are all generic nouns. Likewise the uses of “we” in both 10:16-17 and 12:13 are generic references indicating what typically happened in the congregation at Corinth. The “we” of 10:16 did not require that every member of the Corinthian church was present and participated every time the Supper was celebrated—some were doubtless not in the assembly on any given occasion because of sickness, travel, or other such reasons; those who were holding on to sin had no right to partake; and Paul, who wrote the “we,” was not in Corinth at all. If the “we” in 10:16-17 (and in the very closely related reference to the Supper in 12:13 in “we . . . have been made to drink”) does not even require the inclusion of every member of the Corinthian assembly, how much less does it require the inclusion of the Apostle Paul? Was Paul present with the church at Corinth, and thus included in the “we . . . break . . . bread” of 10:16-17, every time that assembly celebrated communion? If not, how can the “we [are] . . . one

⁸¹⁴ “we *being* many are one bread, *and* one body; ὅτι εἷς ἄρτος, ἐν σῶμα, οἱ πολλοί ἐσμεν 10:17; [we] being many, are one body; πολλὰ ὄντα, ἐν ἑστὶ σῶμα 12:12; cf. “the body of Christ,” τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ 10:16; “the body of Christ,” σῶμα Χριστοῦ, 12:27.

⁸¹⁵ cf. pgs. 227-231, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*, Daniel B. Wallace. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996.

⁸¹⁶ cf. pgs. 521-523, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, Wallace.

⁸¹⁷ εὐλογοῦμεν; κλῶμεν; μετέχομεν.

body” of 10:17 or the “we” and “body” of 12:13 establish that Paul and the Corinthian church members were part of the same church body—a supposed universal, invisible church which cannot be exegetically established from the meaning of the word *ekklesia*, the clear use of the body metaphor in 1 Corinthians 12:13-27 for the particular, local assembly, and any reasonable understanding of the necessarily localized nature of a body? The *we* in both 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 and 12:13 simply establishes that the respective actions indicated in the respective passages were going on among the Corinthians and with the apostle Paul. The word emphasizes the fellowship around the church ordinances among the members of the church at Corinth in both passages.

One cannot affirm that Christ has both a universal, invisible body and a local, visible one, and that 1 Corinthians 12:13 speaks of the universal body but 12:27 of the local one, since the metaphor of the body of Christ is not bifurcated: Christ has but one body (Ephesians 4:4).⁸¹⁸ Additionally, even if Scripture taught—which it does not—the existence of a universal body of Christ, it would be impossible to contextually support a universal reference in 1 Corinthians 12:13. Where in the flow of v. 13-27 would Paul change from speech about the allegedly universal body of Christ to the local body clearly in view in v. 27? What part of the body metaphor in v. 14-26 is local, and which universal? No acceptable answer exists. Both the fact that there is but one type of body of Christ and the unity of 1 Corinthians 12:13-27 obliterate the UCD view of 1 Corinthians 12:13.

First Corinthians 12:27 defines the body of Christ as an ecclesiological metaphor, but the UCD makes the body of Christ soteriological. The UCD view thus confuses ecclesiology and soteriology. This confusion suits the historical development of the universal church doctrine; post-apostolic, proto-Popish apostasy from the faith developed the idea of a universal or catholic church⁸¹⁹ and the related idea encapsulated in the

⁸¹⁸ The use of a generic sense for the word *church* or the body metaphor in Ephesians 4:4 by no means indicates the existence of one universal, invisible church. See the discussion of the generic noun in endnote 80.

⁸¹⁹ The church is never called *universal* or *catholic* in Scripture. The designation first appears in the Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrneans 8:2, among a number of other unbiblical statements: “Wherever the bishop appears, there let the congregation be; just as wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the catholic church. It is not permissible either to baptize or to hold a love feast without the bishop. But whatever he approves is also pleasing to God, in order that everything you do may be trustworthy and valid” (ὅπου ἂν φανῇ ὁ ἐπίσκοπος, ἐκεῖ τὸ πλῆθος ἔστω, ὥσπερ ὅπου ἂν ᾖ Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς, ἐκεῖ ἡ καθολικὴ ἐκκλησία. οὐκ ἔξόν ἐστιν χωρὶς τοῦ ἐπισκόπου οὔτε βαπτίζειν οὔτε ἀγάπην ποιεῖν ἀλλ’ ὃ ἂν ἐκεῖνος δοκιμάσῃ, τοῦτο καὶ τῷ θεῷ εὐάρεστον, ἵνα ἀσφαλὲς ᾖ καὶ βέβαιον πᾶν ὃ πράσσετε). It is quite likely that this affirmation of the existence of a catholic church was a later interpolation into Ignatius’ epistle, if Ignatius actually wrote to the Smyrneans at all. There are three different recensions of Ignatius’ letters—a long, a middle, and a short version. The long version is generally recognized as a spurious fourth century forgery which projects later hierarchicalism and other

developing Roman Catholic heresies into earlier centuries—indeed, it was the product of semi-Arianism that denied both the true equality of the Son to the Father and the true and complete humanity of Christ, and consequently destroyed the Biblical doctrine of redemption (pgs. 306-307, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 1, Aloys Grillmeier, trans. John Bowden). The short recension exists only in Syriac and contains only the letters to the Ephesians, Romans, and Polycarp, these letters themselves having omissions that make them shorter than their partners in either the long or middle recensions. The middle recension, the version quoted above, is found in Greek in only one manuscript—the eleventh century Codex Mediceo-Laurentianus. Scholarship is divided about the genuineness of either the middle or the short recensions, with some maintaining that all the letters are extremely heavily interpolated and others arguing that “Ignatius bishop of Antioch did not exist” (pg. 66, “Ignatian Problems,” *Journal of Theological Studies*, C. P. Hammond Bammel, 33:1 (April 1982); see the article, pgs. 62-97, for a discussion of various theories on the authenticity or forging of the allegedly Ignatian epistles.). Even if one assumes that Ignatius actually wrote something similar to the middle recension, and that his writings were then corrupted and falsified into the long and short recensions, there is no reason to conclude that the eleventh century Greek codex of the middle recension referring to a “catholic church” does not itself have numerous dogmatic interpolations designed to support later Roman Catholic dogmas—such as Smyrneans 8:2, the verse in question, and its reference to the catholic church—ἡ καθολικὴ ἐκκλησία.

“There are, in all, fifteen Epistles which bear the name of Ignatius. These are the following: One to the Virgin Mary, two to the Apostle John, one to Mary of Cassobelae, one to the Tarsians, one to the Antiochians, one to Hero, a deacon of Antioch, one to the Philippians, one to the Ephesians, one to the Magnesians, one to the Trallians, one to the Romans, one to the Philadelphians, one to the Smyrnaeans, and one to Polycarp. The first three exist only in Latin; all the rest are extant also in Greek. It is now the universal opinion of critics that the first eight of these professedly Ignatian letters are spurious. They bear in themselves indubitable proofs of being the production of a later age than that in which Ignatius lived. Neither Eusebius nor Jerome makes the least reference to them; and they are now by common consent set aside as forgeries, which were at various dates, and to serve special purposes, put forth under the name of the celebrated Bishop of Antioch . . . [among the other epistles, a spurious long form, a middle recension, and a short recension exist, and] there was . . . a pretty prevalent opinion among scholars, that [no form] could . . . be regarded as absolutely free from interpolations, or as of undoubted authenticity. . . . This expression of uncertainty was repeated in substance by Jortin (1751), Mosheim (1755), Griesbach (1768), Rosenmüller (1795), Neander (1826), and many others; some going so far as to deny that we have any authentic remains of Ignatius at all, while others, though admitting the seven [middle recension] letters as being probably his, yet strongly suspected that they were not free from interpolation. . . . [T]he question [was reignited] by the discovery of a Syriac version [the short recension, first published in 1845] of three of these Epistles among the mss. procured from the monastery of St. Mary Deipara, in the desert of Nitria, in Egypt. . . . some accepted the [view that only these three short letters] represented more accurately than any formerly published what Ignatius had actually written . . . [while] others very strenuously opposed [this position in favor of the middle recension]. . . . [T]he Ignatian controversy is not yet settled” (*Church Fathers—The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, “Introductory Note to the Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians,” ed. Alexander Roberts & James Donaldson). While the reference to a catholic church by Ignatius is dubious, Pope Cornelius, writing against the Anabaptist Novatian, and developing a proto-Roman Catholic principle not found clearly before the third century, affirmed that there “should be but one bishop in a catholic church” (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6:43:11).

Let it also be briefly mentioned that it is indisputable that the so-called “Apostles’ Creed” was not written by the apostles, and its present form, with its profession of faith in a “catholic church,” is a development of the era after the union of proto-Popery with the Roman state. The “Apostles’ Creed” developed from the Old Roman Creed, which simply affirmed faith in the “holy church.” It was “in the late fourth century that *catholic* began to appear in [various] Western creeds” (pg. 385, *Early Christian Creeds*, J. N. D. Kelly. London: Longman, 1972. 3rd ed.), in large part to contrast the Roman church with dissident movements including the “heretical” Anabaptists of the age among the Donatists and Novatians. The earliest physical evidence for the Apostles’ Creed itself is contained in the tract *De singulis libris canonicis* written by the monk Priminius between A. D. 710-724. Both Pope Leo the Great (d. 461) and Gregory the Great (d. 604) appear to have been ignorant of the Creed, and among scholars “very few will be likely to

Cyprianic formulation *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, “Outside the church there is no salvation.” The Protestant movement transferred the notion of the essentiality of church membership to salvation from the visible universal (catholic) church concept of Rome to the allegedly invisible universal church,⁸²⁰ a view adopted by UCDs in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Historic Baptists, following Scripture, reject entirely the notion that there is no salvation outside of the church, maintaining rather that one must be saved before he can properly join the local, visible congregation, the only church that exists, and that salvation is not conjoined to membership in either a universal visible or invisible church, since such concepts are not taught in the Bible. The confusion of ecclesiology and soteriology involved in the UCD view of 1 Corinthians 12:13, but avoided in the historic Baptist view of the text, demonstrates the superiority of the latter.

The first commentary we have on the Corinthian epistles, 1 Clement, written by the pastor of the church at Rome to the Corinthian church around the turn of the first century, understands the metaphor of the church as “body” in a local sense, not a universal one (37:5; 38:1; 46:7). Contrary to later patristic baptismal regeneration, universal ecclesiology, hierarchicalism, works salvation, and other grievous heresies, Clement’s epistle evidences local-only ecclesiology, congregational church government, the unity of the office of presbyter/bishop, justification by faith, and other Baptist doctrines.⁸²¹ Thus, the earliest known historical commentary on the body metaphor, composed only decades after Paul wrote his epistle, supports the historic Baptist view of the body metaphor against the UCD position.

The fact that the church of Christ is only a local, visible institution, the fact that the body of Christ metaphor throughout the New Testament is employed for the particular congregation, the immediate context of 1 Corinthians 12, the nullification of the Scriptural doctrine of separation involved in the UCD position, the fact that there is but one type of church body, the confusion of soteriology and ecclesiology involved in

deny that [the received version of the Apostles’ Creed] is to be sought somewhere north of the Alps at some date in the late sixth or seventh century” (pg. 398, 410, 421, *Early Christian Creeds*, *ibid.*).

⁸²⁰ Augustine of Hippo, to combat the Donatists, among whom it appears the Baptists of his era were to be numbered and who contended for a regenerate church membership, held to the idea of an invisible catholic church before the era of the Reformation. He held that the invisible church was a smaller remnant of true believers entirely contained within the visible Catholic church, developing this concept in order to justify the Catholic practice of allowing obviously ungodly, immoral, and unregenerate members within the Catholic fold. However, Augustine held that the members of this invisible church were entirely contained within the bounds of the visible Catholic denomination. Following Cyprian, Augustine held that outside the visible church there is no salvation. When Protestantism adopted Augustine’s invisible church conception, it was adjusted—at least among the more evangelical wing of the reform movement—so that one could be part of the invisible church without absolutely having to be a member in the visible church.

⁸²¹ See “Pauline Images of the Church in 1 Clement,” by Thomas Ross (available at <http://sites.google.com/site/thross7>).

the UCD doctrine, and the evidence of 1st century extra-canonical Christian understanding of the body metaphor all tell heavily against the UCD view of 1 Corinthians 12:13. Certain of these evidences, of themselves, make the UCD view of the verse entirely impossible. Moreover, alleged proof of the UCD view from the use of *we* in the verse falls very short. First Corinthians 12:13 cannot teach that the Holy Spirit baptizes people into the universal, invisible body of Christ, because there is no universal, invisible body of Christ. The UCD view does not affirm that the Spirit baptizes people into the membership of local assemblies, but the body of 1 Corinthians 12:13 is the local, visible congregation. Thus, the UCD view is not taught in 1 Corinthians 12:13. The historic Baptist understanding of the verse avoids all the problems in the UCD position and gives a satisfactory and consistent understanding of 1 Corinthians 12.

b.) Does Christ baptize with the Spirit, or does the Holy Spirit baptize?

An examination of the gospel accounts of the promise of Spirit baptism manifest that Christ is the One who baptizes with the Spirit; the Spirit is not said to baptize anyone. In Matthew 3:11 (cf. Mark 1:7-8; Luke 3:16) John the Baptist predicted, “I indeed baptize you with water unto 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.” John likewise stated that “he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost” (John 1:33). These are all the explicit references to baptism with the Holy Spirit in the gospels, and Christ is the agent performing the baptism in every case, while the Holy Spirit is the means or instrument⁸²² through which the baptism takes place. The fact that Spirit baptism took place when Christ, in conjunction with the Father, sent the Comforter—the Holy Ghost (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7; Acts 1:4-8)—to abide with the church at Pentecost (Acts 2) also demonstrates that the Lord Jesus, not the third member of the Trinity, is the agent in Spirit baptism. In Acts 1:5, referring back to these predictions and forward to their fulfillment on the day of Pentecost, the Lord Jesus stated, “John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.” Again, the Holy Spirit is not the agent performing the baptism, but the medium or instrumentality whereby Christ baptizes. The evidence in the gospels and Acts is uniformly against the

⁸²² cf. the section “Spirit Baptism in the Gospels,” where the fact that Christ baptizes *with* the Holy Ghost, rather than *in* Him, is defended.

Holy Ghost being the agent in Spirit baptism.

Both the Old Testament prediction of Spirit baptism and the statement of fulfillment in Acts, employing the language of the Spirit being “poured out,” deny the agency of the Holy Ghost in Spirit baptism. Jehovah affirms in Joel 2:28-29, “I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.”⁸²³ On Pentecost, Peter referenced this text, stating that “God [promised], I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.” Consistent with the Old Testament, Peter affirmed that the Spirit did not pour Himself out in the action of Spirit baptism. The Holy Spirit was poured out by the other two members of the Trinity, the Father (Acts 2:17-18) and the Son (Acts 2:33).

The UCD view of 1 Corinthians 12:13 avers that the Spirit baptism allegedly set forth in the text is performed by the agency of the Holy Ghost. Such a view of the text disregards the Old Testament predictions of Spirit baptism and contradicts every statement concerning the nature of this baptism in the gospels and in Acts. The historic Baptist view avoids these extreme hermeneutical difficulties by correctly recognizing that Christ was the agent in the completed action of Spirit baptism and 1 Corinthians 12:13 speaks not of baptism with the Holy Ghost but of the immersion in water through which a believer is united to the membership of a local, visible church body.

c.) Was Spirit baptism a completed historical phenomenon at the time Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, or is it an event that takes place regularly throughout the entire dispensation of grace?

In his epistle to the Ephesians, Paul indicates that there was but “one baptism” (Ephesians 4:5), demonstrating that by the time he wrote the epistle (c. A. D. 57-62) Spirit baptism was already a completed historical phenomenon and only immersion in water remained for the rest of the age of grace.⁸²⁴ In fact, the cessation of Spirit baptism

⁸²³ אֲשַׁפֹּךְ אֶת־רוּחִי עַל־כָּל־בָּשָׂר . . . אֲשַׁפֹּךְ אֶת־רוּחִי :

⁸²⁴ The reference in Hebrews 6:2 to “baptisms” does not in any way undermine the teaching of Ephesians 4:5, since the doctrines in Hebrews 6:1-2 are Old Testament beliefs that Paul calls the Hebrews to go on from, and the Greek word βαπτισμός in Hebrews 6:2 speaks of Old Testament ceremonial immersions, not Christian baptism, as it does in Hebrews 9:10 and in every other reference in the New Testament (Mark 7:4, 8).

had already occurred by the time 1 Corinthians was written (c. A. D. 54); for, subsequent to the events of Acts 19:1-7—or, more properly, after Acts 2 itself—Spirit baptism ended, having fulfilled its purpose.⁸²⁵ Because the Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles had received the Spirit (Acts 1:5, 8; 2; 8; 10; 19), the dispensational transition connected to the baptism of the Holy Ghost was complete, and all who subsequently came to faith received the Spirit immediately at the moment of their regeneration (Romans 8:9). Christ

⁸²⁵

1 Corinthians appears to have been written in the time period described in Acts 19:22-23, when Paul “stayed in Asia for a season,” and thus after the final event of Spirit baptism in Acts 19:1-7. Perhaps Paul’s recognition of the conclusion of Spirit baptism explains his employment of the middle voice *παύσσονται* for the glossolalia, in contrast to the passive *καταργηθήσονται* for the revelatory gifts of prophecy and knowledge that ended (cf. “1 Corinthians 13:8-13 and the Cessation of Miraculous Gifts,” R. Bruce Compton, *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* (2004) 97-144) with the completion of the canon.

It would be invalid to argue for a continuing action of Spirit baptism throughout the dispensation of grace based on the fact that Christ is called in *ὁ βαπτίζων ἐν Πνεύματι Ἁγίῳ* John 1:33, employing a present participle. The declaration is a statement of God the Father recorded within the speech of John. The phrase, within its context, is: *κἀγὼ οὐκ ᾔδην αὐτόν· ἀλλ’ ὁ πέμψας με βαπτίζειν ἐν ὕδατι, ἐκεῖνός μοι εἶπεν, Ἐφ’ ὃν ἂν ἴδῃς τὸ Πνεῦμα καταβαῖνον καὶ μένον ἐπ’ αὐτόν, οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ βαπτίζων ἐν Πνεύματι Ἁγίῳ*. One could make a case for the participle fitting within the category of the futuristic present (pgs. 535-537, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, Daniel Wallace). Alternatively, one could say that the present participle is actually a simple gnomic present. The phrase *οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ βαπτίζων ἐν Πνεύματι Ἁγίῳ* fits all the distinguishing marks of the gnomic category, which makes “a statement of a general, timeless fact. . . . in . . . general maxims about what occurs at *all* times. . . . [It] is generally *atemporal*” (pg. 523, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, Daniel Wallace). However, it appears most likely that the present participle is employed as a vivid description of the future action of the Messiah. Note that God had said, *Ἐφ’ ὃν ἂν ἴδῃς τὸ Πνεῦμα καταβαῖνον*, employing an aorist for the action of John seeing the Spirit descend, although at the time God spoke to John the action of the Spirit’s descent on Christ was yet future. In any case, no temporal idea of Christ repeatedly or once-for-all baptizing is the force of the text. Rather, the articular present participle simply indicates that the Messiah, rather than someone else, is the One who is to perform Spirit baptism. The use is similar to the only other instance of *ὁ βαπτίζων* in Scripture, where the phrase describes John as “the Baptist,” *Ἰωάννης ὁ βαπτίζων*. John’s disciples did not baptize—John alone had authority from heaven (Matthew 21:25) to do so, and he was consequently the unique one who performed his baptism. Similarly, the Lord Jesus is the only One who has the power to perform Spirit baptism.

Note that the only reference to *ὁ βαπτίζων* in the apostolic patristic writings is impossible to interpret as a repeated or continuing action—the articular participle refers to an individual who is going to baptize one other person. (Didache 7:4: “And before the baptism, let the one baptizing [*ὁ βαπτίζων*, present participle] and the one who is to be baptized [*ὁ βαπτιζόμενος*, present participle] fast, as well as any others who are able. Also, you must instruct the one who is to be baptized [*τὸν βαπτιζόμενον*, present participle] to fast for one or two days beforehand.” Both the one baptizing and the one being baptized only act one time, not repeatedly. Compare the present infinitive *τὸ βαπτίζεσθαι* in Justin Martyr’s *Dialogue with Trypho* 46 for the single act of ritual bathing after ritual defilement.

Even if one wished to dispute the classification of *ὁ βαπτίζων* in John 1:33 as employed for vividness, and likewise rejected a classification of the present as gnomic, since it is obvious on the historic Baptist, UCD, and PCP positions that Spirit baptism did not take place before Pentecost, an argument built upon the present tense in John 1:33 would prove too much—it would lead to the conclusion that Christ, before Pentecost, was already baptizing with the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, the fact that Christ will baptize believing Israel with the Holy Ghost in the Tribulation period, as recorded in Joel 2:28-32, could have been excluded from the verse had an aorist been employed, not to mention the several records of the Spirit’s coming in Acts 2, 8, 10, and 19. Certainly no ground against the historic Baptist view, or in favor of either the UCD or PCP position, is gained by the *ὁ βαπτίζων* of John 1:33.

baptizes no further groups or individuals with the Spirit. While Spirit baptism was a transitional event, and nothing in Scripture states or hints that it would continue until the end of the church age, the Lord Jesus specifically declared that water baptism would continue to be practiced by His church until His return (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). For the entirety of the dispensation of grace, immersion in water is commanded; but no such command is found for the transitional and passing event of Spirit baptism. “Repent and be baptized” in water (Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12, 36-39; 16:13-15, 32-33; 18:8; 22:16) is the continuing, enduring order from heaven, and refusal to do so is to reject the counsel of God (Luke 7:29-30). Thus, when Ephesians 4:5 indicates that one baptism, not two,⁸²⁶ was extant at the time of its composition, Spirit baptism must by that time have passed away.⁸²⁷ Water baptism could not have ceased, since it is to continue until the return of Christ and is mentioned in epistles composed after Ephesians (cf. 1 Peter 3:21). Had both water and Spirit baptism been continuing events at the time the book of Ephesians was written, Ephesians 4:5 would have read, “one Lord, one faith, two baptisms.” Ephesians 4:5, therefore, demonstrates that Spirit baptism had ceased. This cessation of Spirit baptism also explains the entire absence of reference to it as an ongoing work in the New Testament epistles—indeed, to an almost total absence of reference to Spirit baptism in the epistles at all.⁸²⁸

The UCD view that 1 Corinthians 12:13 refers to the Holy Spirit’s baptizing

⁸²⁶ Indeed, that there was but one baptism would also suggest that fire baptism was not occurring at the time the book of Ephesians was written, supporting the view that the baptism of fire is synonymous with the historically completed act of Spirit baptism. If the baptism of fire took place daily as men were cast into hell, then it would certainly appear that there was more than one baptism at the time the book of Ephesians was written. While it is true that an advocate of equating fire baptism with eternal damnation could argue that the baptism of fire did not pertain to the church at Ephesus, as it was composed of regenerated individuals, the fact that there were false professors in the membership of the Ephesian church (cf. Acts 20:29-31) who would, if fire baptism is hell fire, certainly experience it, demonstrates (as do other considerations) that Ephesians 4:5 provides at least some additional support for equating Spirit and fire baptism and viewing them both as a completed event fulfilled in Acts 2.

⁸²⁷ Interestingly, Orthodox Quakerism, on the assumption that Spirit baptism is to continue throughout this age, argues based on Ephesians 4:5 that baptism in water must have passed away: “We reverently believe that, as there is one Lord and one faith, so there is, under the Christian dispensation, but one baptism, (Eph 4:4,5) even that whereby all believers are baptized in the one Spirit into the one body. (1 Cor 12:13 RV) This is not an outward baptism with water, but a spiritual experience; not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, (1 Pet 3:21) but that inward work which, by transforming the heart and settling the soul upon Christ, brings forth the answer of a good conscience towards God, but the resurrection of Jesus Christ, in the experience of His love and power, as the risen and ascended Savior. No baptism in outward water can satisfy the description of the apostle, of being buried with Christ by baptism unto death. (Rom 6:4) It is with the Spirit alone that any can thus be baptized” (*Declaration of Faith Issued by the Richmond Conference in 1887* <http://www.quakerinfo.com/rdf.shtml>).

⁸²⁸ Titus 3:6, alluding to the outpouring on Pentecost, is the solitary reference of any kind whatever to Spirit baptism in the epistles. All other alleged references (as demonstrated below) refer to immersion in water. Compare endnote 64.

believers into the universal church, the body of Christ, cannot be sustained. Scripture teaches that there is no universal church into which the Holy Spirit can baptize believers. Furthermore, Christ, not the Holy Ghost, is the agent in Spirit baptism. Moreover, Spirit baptism had already ceased at the time 1 Corinthians was written, never again to take place during the church age, while water baptism was ongoing in 1 Corinthians itself (cf. 1:14ff.), enduring until the return of Christ. In sum, the problems of the UCD view of Spirit baptism are avoided by the historic Baptist view, for it is the position taught in the Bible.

d.) The Exegesis of 1 Corinthians 12:13

First Corinthians 12:13 reads, “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.”⁸²⁹ The clauses of this passage will be examined in order and their significance evaluated.

“For by one Spirit”: καὶ γὰρ ἐν ἐνὶ Πνεύματι

The historic Baptist position affirms that this clause refers to the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit, as do both the PCP and UCD doctrine. This clause, in the Biblical, historic Baptist view, refers to the Holy Spirit’s leading the members of the church at Corinth to submit to water baptism. Although the members of the Corinthian assembly boasted about the amazing spiritual gifts given them by the Spirit and caused division in the assembly on account of those gifts, the Apostle Paul reminded the congregation that the Holy Spirit had led the members of their church to submit to a common immersion with the phrase “by one Spirit.” First Corinthians 12:13 affirms that the Holy Spirit is the Producer of congregational unity around the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

Various commentators and writers have advanced the idea that *by* in the verse should be translated *in* and have consequently affirmed either that the correct translation is either “in one Spirit” or “in one spirit.” The question of a reference to the Holy Spirit, or a “spirit,”⁸³⁰ and of the rendition of *en* as *by* or *in*, will be addressed in order.

⁸²⁹ καὶ γὰρ ἐν ἐνὶ Πνεύματι ἡμεῖς πάντες εἰς ἓν σῶμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν, εἴτε Ἰουδαῖοι εἴτε Ἕλληνες, εἴτε δοῦλοι εἴτε ἐλεύθεροι καὶ πάντες εἰς ἓν Πνεῦμα ἐποτίσθημεν.

⁸³⁰ Believers with a strong view of God’s providential working in the translation of the King James Bible often also consider that the use of a capital “S” in the King James Bibles from which they read and

Thomas Strouse, Baptist seminary professor and advocate of Spirit baptism as a completed historical event, commented concerning 1 Corinthians 12:13:

Paul employed the expression “by one Spirit” (*en henī pneumatī*) in Phil. 1:27 as “in one spirit,” referring to “the spirit of unity.” Since *pneumatī* is anarthrous in I Cor. 12:13, Paul differentiated *pneumatī* (“spirit”) from the seven previous articular references to “the Spirit” (*to pneumatī*) as deity.⁸³¹

Strouse affirms that 1 Corinthians 12:13 refers to a “spirit of unity” that the assembly possessed when its members received water baptism, rather than to the Holy Spirit leading the members of the assembly to receive immersion. However, the idea that 1 Corinthians 12:13 refers to “a spirit” of unity rather than the third Person in the Trinity cannot be sustained exegetically.

First, the immediate context provides overwhelming support for a reference to the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12:13. Consider 12:3-13:

Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking **by the Spirit of God** calleth Jesus accursed: and *that* no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but **by the Holy Ghost**. Now there are diversities of gifts, but **the same Spirit**. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of **the Spirit** is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given **by the Spirit** the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge **by the same Spirit**; To another faith **by the same Spirit**; to another the gifts of healing **by the same Spirit**; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another *divers* kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these **worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit**, dividing to every man severally as he will. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also *is* Christ. For **by one Spirit** are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into **one Spirit**.⁸³²

study from should be considered hermeneutically. While this providential argument should not be ignored or belittled, because as modern capitalization practices became standardized an upper-case “S” in 1 Corinthians 12:13 indeed became the capitalization practice found in the Authorized Version, in the original 1611 KJV the “s” was lower case in 1 Corinthians 12:13, as it was in a great number of other verses referring to the Holy Spirit. For example, note 1 Corinthians 12:3, “spirit of God,” v. 4, 7, 8, 9, 11, “spirit,” 2 Corinthians 3:3, “spirit of the living God,” 3:18, “spirit of the Lord,” etc. This is not to say that the Holy Spirit universally lacks capitalization in the 1611 edition; e. g., 1 Corinthians 2:14 & 7:40 read “Spirit of God.” See *The Holy Bible: 1611 edition*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson 2003 (reprint ed).

⁸³¹ “Ye Are The Body of Christ,” Dr. Thomas M. Strouse. Emmanuel Baptist Theological Seminary, Newington, CT. elec. acc. http://www.faithonfire.org/articles/body_of_christ.html.

⁸³² 12:3 διὸ γνωρίζω ὑμῖν, ὅτι οὐδεὶς ἐν Πνεύματι Θεοῦ λαλῶν λέγει ἀνάθεμα Ἰησοῦν· καὶ οὐδεὶς δύναται εἰπεῖν Κύριον Ἰησοῦν, εἰ μὴ ἐν Πνεύματι Ἁγίῳ. 4 Διαίρέσεις δὲ χαρισμάτων εἰσὶ, τὸ δὲ αὐτὸ Πνεῦμα. 5 καὶ διαίρέσεις διακονιῶν εἰσὶ, καὶ ὁ αὐτὸς Κύριος. 6 καὶ διαίρέσεις ἐνεργημάτων εἰσὶν, ὁ δὲ αὐτὸς ἐστὶ Θεός, ὁ ἐνεργῶν τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν. 7 ἐκάστῳ δὲ δίδεται ἢ φανέρωσις τοῦ Πνεύματος πρὸς τὸ συμφέρον. 8 ᾧ μὲν γὰρ διὰ τοῦ Πνεύματος δίδεται λόγος σοφίας, ἄλλῳ δὲ λόγος γνώσεως, κατὰ τὸ αὐτὸ Πνεῦμα· 9 ἑτέρῳ δὲ πίστις, ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ Πνεύματι· ἄλλῳ δὲ χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων, ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ Πνεύματι· 10 ἄλλῳ δὲ ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων, ἄλλῳ δὲ προφητεία, ἄλλῳ δὲ διακρίσεις πνευμάτων, ἑτέρῳ δὲ γένη γλωσσῶν, ἄλλῳ δὲ ἐρμηνεία γλωσσῶν· 11 πάντα δὲ ταῦτα ἐνεργεῖ τὸ ἐν καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ Πνεῦμα, διαιροῦν ἰδίᾳ ἐκάστῳ καθὼς βούλεται. 12 Καθάπερ γὰρ τὸ σῶμα ἐν ἐστί, καὶ μέλη ἔχει πολλά, πάντα δὲ τὰ μέλη τοῦ σώματος τοῦ ἐνός, πολλά ὄντα, ἐν ἐστί σῶμα· οὕτως καὶ ὁ Χριστός. 13 καὶ γὰρ ἐν ἐνὶ Πνεύματι ἡμεῖς πάντες εἰς ἐν σῶμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν, εἴτε Ἰουδαῖοι εἴτε Ἕλληνες, εἴτε δοῦλοι εἴτε ἐλεύθεροι καὶ πάντες εἰς ἐν Πνεῦμα ἐποτίσθημεν.

The eleven references to the word *pneuma*, “Spirit/spirit,” in 1 Corinthians 12:3-13, uniformly refer to the Holy Spirit. Changing “by one Spirit” to “in one spirit of unity” in v. 13 is very contrary to the context. For that matter, the “one Spirit” of v. 13 is the “one and the selfsame Spirit” who “worketh . . . as he will” in v. 11. The explanatory words “for” in v. 12 & 13 connect the reference to the “one Spirit” (*hen Pneuma*) of v. 13 immediately back to the “one . . . Spirit” (*hen . . . Pneuma*) of v. 11. Since v. 11 refers to the Holy Spirit, v. 13 refers to the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, that the second half of 1 Corinthians 12:13 refers to “drink[ing] into one Spirit,” the Holy Spirit, not a “spirit of unity,” confirms the reference to the Holy Spirit in the first half.⁸³³ The overwhelming evidence of eleven references to the Holy Spirit in the immediate context of 1 Corinthians 12:13, the fact that v. 13 explains and develops the reference to the Holy Spirit in v. 11, and the evidence of the second half of v. 13, prove that 1 Corinthians 12:13a refers to the Holy Spirit, not to a “spirit of unity.”

Furthermore, the word “spirit” is not employed anywhere in Scripture as a reference to a “spirit of unity.” If 1 Corinthians 12:13 referred to such a thing, it would be absolutely unique in Scripture in doing so. An alleged parallel to Philippians 1:27 fails because the latter passage refers to the human spirit, as is made obvious by the immediately following reference to another portion of the human person, the mind or soul: “I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit [*en heni pneumati*], with one mind [*mia pseuche*] striving together for the faith of the gospel.”⁸³⁴ Philippians 1:27, along with the similar reference in Acts 4:32 to “the multitude of them that believed [being] of one heart and of one soul,”⁸³⁵ do indeed emphasize unity in the assembly, as in both verses the inner beings, the minds, souls, hearts, and spirits, of the members of the church were to be in agreement as they strove together to serve the Lord. Nonetheless, Philippians 1:27 and Acts 4:32 do not refer to a “spirit of unity” anymore than they do to a “soul of unity” or a “heart of unity.” Thus, unless one wishes to make 1 Corinthians 12:13 into a reference to being baptized and drinking into the human soul and spirit—which would require a definite mental stretch to produce any reasonable signification—there is no parallel whatever between 1 Corinthians 12:13 and Philippians 1:27 in the use of the word *pneuma*, “Spirit/spirit,” as a reference to a “spirit of unity.” None of the 385

⁸³³ However, an advocate of the “spirit of unity” position would likely also wish to deny that the second half of 1 Corinthians 12:13 is a reference to the Holy Ghost. Note the further comments below on the “drink into one Spirit” clause.

⁸³⁴ ἀκούσω τὰ περὶ ὑμῶν, ὅτι στήκετε ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι, μιᾷ ψυχῇ συναθροῦντες τῇ πίστει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου.

⁸³⁵ Τοῦ δὲ πλήθους τῶν πιστευσάντων ἦν ἡ καρδία καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ μία· καὶ οὐδ’ εἰς τι τῶν ὑπαρχόντων αὐτῷ ἔλεγεν ἴδιον εἶναι, ἀλλ’ ἦν αὐτοῖς ἅπαντα κοινά.

references to the word *pneuma* in the New Testament refers to a “spirit of unity.” A very large number of the references to *pneuma*—including ten instances other than 1 Corinthians 12:13a in 12:3-13—refer to God the Holy Spirit.

Strouse’s statement, “Since *pneumati* is anarthrous in 1 Cor. 12:13, Paul differentiated *pneumati* (“spirit”) from the seven⁸³⁶ previous articular references to ‘the Spirit’ (to *pneumati*) as deity” cannot be sustained. Several rules of Greek grammar demonstrate that there is no reason to require an article to make “by one Spirit” have a definite signification. Daniel Wallace, in his *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, writes:

The function of the article is *not* primarily to make something definite that would otherwise be indefinite. . . . It is not necessary for a noun to have the article in order for it to be definite. . . . there are at least ten constructions in which a noun may be definite though anarthrous. . . . [A] proper name is definite without the article. . . . There is no need for the article to be used to make the object of a preposition definite. . . . [they are only] occasionally indefinite Thus, when a noun is the object of a preposition, it does not require the article to be definite: if it has the article, it must be definite; if it lacks the article, it may be definite. The reason for the article, then, is usually for other purposes (such as anaphora or as a function marker). . . . [Furthermore,] [a] one-of-a-kind noun does not, of course, require the article to be definite (e.g., “sun,” “earth,” “devil,” etc.). One might consider πνεῦμα as monadic when it is modified by the adjective ἅγιον. If so, then the expression πνεῦμα ἅγιον is monadic and refers only to *the* Holy Spirit.⁸³⁷

A reference to the name of the monadic Spirit of God,⁸³⁸ with Spirit as the object of the preposition “by,” has no need of the Greek article to express definiteness. To argue otherwise neglects important characteristics of Greek syntax.

Furthermore, not all the references to the Spirit of God in 1 Corinthians 12:3-13 contain the Greek article. In 12:3, the Holy Spirit is twice mentioned without an article, both instances following the same preposition (*en*) employed in 12:13.⁸³⁹ Furthermore, the Spirit of God is referred to without the Greek article following *en* (and in a variety of other constructions, naturally, 7:40, etc.) elsewhere in 1 Corinthians (2:4, 13; 6:19). In fact, the construction *en heis*, “in/by one,” is never followed by the Greek article in the epistles of Paul or, for that matter, in any of the New Testament outside of Luke’s

⁸³⁶ While Strouse appears to have stopped counting at an earlier point, probably verse four, there are nine, not seven, references to the Holy Spirit from 12:3-12:12. There are indeed seven in 12:4-12. It is not clear why one would stop references to *pneuma* at v. 4 when two additional references to the word occur in v. 3.

⁸³⁷ Pgs. 210, 243, 245, 248, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*, Daniel B. Wallace. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996.

⁸³⁸ It is true that the phrase πνεῦμα ἅγιον is not found in the instances where πνεῦμα is found in 1 Corinthians 12:4-13, but the references in v. 4-13 are controlled by v. 3, where the Spirit is specifically designated with His monadic title of πνεῦμα ἅγιον, as well as His unique status as πνεῦμα Θεοῦ.

⁸³⁹ οὐδεὶς ἐν Πνεύματι Θεοῦ λαλῶν λέγει ἀνάθεμα Ἰησοῦν καὶ οὐδεὶς δύναται εἰπεῖν Κύριον Ἰησοῦν, εἰ μὴ ἐν Πνεύματι Ἀγίῳ.

gospel⁸⁴⁰—but one could not properly supply the English indefinite article after any of the Greek nonarticular *en heis* constructions.

First Corinthians 12:13a of necessity refers to the Holy Spirit. The connection of v. 13 to v. 11 and the eleven uses of *pneuma* for the Holy Spirit in the immediate context compel this conclusion. Arguments in favor of an alternative reading of the text as a reference to a “spirit of unity” fall far short of dismantling the contextual evidence for a designation of the Holy Spirit. Scripture does not refer to a “spirit of unity” with the word *pneuma* anywhere in the Bible. Syntactical asseverations against a reference to the Spirit of God in 1 Corinthians 12:13a entirely fail to establish their conclusions. Indubitably, reference to the great God, the Holy Spirit, must not be removed from 1 Corinthians 12:13a.

Since the Holy Spirit, not any kind of other “spirit,” is found in the first clause of 1 Corinthians 12:13, the question arises whether the sense of *en heni Pneumati* is “by one Spirit,” as in the King James Version, or “in one Spirit.” Should the Greek preposition *en* be translated here as “by” or “in”? Arthur Pink, arguing in favor of an “in one spirit” position, wrote:

[T]he preposition translated ‘by’ in 1 Corinthians 12:13 is ‘en,’ which is translated in the N. T. ‘among’ 114 times, ‘by’ 142, ‘with’ 139, [and] ‘in’ 1863 times. Comment is needless. ‘In one spirit were we all baptized’ should be the rendering of 1 Corinthians 12:13.⁸⁴¹

Pink expresses the single major argument against the reading of the Authorized Version—the preposition *en* is translated *in* more frequently⁸⁴² than it is translated *by*. This, however, is not by any means sufficient evidence that *in* is correct for 1 Corinthians

⁸⁴⁰ The complete list of ἐν εἰς references in the NT is as follows: Luke 5:12, 17; 8:22; 13:10; 20:1; Romans 12:4; 15:6; 1 Corinthians 10:8; 12:13; Galatians 5:14; Ephesians 2:16, 18; 4:4; Philippians 1:27; Colossians 3:15; James 2:10; Revelation 18:8, 10. Note that all thirteen of the references outside of Luke are not followed by the article, while Luke uniformly employs one.

⁸⁴¹ “Does First Corinthians 12 Mean the Universal Church or a Local New Testament Church?” Arthur W. Pink (<http://www.pbministries.org/books/pink/Miscellaneous/universal-or-local.htm>). It should be noted that Pink did not always hold his (correct) local-only ecclesiological view that led him to his (incorrect) view of this specific clause of 1 Corinthians 12:13, but, in his own words from his article, “For almost ten years after his regeneration the writer [Arthur Pink] never doubted that the ‘body’ spoken of in 1 Corinthians 12 had reference to ‘the Church Universal.’ This was taught him by those known as ‘Plymouth Brethren,’ which is found in the notes of the Scofield Reference Bible, and is widely accepted by evangelicals and prophetic students. Not until God brought him among Southern Baptists (a high privilege for which he will ever be deeply thankful) did he first hear the above view challenged. But it was difficult for him to weigh impartially an exposition which meant the refutation of a teaching received from men highly respected, to say nothing of confessing he had held an altogether erroneous concept so long, and had allowed himself to read 1 Corinthians 12 (and similar passages) through other men’s spectacles. However, of late, the writer has been led to make a prayerful and independent study of the subject for himself, with the result that he is obliged to renounce his former view as utterly untenable and unscriptural.”

⁸⁴² The exact numbers cited by Pink may not be exactly accurate—Thayer’s Greek lexicon (elec. acc. Online Bible software) affirms ἐν is rendered as *in* 1902 times, *by* 163 times, *with* 140 times, *among* 117 times, *on* 62 times, *through* 39 times, and in other ways 265 times, for a total of 2801 references.

12:13.

First, the fact that *en* “is the workhorse of prepositions in the NT, occurring more frequently and in more varied situations than any other”⁸⁴³ must be recognized. As the most common preposition in the New Testament, and one used in a greater variety of situations than any other, the size of the word’s semantic range must be recognized. While *in* is the most common translation, it is by no means the universal one, and there are hundreds of verses in the New Testament where it is simply not possible to properly translate the word as *in*. It is clearly invalid to affirm that because *en* is most commonly rendered *in*, it must be so translated in every instance. Such an argument must ignore around 900 uses of the word.

Second, the underlying question is whether an idea of place or sphere, a locative notion (the common idea when *in* is the translation) or one of instrumentality (when *by* or *with* is commonly the translation) represents the idea in the text. The fact that instrumentality may be expressed in English with more than just *by* also points to the fact that comparing the frequency of that translation alone (to the exclusion of, e. g., *with*, the third most common translation for *en*), against the sphere notion emphasized through the rendition *in*, underestimates the frequency of the instrumental use of *en*.

Third, having concluded that the *Pneuma* of 1 Corinthians 12:13a is the Holy Spirit, not some other kind of spirit, a translation “by one Spirit” rather than “in one Spirit” follows, since advocates of the *in* translation—such as both Strouse and Pink, as cited above—at least nearly universally believe that the phrase does not refer to the “Spirit,” but to a “spirit.” Very few argue for “in one Spirit.” If “one Spirit,” not “one spirit,” is the correct translation, then “by” rather than “in” follows.

Fourth, a consideration of the context of 1 Corinthians 12:13a is determinative for the significance of the phrase. Both the immediate context of 1 Corinthians 12 and the comparative grammatical context derived by an examination of uses of *en* in connection with “Spirit,” *Pneumati*, demonstrate that *by* is the correct translation of *en* in 1 Corinthians 12:13.

The New Testament and wider *Koiné* background evidence that a consideration of action *en Pneumati* as “by the Spirit” is not uncommon. The LXX contains the instrumental sense of *en Pneumati*. One finds phrases with *en* and *Pneuma* signifying “by [the, thy, etc.] Spirit (cf. 1 Chronicles 28:12; Nehemiah 9:30; Micah 3:8; Zechariah 4:6).⁸⁴⁴ More importantly, when a reference to the Holy Spirit is in view, an examination

⁸⁴³ pg. 372, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, Daniel Wallace.

⁸⁴⁴ 1Chronicles 28:12, καὶ τὸ παράδειγμα ὃ εἶχεν ἐν πνεύματι αὐτοῦ τῶν αὐλῶν οἴκου κυρίου καὶ πάντων τῶν παστοφορίων τῶν κύκλῳ τῶν εἰς τὰς ἀποθήκας οἴκου κυρίου καὶ

of all New Testament verses where *en* is followed within four words by *pneuma* in the dative case will evidence that the definite majority of the time the locative *en* is not the intended sense. In the thirty references to this construction in the New Testament, only nine⁸⁴⁵ are rendered as “in the Spirit” in the Authorized Version. The other twenty-one⁸⁴⁶ are rendered otherwise, including twelve instances of “by the Spirit,” the most common single translation.⁸⁴⁷ The broad New Testament context supports the strong possibility that 1 Corinthians 12:13a should be rendered “by the Spirit.”

The book context of 1 Corinthians, and specifically the immediate context of 12:13a in 1 Corinthians 12, supply overwhelming evidence that an instrumental use of the preposition *en* is in view in 1 Corinthians 12:13a, thus validating the accuracy of the translation *by*, as found in the King James Version. First, elsewhere in Paul’s epistles to the Corinthians, there is no instance of the sense required by the alternative locative translation of *en* as *in*—the Spirit is not the medium of anything in the Corinthian epistles. Second, and in contrast, the idea of the Spirit’s being the agent or instrument, as conveyed in the Authorized Version’s translation of the members of the church at Corinth submitting to baptism in water “by the Spirit,” are found throughout the epistles Paul

τῶν ἀποθηκῶν τῶν ἁγίων. Nehemiah 9:30, καὶ εἴλκυσας ἐπ’ αὐτοὺς ἔτη πολλὰ καὶ ἐπεμαρτύρω αὐτοῖς ἐν πνεύματί σου ἐν χειρὶ προφητῶν σου καὶ οὐκ ἠνωτίσαντο καὶ ἔδωκας αὐτοὺς ἐν χειρὶ λαῶν τῆς γῆς. Micah 3:8 ἐὰν μὴ ἐγὼ ἐμπλήσω ἰσχὺν ἐν πνεύματι κυρίου καὶ κρίματος καὶ δυναστείας τοῦ ἀπαγγεῖλαι τῷ Ἰακωβ ἀσεβείας αὐτοῦ καὶ τῷ Ἰσραὴλ αμαρτίας αὐτοῦ. Zechariah 4:6 καὶ ἀπεκρίθη καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς με λέγων οὗτος ὁ λόγος κυρίου πρὸς Ζοροβαβελ λέγων οὐκ ἐν δυνάμει μεγάλη οὐδὲ ἐν ἰσχύϊ ἀλλ’ ἢ ἐν πνεύματί μου λέγει κύριος παντοκράτωρ.

⁸⁴⁵ Romans 8:9; 9:1; 14:17; Ephesians 6:18; Colossians 1:8; 1 Thessalonians 1:5; 1 Timothy 3:16; Jude 20; Revelation 1:10.

⁸⁴⁶ Matthew 3:11; 12:28; Mark 1:8; 12:36; Luke 2:27; 3:16; 4:1; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16; Romans 15:16; 1 Corinthians 6:11; 12:3, 9, 13; 2 Corinthians 6:6; Ephesians 2:18, 22; 3:5; 5:18; 1 Pet 1:12;

⁸⁴⁷ “But if I cast out devils **by the Spirit** of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you” (Matthew 12:28).

“For David himself said **by the Holy Ghost**, The LORD said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool” (Mark 12:36). “And he came **by the Spirit** into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law” (Luke 2:27). “And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led **by the Spirit** into the wilderness” (Luke 4:1). “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). “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). “Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking **by the Spirit** of God calleth Jesus accursed: and *that* no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but **by the Holy Ghost**” (1 Corinthians 12:3). “To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing **by the same Spirit**” (1 Corinthians 12:9) “For **by one Spirit** are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:13). “By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, **by the Holy Ghost**, by love unfeigned” (2 Corinthians 6:6). “For through him we both have access **by one Spirit** unto the Father” (Ephesians 2:18). “Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets **by the Spirit**” (Ephesians 3:5).

wrote to Corinth. One notes elsewhere such phrases as “by his Spirit” (2:10), “by the Spirit” (6:11, 12:8, etc.), and many other instances of the Spirit actively engaging in activity, such as teaching (2:13). Third, since 1 Corinthians 12:13 refers to baptism in water, the medium of the baptism referred to in the verse is water, not the Holy Spirit. One is immersed in water, not in the Spirit, when one is baptized into a church’s membership; but the Holy Spirit is He who leads a believer to submit to water immersion. A Christian submits to water baptism “by the Spirit,” but water baptism is in water, not “in the Spirit.” Fourth, one notes that when *en* modifies the word *Pneuma* as a reference to the Holy Spirit, it always has an instrumental idea in the Corinthian epistles:

6:11 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.

6:11 καὶ ταῦτά τινες ἦτε· ἀλλὰ ἀπελούσασθε, ἀλλὰ ἡγιασθητε ἀλλ’ ἐδικαιώθητε, ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ, καὶ ἐν τῷ Πνεύματι τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμῶν.

12:3 Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking **by the Spirit** of God calleth Jesus accursed: and *that* no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but **by the Holy Ghost**.

12:3 διὸ γνωρίζω ὑμῖν, ὅτι οὐδεὶς ἐν Πνεύματι Θεοῦ λαλῶν λέγει ἀνάθεμα Ἰησοῦν· καὶ οὐδεὶς δύναται εἰπεῖν Κύριον Ἰησοῦν, εἰ μὴ ἐν Πνεύματι Ἀγίῳ.

12:9 To another faith **by the same Spirit**; to another the gifts of healing **by the same Spirit**;

12:9 ἐτέρῳ δὲ πίστις, ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ Πνεύματι· ἄλλῳ δὲ χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων, ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ Πνεύματι·

6:6 By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, **by the Holy Ghost**, by love unfeigned,

6:6 ἐν ἁγνότητι, ἐν γνώσει, ἐν μακροθυμίᾳ, ἐν χρηστότητι, ἐν Πνεύματι Ἀγίῳ, ἐν ἀγάπῃ ἀνυποκρίτῳ,

Fifth, the immediate context of 1 Corinthians 12:13 has a very great number of references to the Spirit as instrument or agent, employing a variety of Greek forms. Consider 12:8-13:

8 For to one is given **by the Spirit** the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge **by the same Spirit**; 9 To another faith **by the same Spirit**; to another the gifts of healing **by the same Spirit**; 10 To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another *divers* kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: 11 But all these **worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit**, dividing to every man severally as **he will**. 12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also *is* Christ. 13 For **by one Spirit** are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

The previous verses consequently strongly indicate that 12:13a expresses the active action of the Holy Spirit. Finally, 12:11 affirms that the “one . . . Spirit . . . worketh,” indicating active agency, so the reference merely two verses later—which is even connected to v. 11 by the word “for” that begins v. 12, 13—to action “by” the same “one Spirit” is necessarily a reference to the Spirit’s agency or instrumentality. The context of the Corinthian correspondence validates what is required by the immediate context of 1 Corinthians 12:13a—the *en heni Pneumati* of that verse is a reference to action “by the Spirit,” not to something taking place “in the Spirit.”

In sum, 1 Corinthians 12:13a properly signifies and is translated “by one Spirit.” No reference to a “spirit of unity” or anything less than the third Person of the Trinity is exegetically viable. Furthermore, the preposition *en* is necessarily translated in this clause as “by.” The text indicates that the event referred to in the remainder of the verse took place through the instrumentality of the Holy Ghost.

“Are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles,
whether *we be* bond or free”:

ἡμεῖς πάντες εἰς ἓν σῶμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν, εἴτε Ἰουδαῖοι εἴτε Ἕλληνες, εἴτε
δοῦλοι εἴτε ἐλεύθεροι

The baptism of 1 Corinthians 12:13 is immersion in water, since, as demonstrated earlier, Spirit baptism had ceased by the time the first epistle to the Corinthians was inspired. Furthermore, a reference to Spirit baptism in 1 Corinthians 12:13 would be unique in the Pauline corpus—all other references to the baptism of the Holy Ghost are in the gospels or in Acts.⁸⁴⁸ Indeed, throughout the entirety of Scripture, whenever baptism is mentioned without a contextual qualifier (“with the Holy Ghost” “with fire” “unto Moses,” etc.) immersion in water is universally the referent. No contextual qualifier is found in 1 Corinthians 12:13. Thus, the verse does not constitute a unique reference to Spirit baptism contrary to the uniform Pauline usage elsewhere in his epistles, but a simple reference to baptism in water, like all other unqualified references to baptism in the Bible. Such general considerations from Scripture establish that 1 Corinthians 12:13 speaks of immersion in water, not Spirit baptism.

The statement of the verse itself supports a reference to immersion in water. As discussed earlier, Christ is the agent of Spirit baptism—the second, not the third Person of the Trinity performs this baptism (Matthew 3:11, etc.). Were 1 Corinthians 12:13 a reference to Spirit baptism, it would contradict all the clear passages on the doctrine by

⁸⁴⁸ That is, no verse in Paul’s epistles employs the word *baptism* in connection with the work of the Spirit in Acts 2, 8, 10, and 19. Titus 3:6 does allude back to this action in the *historia salutis* (compare endnote 64). A discussion of verses in other parts of the New Testament sometimes alleged to be references to Spirit baptism is found in the section “Spirit Baptism: Other Alleged References in the Epistles: Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:27; Colossians 2:12; 1 Peter 3:21” below. Concerning these latter texts, “It is sometimes argued that certain passages that refer to baptism, without any further qualification, also teach about Spirit-baptism (e. g., Romans 6:4; Galatians 3:27; Colossians 2:12; 1 Peter 3:21). This interpretation is usually designed to protect these texts against a view that takes them to teach baptismal regeneration. But, in fact, the early church consistently used ‘baptism’ without any qualifiers to refer to water-baptism. None of these passages, even when taken to refer to immersion in water, implies baptismal regeneration” (pg. 50, “Baptism of the Holy Spirit,” Craig Blomberg, in *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996).

making the Holy Ghost the baptizer. Recognizing in the text a reference to the working of the Spirit in leading the members of the Corinthian church to be baptized in water harmonizes perfectly with the rest of the Bible.

A reference in 1 Corinthians 12:13 to the working of the Holy Spirit in leading the members of the Corinthian church to receive water baptism fits the context of 1 Corinthians. Paul wrote his epistle to a church filled with “contentions” (1 Corinthians 1:11), where factions had formed claiming to follow Paul, Apollos, and others (1:12). The apostle exhorts the church to unity based on their uniform immersion in the name of the Trinity—they were not baptized in the name of Paul or any other affirmed head of a church faction (1:13ff.), but had all pledged themselves to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in the baptismal bath. Likewise in 1 Corinthians 12:13, all the members of the Corinthian church, whether Jews or Gentiles, bond or free, had received a common water baptism into the body of Christ, the local congregation (12:27), and thus unity was incumbent upon them. Having been added to the body by an identical immersion in water (12:13), each member of the church was a body part which needed the others for the congregation to function properly (12:14-27). The Corinthians exulted in the various pneumatic gifts, often improperly manifested among them (1 Corinthians 12-14), but they were to be unified, as they had all been led by the one Holy Spirit (12:13a) to submit to immersion into a common church body. The assembly was to recognize and prize the unity derived from the identical, Spirit-led immersion in water participated in by all its members. Finally, the reference to the other church ordinance, the Lord’s Supper, in 12:13d, supports a reference to water baptism in 12:13a. The context of 1 Corinthians 12:13 clearly supports a reference to baptism in water, rather than to Spirit baptism.

Paul refers to water baptism “into one body” because the ordinance adds a believer to the membership of the congregation authorizing the immersion. This truth is also manifest in Acts 2:41-47. Those that “gladly received [Peter’s gospel preaching of the] word were baptized: and the same day there were added [to the pre-Pentecost church membership of around 120, Acts 1:15] about three thousand souls.” These three thousand were “added to the church” (v. 47). The verb “add,” *prostithemi* (προστίθῃμι), is not just a word for joining a church’s membership in Acts 2:41-47, but is also employed in this way in Acts 5:14 & 11:24⁸⁴⁹ (cf. Isaiah 14:1, Zechariah 14:17,

⁸⁴⁹ Note that these verses cannot refer to becoming “in Christ” at the moment of conversion. Those who had *already* become believers were subsequently “added to the Lord” by means of baptism into His body, the local, visible congregation.

LXX).⁸⁵⁰ Thus, 1 Corinthians 12:13 affirms that, led by the Holy Spirit, the members of the Corinthian church had been immersed in water and by that means had been added to the membership of the congregational body in that city.

“And have been all made to drink into one Spirit”
καὶ πάντες εἰς ἓν Πνεῦμα ἐποτίσθημεν

As the members of the church at Corinth had been contentious and factious over the issue of baptism (1 Corinthians 1), so they had been practicing the Lord’s Supper improperly (1 Corinthians 11). As Paul had exhorted the congregation to Spirit-led unity around their common immersion in the first half 12:13, so he reminds them that they had all participated in the Lord’s Supper, had “been all made to drink,” with reference to the same unifying Holy Spirit. The verb *make drink* is used for literal drinking in Scripture.⁸⁵¹ The use of the passive voice for the verb is parallel to the passive voice for *were baptized*; indeed, the clauses discussing the two church ordinances manifest strong parallelism⁸⁵²—a strong argument that the phrase refers to the church ordinance that complements believer’s immersion, the Supper,⁸⁵³ the celebration of communion with

⁸⁵⁰ Isaiah 14:1, καὶ ἐλέησει κύριος τὸν Ιακωβ καὶ ἐκλέξεται ἔτι τὸν Ἰσραὴλ καὶ ἀναπαύσονται ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς αὐτῶν καὶ ὁ γιῶρας προστεθήσεται πρὸς αὐτοὺς καὶ προστεθήσεται πρὸς τὸν οἶκον Ιακωβ, “And the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and they shall rest on their land: and the stranger shall be added to them, yea, shall be added to the house of Jacob.” Zechariah 14:17, καὶ ἔσται ὅσοι ἐὰν μὴ ἀναβῶσιν ἐκ πασῶν τῶν φυλῶν τῆς γῆς εἰς Ἱερουσαλὴμ τοῦ προσκυνῆσαι τῷ βασιλεῖ κυρίῳ παντοκράτορι καὶ οὗτοι ἐκεῖνοις προστεθήσονται, “And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever of all the families of the earth shall not come up to Jerusalem to worship the king, the Lord Almighty, even these shall be added to the others.”

⁸⁵¹ The fifteen New Testament references are Matthew 10:42; 25:35, 37, 42; 27:48; Mark 9:41; 15:36; Luke 13:15; Romans 12:20; 1 Corinthians 3:2, 6-8; 12:13; Revelation 14:8.

⁸⁵² πάντες εἰς ἓν σῶμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν
πάντες εἰς ἓν Πνεῦμα ἐποτίσθημεν

One notes as well the naturalness of the aorist tense for the verbs ἐβαπτίσθημεν and ἐποτίσθημεν as references in the text to baptism and the Supper (contra, e. g., *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelien (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990), which argues in its note on 1 Corinthians 12:13 that present tense verbs would be expected if baptism and the Supper were under consideration). Each member of the church at Corinth had only been baptized once, so the use of tenses common for durative action, such as the present or the imperfect, would not well fit the verse. The parallelism between the two ordinances makes the use of the same tense for both verbs expected, so a requisite requirement of an aorist ἐβαπτίσθημεν would lead one to expect the aorist for ἐποτίσθημεν. Furthermore, the summary nature of the presentation of 1 Corinthians 12:13 expects aorist tense verbs. The emphasis is not upon the repetition (or lack thereof) of the acts of baptism and communion, but upon the simple fact that the members of the church shared in unifying fellowship around these ordinances derived from the Holy Spirit.

⁸⁵³ The variant reading πόμα ἐποτίσθημεν, making the phrase “we have been all made to drink into one drink,” found in around 15% of the MSS of 1 Corinthians 12:13 (while the TR reading has 85% of MSS, including those preferred by the CT, such as \aleph and B), although certainly not original, indicates that scribes copying 1 Corinthians 12:13 thought its latter portion referred to the Lord’s Supper.

reference to (*eis*) the one Holy Spirit. The topical and linguistic connection of 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 to the discussion of communion in 10:16-17, as explained earlier, further supports this interpretation. While a reference to the Lord's Supper is natural when compared to the first half of the verse, and the perspicuity of Scripture supports the fact that one can indeed determine the significance of the text, the question of why the Supper would be referred to as "drinking" rather than "eating" (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:20), along with the use of *potidzo* as "make drink" rather than the verb *drink* elsewhere used for the Supper, *pino*, makes understandable a view that the clause refers more generally to common blessings received from the Spirit, including (but not exclusively referring to) the Lord's Supper. However, both of these arguments for a wider reference to spiritual blessing, rather than a restricted one to the Supper, can be effectively answered.⁸⁵⁴

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The more common verb πίνω appears 75 times in the NT and is simply "to drink" in contrast to ποτίζω, which appears 15 times and is "to cause/give to drink." The "give to drink," rather than a simple "drink" sense for ποτίζω is very clear in Matthew 25:35, 42. Πίνω is used elsewhere for the Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:67; Mark 14:23; Luke 22:18), including six references in 1 Corinthians (11:25-29), while no other ποτίζω reference specifically refers to communion. This is a formidable argument against a reference to the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 12:13. However, there are considerable counterarguments to this linguistic challenge.

First, as mentioned in the text, the related noun ποτήριον is used in connection with the Supper—indeed, it is used exclusively in connection with the Supper in 1 Corinthians, where it appears eight times.

Second, in 1 Corinthians 12:13 ποτίζω is an aorist passive indicative verb. There are no passive forms of πίνω in the New Testament—the verb appears in the active voice 71 times, and in the middle 4 times (Matthew 20:23; Mark 10:39; Luke 17:8; Revelation 14:10), and the middle possesses a genuine middle sense, not a passive one (while some might argue that some or all of the middle references are deponent, that would, in any case, make the sense equivalent to the active, not to the passive). The NT middle voice references are also universally in the future tense. One notices a similar extreme paucity of passive πίνω forms in the LXX—the verb appears there in the active 206 times, 61 times in the middle (all future again and at least some deponent), and only three times in the passive voice (Leviticus 11:34; Sirach 31:28, 29), in each case a present passive. The apostolic patristic writers employed πίνω seven times in the active, once in the (future) middle, and never in the passive. Various works of the Apologists Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, and Theophilus of Antioch (as found in the respective modules for *Accordance Bible* software; so for all the studies in this endnote; it should be noted that the classifications in *Accordance* have been accepted, so that middle/passive forms recorded as middles or as passives have here been reckoned as such) contain thirteen uses πίνω of in the active, four uses in the middle, and no uses in the passive.

Various Apocryphal Gospel texts (as found in *Accordance*) employ the verb in the active nine times, and never in the middle or passive. Josephus employs πίνω in the active voice thirty-seven times, never in the middle, and only once in the passive, a present infinitive. Philo employs the verb forty-nine times in the active voice, six times in the middle (always a future middle), and only once in the passive (an aorist passive participle). The pseudepigrapha employ πίνω forty-five times in the active, fifteen times in the middle, and never in the passive. Thus, the passive voice of πίνω is absent from the inspired Greek text and extremely rare in related *Koiné* Greek literature, while the aorist passive, as employed for ποτίζω in 1 Corinthians 12:13, is not found in any range of literature examined, excluding a single participial text in Philo. No aorist passive indicatives were found in any text. Thus, one could conclude that the constraints of the *Koiné* usage impelled Paul to employ ποτίζω to express the aorist passive idea he wished, since such a tense and voice for πίνω were not a live option.

While the verb *potidzo* is not used elsewhere of the Supper in Scripture, the related noun *poterion* is regularly employed in the New Testament in connection with communion (Matthew 26:27; Mark 14:23; Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 10:16, 21; 11:25-28), and the noun is exclusively used of the Supper in eight references, the only references to the word in Paul's epistles, all of which are in the two chapters immediately preceding 1 Corinthians 12. Furthermore, the specific sense of *potidzo* as *made to drink*, in contrast to the simple idea of *drink* with *pino*, emphasizes the work of the unifying Spirit in bringing the Corinthians to both immersion and the Supper. The connection of 12:13 with 10:16-17, with its mention of the Supper first as drinking, explains the reference in 12:13 to the ordinance as a common drink rather than a common eating—contextually, greater clarity is achieved through the representation of the Supper in this manner.⁸⁵⁵ Furthermore, one wonders what substance, other than the fruit of the vine, could possibly be drunk in 1 Corinthians 12:13, since drinking is not clearly a metaphor anywhere in the Bible for general Spirit-produced spiritual blessings. The fruit of the vine from the

While ποτίζω occurs in the passive voice only in 1 Corinthians 12:13 in the New Testament (the other fourteen references possessing the active voice) the verb is found in the LXX in the passive twice, in the present and future tenses (Genesis 13:10; Ezekiel 32:6), and sixty-three times in the active voice. In the apostolic patristic writers, two active voice forms, four middle, and one passive, an aorist, (Shepherd 68:9) are found. The Apologists examined above employ ποτίζω in the active seven times, the middle once, and the passive not at all. Nor does Josephus employ the verb at all. Philo uses it in the active thirty-three times, the middle seven times, and the passive twice, both aorists (Alleg 2:86; Post (Cain) 151). The pseudepigrapha employ the word in the active six times and the passive (an aorist) once (Abraham 19:16).

A consideration of these data points toward the idea that the passive voice of ποτίζω was much more in live play than the passive of πίνω in the *Koiné* milieu. Thus, it appears possible that ποτίζω would have been the verb of choice for Paul when he wanted to express a passive concept, and especially an aorist passive idea.

A third and considerably simpler further consideration lies in the parallel with the aorist passive ἐβαπτίσθημεν. As passivity, not active agency, is expressed in the verb for the church ordinance of baptism, so it is reasonable to see Paul maintain parallel passive, rather than active agency in the reference to the second church ordinance. In the same way that the Corinthians, led by the Holy Spirit, “were baptized,” so they “were given to drink” of the cup in the Supper. An active voice reference to the church members drinking would violate the parallelism, and once one was shut up to the passive voice, the sense of “were made to drink” expressed by ποτίζω would be more natural than a use of πίνω as simply “drink.” Furthermore, as discussed in the text, since He who “made [the Corinthians] to drink” in the Supper was that same Spirit who led them to the waters of baptism, the use of ποτίζω to emphasize the unifying Spirit’s active work in the Supper provided Paul another argument to exhort the church, divided as it was specifically over the practice of the Supper (11:17-34) while it boasted in its pneumatic gifts, to unity.

These considerations eliminate the force of the objection to viewing the second half of 1 Corinthians 12:13 as a reference to something other than the Supper from the use of πίνω, rather than ποτίζω, in the passage.

⁸⁵⁵ Note also the repeated (though not exclusive; cf. 9:7, 13; 11:24-34) connection in the previous context of the verb *to eat* in association with meat offered to idols (8:7, 8, 10, 13; 10:7, 18, 25, 27, 28, 31). Such an association also could contribute to Paul’s choice of *drinking* as the verb of choice to refer to the Supper rather than *eating*. Contextually, drinking would more certainly reference the church ordinance, rather than meat eaten to glorify false gods.

church ordinance complementing baptism, which is spoken of in parallel syntax in the first half of the verse, is the logical reference. Contextual and lexical considerations demonstrate that the final clause of 1 Corinthians 12:13 refers to participation in the Lord's Supper.

e.) A Summary of the Conclusion of the Exegesis of 1 Corinthians 12:13

In the divided church at Corinth, the ordinances of baptism and communion, which were intended as sources of unity, had been distorted and were associated with divisiveness and strife within the Corinthian congregation (1 Corinthians 1:11-17; 11:20-22). The Corinthian strife was further worsened by the misuse of spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12-14). In 1 Corinthians 12:13, Paul reminded the church that God had given them a common baptism and Lord's Table, and called them to the unity the Lord intended for their congregation as the body of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 12:13, Paul told the Corinthians, in paraphrase, "Spiritual gifts are for unity in the congregation, the body of Christ: the Spirit who gave these gifts to your church also worked in you to receive a common immersion and to partake in a common Lord's Supper—so be unified!"

f.) Support from Commentators for Interpreting 1 Corinthians 12:13 as a Reference to the Church Ordinances

Many Biblical commentators, both Baptist and non-Baptist, have viewed 1 Corinthians 12:13 as a reference to baptism in water and the Lord's Supper. Of course, many other commentators have adopted a large variety of alternative positions. The view that the first half of the verse is a reference to water baptism is somewhat more widespread than the position that the second half refers to communion. Some commentators hold that baptism in water is spoken of in the first half of 1 Corinthians 12:13 while positing that the second half refers to something else. On the other hand, almost all who view the second half of 1 Corinthians 12:13 as a reference to communion likewise see water baptism in the first half of the verse. Some examples are worthy of citation.

A. T. Robertson affirmed that the baptism of 1 Corinthians 12:13 is water baptism, "a reference to a definite past event with each of them of different races, nations, classes, when each of them put on the outward badge of service to Christ, the symbol of

the inward changes already wrought in them by the Holy Spirit.”⁸⁵⁶ Albert Barnes stated: “Many suppose that there is reference here to the ordinance of baptism by water. . . . [including] Bloomfield, Calvin, Doddridge, etc.”⁸⁵⁷ John Wesley saw water baptism in 1 Corinthians 12:13,⁸⁵⁸ as did G. W. H. Lampe, evaluating both the New Testament and patristic doctrine.⁸⁵⁹ Henry Alford, in his classic *Alford’s Greek Testament*,⁸⁶⁰ states that the verse speaks of “the water of baptism . . . so (understanding the whole verse of baptism) Chrysostom, Theophylact, Oecolampadius, Rückert, Meyer, De Witt.” Alford also declares that “Luther, Beza, Calvin, Estius, Grotius, [et.] al., refer the latter half to the Lord’s Supper.” The *Expositor’s Greek Testament*, edited by W. Robertson Nicoll,⁸⁶¹ states that “Paul refers to actual Christian baptism” in 1 Corinthians 12:13 and further indicates that “Augustine, Calvin, Estius, [etc., understand] the *poterion* of the Lord’s supper (10:16, 11:25),⁸⁶² as though *kai* coupled the two sacraments.” John Calvin, commenting on 1 Corinthians 12:8-13, wrote:

“We are,” says [Paul], “engrafted by baptism into Christ’s body[.]” . . . He speaks . . . of the baptism of believers . . . Hence, with respect to God, this invariably holds good—that baptism is an engrafting into the body of Christ[.] . . . The Apostle, also, observes here a most admirable medium, in teaching that the nature of baptism is—to connect us with Christ’s body. . . . We have drunk into one Spirit . . . [Paul refers] to the Supper, as he makes mention of *drinking* . . . Now, though the cup forms but the half of the Supper, there is no difficulty arising from that, for it is a common thing in Scripture to speak of the sacraments by synecdoche. Thus he mentioned above in the tenth chapter . . . simply the *bread*, making no mention of the cup. . . . He teaches, therefore, that believers, so soon as they are initiated by the baptism of Christ, are already imbued with a desire of cultivating mutual unity, and then afterwards, when they receive the sacred Supper, they are again conducted by degrees to the same unity, as they are all refreshed at the same time with the same drink.⁸⁶³

The *Jamison, Faucett, and Brown Commentary*,⁸⁶⁴ commenting on “drink into one Spirit,” affirms, “There is an indirect allusion to the Lord’s Supper, as there is a direct

⁸⁵⁶ *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, A.T. Robertson, comment on 1 Corinthians 12:13. Elec. acc. *Online Bible for Mac*, Ken Hamel. Oakhurst, NJ: Online Bible Software, 1996.

⁸⁵⁷ *Notes on the New Testament*, Albert Barnes. Elec. acc. *Online Bible for Mac*.

⁸⁵⁸ *Notes on the Old and New Testaments*, John Wesley (orig. pub. 1767). Elec. acc. *Online Bible for Mac*. Comment on 1 Corinthians 12:13.

⁸⁵⁹ *The Seal of the Spirit: A Study in the Doctrine of Baptism and Confirmation in the New Testament and the Fathers*, G. W. H. Lampe, 2nd ed. London: S. P. C. K., 1967, pgs. 56-7, 137.

⁸⁶⁰ Alford, Henry, *Alford’s Greek Testament* (rev. ed). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1980 (reprint ed). Comment on 1 Corinthians 12:13. Alford uses abbreviations for the names of other commentators; full names have been supplied above.

⁸⁶¹ Nicoll, W. Robertson (ed.), *The Expositor’s Greek Testament*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002 (reprint ed.), comment on 1 Corinthians 12:13. Abbreviated names are, again, written out in full.

⁸⁶² The related verb *potidzo* is used for “to drink” in 1 Corinthians 12:13.

⁸⁶³ John Calvin, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, elec. acc. Christian Library Series, vol. 7, John Calvin Collection. Rio, WI: AGES Software, 1998.

⁸⁶⁴ R. Jamieson, A. R. Faussett, and D. Brown, *A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments* (1871), elec. acc. *Online Bible for Mac*.

allusion to baptism in the beginning of the verse.” Matthew Poole, commenting on “drink into one Spirit,” stated:

[M]any others choose rather to interpret drinking in this place, of drinking at the table of the Lord, partaking of that whole action being set out here by one particular act there performed. This is probable, considering that the apostle, in the former part of the verse, had been speaking of the other sacrament of the gospel, and that he, speaking of the Lord’s supper, 1 Cor 10:17, had used this expression: *For we being many, are one bread, and one body.*⁸⁶⁵

Albert Barnes commented on the second half of 1 Corinthians 12:13:

This probably refers to their partaking together of the cup in the Lord’s Supper. The sense is, that by their drinking of the same cup commemorating the death of Christ, they had partaken of the same influences of the Holy Ghost, which descend alike on all who observe that ordinance in a proper manner. They had shown, also, that they belonged to the same body, and were all united together; and that, however various might be their graces and endowments, yet they all belonged to the same great family.⁸⁶⁶

While it would be inaccurate to affirm that viewing 1 Corinthians 12:13 as a reference to the two ordinances the Lord Jesus gave His church is anything like the unanimous position among commentators on the passage, the position is very widely represented. Indeed, within the wider world of Christianity “the most popular view of 1 Corinthians 12:13 is that Paul is describing Christian water-baptism . . . which incorporates the baptisand into the Body of Christ.”⁸⁶⁷ A reference in 1 Corinthians 12:13 to immersion in water cannot be dismissed as a new and novel position, for it has been believed by many of the Lord’s churches and people, as well as within Christendom generally, and deserves to be evaluated sympathetically and accepted on account of the strong exegetical merits indicated above.

E. Historic Baptist support for a first-century fulfillment of Spirit baptism and for interpreting 1 Corinthians 12:13 as a reference to the church ordinances

⁸⁶⁵ *Annotations upon the Holy Bible*, Matthew Poole (1700), elec. acc. *Online Bible for Mac*.

⁸⁶⁶ *Notes on the New Testament*, Albert Barnes. Elec. acc. *Online Bible for Mac*. The view that 1 Corinthians 12:13 refers to baptism in water and the Lord’s supper is, naturally, also advocated in other theological works outside of commentaries. For example, “[In] 1 Corinthians 12:13 . . . distinctions of Jew and Gentile, bond and free, are abolished. By the grace of the same Spirit (or perhaps ‘in one spirit’ of Christian love and fellowship) . . . all are joined in baptism to the one body of Christ[.] . . . Possibly there is an allusion to both sacraments. . . . Both our baptism and our partaking of the cup in the communion are tokens and pledges of Christian unity. They mark our union with the one body of Christ” (“Baptism,” in the *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, John McClintock & James Strong. Elec. acc. Christian Library Series vol. 2. Albany, OR: AGES Software, 2006. The author of the article in the encyclopedia, in common with all the Protestant commentators cited above, believes in universal ecclesiology, not the historic Baptist local-only position.).

⁸⁶⁷ pg. 129, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, James Dunn. Unfortunately, many of those who advocate this position, confusing ecclesiology and soteriology, follow Cyprian and affirm that the body of Christ is the universal realm of salvation, rather than the local assembly of those previously born again. The wider world of Christianity is filled with heresy.

While many in certain circles have not given much consideration to the view maintained above, and an unfortunately large number of advocates of both the PCP and UCD doctrine have never even heard about the historic Baptist position on Spirit baptism, the view of 1 Corinthians 12:13 expounded above, where the passage is considered as a reference to the church ordinances of baptism and the Supper, has strong Baptist support historically.⁸⁶⁸ Indeed, the fulfillment of Spirit baptism as a past event that ended in the first century is an important Baptist position in the history of doctrine.

In 1802, Pastor T. B. Montanye, representing the “elders and messengers of the Philadelphia Association,” wrote the work “On the Baptism of the Holy Ghost” as a circular letter, which was “signed by order of the Association” by the Association moderator.⁸⁶⁹ This letter, as representative of the beliefs of the most influential Baptist body of the time, is worth quoting at some length. The letter stated:

The Baptism of the Holy Ghost . . . was never inculcated . . . [as] the work of regeneration and sanctification . . . in the Gospel, and we think ought not to be considered as constituting any part in the office work of the Divine Spirit in renewing the heart. . . . [O]ur respected [non-Baptist but Christian] friends . . . may be regenerated, and enjoy the highest consolation in the sweet incomes of the Holy Comforter, and the most sensible communion with Christ; yet as all this does not constitute the baptism of the Holy Spirit, nor is designed by it in the sacred Scriptures, it follows of consequence, that, rejecting the water baptism, they have no baptism whatever, and ought cheerfully to submit to that prescribed in the example of Jesus Christ. . . . [T]here is no well founded evidence of [the] present existence . . . of the baptism of the Holy Ghost . . . The term baptism of the Holy Ghost . . . was first taught by the harbinger of Jesus Christ, Matthew 3:11, “He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire” . . . the accomplishment of the promise made by Jesus Christ [of Spirit baptism was in] . . . Acts 2:16-22 . . . [as predicted in] Luke 24:49 . . . Acts 1:4, 5 . . . [and it was] the ground on which the apostles went to Jerusalem, and there in holy concert joined in prayer and supplication for the accomplishment of such qualifying aid, to [promulgate] the knowledge of their exalted Redeemer. . . .

The nature of this baptism, most clearly evinces it to be distinct, and materially different from that of regeneration. The one a still small voice, saying “this is the way;” the other, that of “a rushing mighty wind.” One invisible, “A white stone, and a new name given, which no man knew save he that had received it;” the other, to be seen, “Cloven tongues of fire sat on them.” One internal, filling the heart with secret consolation, joy, and pleasure; the other external, “The whole house where they were sitting.”

This renders the term *baptism* proper, because they were immersed in the fountain of the Spirit, and thereby made partakers of such extraordinary and miraculous influence, as in regeneration and conversion were never promised.⁸⁷⁰ . . .

⁸⁶⁸ Of course, this does not mean that all Baptists, or all Baptist churches in all ages, believed exactly the position proposed above. Such doctrinal harmony will only be achieved when all the saints are gathered, free from sin and in resurrected, glorified bodies, into the future heavenly assembly.

One should also consider that the historic Baptist view of Spirit baptism was very prominent during times of Spirit-led revival among Baptists. Holding the Biblical, Baptist view of the baptism of the Holy Ghost, rather than a PCP or UCD position, contributes to the cause of revival.

⁸⁶⁹ The letter by T. B. Montanye, from the minutes of the October 5-7 meeting of the Philadelphia Baptist Association, is found on pgs. 415-420 of the *Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association*, A. D. Gillette, elec. acc. Baptist History Collection, ver. 1. Paris, AK: Baptist Standard Bearer, 2005.

⁸⁷⁰ In the omitted section, the letter argues that “whatever any Christian may have gained in the experience of grace, he has no right to the term, baptized by the Spirit, unless such a person professing this

The subjects of this baptism differ essentially from those of regeneration. The work of grace is upon the hearts of the unregenerated, bringing them from a state of moral death to life, from darkness to light, and from the power of sin, and service of Satan, to the liberty of the gospel, and the enjoyment of fellowship with God. Whereas, the baptism of the Holy Ghost was upon the apostles; who, having experienced the work of grace upon their souls, and being thereby made partakers of all that is peculiar to regeneration, could not be regenerated by the descent of the sacred Spirit, which being a work only once in the divine life, could not be effected again. . . .

Here it is proper to remove some apparent difficulties, which are a means of puzzling the minds of many. First, what baptism the apostle denominates one baptism? We answer, The instituted appointment of Jesus Christ, which he authorized after his resurrection, which remains a standing ordinance in the church, and which Peter, when filled with the Holy Ghost, enjoined on Cornelius and the rest of the believing Gentiles, even after they were baptized with the Holy Spirit; though the baptism of the Spirit was never an essential prerequisite to water baptism[.] . . . [I]n 1 Corinthians 12:13 . . . there seems no absurdity in saying that the same Spirit influences all nations to yield an obedience to the instituted appointments of Jesus Christ, and so come [by immersion in water] into the union of the body the church. As for sundry other Scriptures, such as Romans 6:3, 4; Colossians 2:12; 1 Peter 3:21; Galatians 3:27; they have an evident relation to water baptism, and are no way connected with, nor yet refer to, the work of grace in the heart. . . .

We . . . leave you to [some closing] further instruction. 1.) That though regeneration and sanctification be essential to the character of a Christian, yet neither of them constitute the baptism of the Holy Ghost. 2.) However much you may enjoy of the Spirit, as the Spirit of life, light, and love; you have no Scripture grounds to call this the inward baptism, and so the one baptism, and thereby live in the neglect of the appointments of Jesus Christ. 3.) That as the baptism of the Holy Ghost was given for the confirmation of the gospel dispensation, it has effected its design; the sacred prophecy is fulfilled, and it has ceased. 4.) That as [this] extraordinary work, and no other, is known in the gospel as the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and that took place after faith in Christ, or regeneration, we have no right to call regeneration baptism. 5.) Though we are the hopeful subjects of divine grace, and live in the smiles of heaven; it is both our duty and privilege to submit to the appointments of Jesus Christ, as laid down in his word.

And now, dear brethren, you may perceive, that our intention is not to deny any of the blessed operations of the holy Ghost upon the human mind; but to distinguish between truth and error. . . . And as churches, we would exhort you to live in the Spirit, and grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed until the day of redemption. In the mean time, pray for us, that as instrumental of your joy, you and we may honor our profession by holy living, in the smiles of God's gracious Spirit.

The historical fulfillment of Spirit baptism was affirmed with striking clarity in 1802 by the Philadelphia Association. A position very similar to that advocated in this composition, and very different from both the PCP and UCD view, was thus the official doctrine of the most influential body of American Baptists in that era. Similarly, Texas Baptists of the nineteenth century believed:

When the Holy Spirit came with power upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:2), and fell on the house of Cornelius (Acts 11:15-16), while Peter preached to them, it was called a baptism of the Holy Spirit. In both cases, and all cases of such baptism, speaking with tongues followed. . . . The ordinary operation of the Holy Spirit in the first century, in the regeneration and conversion of men was [not] called a baptism . . . of the Spirit. . . . To speak of the operation of the Holy Spirit in regeneration and conversion as the baptism of the Holy Spirit, is both unscriptural and misleading. For it is not a baptism, even figuratively.⁸⁷¹

miraculous attainment, for no other is called the baptism of the Holy Ghost, prove it by signs and wonders, as did the primitive Christians.”

⁸⁷¹ Pg. 481, *Texas Historical and Biographical Magazine*, vol. 1, ed. John B. Link (1825-1894), elec. acc. Baptist History Collection CD ver. 1.0. Paris, AK: Baptist Standard Bearer, 2005.

Dr. Alvah Hovey was a Baptist pastor and then a professor of Hebrew, church history, theology, and Christian ethics at the Newton theological institution, a Baptist college, for a number of decades, starting in 1849. He became the president of the college in 1868, the year he also became a member of the executive committee of the American Baptist missionary union, a position he held until 1883. Concerning Spirit baptism, he wrote:

Do the Scriptures speak of a “baptism in the Spirit” after regeneration, as something to be expected by all Christians to the end of time? . . . [T]he baptism of the Spirit . . . embraced the gift of inspiration, and, indeed, the other miraculous gifts of the first age. . . . [such as] a mysterious power of using languages which they had never learned. . . . [A] miraculous endowment was an important part of the baptism of the Spirit. . . . [T]he gift of prophecy . . . was an effect of “baptism in the Spirit” . . . [B]aptism in the Holy Spirit included miraculous gifts . . . extraordinary powers . . . special and visible effects[.] . . . The questio[n] . . . [whether] “baptism in the Holy Spirit,” after regeneration, [is] something to be expected by all Christians to the end of time . . . ha[s] been answered in the negative. [One who does not have] miraculous gifts . . . should not profess to have been “baptized in the Holy Ghost,” nor apply to [himself] those texts which refer to this baptism. . . . [Through] the apostolic age . . . [there was a] gradual decrease of [miraculous] “gifts” of the Spirit. . . . “baptism in the Holy Ghost” conferred miraculous powers, as that of speaking with tongues, of prophesying, of healing the sick, and . . . these extraordinary gifts, having served their purpose, were [then gradually] withdrawn from the Church. . . . Plainly, then, the work of the Spirit, by which extraordinary powers were conferred . . . might cease with the apostolic age, while the work fo the same Spirit in other forms adapted to the needs of the saints might continue until the second coming of Christ.⁸⁷²

The view that Spirit baptism was a post-conversion phenomenon which conveyed supernatural powers and was limited to the apostolic age, is indeed the historic Baptist position.

Considering specifically 1 Corinthians 12:13, one notes that the Baptist *Confession of 1527* affirmed the faith of all Baptists accepting the document that being “baptized into one body” referred to that immersion in water by which one joined the membership of the local, visible assembly:

In the first place, mark this concerning baptism: Baptism should be given to all those who have learned repentance and change of life, and believe in truth that their sins have been taken away through Christ; and to all those who desire to walk in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and to be buried with him in death, that with him they may rise; and to all those who with such intention themselves desire and request it of us. By this is excluded all infant baptism, the Pope’s highest and first abomination. . . . In the second place, we were united concerning excommunication, as follows: Excommunication should be pronounced on all those who have given themselves to the Lord, to walk in his commandments, and on all those who have been baptized into one body of Christ, and who call themselves brothers and sisters, and yet slip away and fall into sin and are overtaken unawares. . . . Thirdly, we were one and agreed concerning breaking of bread, as follows: All who would break one bread for a memorial of the broken body of Christ, and all who would drink one draught as a memorial of the poured out blood of Christ should beforehand be united to one body of Christ; that is, to the Church of God, of which the head is Christ, to wit, by baptism.⁸⁷³

⁸⁷² See pgs. 29-51, *Doctrine of the Higher Christian Life Compared With the Teaching of the Holy Scriptures*, by Alvah Hovey. Boston, MA: Henry A. Young, 1885.

⁸⁷³ Pgs. 535-536, *A History of the Baptists*, vol. 2, Thomas Armitage, quoting the *Confession of 1527*, by (prob.) Michael Sattler. elec. acc. Baptist History Collection CD.

The pastor of the first American Baptist church, John Clarke,⁸⁷⁴ believed that 1 Corinthians 12:13 referred to immersion in water and gave no indication that he believed that Spirit baptism was still occurring after the first century:

Believer's baptism by immersion was a cardinal tenet of Clarke's church way. . . . Clarke wrote only of water baptism. Although he spoke of being filled with the Holy Spirit, he never suggested a "baptism of the Spirit." . . . [I]n his discussion of 1 Corinthians 12:13 . . . Clarke glossed . . . it as "knit together in one by his Spirit."⁸⁷⁵

A historical fulfillment and cessation of Spirit baptism, and a view of 1 Corinthians 12:13 as a reference to immersion in water and the Lord's Supper, was advocated in 1828 by the congregations of the Georgia Baptist Association, which affirmed that the "plain" interpretation of 1 Corinthians 12:13 was one which read the verse as a reference to the church ordinances:

The Georgia Baptist Association of Elders and Brethren, to the Churches which they represent, send Christian salutation [in 1828]: . . . We now advance some plain Bible proof of that gospel order observed by us. . . . We believe that water baptism and the Lord's Supper, are ordinances of the Lord, and are to be continued till his second coming[,] that true believers in Jesus Christ are the only subjects of baptism . . . that dipping is the mode[,] [and] [t]hat none but regularly baptized church members have a right to commune at the Lord's Table. In vindication of these doctrines we bring the following plain scriptures: . . . For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have all been made to drink into one spirit."⁸⁷⁶

Similar declarations from other Baptist groups of that era and afterwards are found:

⁸⁷⁴ John Clarke appears to have established a real Baptist church in America the year before Roger Williams did. Williams adopted Baptist sentiments for less than a year, practiced se-baptism before going off into the "seeker" heresy of the day, and created a "Baptist" church that never started any other churches in America and from which American Baptists by no means are derived. See *The First Baptist Church in America Not Founded by Roger Williams*, J. R. Graves & S. Adlam. Texarkana, TX: Bogard Press, 1995. (reprint of 1928 2nd ed.).

⁸⁷⁵ pg. 103, Chapter 11, "A Baptist Theology and Church Way," in *John Clarke (1609-1676): Pioneer in American Medicine, Democratic Ideals, and Champion of Religions Liberty*, Louis Franklin Asher. Pittsburg, PA: Dorrance Publishing, 1997. Elec. acc. Baptist History Collection CD.

⁸⁷⁶ pgs. 175-181, *History of the Georgia Baptist Association*, Jesse Mercer. Washington, GA, pub. 1838. Elec. acc. Baptist History Collection CD.

It would be invalid to conclude that these Georgian Baptists did not believe that 1 Corinthians 12:13a referred to the Holy Spirit because of the lack of capitalization in this document. Capitalization conventions of the present time are notably different in past centuries. One notes, for example, in this same book, sentences such as the following: "We believe that all those who were chosen in Christ, will be effectually called, regenerated, converted, sanctified, and supported by the spirit and power of God, so that they shall persevere in grace, and not one of them be finally lost" (pg. 25). "Their hope of success was founded upon the promise and spirit of the Lord" (pg. 30). "It is not assuming to much to say, that a large proportion of the Mission ardour which is felt by thousands, may be traced to the influences of the spirit of our GOD on the heart of our excellent brother Dr. WILLIAM CAREY" (pg. 44). "Consider, we beseech you, if there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the spirit, if any bowels and mercies, the situation, of many parts of our land" (pg. 106). "[A]n inspired Apostle, who had been himself, the happy subject, in a special manner, of the gracious influence of the spirit of God, and thereby made a true convert" (pg. 135). Sometimes references to the Holy Spirit received capitalization, and sometimes they did not, but this did not make references in sentences such as those above concerning the "spirit . . . of God" or "the spirit of the Lord" or "the spirit of our God" speech about anyone or anything less than the Holy Ghost of God.

For we believe that Christian baptism is the first ordinance a believer ought to comply with; and persons cannot become regular church members without first being baptized according to the word of God. This appears from the conduct of the apostles in the first gathering of the churches of Jesus Christ. Acts 2:41, 42. They that gladly received the word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they (i. e., those baptized) continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." Also it is said, "By one Spirit we are all baptized into one body." 1 Corinthians 12:13. That is, by the leading and teaching of the Holy Spirit we are all baptized into one body, i. e. the church. And we cannot find from the Holy Scriptures, and we think no man can, that since the ascension of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, that any were received members of the visible church before they submitted to the ordinance of baptism.⁸⁷⁷

A belief that Spirit baptism ceased in the first century, and that 1 Corinthians 12:13 refers to immersion in water and the ordinance of communion, is not a new view among Baptists. Many of the Lord's churches have demonstrably held this view of the verse for centuries.

F. Spirit Baptism: Other Alleged References in the Epistles:

Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:27; Colossians 2:12; 1 Peter 3:21⁸⁷⁸

It is very rare for one who recognizes that 1 Corinthians 12:13 refers to immersion in water and the Lord's Supper to consider any other references to baptism in the epistles as setting forth the baptism of Holy Ghost. All other texts sometimes alleged to refer to Spirit baptism, when taken in their natural sense, speak of the church ordinance of immersion. The position of the Philadelphia Baptist Association in 1802, as quoted extensively above, is still true: "As for sundry other Scriptures, such as Romans 6:3, 4; Colossians 2:12; 1 Peter 3:21; Galatians 3:27; they have an evident relation to water baptism, and are no way connected with, nor yet refer to, the work of grace in the heart." The only substantive reason typically given to attempt to prove that these passages refer to Spirit baptism is that, were a reference to immersion in water in view, the heresy of baptismal regeneration would allegedly follow. Having dispelled this notion and demonstrated the entire compatibility of justification by faith alone with a reference to the church ordinance of baptism in these texts, no reasons remains to deviate from the

⁸⁷⁷ pg. 13, "Preface." *A Concise History of the Kehukee Baptist Association*, Lemuel Burkitt & Jesse Read, rev. Henry L. Burkitt, pub. 1850. Elec. acc. Baptist History Collection, ver. 1. Paris, AK: Baptist Standard Bearer, 2005.

Note also that the Anabaptist "Confession of Faith, According to the Holy Word of God," c. A. D. 1600, Article XXII, stated, with evident allusion to 1 Corinthians 12:13, that "[B]aptism is an ordinance and institution of the Lord, by which believers are united with each other by one Spirit in fellowship with Christ" (pg. 398, *Martyr's Mirror*, Thieleman J. Van Braght, trans. Joseph Sohm).

⁸⁷⁸ Note that Ephesians 4:5 has been evaluated earlier in the section "Was Spirit baptism a completed historical phenomenon at the time Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, or is it a event that takes place regularly throughout the entire dispensation of grace?"

normal sense of these verses as references to immersion. Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:27; Colossians 2:12; and 1 Peter 3:21 will consequently be analyzed in order, and the entire compatibility of interpreting them as references to immersion in water with justification by faith alone will be demonstrated. Indeed, affirming the necessity of considering these texts as references to Spirit baptism, because of a supposedly unavoidable necessity of affirming baptismal regeneration if they are recognized as simple verses about immersion, gives far too much exegetical favor to the baptismal regeneration heresy. Since the simple fact of the matter is that the verses in question are about immersion in water, not Spirit baptism, affirming that they require salvation by baptism if the ordinance is in view would in fact go far to establish, rather than refute, baptismal regeneration.⁸⁷⁹

5.) Romans 6:3-4

Baptismal regenerationists allege that Romans 6:3-4 teaches that baptism is the literal means through which one is united to Christ. They argue that spiritual blessings are said to be “in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3) and that these verses say one is “baptized into Jesus Christ” (Romans 6:3). They conclude that a person is out of Christ until he is baptized, and through baptism “into” Christ he gets “in” Christ and begins receiving spiritual blessing for the first time. However, an exposition of the passage in its context demonstrates the fallacious nature of this claim. This argument for baptismal regeneration also cannot be supported by an analysis of the phrases “into Christ” and “in Christ” that are found throughout the Bible. One is “in Christ” at the moment of faith, prior to baptism.

In chapters 1-5 of the book of Romans, Paul clearly explains that the gospel, “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth,” is “that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law,” that “to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness,” so that “being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 1:16, 3:28, 4:5, 5:1). Having explained that sinners are justified by faith alone in these chapters (where the words *believe* and *faith* are found almost fifty times, and baptism is never

⁸⁷⁹ Since the author of this paper has demolished the doctrine of baptismal regeneration in the book *Heaven Only For the Baptized? The Gospel of Christ versus Baptismal Regeneration*, currently available at <http://sites.google.com/site/thross7> and in an e-book version for the Kindle, he sees no reason to rewrite what he has already composed. The exposition of the passages below is heavily dependent upon what was written in this earlier volume.

mentioned), Paul then begins in Romans 6-8 to explain the implications of justification by faith in the life of the saved individual. He naturally mentions baptism early in this section of his discourse, since it publicly identifies the saint with the people of God, and is one of the first acts of obedience for the newly regenerate individual. Romans 9-11 then surveys God's relationship to Israel, while chapters 12-16 discuss God's righteousness at work in the believer's life. The greater context of the book of Romans supports the conclusion that baptism, as mentioned in 6:3-4, is not the means through which one is declared just before God, for it appears in a section dealing with the Christian life, not the reconciliation of the lost. A careful examination of the passage also yields the same conclusion.

Romans 6:1-11 reads as follows:

1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? 2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? 3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 4 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. 5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of *his* resurrection: 6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. 7 For he that is dead is freed from sin. 8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: 9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. 10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. 11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

In verses one and two, Paul deals with the slanderous notion that the doctrines of justification by faith alone and the eternal security of the believer provide a license to sin; the enemies of the gospel had affirmed as much (Romans 3:8). He counters that one who dies to sin⁸⁸⁰ at the time he is justified by faith (as expounded in chapters 1-5, cf. Galatians 2:19-21) and so is now "dead to sin" cannot "live any longer therein" (v. 2). A dead man is not influenced or affected by the affairs of this life; its sounds, tastes, pleasures, ambitions, and all else mean nothing to him. God gives a sinner a new heart and nature at the moment of regeneration (2 Corinthians 5:17, Hebrews 8:10-12), so that his "old man" is now "crucified" with Christ and he henceforth will "not serve sin" any longer (Romans 6:6). Paul argues that, since God breaks the dominion of sin over men when they believe, justification by faith leads to a holy life, not lawlessness. He then reminds his readers that their baptism was a symbol or "likeness" (v. 5) of their death to the old life of sin and resurrection to a new holy life in Christ at the moment when they trusted in Him. They were "baptized into [Greek *eis*, "with reference to"]⁸⁸¹ Jesus

⁸⁸⁰ *apethanomen te hamartiai*, second aorist active of *apothnesko*, "to die."

⁸⁸¹ Romans 6:2, *apethanomen te hamartia*, "are dead to sin" or "died [with reference to] sin," provides contextual support for a rendering of *eis* as "with reference to" in Romans 6:3-4, as it is a "dative

Christ,” and so were “baptized into [Greek *eis*, “with reference to”]⁸⁸² his death” (v. 3). They were “buried with him⁸⁸³ by baptism into [Greek *eis*, “with reference to”] death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so [they] also should walk in newness of life.” Since Paul taught justification by faith, not baptismal regeneration, he affirmed, as Baptists do today, that baptism is connected with a “walk in newness of life.” Nothing in Romans six states that the ordinance is administered “in order that men might obtain the remission of past sins.” Nor does the chapter affirm that baptism is the act that makes one dead to sin. On the contrary, it states baptism is a picture or “likeness” (v. 5) of Christ’s atoning work, which is the true foundational cause of deliverance from sin’s penalty (Revelation 1:5) and power (Hebrews 9:14). Indeed, baptismal regenerationists must affirm the incongruity that one buries a man in baptism in order to kill him to sin, rather than burying one who is already dead to sin, as do true churches. Happily, very few of the advocates of forgiveness through water bury people in order to kill them, or argue in favor of such a practice, at any other time than when they attempt to prove their views from Romans 6. When baptismal regenerationists affirm that a person dies to sin when he is buried in baptism,

of reference/respect [with reference to] . . . instead of the word *to*, supply the phrase *with reference to* before the dative . . . illustrations [of this use include] . . . Romans 6:2 [and] Romans 6:11” (Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, pgs. 144-146).

⁸⁸² It is noteworthy that the baptismal regenerationists who so vehemently insist upon *eis* signifying “in order to obtain” in Acts 2:38 (“*eis* the remission of sins”) cry out for a sense of penetration or literal entry into Christ in Romans 6:3-4. Obviously one is not baptized “in order to obtain” Jesus Christ’s death in Romans 6:3-4, for Christ died nearly two thousand years ago and His death is a historical fact that is in no way contingent upon anyone submitting to baptism. Therefore the advocates of salvation by baptism argue *eis* signifies “penetration into” in this passage. However, in Acts 2:38 one cannot possibly penetrate into the remission of sins, so a meaning of “in order to obtain” remission of sins is insisted upon for *eis*. If, in either Acts 2:38 or Romans 6:3-4, *eis* conveys any other of the twenty-nine subheadings with different ideas listed in the Greek lexicon BDAG for its 1,767 appearances in the New Testament, the case for remission of sins through baptism in these passages is obliterated. Happily, the defender of justification by faith can appeal to vast numbers of clear, unambiguous passages to support his view, rather than hanging his hope for eternity upon a particular sense of a preposition with a very broad range of meaning in a handful of texts, as the baptismal regenerationist must do. Note that *eis* signifying “on account of” or “with reference to” in Acts 2:38 and Romans 6:3-4 makes sense in both passages (Acts 2:38, “be baptized . . . with reference to/on account of the remission of sins,” and Romans 6:3-4, “baptized with reference to/on account of Jesus Christ . . . baptized with reference to/on account of his death . . . buried with him by baptism with reference to/on account of his death”). It certainly fits better with the other passages where the verb *baptize* is used with *eis*. For example, in 1 Corinthians 10:2, “baptized unto (*eis*) Moses” can hardly mean “baptized in order to obtain Moses” or “baptized in order to penetrate into Moses,” but “baptized with reference to Moses.”

⁸⁸³ Note that only immersion pictures death, burial, and resurrection. If sprinkling and pouring are acceptable pictures of burial, one wonders why the graveyards for denominations that practice “baptism” in these modes are not filled with bodies with a little dirt sprinkled or poured on their heads, rather than completely covered with earth. It seems that at funerals all know that burial requires immersion, but at baptisms many find a way to deny it.

the ordinance is no longer a true likeness of Christ's death (v. 5), for Christ died before He was buried, just as in Baptist baptism one is dead to sin before he is buried beneath the baptismal waters. Furthermore, v. 5 states that those Biblically baptized ("planted together in the likeness of his death") "shall be also *in the likeness* of *his* resurrection." Since only true believers can be baptized, and all true believers are eternally secure, this certain promise of resurrection with Christ for the Scripturally baptized fits well within the Biblical view of baptism. However, baptismal regenerationists almost always deny that those they baptize are eternally secure; thus, the "shall be" guarantee of v. 5 creates a significant problem for them. Paul's argument in v. 6-10 also gives no solace to advocates of water salvation; the passage never states that one actually dies to sin in baptism, while the use of the Greek perfect tense to state that one dead "is freed"⁸⁸⁴ from sin (v. 7) buttresses the fact that those so dead will never be alive to sin again, and so are eternally secure. Finally, v. 11 commands believers to constantly "reckon . . . yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." The dominion of sin having been shattered when justified by faith, the saints are to count themselves dead indeed to sin as they grow in holiness day by day. Nothing in Romans six affirms that one gains forgiveness of sin or is literally made dead to sin at the moment of baptism. On the contrary, the chapter invalidates baptismal regeneration.

Not only does the context of Romans 6:3-4 nullify the affirmations of baptismal regenerationists, but a study of the Biblical uses of *eis* + *Christon* ("into . . . Christ," Romans 6:3) and *en* + *Christo* ("in Christ") demonstrate the fallacious nature of the baptismal regenerationist assertion that one only becomes *en* or "in" Christ at the time of baptism. The word "Christ" is the object of the preposition *eis* nineteen times in the New Testament.⁸⁸⁵ Examination of these verses demonstrates that the two New Testament

⁸⁸⁴ *Dedikaioiai*, Perfect passive indicative, third person singular of *dikaioo*. The implication, supported clearly elsewhere in Scripture, is that this "freeing," this judicial or legal freedom from sin, took place at a particular time in the past but possesses abiding results; once justified and freed from sin, one remains so and will certainly enter eternal glory (Romans 8:30). "The perfect . . . unites in itself as it were present and aorist, since it expresses the continuance of completed action . . . the perfect is both punctiliar and durative" (A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1934, pg. 893).

⁸⁸⁵ The nineteen references are: Acts 19:4, "Believe on (*eis*) him . . . on (*eis*) Christ Jesus"; Acts 20:21, "repentance toward (*eis*) God, and faith toward (*eis*) our Lord Jesus Christ"; Acts 24:24, "the faith in (*eis*) Christ," Romans 6:3, "baptized into (*eis*) Christ"; Romans 16:5, "firstfruits of Achaia unto (*eis*) Christ"; 1 Corinthians 1:9, "called unto (*eis*) the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ"; 1 Corinthians 8:12, "ye sin (*eis*) against Christ"; 2 Corinthians 1:21, "he which stablisheth us with you in (*eis*) Christ"; 2 Corinthians 11:3, "the simplicity that is in (*eis*) Christ"; Galatians 2:16, "even we have believed in (*eis*) Jesus Christ"; Galatians 3:17, "the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in (*eis*) Christ"; Galatians 3:24, "the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto (*eis*) Christ"; Galatians 3:27, "baptized into (*eis*) Christ"; Ephesians 5:32, "I speak concerning (*eis*) Christ and (*eis*) the church"; Philippians 1:10, "ye may

instances of the presence of the word “baptize” after the preposition *eis* prove nothing about how one gets *en* or “in” Christ. If baptism *eis* Christ proves one literally enters into Christ at the moment of the ordinance, then why cannot one believe *eis* Christ to get in Him, since believing *eis* Christ is found more frequently than is baptism *eis* Christ (Acts 20:21, Galatians 2:16, Colossians 2:5)? In fact, one is said to believe “into” (*pisteuo* + *eis*) the Lord Jesus Christ in 45 verses.⁸⁸⁶ If baptism *eis* proves one is “in Christ” only after the ordinance, why does one not actually speak *eis* or “into” Christ (Ephesians 5:32), or even sin *eis* Christ (1 Corinthians 8:12)? Why is it that baptism *eis* proves that one is not “in (*en*) Christ” until baptized, and baptism is the means through which one becomes “in Christ,” but belief *eis* Christ does not prove that one is “in Christ” at the moment of faith? Why not affirm that one is *eis* or “into” Christ whenever he speaks, or that one must actually sin *eis* or “into” Christ? Baptismal regenerationists who argue that baptism *eis* Christ proves one is unforgiven until he receives the ordinance evidence either ignorance or dishonesty concerning the preposition *eis* as found in New Testament Greek. When it employs the preposition *eis*, Romans 6:3 simply asserts that one is baptized “with reference to” Christ.

Furthermore, the New Testament does not associate the state of being “in (*en*) Christ” with baptism. Eighty-five verses in the New Testament contain the terms “in (*en*) Christ,” but not one connects baptism with the phrase.⁸⁸⁷ This is a devastating fact for one who would assert that one is *en* Christ through baptism. It is further compounded by the fact that the forty-six verses that speak of being “in the Lord” (*en Kurio*),⁸⁸⁸ the fifty-two verses that use “in Him” (*en auto*) with reference to Christ,⁸⁸⁹ the twenty-three verses

be sincere and without offence till (*eis*) the day of Christ”; Colossians 2:5, “steadfastness of your faith in (*eis*) Christ”; Philemon 6, “every good thing which is in you in (*eis*) Christ Jesus”; 1 Peter 1:11, “it testified beforehand the sufferings of (*eis*) Christ”; and 2 Peter 1:8, “neither be barren nor unfruitful in (*eis*) the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

⁸⁸⁶ Matthew 18:6; Mark 9:42; John 1:12; 2:11, 23; 3:15-16, 18, 36; 4:39; 6:29, 35, 40, 47; 7:5, 31, 38-39, 48; 8:30; 9:35-36; 10:42; 11:25-26, 45, 48; 12:11, 36-37, 42, 44, 46; 14:1, 12; 16:9; 17:20; Acts 10:43; 19:4; Romans 10:10; 1 Timothy 1:16; James 2:19; 1 Peter 1:21; 1 John 5:10, 13.

⁸⁸⁷ The verses are as follows: Romans 3:24; 6:11, 23; 8:1-2, 39-9:1; 12:5; 15:17; 16:3, 7, 9-10; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 4, 30; 3:1; 4:10, 15, 17; 15:18-19, 22, 31; 16:24; 2 Corinthians 2:14, 17; 3:14; 5:17, 19; 12:2, 19; Galatians 1:22; 2:4, 17; 3:14, 26, 28; 5:6; 6:15; Ephesians 1:1, 3, 10, 12, 20; 2:6-7, 10, 13; 3:6, 11, 21; 4:32; Philippians 1:1, 13, 26; 2:1, 5; 3:3, 14; 4:7, 19, 21; Colossians 1:2, 4, 28; 1 Thessalonians 2:14; 4:16; 5:18; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; 1 Timothy 1:14; 2:7; 3:13; 2 Timothy 1:1, 9, 13; 2:10; 3:12, 15; Philemon 1:8, 23; 1 Peter 3:16; 5:10, 14; 1 John 5:20.

⁸⁸⁸ Romans 14:14; 16:2, 8, 11-13, 22; 1 Corinthians 1:31; 4:17; 7:22, 39; 9:1-2; 11:11; 15:58; 16:19; 2 Corinthians 2:12; 10:17; Galatians 5:10; Ephesians 1:15; 2:21; 4:1, 17; 5:8; 6:1, 10, 21; Philippians 1:14; 2:19, 24, 29; 3:1; 4:1-2, 4, 10; Colossians 3:18; 4:7, 17; 1 Thessalonians 3:8; 4:1; 5:12; 2 Thessalonians 3:4; Philemon 1:16, 20; Revelation 14:13.

⁸⁸⁹ Matthew 10:32; 13:57; Mark 6:3; Luke 12:8; 23:22; John 1:4; 6:56; 7:18; 10:38; 13:31-32; 15:5; 18:38; 19:4, 6; Acts 17:28; Romans 1:17; 1 Corinthians 1:5; 2:11; 12:9; 2 Corinthians 1:19-20; 5:21; 13:4;

where the phrase “in Me” (*en emoi*) references being “in Christ,”⁸⁹⁰ the references where “in Thee” is used of being “in Christ,”⁸⁹¹ the twelve references to being “in God” (*en Theo*),⁸⁹² the references to being in the Father or *en Patri*,⁸⁹³ to being in the Son or *en Huio*,⁸⁹⁴ and to being *en* the Spirit (*en Pneumati*)⁸⁹⁵ never state or even hint that through baptism one enters into the state of being in Christ, in God the Father, or in God the Holy Spirit. If people were to become *en* Christ through baptism, one would expect to find a great number of verses that connect the two; but never once, in the two hundred seventy-nine verses which deal with the appropriate phrases in Scripture, does such an assertion appear.

While Scripture never affirms that one is “in Christ” (*en Christo*) at the moment of baptism, it does make affirmations about the “in Christ” state that are incompatible with the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. Nothing can remove one who is “in Christ” from that blessed state; he is eternally secure therein (Romans 8:37-39).⁸⁹⁶ All who are “in the Spirit” are saved (Rom 8:9), but people were so before water baptism (Acts 10:44-48). Only *en* the Spirit can one confess Jesus as Lord (1 Corinthians 12:3), but this profession must be made before baptism is Biblically possible. Indeed, the Spirit leads one to submit to baptism (1 Corinthians 12:13), for one has Him before immersion.⁸⁹⁷ Furthermore, men are “in Christ by the gospel” (Ephesians 3:6), and it is “the gospel . . . by which also ye are saved” (1 Corinthians 15:1-2). Truly God’s “purpose and grace, which was given [the elect] in (*en*) Christ Jesus before the world began” is “manifest by .

Ephesians 1:4, 9, 11; 2:16; 4:21; Philippians 3:9; Colossians 1:16-17, 19; 2:6-7, 9-10, 15; 2 Thessalonians 1:12; 1 John 1:5; 2:5-6, 8, 27-28; 3:5-6, 9, 24; 4:13, 15-16.

⁸⁹⁰ Matthew 10:32; 11:6; 26:31; Mark 14:27; Luke 7:23; 12:8; 22:37; John 6:56; 10:38; 14:10-11, 20, 30; 15:2, 4-7; 16:33; 17:21, 23; 2 Corinthians 11:10; Galatians 2:20.

⁸⁹¹ Matthew 26:33; Luke 3:22; John 17:21, three references.

⁸⁹² John 3:21; Romans 2:17; 5:11; Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 3:3; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2:2; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; 1 Timothy 6:17; 1 John 4:15-16; Jude 1:1.

⁸⁹³ John 14:10-11, 20; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; 1 John 2:24; Jude 1:1—seven references.

⁸⁹⁴ John 14:13; Hebrews 1:2; 1 John 2:24; 5:11, 20—five references.

⁸⁹⁵ Matthew 3:11; 12:28; 22:43; Mark 1:8, 23; 5:2; 12:36; Luke 1:17; 2:27; 3:16; 4:1; John 1:33; 4:23-24; Acts 1:5; 11:16; 19:21; Romans 1:9; 2:29; 8:9; 9:1; 14:17; 15:16; 1 Corinthians 6:11, 20; 12:3, 9, 13; 2 Corinthians 6:6; Galatians 6:1; Ephesians 2:18, 22; 3:5; 5:18; 6:18; Philippians 1:27; Colossians 1:8; 1 Thessalonians 1:5; 1 Timothy 3:16; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:12; Jude 1:20; Revelation 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10—forty-six references.

⁸⁹⁶ Compare the “bookends” of being “in Christ” which are found in Romans 8:1 and 8:39; the chapter contrasts those in Christ with those who are not.

⁸⁹⁷ Some might assert that since the church is metaphorically referred to as the “body of Christ,” (1 Corinthians 12:27), and one is baptized to join the church, one must be baptized to be “in Christ.” However, the Bible never connects the saving relationship of being “in Christ” and the metaphor of unified service in the church (note 1 Corinthians 12:13-27; Romans 12:4-6ff.) as the “body of Christ” in this fashion. Therefore, this argument is unsupported by Scripture and invalid.

. . . our Saviour Jesus Christ . . . through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:9-10, note v. 12), but the gospel is defined with no mention of baptism (1 Corinthians 15:1-4) and is, in fact, even contrasted with baptism (1:17). These references alone refute the notion that one is *en* Christ by means of baptism.

Christ's high priestly prayer in John 17 demonstrates that one is “in Christ” by faith, not by baptism. The Savior asks His Father that “them . . . which shall believe on me . . . may be one in (*en*) us . . . I in (*en*) them . . . that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me” (John 17:20-23). Since all Christ's prayers are answered, all who believe on Him are in the Father and the Son. Christ is also in all of them (v. 23; note also Galatians 2:20, “Christ liveth in me . . . I live by the faith of the Son of God,” and 2 Corinthians 13:5). The Lord's intercessory prayer never mentions baptism. It indicates, rather, as do other passages of Scripture, that one is in Christ by faith, and that the Son likewise indwells all believers.

The book of 1 John also devastates the idea that one is “in Christ” only upon baptism. It affirms that we can know that we are in Him if we are keeping His Word, not if we are baptized (1 John 2:5-6, 3:24). The transforming power of spiritual union with Christ is altogether different from the ordinance of baptism. All who are in Christ have been given the Holy Spirit, and they can know they are saved because of the Spirit's presence (1 John 4:13), but the Holy Ghost is received before baptism. God the Spirit also guarantees that all truly in Christ “shall abide” in Him (1 John 2:25-27). Consequently, were one were “in Christ” through baptism into a congregation's membership, church discipline or excommunication would be impossible. Further, those in Christ cannot live in continual sin (1 John 3:5-6, 9), but church members can do so. God dwells in all who from a heart of faith confess Jesus (1 John 4:15-16), but such a confession is a prerequisite to baptism (Acts 8:36-38). Similarly, all who love God, which they begin to do when they first know and believe the love God has for them, are in Him (1 John 4:16). If baptismal regeneration is true, one must baptize someone who does not have the Spirit and so is not led by Him into its waters. Baptism would be for those who do not confess Jesus as Lord, who do not obey God's Word, who live in sin, and who do not love God, but hate Him. When such Spirit-resisting, non-confessing, disobedient and sinful God-haters are baptized, they then could not be subsequently be removed from the church rolls, for one “in Christ” remains there forever. Either all this is true, or baptismal regeneration is false, and one is “in Christ” before baptism. Furthermore, John writes “unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life,” and this life “is in (*en*) his Son.” (1 John 5:13, 11). His audience is “in (*en*) him that is true, even in (*en*) his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true

God, and eternal life” (1 John 5:20). Believers constitute John’s intended audience in his epistle, and his audience is *en* Christ and has eternal life as a consequence of faith. 1 John proves that believing, not baptism, gets one in or *en* Christ.

Indeed, the doctrine that one is “in Christ” or *en Christo* by faith is very frequently taught in scripture. In Galatians, Paul associated being *en Christo* and faith, declaring that “a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ . . . even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified . . . we seek to be justified by (*en*) Christ” (Galatians 2:16-17). Galatians 3:14 is similar: “That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through (*en*) Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” Galatians 3:26 reads, “For ye are all the children of God by faith in (*en*) Christ Jesus.” Galatians 5:5-6 states, “We through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in (*en*) Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.” Note also Galatians 2:20-21; 3:2. Galatians repeatedly associates the “*en* Christ” state with faith.

The book of Ephesians also indicates that one is in or *en* Christ by faith. Ephesians 1:1 refers to the “faithful [*pistos*—translated “believing” in John 20:27; Acts 10:45; 16:1; 2 Corinthians 6:15; 1 Timothy 4:10; 5:16; 6:2] in (*en*) Christ Jesus.” Ephesians 1:12-15 declares that we “trusted in (*en*) Christ . . . [upon hearing] the word of truth, the gospel of . . . salvation,” and that when one “believe[s], [he is] sealed with that holy Spirit of promise . . . the earnest of your inheritance,” for “faith [is] in (*en*) the Lord Jesus,” and God demonstrates “the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe” (v. 19). All the spiritual blessings “in Christ” of Ephesians 1:3-14 are given to those who believe or trust in Him (v. 12-19). Ephesians 2:6-10 clearly links being in Christ with faith, stating that God “hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in (*en*) Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through (*en*) Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in (*en*) Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” Ephesians 3:11-12 states that we are “in (*en*) Christ Jesus our Lord: in (*en*) whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.” Thus, Ephesians 1-3 repeatedly links the state of being in or *en* Christ and faith, but baptism is not mentioned anywhere in these chapters.

Other books of the Bible also associate faith and the “in (*en*) Christ” position.

Colossians 1:4 refers to “faith in (*en*) Christ Jesus”; 1 Timothy 1:14 to “faith . . . in (*en*) Christ Jesus”; 1 Timothy 3:13 and 2 Timothy 3:15 to “faith which is in (*en*) Christ Jesus”; 1 Corinthians 4:17 to those who are faithful/believing “in (*en*) the Lord”; Philippians 2:19, 24 to “trust in (*en*) the Lord Jesus . . . trust in (*en*) the Lord”; Colossians 2:5 to “faith in (*en*) Christ”; 2 Thessalonians 3:4 to “hav[ing] confidence [or trust]⁸⁹⁸ in (*en*) the Lord”; and 1 Timothy 6:17 to “trust . . . in (*en*) the living God.” We are “found in (*en*) him, not having [our] own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Philippians 3:9). Dozens of passages indicate that one is “in (*en*) Christ” by faith. Many others that do not make the connection to faith explicit are nevertheless incompatible with baptismal regeneration. Not one of the two hundred seventy-nine relevant texts connect being “in Christ” and baptism.⁸⁹⁹

Romans 6:3-4 provides no support whatever for baptismal regeneration. Neither the passage in its context, nor the phrase “into (*eis*) Christ,” nor the phrase “in (*en*) Christ,” provide a shred of evidence for salvation by baptism. At the moment of faith one is in Christ, and the Lord Jesus indwells all believers, not the baptized only. Those who argue for baptismal regeneration using passages such as Romans 6 “do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God” (Matthew 22:29).

6.) Galatians 3:27

Galatians 3:27 states that “as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” Since the verse declares that in baptism one puts on Christ, baptismal regenerationists argue that forgiveness for (past) sins is only received at the point of baptism.⁹⁰⁰ This view has a number of major problems.

First, “put on” (*enduo*) is never plainly used for anything that relates to the

⁸⁹⁸ *Pepoithamen*, the perfect active indicative first person of the verb *peitho*, translated “trust” in Matthew 27:43; Mark 10:24; Luke 18:9; 2 Corinthians 1:9; Philippians 2:24; Hebrews 2:13; 13:18.

⁸⁹⁹ It should be specifically pointed out as well that while the New Testament never says one is baptized *en* Christ, men do believe *en* Christ. Note the following texts: “And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe (*pisteuete en*) the gospel” (Mark 1:15); “Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in (*pisteos en*) his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God” (Romans 3:25); “For ye are all the children of God by faith in (*pisteos en*) Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:26); “Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in (*pistin en*) the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints” (Ephesians 1:15); “Since we heard of your faith in (*pistin . . . en*) Christ Jesus, and of the love *which ye have* to all the saints,” (Colossians 1:4); etc.

⁹⁰⁰ A refutation of the argument that one is baptized “into” (*eis*) Christ to get “in” (*en*) Christ is found in the analysis of Romans 6:3-4 above.

immediate forgiveness of sin in any of its twenty-eight appearances;⁹⁰¹ the baptismal regenerationist must simply allege, without any evidence, that to “put on” Christ refers to justification. *Enduo* (“put on”) is, in contrast, clearly used in a number of passages for the walk of the already forgiven Christian, and of those already baptized. In Romans 13:12-14, Paul exhorts the baptized believers at Rome to “cast off the works of darkness, and . . . put on (*enduo*) the armour of light . . . put ye on (*enduo*) the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to *fulfill* the lusts *thereof*.” His command to the church at Rome to “put on” Christ and the armor of light is an exhortation to live for God, not to receive forgiveness of past sins by being rebaptized. Paul similarly commands the church at Ephesus to “put off concerning the former conversation the old man . . . and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and . . . put on (*enduo*) the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:22-24). Again, the text calls already baptized believers to live for God. It is not an exhortation for church members to submit to a second baptism. Later in the same epistle, the apostle commands the congregation at Ephesus to “put on (*enduo*) the whole armour of God. . . . Stand therefore . . . having on (*enduo*) the breastplate of righteousness.” Similarly, Colossians 3:10-14 relates an appeal to the church at Colosse to “put on (*enduo*) the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him. . . . Put on (*enduo*) therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind . . . and above all these things *put on* charity, which is the bond of perfectness.” 1 Thessalonians 5:8 likewise commands “us, who are of the day, [to] be sober, putting on (*enduo*) the breastplate of faith and love.” In all these instances, those who are already forgiven are commanded to “put on” a variety of things that relate to the Christian life. One could compare baptism to the uniform donned by an enlisted man

⁹⁰¹ Matthew 6:25; 22:11; 27:31; Mark 1:6; 6:9; 15:17, 20; Luke 12:22; 15:22; 24:49; Acts 12:21; Romans 13:12, 14; 1 Corinthians 15:53-54; 2 Corinthians 5:3; Galatians 3:27; Ephesians 4:24; 6:11, 14; Colossians 3:10, 12; 1 Thessalonians 5:8; Revelation 1:13; 15:6; 19:14. Note as well that out of thirty-two instances of *enduo* in the earliest patristic writings, not one refers to the legal act of justification, even in writers with very poor theology. The verb is almost always used metaphorically for various aspects of righteous living (for example, 1 Clement 30:3 states, “Let us clothe ourselves in concord, being humble and self-controlled.”), while a few instances refer to literally putting on clothing. See 1 Clement 30:3; Ignatius to Polycarp 1:2; Epistle of Barnabas 3:2; Shepherd of Hermas 20:2; 22:8; 26:2; 27:4; 34:8; 39:7, 10; 42:1, 4; 43:4; 44:1; 45:4; 61:2, 4-5; 65:3; 75:1; 79:4; 86:5; 90:2-4, 8; 92:1; 101:2; 106:3. Furthermore, the pre-Christian use of “put off the man” by the skeptic philosopher Pyrrho of Elis relates to a change of life—when Pyrrho failed to act in accordance with his convictions, “In shame Pyrrho admit[ed that those who pointed out his inconsistency were] right, but by way of excuse he sa[id]: *clalepon estin ton anthropon ekunai*, ‘it is difficult to put off the man.’” (pg. 185, “Observations on a Pauline Expression,” P. W. Van Der Horst. *New Testament Studies* 19:181-187). Neither Scripture nor the documents of the earliest patristic writings nor the relevant records of pre-Christian philosophy connect the legal act of justification with the terminology of “put on” and “put off.”

when he joins the army;⁹⁰² the recruit is enrolled before he gets his uniform and puts it on. The uniform simply makes him easier to identify than civilian clothing would. Since “put on” is terminology for those already justified before God, the statement of Galatians 3:27 indicates that those already forgiven should “put on” Christ in baptism as a public testimony of a previously received pardon and as a public identification with Christ. The verse does not teach that one receives remission of sins or becomes a Christian through baptism.

Second, both the immediate and wider context of Galatians 3:27 explode the claim that the verse teaches baptismal regeneration. Galatians 3:26, the verse immediately preceding v. 27, indicates that “ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” If Paul were to affirm in v. 27 that one becomes a child of God through baptism, he would contradict what he had said the verse before.⁹⁰³ Paul’s contextual point

⁹⁰² Compare the metaphor of the *toga virilis* ceremony discussed in endnote #182.

⁹⁰³ Some baptismal regenerationists affirm that one is “saved by faith” at the moment of baptism and that none but such as are baptized are saved by faith. This is a perversion of language—“saved by faith” obviously does not mean “saved by baptism.” Furthermore, this argument is only utilized when convenient for misinterpreting a passage such as this one; discussing Mark 16:16, such baptismal regenerationists argue in a contradictory fashion that faith does not equal baptism but must precede it, and that faith really does not save. Discussing Galatians 3:26-27, however, where it is convenient to equate the two, “children of God by faith” really is said to signify “children of God by baptism.” One can prove anything if he handles the Bible with this sort of carelessness.

Some justify equating salvation by faith with baptism in Galatians 3:26-27 by mentioning that the Greek word *gar* (English “for”) is found between the two verses. Either ignorant of or deliberately misrepresenting the Greek language, they argue that *gar* necessarily introduces a cause or reason, so that Paul tells the church at Corinth “ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus” only because “as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ,” despite the fact that “put on” is not justification terminology. This argument from *gar* misrepresents the Greek conjunction. 1.) *Gar* appears 1,067 times in the New Testament and signifies a great variety of things, many of which do not suit baptismal regenerationists’ allegations here at all. One cannot simply assume a significance of *gar* that supports one’s doctrinal position and then use the assumption to prove that very doctrine. Furthermore, when *gar* is causal, the cause can relate to the greater context rather than to the immediately preceding statement (e. g. Romans 2:24). Stating that the Greek word *gar* in Galatians 3:27 provides definitive evidence that one does not have saving faith until baptized distorts the range of meaning for the word. 2.) This argument ignores the fact that more than one *gar* appears in the context. Galatians 3:24-28 reads:

Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For (*gar*) ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For (*gar*) as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for (*gar*) ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

Gar appears three times in v. 26-28. Henry Thayer’s *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978, reprint ed.) states as a use of the word, “When in successive statements *gar* is repeated twice or thrice, or even four or five times . . . one and the same thought is confirmed by as many arguments, each having its own force, as there are repetitions of the particle” (cf. BDAG, “[*G*]ar . . . is sometimes repeated . . . to introduce several arguments for the same assertion”). Thus, when *gar* is found in consecutive verses, the word does not have to indicate that successive arguments each give the reason for their immediate predecessor. If *gar* in the passage fits the quoted use, then “ye are all the children of God

is the equality of Jew and Gentile (v. 28); both are saved in the same manner by faith (v. 26) and both receive the same baptism (v. 27). The immediate context of Galatians 3:27 destroys the baptismal regenerationist argument.

The wider context of Galatians 3 also demolishes the argument of baptismal regenerationists in 3:27. Paul argues that the Spirit was received “by the hearing of faith” (3:2), that the ministration of the Spirit and the working of miracles was not “by the works of the law” but by the “hearing of faith” (3:5), and that “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness” (v. 6). He concludes, “know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham” (v. 7). As Abraham was justified by faith, so today men are justified by faith. Abraham was certainly not baptized, so baptismal regeneration confounds Paul’s comparison. The doctrine also

by faith in Christ Jesus” confirms that “after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster,” and “as many of you as have been baptized” also confirms that believers are no longer under the schoolmaster, rather than proving that they are somehow only saved by faith after baptism.

A Pauline allusion to the *toga virilis* ceremony—which is suggested by Paul’s references to the *paidagogos* (“schoolmaster,” 3:24) and to “tutors and governors” (4:2) in the section from 3:19-4:7—is consistent with this view of the successive *gar* particles in 3:24ff. At “the time appointed of the father” (4:2), which at different periods of Greco-Roman culture and in accordance with the view of the father varied from fourteen to twenty, a youth would pass from his state as a child to a new position as an adult, at which point he would be free from the *paidagogos* or “schoolmaster.” This change was represented by a ceremony in which the dress of the adult, the *toga virilis*, was assumed by the youth as a representation of his new position. Although one reached the accepted age of adulthood before the *toga virilis* ceremony took place, it formally and outwardly represented the transition. Paul teaches that one must first be adopted as a son of God by faith (v. 26) and then publicly announce this new state through baptism (v. 27). Similarly, “youths with the [newly acquired] toga of manhood [the *toga virilis*] were introduced publicly as citizens . . . [although the] rite itself did not confer Roman citizenship but only proclaimed and registered the Roman citizenship into which the boy had already been born” (pg. 258, “Coming of Age and Putting on Christ: The *Toga Virilis* Ceremony, Its Paraenesis, and Paul’s Interpretation of Baptism in Galatians,” J. Albert Harrill. *Novum Testamentum* XLIV, 252-277). When “justified by faith” one is free from the “schoolmaster” of the law (v. 24-26), but this transition is formally and outwardly represented by baptism. Both the *gar* of v. 26 and of v. 27 illustrate that “after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster” (v. 25). Believers are free from the schoolmaster because they are the children of God by faith (v. 26), and they are free from the schoolmaster because, as the *toga virilis* ceremony represented the transition from immaturity under a schoolmaster to maturity, they have put on Christ in baptism (v. 27). Since both the *gar* of v. 26 and of v. 27 prove the point made in v. 25, the assertion by advocates of baptismal regeneration that “for” in v. 27 gives the cause of v. 26, so that one is only a child of God upon being baptized, is incorrect. For more on the *toga virilis* and related issues, in addition to the work by Harrill already cited, see *The Significance of Clothing Imagery in the Pauline Corpus*, Chong-hun Kim (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2004), pgs. 92-95; “Coming of Age in Rome: The History and Social Significance of Assuming the *Toga Virilis*,” F. Dolansky (M. A. thesis, University of Victoria, Canada, 1999); *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, gen. ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990) on Galatians 3-4; “The Pedagogical Nature of the Law in Galatians 3:19-4:7,” Richard N. Longenecker, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 25:1 (Mark 1982), pgs. 53-61. Tertullian alludes to the *toga virilis* ceremony as acceptable and non-idolatrous in his *On Idolatry*, chapter 16 (Note also Augustine, *City of God* 4:11). In any case, the idea of Galatians 3:27 as a “metaphor . . . of putting on a uniform . . . [is accepted by various writers and is] an early instance of an idea common in later baptismal theology” (pg. 56, *The Seal of the Spirit*, G. W. H. Lampe (London: S. P. C. K., 1967, 2nd ed.).

confounds Paul's assertion in Galatians 3:8 that the Scripture "preached before the gospel unto Abraham . . . foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith," unless one wishes to argue the *non sequitor* that Abraham received prophecies concerning baptism. Paul concludes that "they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham" (v. 9). The chapter then asserts that "the just shall live by faith . . . the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit by faith" (v. 12, 14). Paul proceeds to vindicate justification by faith on the basis of God's offer of the gospel to Abraham before the giving of the Mosaic law (v. 15-21), completing his argument with the recognition that "the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe" (v. 22). An unbaptized Abraham cannot be the prototype of a supposed New Testament teaching of baptismal regeneration, but an Abraham saved by faith in the coming Savior is a great proof for New Testament justification by faith in Christ. The Law of God itself is "our schoolmaster to *bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (v. 24), for "ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (v. 26). The rest of Galatians chapter three, along with the rest of the book (2:16, 20-21; 5:5, etc.), demonstrates the folly of affirming baptismal regeneration in Galatians 3:27.

Galatians 3:27 utterly fails as a proof-text for remission of sins through baptism. "Put on" is not Biblical terminology for the receipt of remission of sins; it is a term of Christian growth. Both the immediate context, Galatians 3:26, and the wider context of the chapter and the rest of the book preclude baptismal remission in 3:27. Those who use the verse to prove that baptism is the gateway to heaven completely miss the point.

Colossians 2:12

Colossians 2:12 states that believers are "buried with [Christ] in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." It is alleged that since people are "buried with him" in baptism, and also "risen with him" in the ordinance, one must therefore be baptized to have his sins removed. However, the verse does not say that sins are removed through baptism; it affirms that in the ordinance one is buried and risen with Christ.⁹⁰⁴ The true churches of the Lord Jesus affirm both justification by grace through faith alone and that, having already been justified and become dead to sin, men are to be outwardly buried with Christ

⁹⁰⁴ One may note again the incongruity that baptismal regenerationists bury a living man in order to kill him. How much better to bury a man in baptism who is already dead to sin!

in baptism by immersion⁹⁰⁵ and rise with Him when they come up out of the water. Since the verse never states that forgiveness of sins happens at the moment of baptism, one cannot legitimately draw such a conclusion. Furthermore, the spiritual circumcision of verse 11, which does take place at the point of faith and so regeneration (cf. Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6; Jeremiah 4:4; Romans 2:28-29),⁹⁰⁶ is “without hands”; God

⁹⁰⁵ The verse certainly makes it clear that dipping or immersion, not sprinkling or pouring, is the proper mode of baptism. The fact that those who submit to it are spiritually circumcised (already justified, v.11) and can exercise faith (v. 12) also demonstrates the unscriptural nature of infant “baptism.” See endnotes 11, 128.

⁹⁰⁶ Proponents of infant baptism have often argued for their position by equating their rite with the Old Testament ceremony of circumcision. However, neither Christ nor the apostles ever stated that the one replaced the other. The literal act of Old Testament circumcision is by no means paralleled to baptism, or to the new birth and spiritual circumcision, in the Bible. Nor does the fact that literal Old Testament circumcision was a picture of regeneration, while baptism also pictures regeneration, mean that the two are identical. Both Abraham’s offering of Isaac in Genesis 22 and the Passover ceremony of Exodus 12 picture the saving work of Christ (Hebrews 11:17-19; 1 Corinthians 5:7), but Abraham’s act of faith in Genesis 22 was hardly the first Passover. The many Jewish Christians (and others, Acts 16:3) after the cross and Pentecost who received both literal circumcision and baptism obviously did not think that the one ceremony replaced the other, nor did the multitudes of circumcised Jews who were baptized by John or by Christ’s disciples in the time before the cross when both literal circumcision (Colossians 2:14) and baptism (Luke 7:30) were ordinances ordained by God. The true “circumcision . . . [are those who] worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh” (Philippians 3:3), not all infants that have had water poured on them or sprinkled on their heads. One also wonders why, since only male babies were circumcised, baby girls also receive infant baptism in the denominations that practice it. Furthermore, the church is never said to be the equivalent of the nation of Israel, nor do any of the seventy references in the New Testament to the word *Israel* speak of believing Gentiles or Gentile church members, while a variety of texts specifically contrast the two groups (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:32; Galatians 6:16 distinguishes Christian Gentiles, “as many as walk according to this rule,” from Christian Jews, “the Israel of God.”). Baptism adds a believer to the membership of the church authorizing the ordinance (1 Corinthians 12:13; Acts 2:41, 47), but Jewish children were considered part of the nation of Israel and were nationally in covenant with God even before their circumcision (Deuteronomy 29:11-12; Joshua 5:5 evidences that the infants or “little ones” of that text were uncircumcised). Most advocates of infant baptism do not affirm that babies are church members in the New Testament era simply by being born, even before the application of water in infant baptism (some Reformed paedobaptists, however, do argue in this way), but if a parallel to membership in the nation of Israel is to be sustained, they would have to argue so.

Colossians 2:11-12 is sometimes alleged to equate baptism and spiritual circumcision, but there is no proof that it does so—the spiritual circumcision “without hands” of v. 11 is specifically contrasted with the literal circumcision of the body, not to baptism (compare Ephesians 2:11). As indicated above, baptism is very much an act performed with one’s hands, while spiritual circumcision or regeneration is “without hands.”

The only potentially reasonable attempt at proof in the entirety of Scripture for the affirmation that spiritual circumcision is baptism would be the assertion that the participle “buried with” (*suntaphentes*) in Colossians 2:12 is dependent upon the verb “ye are circumcised” (*perietmethete*) in Colossians 2:11. However, the passage does not definitively equate the two actions or make them identical. The fact that two things are related—as are receiving a new heart in spiritual circumcision and the outward testimony or picture of regeneration in baptism—does not establish an identify between the two. *Suntaphentes* could be an example of an aorist participle of subsequent action (cf. 132, 142-146, *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek*, Earnest Burton. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1923-1925; pg. 614 n. 2, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, Wallace), or Paul could be viewing the *perietmethete* and

suntaphentes as simple snapshot actions that took place in the past and are closely associated, so that, although the (possibly telic) participle could be considered as loosely temporally simultaneous with the verb grammatically, none the less the simple snapshot nature of the aorist tense could allow for an earlier spiritual circumcision followed by an outward testimony to that fact in baptism (cf. Acts 25:13 and the relationship of the participle “salute/greet,” *aspasamenoi*, to the verb “came,” *katentesan*, or 1 Peter 3:18 and the relation of the participle “made alive,” *zoapoiethes*, to the verb “suffered,” *epathe*; also 1 Timothy 1:12; Acts 10:3; 11:13). In context, Paul proves that believers are complete in Christ (2:10). They are spiritually circumcized (2:11) and baptized as the outward evidence of regeneration (2:12), forgiven (2:13-14) and free from legal ordinances (2:14-15). Since they are complete in Christ and are identified with Him (2:10-15), they are not to return to Jewish ceremonialism (2:16ff.). Believers are spiritually united to Christ and spiritually circumcized before they are symbolically buried and raised with Christ in baptism. Paul’s argument does not require either baptismal regeneration or the equation of spiritual circumcision and baptism in Colossians 2.

Furthermore, those who are buried with Christ in baptism in Colossians 2:12 are believers, people who have already had their sins forgiven, not infants who are supposedly baptized as an alleged counterpart to circumcision in Israel. They are people who have already have faith, as Colossians 2:12 itself affirms. They had received Christ (v. 6) and had all their trespasses forgiven (v. 13), and Paul rejoiced in their steadfast faith (v. 5). Paul longed to see them “that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding” (v. 2). Infants would not have their hearts knit together in love and have the riches of the full assurance of understanding if Paul came to see them. They do not even know their right hands from their left (Jonah 4:11)—how could they have “the full assurance of understanding” concerning the deep truths of the gospel? Those baptized in Colossians 2:12 were old enough to choose to celebrate Jewish holy days and feast days or to refrain from doing so. They were not to allow anyone to judge them based on their choice (v. 16). They were also to refuse to listen to the beguiling words of false teachers (v. 4, 18). The commands of Colossians chapter two are ridiculous if applied to infants. Colossians 2:12 speaks of those who have already been spiritually circumcised, who have already become believers, being immersed in baptism. It gives no support at all to infant baptism, nor does it establish any equivalence between the Jewish ceremony of circumcision and the church ordinance of believer’s immersion.

Furthermore, history does not support an argument for infant baptism from circumcision. “There is a silence in the early patristic references to infant baptism concerning the analogy between circumcision and baptism. . . . [N]ot until the mid-third century that this analogy first occurs as an argument for infant baptism. Furthermore, the citing of Colossians 2:11-12 does not occur in this connection until the mid-fourth century” (“Colossians 2:11-12: The Circumcision/Baptism Analogy, and Infant Baptism,” J. P. T. Hunt. *Tyndale Bulletin* 41.2 (1990) 227-244).

The New Testament, using Abraham as the Christian’s pattern (Romans 4:23-25), also states that circumcision was a “seal of the righteousness of the faith which *he had yet* being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised” (4:11). Thus, even if circumcision were equivalent to baptism, faith would be a prerequisite, and baptism would not be the means of attaining justification, but only a token of a previously received “righteousness of faith.” (See Romans 4:1-25.) A parallel between circumcision given to all the physical seed of Abraham and baptism given to the spiritual seed of Abraham would restrict baptism to believers, since “they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham” (Galatians 3:7).

The use of the word “seal” (*sphragis*) in Romans 4:11—for the already justified and already believing Abraham—by no means supports the Reformed sacramental notion that infant baptism is a vehicle conveying saving grace and that through baptism grace is “conferred by the Holy Ghost” upon the elect (*Westminster Confession of Faith*, Article 28). Since Romans 4:11 is the only verse in Scripture that could with any plausibility be used to support the Reformed view, its advocates argue from this text that circumcision is a “seal” of grace, that their sacrament of infant baptism is equivalent to circumcision, and that, therefore, infant baptism seals or conveys grace to their infants. This argument breaks down at many points. First, the verse does not say that circumcision was a seal of grace to Jewish male infants. While circumcision was a “sign” by nature, it is not affirmed to have been a “seal” to all, but only personally to

performs this new birth as a work of His mighty power apart from human agency. In contrast, baptism is very much a work of man and is certainly not performed “without hands.” As in Romans 6:4,⁹⁰⁷ the only other passage in Scripture where the verb “buried with”⁹⁰⁸ appears, Colossians 2:12 affirms that in baptism believers publicly identify with Christ but fails miserably to prove that the unbaptized are damned.

Titus 3:5

Baptismal regenerationists attempt to use the fact that Titus 3:5 refers to the “washing of regeneration” to prove their doctrine. This washing, they affirm, is baptism. However, the complete verse reads, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” In addition to the omission of any mention of baptism, the verse

believing Abraham, who received it when he had already been justified by faith. A recognition of this distinction in Romans 4:11 explains the Old Testament use of the word *sign* or *token* (Hebrew *’oth*) in connection with circumcision (Genesis 17:11) but the complete absence of references in the Old Testament to the ceremony as a “seal.” Second, the New Testament does not equate circumcision with baptism or state that the latter replaces the former. Third, the Biblical immersion of believers has nothing to do with the ceremonial application of water to infants that Catholics and Protestants claim is baptism. Fourth, a seal is a visible mark or impression evidencing the authority of the one who authorizes the seal to the genuineness or correctness of whatever is witnessed to by its presence. However, baptism does not leave a visible mark upon those who receive it, and it is not administered to single individuals by Divine authority—the authority given the church to administer baptism is general (Matthew 28:18-20). No man can put marks upon the elect of God which shall authoritatively certify that they are His, and neither baptism nor the Lord’s Supper authenticate one’s personal election to himself or to others; such authentication is given to the regenerate individual himself by the presence of true faith and the manifestation of that faith in a changed life, as taught in 1 John (cf. 5:13). Unlike the ordinance of baptism, the “seal” of circumcision given to Abraham was indeed a visible mark and was applied to the individual man Abraham by direct Divine authority. Circumcision was a seal to Abraham, but to nobody else. Finally, when advocates of Reformed theology and other Protestants speak of baptism as a “seal” or vehicle of grace, they use the word in a sense entirely absent in Scripture. None of the appearances of the word “seal” (*sphragis*) in the New Testament indicate that grace is conveyed through a “seal” (Romans 4:11; 1 Corinthians 9:2; 2 Timothy 2:19; Revelation 5:1-2, 5, 9; 6:1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 12; 7:2; 8:1; 9:4). Those who think that infant baptism was the instrument of their receiving forgiveness, those who think that they received the sacrament as confirmation and evidence that they were already regenerated in the womb, and those who think they had water applied to them in infancy as evidence that they were certain to be regenerated in the future unless they consciously rejected the “sacrament” and its efficacy are underneath a terrible spiritual delusion. They will certainly be damned unless they recognize that their unbiblical religious ceremony did nothing beneficial for them, admit they are still lost, and then repent and believe the gospel.

Indeed, baptism is not even a “sign” in the sense regularly employed in Reformed theology. The ordinance is indeed a sign of what Christ did and suffered, but it is not a “sign” promising that any saving work will be done in the one who receives it—yet it is in this latter sense that the Reformed generally speak of the ordinance as a “sign.”

⁹⁰⁷ See the analysis of Romans 6:3-4 as a proof-text for baptismal regeneration above.

⁹⁰⁸ The verb is *sunthapto*.

specifically states that men are not saved “by works of righteousness.” Since baptism is a work of righteousness, as is plain upon consideration of its nature and purpose, and as Matthew 3:15 specifically indicates, Titus 3:5 clearly eliminates it as a prerequisite to forgiveness. The “washing of regeneration” is the cleansing by the blood of Jesus that takes place the moment a sinner forsakes confidence in his works and believes in Christ alone for justification. For water salvation advocates to make the “washing of regeneration” a reference to the unmentioned and unimplied act of baptism, despite the fact that a handful of words earlier the text excludes the ordinance, is to “wrest [this verse] . . . as *they do* also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction” (2 Peter 3:16).

1 Peter 3:21

The final major attempt to support baptismal regeneration with Scripture comes from 1 Peter 3:21. This verse states that “baptism doth also now save us,” while verse 20 mentions that “souls were saved by water.” Baptismal regenerationists argue on this basis that the unbaptized are lost. However, this view takes the verses out of context, as a study of the passage and Peter’s teaching elsewhere indicates.

First Peter 3:18-22 reads:

18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: 19 By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; 20 Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. 21 The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: 22 Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.

Within the wider context of a primary theme in 1 Peter, suffering for Christ (v. 13-17), verse 18 mentions the Lord Jesus’ substitutionary death for sin, as He, “the just for the unjust,” suffered in the place of mankind. The verse then recounts His “death in the flesh,” and explains how, by the Holy Spirit, Christ was “quickened” or “made alive.” Verses 19-20 mention that by this same Spirit He preached to those who are now “spirits in prison,” but were, at the time of the preaching, the rebellious and ungodly generation of men that “sometime were disobedient . . . in the days of Noah.” When Noah, a “preacher of righteousness” (2 Peter 2:5), proclaimed the truth to his contemporaries, he functioned as God’s mouthpiece, so that, by the Spirit, it was really Christ preaching to that rebellious generation. However, since the men of Noah’s day did not receive the truth in that time “while the ark was a preparing,” they died in the flood and went to hell, where they are now “spirits in prison.” Eight people or “souls,” namely, Noah, his wife,

and their three sons with their wives (Genesis 6:18; 7:7, 13) were then “saved by water”; that is, they were separated and saved from the ungodly world system by means of the waters of the flood. They were not saved from their sins by the floodwaters, and the water certainly did not save them from either physical or spiritual death—those in the water and not in the ark drowned and were damned. Verse 21 then explains that as Noah and his household were saved from the ungodly world by the flood waters, so Christians today are saved from the ungodly world by baptism (v. 21a), which is not the act which actually puts away sin (v. 21b) but is rather the “answer of a good conscience toward God” (v. 21c). The doctrines mentioned in the text are only possible because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ (v. 21d), who has ascended into heaven and has all authority (v. 22). Furthermore, these truths can encourage the suffering Christian (4:1ff.). Having surveyed 1 Peter 3:18-22, an analysis of its alleged support for baptismal regeneration is now possible.

First, the parenthesis in verse 21 demonstrates that Peter does not here teach baptismal regeneration. On the contrary, it expressly disclaims the doctrine. It could well have been included specifically to forestall the danger of abusing the passage to unwarrantedly conclude that baptism is required for forgiveness. The parenthetical statement teaches us that baptism is “not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God.” Peter’s affirmation that baptism does not put away filth is incongruous if regeneration takes place by means of the ordinance.⁹⁰⁹

⁹⁰⁹ Some attempt to avoid the fact that baptism is not the “putting away of the filth of the flesh” by affirming that Peter simply means that baptism does not remove physical dirt upon the body, rather than signifying that baptism does not save from spiritual uncleanness. This attempt to avoid the meaning of the passage fails for the following reasons: 1.) Peter said “filth of the flesh,” (an attributive genitive) identifying the filth with the ungodly, fleshly nature that controls the lost (cf. Romans 8:8), not “filth upon the flesh,” which would suit an equation of “filth” with physical dirt and “flesh” simply with the body. 2.) The word “filth,” *hrupos*, although not used elsewhere in the New Testament, is always used in the Greek Old Testament of spiritual filthiness (Job 9:31 (cf. v. 29-30); 11:15; 14:4; Isaiah 4:4). 3.) The word is used in the apostolic patristic writers for spiritual filthiness (1 Clement 17:4; Epistle of Barnabas 11:11) but never of simple dirt on one’s body. Philo (*On the Change of Names (Mutatione)* 48, ref. Job 14:4) only uses the word for spiritual filthiness. 4.) The noun *hrupos* in 1 Peter 3:21 shares an etymological root with the verb *hrupoo*, found only in Revelation 22:11 in the New Testament, where it refers to spiritual filthiness. Josephus uses the closely related verb *hupaino* (found in the Byzantine and modern critical text in Revelation 22:11 instead of the inspired *Textus Receptus* reading) only of spiritual filthiness (*Contra Apion* 1:24:220). The very closely related noun *huparia* is only used in the New Testament of spiritual filthiness (James 1:21). None of these nouns or verbs are used in either the New Testament or the closely related sets of *Koiné* literature examined above for simple dirt on the body. Compare the definition of *hrupos* as “moral and intellectual pollution” and of *hrupoo* as “[to] defile, be filthy” in Lampe’s *Patristic Greek Lexicon*. No literal references to the removal of dirt are listed in Lampe for *hrupoo*—it is only defined as spiritual filthiness. The metaphorical use of *hrupos* is dominant in Lampe, while a sense of physical dirt particles being removed is not in view in any of the examples written out in the definition. (The definition in BDAG for *hrupoo* as a “dark viscous juice” (cf. the example in Barnabas 8:6, which is

Conclusive evidence against baptismal forgiveness is found in the affirmation that baptism is the “answer of a good conscience toward God.” Peter affirms that one has a good conscience prior to his baptism, which is his “answer⁹¹⁰ . . . toward God” resulting from his reconciled state and peace of mind and heart.⁹¹¹ If one heading up to the baptistry is, as baptismal regeneration teaches, still lost and a child of the devil (John 8:44) who is under the wrath of God, a heartbeat from the fires of hell, and an unforgiven, Spirit-resisting, non-confessing, disobedient God-hater⁹¹² who still sinks under the weight of every sin he has ever committed his entire life, how can he possibly have a “good conscience” toward God, as 1 Peter 3:21 affirms one must prior to baptism? The lost have, rather, a “reprobate mind” (Romans 1:28) and a “corrupt mind” (2 Timothy 3:8). They are “vainly puffed up by [their] fleshly mind” (Colossians 2:18). They have “their mind and conscience defiled” (Titus 1:5) and “seared with a hot iron” (1 Timothy 4:2). They need to have their conscience “purge[d] . . . [with] the blood of Christ” (Hebrews 9:9, 14; 10:2,⁹¹³ 22). The fact that baptism is a good conscience’s answer⁹¹⁴ toward God proves that baptismal regenerationists err in their view of 1 Peter 3:21.

appropriately placed under this category in BDAG, and is listed in definition #1 in Lampe) is, of course, relevant to neither the proponent or opponent of the view that 1 Peter 3:21 refers to physical dirt instead of spiritual defilement.)

⁹¹⁰ Some might dispute the KJV rendering of *eperotema* as “answer.” The word can have more than one sense, and since 1 Peter 3:21 is the only place in the New Testament where this noun appears, an analysis of other Biblical passages that employ the word is not possible. However, in extrabiblical Greek the word could mean an “answer to inquiry put to higher authority” (*Greek-English Lexicon*, Liddell, H. G. & Scott, R., New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1996, 9th ed.). “The papyri show that the noun *eperotema* was at times used in a technical sense to denote the question-and-answer process . . . in usage this term . . . came to include the response. . . . In view of this question-and-answer usage of the noun, the rendering in the Authorized Version, ‘the answer of a good conscience toward God,’ is quite acceptable. The believer’s acceptance of baptism is his answer to the Spirit’s questions stirring his conscience and resulting in his conversion. His answer is given out of ‘a good conscience,’ a conscience purified by the blood of Christ and assured of personal acceptance with God. His baptism is his answer to the work of God in his heart, bearing witness before the world to what God has done for him.” (“Selected Studies from 1 Peter, Part 2: The Suffering and Triumphant Christ: An Exposition of 1 Peter 3:18-22,” D. Edmond Hiebert, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 139:554 (April 1982) pg. 156-157). Compare the use of *eperotesis* in the *Letter of Aristeas* 122.

⁹¹¹ Note that this clause demonstrates the fallacy of infant baptism. Infants can hardly be baptized as the answer of their good conscience toward God. See also endnotes #11, 128.

⁹¹² See the analysis of Romans 6:3-4 as an alleged proof-text for baptismal regeneration and its discussion of 1 John.

⁹¹³ Consider that this verse demonstrates that one who has his conscience purged by the blood of Christ has it cleansed once and for all. Once saved, always saved.

⁹¹⁴ “Answer of a good conscience,” *suneideseos agathes eperotema*, is a subjective genitive construction that could be rendered “a good conscience’s answer” (see pgs. 113-116, Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*). It is clear that the good conscience is possessed before baptism. Even if one wished to dispute the rendering of the KJV of *eperotema* as “answer,” and argue for “inquiry” or “appeal” as the sense of the word, it would still be “a good conscience’s inquiry/appeal” and so affirm that the good conscience was possessed prior to the administration of the ordinance.

Second, a study of the specific words used in 1 Peter 3:20-21 indicates that spiritual salvation from sin and hell is not in view. In verse 20, the word “saved” (“in the days of Noah . . . eight souls were saved by water”) is *diasodzo*. This Greek word is never used in the New Testament for salvation from sin;⁹¹⁵ instead, it means “to rescue or deliver from a hazard or danger, bring safely through.”⁹¹⁶ A first century Christian reading Peter’s epistle in Greek might be saved in the *diasodzo* sense by means of baptism if he hid in the baptistry and so escaped from Roman soldiers seeking his arrest, but he would not have used *diasodzo* to convey the idea of salvation from sin. The idea is similar to the declaration in Hebrews of Noah’s physical deliverance and separation from the world system when he “prepared an ark to the saving [physical deliverance, not spiritual salvation] of his house” and in so doing “condemned the world” (Hebrews 11:7). The use of *diasodzo* in verse 20, which also fits with the background of Hebrews 11:7, controls the understanding of Peter’s use of the verb *sodzo* in verse 21 (“baptism doth also now save us”). This word⁹¹⁷ is used for both physical deliverances such as salvation from drowning (Matthew 14:30) and for salvation from sin (Matthew 1:21). The connection with the *diasodzo* of verse 20 indicates that in verse 21 *sodzo* does not speak of baptism saving in the sense of forgiving sin.⁹¹⁸ Rather, baptism “doth also now save us” in the sense of disassociating believers from this world and its ungodly system and

⁹¹⁵ *Diasodzo* appears eight times in Scripture: Matthew 14:36, “made perfectly whole” (physical healing); Luke 7:3, “heal” (physical healing); Acts 23:24, “bring . . . safe” (Paul’s physical safety escaping Jerusalem to get to Felix the governor); Acts 27:43, “the centurion, willing to save Paul” (a Roman soldier saving Paul from slaughter by the other soldiers); Acts 27:44, “escaped . . . safe to land,” (surviving a shipwreck); Acts 28:1, “they were escaped” (likewise a reference to the shipwreck); Acts 28:4, “escaped the sea” (a final reference to the shipwreck—note that these last four uses of the word occur in a six verse section, and they all deal with escape from drowning in water—as does the next and final reference); 1 Peter 3:20, “eight souls were saved by water” (surviving Noah’s flood in the ark). The verb appears 69 times in the LXX (in both the canonical books and the Apocrypha) and it likewise never once signifies salvation from sin (Genesis 19:19; 35:3; Numbers 10:9; 21:29; Deuteronomy 20:4; Joshua 6:26; 9:15; 10:20, 28, 30, 37, 39; 11:8; Judges 3:26, 29; 12:4-5; 21:17; 1 Samuel 19:10, 17-18; 20:29; 22:1, 20; 23:13; 2 Samuel 1:3; 2 Kings 10:24; 19:30; Ezra 9:14-15; Job 21:10, 20; 22:30; 29:12; 36:12; Proverbs 10:5; Ecclesiastes 8:8; 9:15; Isaiah 37:38; Jeremiah 8:20; Ezekiel 17:15; Daniel 11:42; Hosea 13:10; Amos 2:15; 9:1; Micah 6:14; Jonah 1:6; Zechariah 8:13; 1 Maccabees 4:26; 9:46; 2 Maccabees 1:25; 3:38; 8:27; 11:12; 4 Maccabees 2:14; 4:14; 17:22; Wisdom 14:5; 16:11; Sirach 34:12; 46:8; Baruch 6:10, 54, 57-58).

⁹¹⁶ *Diasodzo*, BDAG.

⁹¹⁷ This is a far more common word, appearing 110 times in the New Testament. BDAG classifies the great majority of the verses where it appears under either “to preserve or rescue from natural dangers and afflictions, save, keep from harm, preserve, rescue,” the first meaning listed, or “to save or preserve from transcendent danger or destruction, save/preserve from eternal death” (*sodzo*, BDAG).

⁹¹⁸ It appears that Peter’s only other use of *sodzo* in his epistles, 1 Peter 4:18, refers to non-spiritual salvation as well. One could paraphrase the verse, with its present passive indicative (“are being saved/delivered”) verb form, as “if the righteous are barely delivered [*sodzo*] from the fiery trials they endure on earth to purify and purge them, how will the ungodly expect to escape the eternal judgment of God?” Compare Peter’s use of *sodzo* for physical healing in Acts 4:9 (cf. John 11:12; Acts 27:20, 31).

identifying them with God's new order. God "spared not the old world, but saved Noah . . . bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly" (2 Peter 2:5). As Noah was saved from "the world that then was" (2 Peter 3:6) by the Deluge, being separated from its influence and power, so baptism saves a Christian from the ungodly world with its influences and power and identifies him with God, His redeemed people, and His new order. When the Christian identifies himself with Jesus Christ in the ordinance, he outwardly and publicly cuts himself off from his old life and ways. Having submitted to Christ as his King and entered His kingdom at the moment of repentant faith, in baptism he publicly puts on the uniform, as it were, of His Master's host (cf. Galatians 3:27).⁹¹⁹ Baptism's saving the Christian from the world's ungodly system and publicly separating him unto God fits the words used in 1 Peter 3:20-21. Baptism to achieve forgiveness of sin does not.

Third, Peter's comparison between the events in the days of Noah and baptism nullifies claims of regeneration by the ordinance. Noah's deliverance or salvation "by water" is "the like figure"⁹²⁰ whereunto baptism saves us. Noah, however, was by no means saved from his sin by the waters of the Flood. The book of Genesis recounts that "the wickedness of [the entire race of] man was great in the earth, and *that* every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5); therefore, Noah was a sinner deserving condemnation along with the rest of the mankind. However, "Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD" (Genesis 6:8); God saved Noah by His grace, by undeserved favor, and so justified him entirely apart from any righteous act of his. As Romans 11:6 states, "if [salvation is] by grace, then *is it* no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if *it be* of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work." Noah was "heir of the righteousness which is by faith" and was saved "by faith" (Hebrews 11:7). Furthermore, God commanded Noah to enter the ark because he was "seen righteous" (Genesis 7:1), "just," and "perfect" (Genesis 6:9) before Him, being justified on the basis of Christ's blood and righteousness (cf. Revelation 13:8b) when he believed in the coming Savior. Because he had been justified by faith, Noah manifested his change of state in a change of life—he "walked with God" (Genesis 6:9). Having been "seen righteous" judicially before Jehovah, he "did according unto all that the LORD commanded him" (Genesis 7:1, 5) in his practical

⁹¹⁹ See the analysis of Galatians 3:27 in the section "'Proof-texts' for Baptismal Regeneration Examined" above.

⁹²⁰ The word "figure" is *antitupon*, "antitype," which means "pertaining to that which corresponds to something else, corresponding to" or "copy, antitype, representation" (BDAG, *antitupos*). The only other verse in Scripture that contains this word is Hebrews 9:24, where the objects in the earthly "holy places made with hands" are "the figures (*antitupa*) of the true [heavenly reality]."

life. Christ was in fact preaching through Noah (1 Peter 3:18-19) for one hundred twenty years (Genesis 6:3) before the flood; by the grace of God, the sinner Noah was transformed into a “preacher of righteousness” (2 Peter 2:5). Clearly, he was saved from his sin and manifested his change of life far before the time of the flood. Indeed, God saved him from the evil world by the Flood specifically because of his state as an already justified individual (Genesis 7:1). As evidenced in the life of Noah, individuals today must be justified and show evidence of regeneration before they are Biblically baptized (Matthew 3:8). The comparison with Noah in 1 Peter 3:20-21 demonstrates that one must be justified by faith before he can rightly enter the waters of baptism. As Noah was justified before he passed through the flood, so for Christians today justification by faith takes place before one reaches the water and is a prerequisite for a proper relationship to it.

Fourth, a recognition that Noah’s ark pictures Christ provides further evidence that 1 Peter 3:20-21 does not teach baptismal regeneration. As the ark was “lift[ed] up” (Genesis 7:17), so “the Son of man [was] lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:14-15). As there was only one ark, so there is only one Savior (Acts 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:5). Only one door saved from destruction in Noah’s day, and Christ, the only way to heaven (John 14:6), said, “I am the door” (John 10:9). The ark was sufficient and complete to save from destruction, as Christ is sufficient to save (cf. Hebrews 9:12-14; Hebrews 10:10-14). The ark was available for all men who believed God’s promise of judgment and accepted His provision for salvation (cf. Revelation 22:17; 1 Timothy 2:4) which was needed by all (Romans 3:10, 23); so it is with Christ. God waited patiently before the Flood (Genesis 6:3; 1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 3:9), but there came a time when it was too late to accept His offered escape (Genesis 7:11-13; 2 Corinthians 6:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-14); likewise He waits patiently today for men to repent and believe in His Son, but a time will come when the opportunity to receive salvation has passed. Furthermore, all that were in the ark were secure and saved, shut into it by God’s power; not one person on the ark was lost or died, just as all who believe are in Christ and will never suffer eternal death (Genesis 7:16; 1 Corinthians 15:22, John 10:27-30, 1 John 5:11-13). Those who are in Christ will never have the wrath of God poured out upon them, as it was poured out on the inhabitants of the world in Noah’s day who were outside the ark (Psalm 79:6; Ezekiel 22:31; Revelation 14:10-11), since Christ, pictured by the ark, saves men from their sin. Only those first in the ark passed through the water with Noah; it was the “ark . . . wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.” As Noah and his household were in the ark, shut into it by a miraculous act of God (Genesis 7:16), a week before the flood

began (Genesis 7:1, 4), so a man must be “in Christ” by faith before he can enter the waters of baptism.⁹²¹ One certainly did not pass through the waters of the flood in order to enter the ark—nor does one become “in Christ” by means of baptism. The ark saves from destruction, and the water from the world system. The “figure” of Christians and their baptism (1 Peter 3:21) provided by Noah’s passing through the flood fits very well with the Biblical truth that men are justified before their immersion; it does not fit baptismal regeneration well at all.

Fifth, 1 Peter 3:20-21 does not affirm baptismal regeneration because Peter earlier in his epistle, and elsewhere in Scripture, taught justification simply by “precious faith” (2 Peter 1:1). 1 Peter 1:1-5 affirms that the “elect . . . are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation” (1 Peter 1:1, 5). Peter establishes in the beginning of his epistle that God’s elect, all believers, are eternally saved and secure by Divine power. He affirms that “believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of *your* souls” (1:8-9). Further, he contrasts redemption by the incorruptible blood of Christ (1:18-19), received by supernaturally given faith (v. 21) in the imperishable Word of God (v. 23) with redemption by “corruptible things” (v. 18), which would include the solely temporal waters of baptism. The apostle also states that “he that believeth on [Christ] shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe *he is* precious” (2:6-7).⁹²² When Peter speaks of the new birth, he never connects it with baptism (1 Peter 1:3, 23). In Acts, Peter’s message was: “repent . . . that your sins may be blotted out” (Acts 3:19); “repentance . . . and forgiveness of sins” (5:31); and that “through [Christ’s] name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins” (10:43). Peter declared: “God gave them the [Holy Spirit] . . . who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ” (11:17), since “the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost . . . purifying their hearts by faith” (15:7-10).⁹²³ Peter did not contradict his teaching elsewhere and affirm baptismal regeneration in 1 Peter 3:20-21. As the waters of the flood lifted up the ark (Genesis 7:17), baptism is designed to exalt Christ, who in His death, burial, and resurrection,

⁹²¹ A refutation of the notion that one is “in Christ” by means of baptism is found in the analysis of Romans 6:3-4 as a “proof-text” for baptismal regeneration above.

⁹²² Baptismal regenerationists would do well to substitute the word “baptism” for “believe” and “faith” in verses that predicate salvation upon the latter and see how unlike anything actually in Scripture the verses then sound. Where does the Word of God speak of “precious baptism,” or of being “kept by the power of God through baptism unto salvation,” or of “receiving the end of your baptism, even the salvation of your souls”?

⁹²³ Peter also affirmed forgiveness before baptism in Acts 2:38. See the analysis of the verse as a supposed proof-text for baptismal regeneration above.

provides the meritorious cause of justification, which is received instrumentally simply by faith.

The conclusion that 1 Peter 3:20-21 does not teach forgiveness by baptism is clear. The parenthesis of verse 21, the words used for “saved” in the passage, the comparison to Noah’s deliverance by the Flood, and Peter’s teaching elsewhere in his epistles and in Scripture prove this fact. Baptismal regenerationists must mangle this verse, as they do the handful of other passages examined earlier, to invent support for their view, since the Word of God provides no support for their devilish perversion of the precious gospel of Christ. Those who neglected the ark and were in the water in Noah’s day died. Those who look to the waters of baptism for deliverance from sin will likewise be destroyed.

Conclusion to Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:27; Colossians 2:12; 1 Peter 3:21

Since none of the alleged references to Spirit baptism in the epistles teach baptismal regeneration when analyzed with grammatical, historical hermeneutics, the affirmation that one must abandon the natural interpretation of these passages, which recognizes them as references to immersion in water, to refer them instead to Spirit baptism, fails to convince. The historic Baptist position, which considers all these texts as references to immersion in water,⁹²⁴ should be maintained. Indeed, since none of the

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In addition to the historical documents mentioned above, one notes, as a sampling, that the Baptist *Confession of 1689*, agreed to by over one hundred Baptist churches in England and Wales and signed by such men of God as Hanserd Knollys and William Kiffin, affirms in Article 29, “Baptism is an Ordinance of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, to be unto the party Baptized, a sign of fellowship with him, in his death (Romans 6:3, 4, 5; Colossians 2:12; Galatians 3:27) and resurrection; of his being engrafted into him; of (Mark 1:4; Acts 26:16) remission of sins; and of his (Romans 6:2, 4) giving up unto God through Jesus Christ, to live and walk in newness of life.” The same language and passages were employed in the Baptist *Orthodox Creed* of 1679, the famous American Baptist *Philadelphia Confession of Faith* of 1720, and the *Second London Confession of Faith* of 1677. Among Baptists outside the English-speaking world, the 1879 *French Baptist Confession*, “received by all the Baptist churches of France, Belgium, and Switzerland,” affirms in Article 9, “We believe that baptism is, for Christians voluntarily dead to the world and to sin, the striking and solemn emblem of burial and of resurrection with Christ, to whom they are united by faith, to live in Him a new and holy life. We believe, after the order of Christ, His example and that of the apostles, that the immersion of believers must precede admission into the local church and participation in the communion . . . Romans 6:3, 4; . . . Galatians 3:27; Colossians 2:12; . . . 1 Peter 3:21). The German *Confession of Faith and Constitution of the Churches of Baptized Christians commonly called Baptists* originally composed in 1847 and commonly received into the twentieth century, affirms in Article 8 that “Baptism is a first-fruit of faith and love to Christ, the entrance into obedience toward the Lord . . . and his church (1 Corinthians 12:13; Acts 2:47). It is the solemn declaration, the confession of the sinner (1 Peter 3:21) . . . who has recognized the frightfulness of his sin and the damnability of his whole being . . . that he sets all his hope solely on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ his Saviour (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3, 8) . . . and believes on him as the Redeemer from the curse and wages of sin[,] . . . that he consecrates himself with body and soul to Christ and puts him on (Galatians

passages, interpreted naturally, have anything to do with Spirit baptism, arguing that they teach baptismal regeneration—if interpreted of immersion in water—actually plays into the hands of the advocate of sacramentalism, since he can demonstrate that the texts in question do not deal with Spirit baptism. Whenever baptism is spoken of in the epistles of the New Testament, immersion in water is in view. This is not unusual in light of the transitional and temporary nature of the baptism of the Holy Ghost. The Pentecostal events of Acts 2 were already complete when the epistles were written.

IV. Application of the Biblical Doctrine of Spirit Baptism

The truth that Spirit baptism was a first century phenomenon in which God the Father through Christ by the Spirit authenticated and indwelt the church as His institution for the dispensation of grace ought to seriously impact your life. First, consider that Spirit baptism means that God is now using the church, not Israel, to fulfill His purposes; a new dispensation has begun. You may take this fact for granted today, but first-century Christians recognized its astonishingly great significance. You have a new relationship to the Messiah and to God's revealed Word in the Old Testament. You have a new practice of worship and a new day of worship. Just about everything in the way you think about, serve, and approach God has been altered by the transaction authenticated in the baptism of the Spirit. Indeed, if you are a Gentile living outside the confines of the land of Israel, the fact that you have heard the gospel, become free from the penalty and power of sin, and are now headed to heaven instead of to hell is almost surely a result of the transformation in the way of God's working in the world authenticated by the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Are you filled with gratitude and praise to God for these changes, or do you take for granted and slight the inestimable mercies of God towards you?

Second, consider that the special presence of the Triune Jehovah is no longer in the Tabernacle, Solomon's Temple, or the post-exilic Temple; it is now in the church.**am here.**

V. Conclusion

3:26-27), as his righteousness and strength[,] . . . that he gives his old man to death and wishes to walk with Christ in a new life (Romans 6:4-6).” Indeed, it is questionable if there is any Baptist confessional support at all, anywhere, for the view that the texts in question refer to Spirit baptism rather than to immersion. (All confessions and documentation above was accessed on the Baptist History Collection CD, ver. 1. Paris, AK: Baptist Standard Bearer, 2005.)

Scripture teaches the Baptist doctrine that Spirit baptism was a historical event completed in the first century. Both the post-conversion special power (PCP) and the universal church dispensational (UCD) views of Spirit baptism are erroneous. The references to Spirit baptism in the Old Testament, in the Gospels, and in the book of Acts all corroborate the classical Baptist view and contradict both the UCD and PCP positions. Passages that speak of baptism in the epistles and that are used by PCP's and UCD's to support their respective doctrines fail to do so, because in every case the texts refer to the church ordinance of believer's immersion. Believing the Biblical, historic Baptist doctrine of Spirit baptism will protect God's people from serious and harmful errors in pneumatology, soteriology, and ecclesiology. It will preserve them from false religious systems, such as Pentecostalism, that are largely based upon erroneous views of the baptism of the Holy Ghost. It will enable them to more effectively grow in grace and in the knowledge of their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18) as they have a more Biblical understanding of the doctrine and practice of sanctification. Most importantly, it will enable them to more greatly love, honor, and serve the Triune God as they live by every word that proceeds from His mouth (Matthew 4:4; John 14:15). To Him alone be the glory for the wondrous truths about Himself and the ineffable graces bestowed on His saints that were authenticated and enacted in the Biblical, Baptist doctrine of Spirit baptism!

VI. Appendix: Excerpts from the sermons "The First Pentecost" and "The Church, The Inhabitation of the Holy Spirit" by B. H. Carroll, Pastor of First Baptist Church of Waco, TX, Professor of theology and Bible at Baylor University and Seminary from 1872-1905 and professor and president of the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary from 1908-1914.⁹²⁵

Sermon #1: The First Pentecost

⁹²⁵ *The Holy Spirit: Comprising a Discussion of the Paraclete, the Other Self of Jesus, and Other Phases of the Work of the Spirit of God*, pgs. 19-44. Elec. acc. in the AGES Christian Library Series, Vol. 11, B. H. Carroll Collection. Rio, WI: 2006. Compiled by J. W. Crowder, ed. J. B. Cranfill. While Carroll was a prominent advocate of the historic Baptist view of Spirit baptism, his conclusions are not in perfect agreement with every aspects of the exegesis above (For example, he took a different view of 1 Corinthians 12:13, preferred to speak of "baptism in the Spirit" rather than "baptism with the Spirit," and traced the founding of the church to Matthew 10, when the Lord ordained the apostles, which, while correctly concluding that the Lord founded the church during His earthly ministry and before Pentecost, misses the fact that He had baptized believers following Him, and thus a church, somewhat earlier in John 1:35ff. However, Carroll makes many excellent points, and he is a fine exponent of the historic Baptist view.). Portions of the sermons that were irrelevant to the topic of Spirit baptism and sections where his exposition of the historic Baptist position differ in details from those expounded in the body of the paper above have been removed.

“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” Acts 2:1-4

“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a mighty rushing wind,” not a wind, but a sound like that which a mighty wind makes. The sound was audible evidence of a Presence. “And it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder like as of fire.” Not fire, but “like as of fire.” That does not necessarily mean that the tongues were red. The reference is not to color but to the fact that a blaze of fire went up in a tongue-shape, lambent flame, reaching out as if licking up the substance it played about. Hence, because of shape and movement, we say, “a tongue of flame.” This visible manifestation, accompanying the sound, was divided into tongues, not cloven tongues, one tongue divided into two parts, but the whole appearance distributed it self into tongue-shapes and sat upon each. Following these phenomena of sound and sight, the record concludes: “And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

It is an amazing thing that, after so long an interval, the people of God do not yet have clear conceptions of the significance of this wonderful transaction. Indeed, if you want your mind tangled up and confused, all of its ideas reduced to thick mist and shifting shadows, you have only to read the miscellaneous literature extant upon the subject.

I first mention some of the errors, the misconceptions, that attach ordinarily and with most people, to this transaction of the Day of Pentecost. You hear some say that on the Day of Pentecost the kingdom of God was set up; that there and then the church was established or organized.

There is in this second chapter of Acts not even an indirect hint toward the establishment or organization of either a kingdom or a church. And if you have allowed anybody to impose such a thought upon you with whatever specious pleading or argument, you have received great damage. On so vital a point there cannot be exercised too critical a supervision of the literature we place in the hands of our children. It is a lamentable misrepresentation of a great truth to say that on the day of Pentecost any kingdom was set up, any church was established or organized.

Again, you find in many books placed in young people's hands, or frequently hear in discussing this Pentecost occasion, expressions such as this: “In the days of John the Baptist and in the life of Christ, was water baptism. Here was Spirit baptism. The first was formal, external, symbolic; the latter was spiritual and antitypical, and hence is the real baptism. It matters not much about the first: it matters a great deal about the second.”

And the question is pressed upon the young heart: "Have you received the baptism of the Spirit?" And all sorts of vague notions are taught about that baptism, some making it synonymous with regeneration. It is a common expression, "I may not have water-baptism, but I have the Spirit-baptism. I am a child of God. I am converted." As if the baptism of the Spirit meant conversion, meant regeneration. It is an awful perversion of the truth. It overclouds and puts out of sight a mighty doctrine to have the mind rest upon any such statement as that.

What is the baptism in the Spirit? This is an important inquiry on which you are entitled to a clear conception. Indeed, your conception of it should be so clear that as soon as you hear the expression, "baptism in the Spirit," you may know what that means, just as you say you know what it means when it is said, "Jesus was baptized in the river Jordan." And so quickly ought the true idea of it flash into your mind with the naming of it, that it would be impossible for a wrong view of it to get before you at all.

Few people will claim that, when the expression, "the baptism in the Spirit," is mentioned, they have as definite, well-defined idea of its import as they have when water-baptism is named. Hence the importance of this lesson.

If you permit yourself to think that you have already received the baptism in the Spirit, or that you are now entitled to it, then you have fixed your mind upon a vain delusion. You put a palpable discredit upon the teaching of God concerning one of the highest doctrines of the gospel.

Let me give you one profitable statement. Jesus is the administrator of the Spirit-baptism, and Jesus never did baptize a single individual under any circumstances in either water or Spirit. You can remember that, can't you? I say that the Lord Jesus Christ never baptized an individual in water nor an individual in the Spirit. Spirit-baptism does not relate to the individual. Can you bear that in mind? There never has been but one baptism in the Spirit, and that was the baptism of a church, of an organization, and that baptism was immediate. Do you know what the word "immediate" means? It means without means, without the intervention of any instrumentality.

I mean to say that the Lord Jesus Christ himself, without employing a second or third party, baptized His church on the Day of Pentecost. After that when other people got the benefits of the Spirit-baptism they got it mediately, not immediately. They got it through an Apostle. For instance, Peter, in preaching to Cornelius as an Apostle, inducted Cornelius into the benefits of Spirit-baptism, whatever it means. And in Samaria, when Philip had preached there, the Apostles came down and, through laying on of hands, imparted the miraculous gift. Similarly at Ephesus, through Paul as an intermediary. The presence of an Apostle was always necessary.

Let us get this a little more clearly before us. There has never been but one baptism in the Spirit. That baptism took place on the occasion of this text, the first Pentecost after the passion of Christ. That was not the baptism of an individual. It was the

baptism of an organization. It was the baptism of a church, as such, strictly. And it was immediate, without the intervention of any means whatever. Later, but limited exclusively to apostolic times, the benefits of that baptism were conferred upon others mediately, that is, through the Apostles.

Let us notice another error, for I want to get the errors before you. It relates to the church and is of two kinds. You hear on the streets, you read in the books you come in contact with, wherever you go, the phrase, “church universal,” that is to say, there may be a church particular in a place, but the church universal is the aggregate of the local churches.

There is no such idea conveyed anywhere in the Book of God as the church universal, and to take a local congregation of one faith, and a local congregation of another faith, and a third, fourth, fifth, and sixth kind of faith in a city, and then lump all of these heterogeneous communities, in all of the different localities spread out all over the world, and call that aggregate the church universal, is a degradation of the teaching of God’s Word. You ought never to think in that direction. Your mind cannot form a definite conception when you use the term “church universal.” You cannot put it in a clear expression, and if you do put something in a clear expression as your mind sees it, it is an unscriptural concept.

Another form of the error comes by confounding the local church, in the given place, with the church in glory, the completed body of Christ in heaven. Beyond a few anticipative references, the New Testament tells us nothing of the church in glory until we come to the last two chapters in the Book of Revelation. That . . . church is not referred to in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

It is an awful perversion of the New Testament teaching to designate local congregations of different faiths or of various denominations as so many branches of that heavenly church. I trust that you and I will be present when the last stone is put in that true spiritual temple, and until the last stone is placed, it will not be a completed house, ready for a tenant, but when the last man is saved, thereby completing the spiritual house of God, then, and not till then, will it become the permanent habitation of God.

Here in the second chapter of the Acts, He went into the local, earthly congregation. The last two chapters of the Book of Revelation tell us exactly how the heavenly house will be occupied. It gives first a word description of it and then permits the prophet to see it in vision. The house will descend from heaven—the full, completed church, in the heavenly sense, in the glorified sense, when the last man will be saved that ever will be saved and the work of redemption be completed as to all its units, and as to the fullness of all its parts. Then that house will descend with God for its inhabitant, fulfilling the Scripture, “The tabernacle of God is with men, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” And there shall be no temple in it. There shall be no altar of burnt-offering in it, and it shall be lighted by God and the Lamb. It shall be the everlasting habitation of God. But we have not arrived at the state set forth in the twenty-first chapter of Revelation, and it is an awful perversion of the truth to apply the thought concerning

what will take place as described in the twenty-first chapter of Revelation as applicable to what took place described in the second chapter of the Acts.

What, then, is the meaning of the second chapter of the Acts? One writer rightly abandons the idea of its being a building, establishing and organizing of a church, but he compares it—and he is much nearer the truth—to the launching of a ship. That is a better illustration; it is nearer the truth, but it is about a thousand miles yet from the truth. You know what takes place when a ship is launched. While the ship is actually built, while it is being completed, before it is launched, it has never sailed a foot. It has never as a ship moved on the waters that are to be its home. Launching is putting it in the water. But the church our Lord Jesus Christ built had been launched before this and it had made a good many long voyages. They were not distant, but what you would call trial voyages. It had been launched by the Lord Jesus Christ himself, who built it, but it had been confined to Jewish waters. And if you ask me, under the image of a ship, to tell you what the second chapter of Acts means, it means this: not indeed the launching of the ship of the church but the putting out to the open seas. Heretofore it had been in Jewish harbors and in the rivers and along the coast, but on the Day of Pentecost it pushed out from all shores and went into the boundless sea of all nations and tongues and kindreds and peoples of the earth. Now, that illustration would suit.

Then let me give you very briefly the meaning of this second chapter of Acts. There was not an atom of uncertainty about the time nor the import. Both time and import had not only been fixed but crystallized in monumental teaching for thousands of years. I shall quote you a passage from Leviticus showing that the day must be what we now call the Lord's Day; that commencing from the morrow after the Sabbath, which is our Sunday, and the Sabbath must be the Sabbath that followed the sacrifice of the Paschal lamb, you count full seven weeks, which bring you to Pentecost, the fiftieth day, making it Sunday, the Lord's Day.

The Lord Jesus Christ baptized His church as certainly on the day that He rose from the dead (I mean the day of the week that He rose from the dead), which was the first day of the week, as Leviticus is true[.]

Not only then was the date fixed but the import of it. Let us see what it was. We read concerning three houses in the Bible; I think I may say four—one yet future. That house that Moses built was the tabernacle in the wilderness, built according to a pattern as exact as the draft of an architect according to which our houses are constructed. Moses built a house, and when that house was completed, when everything was done called for by the plan, then the cloud came down and filled it. (See Exodus, chapter 40). That cloud was a symbol; that house was a type. That house was a type of the church. That cloud was a symbol of the coming of the Spirit into the church. The cloud came down and occupied the house, not when the foundation was laid, not when the walls were half-way up, but when the tabernacle was complete. Then the cloud filled the house that Moses built.

In the First Book of Kings (fifth and sixth chapters), we have an advance in the

typical and symbolical idea, showing the house that Solomon built. The first house related to the wanderers, before they had a settled habitation; later another house was built, the immovable and enduring temple. Solomon built it. Away out in Lebanon's forests and in the mountain quarries, preparations went on. Each piece of timber and each rock that went into the wall was individually gathered out and prepared. Then around by Joppa the timbers were brought, the stones were gathered together, and they were all brought into one place. But if you had been there when every piece of material had been brought to the ground and looked at the great pile of the finished rock and timber, you would not call that a house any more than you would a pile of bricks stacked out there in the street, a house. Before there can be a house, the pieces must be brought together and adjusted, fitted up. Now, when that building was completed, the Scriptures tell us a cloud came down and filled Solomon's Temple.

Now, let us look at the house that Jesus built. He is the builder of the two. He built a house for the earth and is building a house for heaven. According to strict correspondence, the tabernacle, or house built by Moses, was the type of the New Testament church, an earthly, militant organization. But the Temple or house built by Solomon, was a type of the heavenly body. In both cases, Jesus himself built the antitypical house.

Just now we are talking about the house on earth. We are not looking at the other. That is in the twenty-first chapter of Revelation, or more dimly seen in Ezekiel's vision of the Temple. We are talking about His house on earth. There was to be a house set on earth, having earthly visibility, having earthly ordinances, having earthly officers, having earthly forms and ceremonies, and there will be one having nothing earthly in it whatsoever, and that one is the one I speak about, the one that is to be occupied by the Holy Spirit as an everlasting habitation after the judgment. The constituent stones of that house harmonize, name by name and stone by stone, with the names that are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. But now the earthly house is not so. It will not harmonize that way.

But let us look at the earthly house. That is the one of which you are a member. That is the one with which you have to do. That one is a business body. That one receives and develops and disciplines members. That one has a commission given to it. That is the one church preaching the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to the whole world, and that is the one about which Pentecost speaks, and no other.

Let us look, therefore, at that one. When did the preparation of the material for this house commence? I can tell you exactly; I can put my finger right on the starting-point. It was the day that John the Baptist preached his first sermon, the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the voice of one preaching in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord. Make ready a people for the Lord. Make ready a people." As if to say, "John, go out yonder and cut down your timber. Go out yonder and quarry your stone. We will want them after a while, when we are ready to put them into a house." How did he quarry them? By preaching repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. How did he ceremonially prepare them? By baptism in water, a new ordinance hitherto unknown

to the world.

When Jesus came, He took this material John had prepared and added to that material. From the day that Jesus came John decreased and Christ increased. Christ entered into possession of John's work, and made and baptized more disciples than did John; and Christ, like John, preached, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." And Christ through His disciples baptized those that had repented and believed, and the work of preparation went on.

When did He begin to put these materials together? I can tell you when He commenced. You know a house commences when its foundation is laid. That is when you commence to put a house together, isn't it? Well, this house that Jesus built, (Jesus and nobody else), was built upon the foundation of the New Testament apostles and prophets. When did that commence? You read in the tenth chapter of the gospel of Matthew that Jesus commenced the work of organization, construction, putting together. How did He do it? He called unto Him twelve and ordained them to be apostles. There the work of construction properly commenced. And later we learn that He appointed seventy others also; and then that He brought in the last ordinance, to-wit, His Supper. Here is the ordinance of baptism and there is the ordinance of the Supper. There were no others.

Let no man dare to add another unless he assumes to make an improvement on the building that came in its perfection from the plan and hand of the Divine Architect. Do not add others and call them sacraments. Do not say that there are seven, when God's Word shows only two ordinances and the Supper is the last one.

Thus Jesus built the church-ship and Himself made several trips with it—what I referred to a while ago by harbor sailing, sailing in the rivers, sailing near the coasts, with local, circumscribed boundaries. What did He say when He looked at it? He said, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

"Finished, Lord?" "Yes, finished." "Oh, no; shall we not organize that church on the Day of Pentecost, days and days after your passion?"

From the cross comes the rebuke as from the realms of sacred death, "It is finished."

Let not man take up the saw and the hammer and talk about building a church on the Day of Pentecost or organizing a church on the Day of Pentecost. "On this Rock," says Christ, "I will build my church."

Who is going to claim equality with Him in that structure? Let thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth before making an assertion that Peter could set up a kingdom or organize a church. If Peter could do it, why can not you do it? When you admit that this building can be done by anyone but the King of kings and Lord of lords, you encourage this idea, sweeping about over the world, that just any fellow can go out and make a

church of his own. “I will start a church, a new church. I will set up a church.”

The church of the Lord Jesus Christ, the church that He built on the earth, commenced in His lifetime, in all of its essential parts, was completed in His lifetime, and any institution pushed out into the waters at a later date stands accursed for lack of time in the start.

And I say to you boldly that if the local congregation is not after the model embodied in the first and mother church, Jerusalem, as ordained and established by the Lord Jesus Christ, then do not claim that it is a church of Jesus Christ. Do not claim it. Call it a society, and a human society at that.

Now, I say that our Lord Jesus Christ, having fashioned His church, built it and finished it prior to the day of Pentecost. He then appointed a day when a tremendous transaction was to take place, and that is the transaction recorded in the second chapter of the Acts. That is exactly what we are to look at. That is the thing whose import we are to fix in our minds. On a specific day, the fiftieth day from the passion, or seven full weeks from the morrow after—on that day there was to take place as regards His earthly house, the antitype of what took place after Moses’ house was built, to-wit: the descent of the Holy Spirit to occupy the house. I do not hesitate then to affirm that the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles records a transaction that was initial. I mean that up to that day there never had been on this earth a church of Jesus Christ occupied by the Spirit.

Well, hadn’t the Spirit been at work? Oh, yes, the Spirit converted men in Abel’s time, but there was never a baptism of the Spirit until the Day of Pentecost. Therefore, conversion and baptism are not the same. You could not say of conversion, “The Holy Spirit was not yet.” You could not say of sanctification, “The Holy Spirit was not yet.” But I will tell you what you could say; you could say that the descent of the Spirit to occupy a New Testament church was not yet. That you could say. So then, on that day the Lord Jesus Christ baptized His church in the Holy Ghost—His *church*. . . .

Then why did He send the Holy Spirit down on the Day of Pentecost—to what end? Why baptize a church? Why didn’t He baptize it before? I shall tell you why. Before that, the church He organized was making its trial trips and He was in it Himself. He was here. His hand was at the helm. He was moving and directing everything in it. But in the development of His plans and of God’s purposes it became necessary for Him to go away, to go up to heaven. And there is the ship without a captain. Jesus is gone. But he says, “I was with you in your trial trips and took care of you. But before you put out to the open sea (and I command you to go out on every sea, to carry the Gospel to all nations), before you put out to the open sea, wait for your captain, the other Paraclete. On the day appointed of old I will send Him.”

The coming of the Holy Spirit that day, the baptism of the church in that Spirit, was for what end? To accredit the church; to accredit and authenticate the church as God’s organization. There had been miracles before, but the miracles before accredited men. Now, the Day of Pentecost was to be signalized by an accrediting of an

organization, and that was a new thing under the sun. On that day the church was to be demonstrated as divine, as being sent forth of God to do its work; Therefore, they were to wait; not to push out into the ocean by themselves; wait until they were indued with power from on high.

Mark how exactly the credentials correspond to the scope of the voyage, to the work they were to do. What is the instruction? What is written in the orders? "Go ye into all the world. Preach the gospel to every creature. Go ye and make disciples of all nations." When this ship approaches a foreign shore and a Parthian or an Elamite or a Persian or a Grecian or a Roman or a dweller in Mesopotamia shall ask, "Where are your credentials?" our text answers: "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." There were present men from every nation under heaven, and these men heard the church, through its representatives, speaking unto them in their own tongue, wherein they were born, and they were accredited; there was the amazing miracle that authenticated the church of Jesus Christ as being commissioned to carry the gospel to all nations.

Well, is this accrediting a thing to be perpetually repeated? No, accrediting has limits as to time. Just as soon as its functions are performed there is no repetition of it. Therefore, said the apostle, in speaking to the local church at Corinth, which had received its heavenly credential, a credential that spoke with tongues, "Whether there be tongues they shall cease." It was not designed that this baptism in the Spirit should be perpetual. It had a function. When its function was accomplished, then it ceased. The church was to go out and prove itself to be from God by the ability to speak in every tongue. That was one thing. "But whether there be tongues they shall cease." The church was to go out having also upon her the power of prophecy: "But whether there be prophecies, they shall fail." The church was to go out having power to work miracles, but miracles also were to cease.

Now, I want to prove that to you, taking a case in the days of the apostles, in the days when the credentials had to be exhibited. It is said that "These signs shall follow them that believe." What signs? The signs of what? These signs shall follow: That they shall take up serpents harmlessly, and if they eat or drink poison, it shall not hurt them, and they shall lay their hands upon the sick and heal them. Is that so? Certainly. When our Lord sent them out, as we find in the tenth chapter of Luke, He said, "If you find any sick anoint them with oil, and raise them up," and the raising up of the sick was to constitute the credentials of that man in that community. . . .

But do you mean that this is for today? Not a breath of it. I do affirm that God's Word distinctly restricts such signs to the days of authentication. Miraculous healing pertains to the credentials, and I would just as soon stand out yonder in the cemetery and ask an old inhabitant, buried forty years ago, to rise up from his grave, and expect to see him rise up, as I would . . . [to] go today to a sick man and anoint him with oil and expect to see the sick rise up.

The attempt would be blasphemous in either case. Why blasphemous? Simply because it would say to the Lord Jesus Christ, "Your church whom you baptized in the

Holy Spirit, was not sufficiently accredited. We want new credentials issued. We want the signs repeated in our time.” It argues that the work then done was not completed.

And the whole of this Christian Science business is predicated upon that misconception of God’s Word and is as diametrically opposed to the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ as any other heresy that ever cursed the world by its introduction. . . . It is important to have clear ideas on all these lines.

Let me advance in that thought just a little and I am through. Of course, there are thousands of other things that could be said on it, for its boundaries are immense, but you cannot hear all of them in one day. I have shown you before, but I want to show you again; I want to make it just as clear as a sunbeam, that this baptism of the church in the Spirit and by the Lord Jesus Christ was temporary in its nature, that it referred to a special object, and that object was accomplished; and then I want to show you that the church, in the New Testament sense, when we come to that word in the New Testament, must all the time be construed as applied to one local congregation. . . .

[B]aptism in the Spirit [would] cease [while] certain other things should abide; . . . the graces would stay; . . . faith, hope and love would continue, but this thing stop. This is for a sign, he said. . . . [N]o man ever did receive a baptism in the Spirit to affect him as an individual only. No man ever did receive a baptism in the Spirit except as a constituent part of the church.

Christ baptized the church, and when He baptized the church all were baptized[.] . . . It was one baptism once for all. In other words, one might never claim that the baptism in the Spirit prompted him to set up a new order of things. He might not say, “I am guided by the’ baptism in the Spirit to go off at a tangent, to set up a different establishment, to defy church authority, to go off as a free lance.” No, sir. . . . [N]one might dare claim Spirit guidance for separatist work. Much less do you do it now. Don’t you say, when you are despising dignitaries, and speaking evil of them, and bringing about schism and disrupting and dividing the people of God—don’t say the Spirit prompts you, that the baptism in the Spirit makes you do this. If you had the Spirit baptism it would be *into*, it would be *for* the church; it would be with reference to the church and not contrary to it and against it. . . .

Do you yet say you have the baptism of the Spirit? Well, if you say it, then I ask you to give me the signs. These signs shall follow. “Which things,” says Paul, “are for a sign.” They were to be a sign of something, accrediting in certain directions. You have it? Give me a sign. What is the sign? Well, let a rattlesnake bite you. Raise the dead. Let me see you do it. Give me the sign. And not in some dark corner bring about a miracle, but in the open daylight, before competent witnesses, as Christ wrought in the presence of thousands. Let there be such miracles wrought as cannot be questioned. Give me the signs.

A picture I leave with you. I have it in my own mind. It makes my heart thrill as I look on the mental canvas. I see the Master coming here on earth. I see the harbinger hewing down the trees and shaping them and exhuming the rocks and finishing them. I see him pointing to the Architect and saying, “Oh Thou Divine Builder, here is the

material. You told me to get it ready.” I see the Builder take the material and, commencing with the foundation, building and building and building, until at last before my eyes is a New Testament church, organized, established, set up, with officers, with ordinances, complete and tried under the Master’s own hand, to show that it would work, and that it would do the things appointed in Judean localities. But it-has a wider destiny.

I see the Captain standing on the deck and reading orders for that ship: “Go ye into all the world. Heretofore I said, Go not to Samaria. Go not to the cities of the Gentiles. I lift the embargo. I tear down the dividing wall. I now order the ship which I have built to go to earth’s remotest bounds—long, perilous voyages, mighty undertakings.” But the Captain says, “I am about to leave you. You never will see me here again in this ship. Therefore, wait; do not put up the sails. Do not lift the anchor. Wait until you are indued with power from on high. Wait until your credentials as a church come down. Wait until you are authenticated to the nations. Wait until the time appointed, and then you put out to the open sea and you keep to the sea. Don’t ever come back to port anymore. Keep to the sea as long as your mission lasts. O Ship of Zion, sail on, sail yonder, and there, and everywhere. Go to this ocean and that bay and that lake. Go on, Ship, ever sailing in storm and calm and sunshine. O Ship, sail on until your Captain comes again.” And so on the Day of Pentecost, when it was fully come, suddenly by sound speaking to the ear, by sight speaking to the eye, by feeling speaking to the inner senses, the credentials come, the accrediting takes place.

They speak with tongues. They are now ready to go forth. And I hear a voice, saying, “Up with your anchor; hoist your sails. Move out of the harbor and away and away and away until the Master comes. On for the long voyage in His name.” The other Paraclete, the other Captain, the Holy Ghost, is in the ship yet, not now to authenticate it, but to guide and give power. He remains not in the universal church (there is no such organization), not in the heavenly church—its time is not yet come—but in the local congregation. Read Revelation concerning the seven churches of Asia; behold Jesus Christ, through the Spirit, moving, not in the church universal, but among the churches—this church, that church, the other church. And as Paul says in his letter to the Ephesians, “Each several building,” not all the buildings making a town, but “each several building is a church of God,” this one here, that one yonder. Each single local congregation is the house of Jesus Christ, infilled and guided by the Holy Ghost.

Now, I hope that your speech will be conformed to the true New Testament idea when you speak of these things. I do not pretend in this day to work miracles; they have passed. The credentials are completed. The attesting is consummated. But I do say that the local congregation is to be the house of Jesus Christ inhabited by the Holy Ghost. . . . Amen.

Sermon #2: The Church, The Habitat of the Holy Spirit

Perhaps the most perplexing of all the questions to be answered today are these: What is meant by the Scripture, “The Holy Spirit was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified”? And in what new sense did the Holy Spirit come on the first

Pentecost after the ascension of Jesus? And does He abide with us in any sense peculiar to New Testament times? No other questions relating to the interpretation of God's Word have more engaged my own mind and heart for years than these.

And now I am going to answer them so these Sunday-school children will understand. Let us commence with an examination, in order, of several Scriptures that constitute our text.

First, the *tabernacle*: "Our fathers had the tabernacle in the wilderness." The tabernacle, or tent, was a movable house for God, to serve only while Israel was on the road. Many chapters in Exodus are devoted to telling how it was constructed, but the significant fact, the one most pertinent to this discussion, is recorded in Exodus 40:33, 34: "So Moses finished the work. Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle."

Here observe:

- (1) This was the house that Moses built;
- (2) every part of it was fashioned separately according to the divine pattern furnished Moses;
- (3) though each part was complete in itself, and all the parts were gathered in one place, as a workman gets together his material on a building site, they did not make a house until they were *put together*. It took *all* of them to make the house and all of them *united*, that, "fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplied, according to the working in due measure of each several part";
- (4) When the house was *finished*, *God moved in and inhabited it* in the presence of all the people.

Pass now to a second Scripture: "But Solomon built him a house." You will find the history in the fifth and sixth chapters of the First Book of Kings. This was after the traveling days of Israel were ended and they had become thoroughly established in the Promised Land. God now needed a *permanent* house instead of a tent. Again we find the same significant fact so pertinent to our discussion—1 Kings 6:37-38; 8:10-11: "In the fourth year [i.e., of Solomon's reign] was the foundation of the house of the Lord laid, in the month Zif. And in the eleventh year, in the month Bul, which is the eighth month, was the house finished throughout all the parts thereof, and according to all the fashion of it. So was he seven years in building it ... And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the Holy Place, that the cloud filled the house of the Lord."

Here again observe:

- (1) This was the house that Solomon built;
- (2) Every part of it was fashioned separately, according to the divine pattern given David;
- (3) Though each part was complete in itself, and all the parts were gathered in one place, they did not make a house until they were *put together*. It took all of them to make one house and all of them properly *united*;

(4) As the stones put in the walls were not rough ashlar, but each previously shaped and numbered and as the timbers were all thoroughly dressed and adapted beforehand, there was no sound of the saw or hammer in putting them together. The mighty building was set up in silence;

(5) When the house was finished, then and not until then, *God moved in and inhabited it.*

Now, the tabernacle of Moses and Solomon's Temple were types of the New Testament church, and the cloud was a type of the Holy Ghost. But after all, Solomon's house was made with hands and in reality God "dwelleth not in temples made with hands." The cloud was not the Holy Ghost himself but just a symbol of Him.

The Temple, however, did foreshadow a *real* house, built not with human hands and skill, which the real God would inhabit. One greater than Moses or Solomon must build this house. In the fullness of time came Jesus, the real builder. "I will build my church," said He. . . . The process of the building was this:

First, John the Baptist was sent before to announce that the kingdom was at hand and to prepare the material, that is, make ready a people one by one for the coming Lord. How did he make them ready? By utterly discarding all idea of a national basis or fleshly descent from Abraham; by insisting upon a personal and voluntary repentance and faith and confession of sins and reformation; by giving them "the knowledge of salvation in 'the remission of their sins;'" and by baptizing these saved people.

Second, Jesus received this prepared material and added more to it in precisely the same manner. So far, the work was individual, that is, it consisted merely of getting out the timbers, quarrying the stones, and dressing them in proper shape to fit into a house yet in his own mind.

Third, He next began to lay a foundation, i.e., to organize His ready-made people. This He commenced by the ordination of the Twelve Apostles and subsequently of seventy prophets, or teachers. As one of our Scriptures says: "Ye are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets [of course he means New Testament prophets]." Here was the beginning of His church. This was the first step in organization.

Fourth, by His Sermon on the Mount and His subsequent parables, He instructed these apostles in all the fundamental principles of His kingdom.

Fifth, according to the tabernacle-type, this was His itinerant church moving about wherever He moved. As a present, living Paraclete, He administered all its affairs while the building progressed. At Caesarea Philippi He announced the foundation principles of church-membership:—a God-revealed and personal faith in Him, saying, "Upon this rock I will build my church." Later he instructed them (Matthew 18) in the discipline and authority of the church: "Tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall

agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” Mark that word “agree,” and note that phrase “on earth,” and that other phrase, “gathered together.” We shall need them all after a while.

Sixth, having unfolded His doctrines, organized His material, laying the foundation in the apostles and teachers, it now became necessary to unite the walls with the great, elect, precious corner-stone, Jesus Christ himself. So He made known fully His approaching death and instituted His second and last memorial ordinance, the Lord’s Supper.

Now hear the builder: “Father, the hour is come; ... I have finished the work which thou gayest me to do” (John 17:1-4). Hear Him again in His death agony: “It is finished: and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost” (John 19:30). And thus the house was built.

Here in the antitype observe:

- (1) This was the house that Jesus built: “Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; who was faithful to Him that appointed Him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house. For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honor than the house. For every house is builded by some man; but He that built all things is God. And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken afterward; but Christ as a son over His own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end” (Hebrews 3:1-6). This house was built “without hands.” It was no material structure of stone and timber. It was a spiritual house. The foundation stones—apostles and teachers—were living stones. The only dead stone in the foundation—Judas Iscariot, the son of perdition—was eliminated, and Matthias, a living stone, replaced him before the house was occupied. Hence one of our Scriptures: “Coming unto Christ, himself a living stone, rejected indeed of men, but with God elect, precious, ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house.” This “spiritual house” is expressly declared by another Scripture to be the “church of the living God,” a church to which the truth is committed for propagation. So, expressly, the church at Corinth is called “God’s building,” “a temple of God.” So likewise the church at Ephesus is called a “holy temple, builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit.” So also when we compare 1 Corinthians 3:9, 17, with 1 Peter 2:4-5, we have the Spirit’s own interpretation of Matthew 16:18: “Upon this rock I will build my church.” That rock is Christ himself.
- (2) That every stone was prepared separately—made a living stone by personal regeneration, repentance, and faith, and was then baptized.
- (3) That these individuals were organized into a body with ordinances, and the gospel work committed to them.
- (4) That while our Lord had *finished* His house, it, as a *house*, remained without an

occupant⁹²⁶ to the first Pentecost.

Whatever influence of the Holy Spirit had been exerted on them and in them as individuals to make them Christians, this was in their separate capacity. As an organization—a composite structure—fitly joined together, it was vacant. A hundred thousand bricks, lying apart, make no house, however perfect each brick. When these bricks are put together in the wall and according to the architect's plan, united by mortar, and a turn-key job of a finished structure is turned over for acceptance, though a complete house, it is yet unoccupied.

We now see the new house built by Jesus Christ. It is a church composed exclusively of regenerated individuals. There is no provision in it for any unconverted man, woman, or child. The laws are complete. The ordinances are complete. Its uses and duties are all defined, and no new thing was ever added, the Spirit afterwards only bringing to their remembrance what Christ had previously taught.

We pause here to emphasize that the earth in all its history had never before known a Christian church. It was an absolutely new organization. And now we are prepared to see it occupied. Such a building needs an inhabitant.

In a word, then, what is the significance of the second chapter of Acts? Was it the setting up of a kingdom or the building of a temple? Nay, verily, the God of heaven, Jesus Christ, in His own person, while on earth, had already set up His kingdom and built His house.

What was it Peter had?

The keys of an established kingdom.

Why had he the keys?

That he might open its door to people that they might enter.

When he did open the door, did he open it from the inside or from the outside? And if he opened it from the outside when and by what process did he himself get in? Did God give Peter the keys, and while He held the keys up in His hand, build a kingdom to fit the keys?

The house was finished. Peter was in it and opened it from the inside. What then signifies the second chapter of Acts?

The simple answer is this: That day God, the Spirit, moved into the house that Jesus had built, as His cloud-type had moved into the typical house built by Moses and

⁹²⁶ Of course, Christ Himself was in His pre-Pentecost church, so a member of the Godhead dwelt in her, although the Holy Spirit had not made the church His special temple as yet.

Solomon.

How then was the descent of the Spirit on that day different from any past work of His?

In this, that never before had He inhabited an organization of Christians. Individual Christians, like Abel, Enoch, Abraham, Moses, and David, he had made and indwelt. But the patriarchal and Mosaic organizations were not spiritual but fleshly. It was the family and the nation typifying, indeed, the church, but they were not the real church itself. Hence the cloud that occupied the house of Moses and the house of Solomon was only a symbolical presence of God. But on the Day of Pentecost God himself came down and filled His house. In this sense, then, the Holy Spirit had not been given, because Jesus had not been glorified. And therefore it was expedient for Jesus to leave His little flock that the Comforter might come.

We now open another important inquiry. In coming on the Day of Pentecost He came with miracles, i.e., conferring miraculous power.

Were there no miracles wrought by the Spirit before the Day of Pentecost? What was there *new* here?

Moses was accredited by miracles. So were the prophets. So was Jesus. What, then, was *new* here?

This was new, that on this day the church, as the executive of her absent Lord, was accredited for the first time in the history of the world. Miracles were now the credentials of the church and authenticated its Gospel message.

This, my brethren, was the baptism in the Spirit, a baptism in miraculous power, authenticating and accrediting the church as the house Jesus built. And, mark me well, just here. No man on that day, or subsequently in apostolic times, received this baptism of miraculous power *apart from his relation to the church*. He was baptized *in the Spirit unto*, i.e., with reference to, *the church*. That is to say, he did not receive this miraculous power, whether of tongues or interpretations of tongues, or healing, or inspiration, or prophecy, or in any other gift as an *individual*, that he might go off at a tangent and become a separatist, or glorify himself, but he was “baptized in the Spirit *unto the church*.” The gifts were for edification, upbuilding the church. . . .

[The] baptism of miraculous power . . . [and] temporary gifts . . . [were inferior to] the enduring graces of regeneration, [and] were temporary—were for a sign, that is, to accredit the church and [then they] would then cease: “Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge [supernatural], it shall vanish away.”

(5) And here in this very text he assured them that this very “baptism in the Spirit” was [for] . . . the church - not out of it, not against it, not to its detriment, but *for it*; not to its

confusion, but to its order; not to its shame, but to its glory; not unto its destruction, but unto its upbuilding. The whole context shows, as other Scriptures abundantly confirm, that the baptism in the Spirit was a baptism in miraculous power, for a temporary purpose, but that baptism, while it lasted, was to give credentials unto the church. Hence the baptism in the Spirit was a baptism *unto*, or *into*, the church.

(6) Believing as I do, that in Apostolic times the church was thoroughly and sufficiently accredited, to my mind there is now no need for this baptism in the Spirit, and as the Scriptures were completed, inspiration ceased with John. . . . What then does remain of the *new* endowment received on the Day of Pentecost? The Spirit did not occupy the house of Jesus merely to accredit it by miracles but to fill it with ability to do the work assigned it, to enable it to carry out all its mission. This is our everlasting heritage.

Do understand me here. When I say the Spirit fills the church today, I do not refer:

1. To that mere concept of the mind—all the elect as they are or shall be in heaven. I refer to no *invisible* church.
2. Nor do I refer to any provincial, national, or world-wide organization of professed believers.
3. I do refer to independent, local, visible organization of baptized believers. There was one such organization at Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost. That was the church. There was afterwards one such in Corinth, to which Paul wrote, and he called that one a temple of the Holy Ghost. There was one such at Ephesus, and he wrote to that one and called it a temple of the Holy Ghost. And wherever elsewhere one was organized, it became a temple of the Holy Ghost. They were all visible and had visible ordinances. All of them were working bodies here on earth. To such a one, and only to such, could our Savior's precept apply: "Tell it to the church." These were the organizations that received, educated, disciplined, and, if need be, excluded members. These preached the gospel. Each was the house of God, the church of the living God, and pillar and ground of the truth. The Holy Ghost does not inhabit a denomination. He inhabits a church. The Holy Ghost does not inhabit a nation. He inhabits a church—a local church.

This was the new thing at Pentecost. Christ built the first one. It was designed not only to perpetuate itself but to multiply itself.

Do listen carefully again to my fourth Scripture: "In Jesus Christ *each several building*, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord." If this general proposition of Paul be true, that "every several building" which is "fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple," of course, it would follow just as he states concerning the particular Ephesus church: "In whom ye also are builded for a habitation of God through the Spirit." That is to say, if it is the law of Jesus Christ that wherever local churches are organized on New Testament principles, each for itself would be a temple of God, then it would follow that if this local church is organized on the New Testament, "we also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Now mark two things:

1. That a denomination in a particular section or country, is not a temple of God. There is no such thing as a state or national church. If God ever thought of such a thing, He did not reveal His thoughts.

2. That Christian people even in one city or community are not a temple of God, any more than a hundred thousand loose bricks make a house. A temple is an organic structure. The parts must be put together according to a plan and so united as to make one building. That is a house. And for Christians to unite themselves together into any kind of human society, whether creditable or innocent its objects, is no temple of God. *The Spirit of God inhabits only one organization on this earth*—the church of Jesus Christ. And unto no other organization as Jesus given His commission and ordinances. And no other organization is the pillar and ground of the truth. The Confederate Veteran Association, the Bar Association, the Medical Association, the Democratic and Republican parties, . . . all of them man-made, may be good and serve good purposes, but none of them is the house of the living God, the holy temple the habitation of the eternal Spirit.

Yea, more, the Young Men's Christian Association, the B.Y.P.U. of America, or the South, or of the State, or the Salvation Army—*none of them* is *the* temple, or even *a* temple of God. To none of them has God committed the world's evangelization.

But, you will say, "Brother Carroll, where does this doctrine lead? Have you looked to the end of it?" No matter where it leads I am willing to follow it, as confidently as Moses followed the pillar of cloud and fire, even if need be into deserts and waterless and foodless places, and simply trust God.

"But don't you believe in ladies' aid societies, and Sunday-schools, and young people's unions?"

In the local church, yes; as working committees of the church, yes; working in and through and by and for the church, yes. Representing for themselves and from themselves into any State or National organization, *no*, SO HELP ME GOD. . . .

I mean to say this much: That if the human societies for doing the work of the church were disbanded—every one of them—the church of Jesus Christ could go right on with the work of evangelizing the world and Christ would have the glory in the church more fully. The following corollaries set forth a summary of the whole matter:

1. This explains the sense in which the Holy Spirit was given after Christ's ascension.
2. This also explains the baptism of the Spirit as never before existent, and here by miraculous endowments bestowing credentials on the church.
3. And how these endowments ceased with the accomplishment of their purpose.
4. An explanation . . . that the baptism in the Holy Ghost was into or unto one body and subordinate to the church.
5. [I]n an accommodated sense, used one time only, a single Christian is called a temple and might have been so called before Christ as well as since Christ[,] [but]
6. No other organization *whatsoever* is an habitation of the Spirit.

7. No other is the pillar and ground of the truth.
8. No other has committed to it the ordinances and possesses one atom of official authority from God.
9. All the good accomplished by any other can be better done through the church.
10. For purposes of cooperation in evangelization the churches may [assist each other]. . .
11. My deliberate conviction is that no work of evangelization *whatsoever* should be committed to any organized convention or association *whatsoever* except such as are composed solely of the representatives of the churches. [Though Biblically there is no basis in Scripture for any organized parachurch conventions or associations at all.]
12. I do not deny their work or its value, but it could have been better done by honoring the church and with less harm. I do not oppose, but favor Sunday-schools, Ladies' Societies, Young People's Unions, as working committees in the local church, doing all their work in, through, by, and for the church and *representing as societies in nothing*.
13. As this is a spiritual house, I believe its worship should be spiritual, that its choirs that lead the music should be spiritual, just as much as the preachers and deacons. In other words, it is just as lawful and congruous to employ an unconverted, professional elocutionist or actor to do your preaching and an unconverted business expert to manage the temporalities of the deacons' office as to employ unconverted singers.
14. If this is a spiritual house to offer spiritual sacrifices, and as contribution for Christ's sake is a part of this worship, all secular methods of raising money by pew-rents, fairs, raffles, suppers, balls, etc., are an abomination in the sight of God. Let the world raise its money that way if it wants to.
15. That we ought never to canvass the world for church-money. If any voluntarily, without solicitation, and from respect to religion, wish to aid, receive it. If, however, the circumstances of the tender show it to proceed from a spirit of patronage or a *means of* advertising you had better let it alone.
16. That every dollar expended in meeting-houses that apes the temple or cathedral idea as if brick and wood and stained glass spires were holy; and every dollar put into mere style or ornamentation, such as would make the poor feel not at home, leave it out. Whatever is necessary to endurance, size, safety, ventilation, warmth, acoustics, ingress and egress, and especially acoustics, have them, of course. Simplicity and utility may combine with taste.

Reasons Why the Filioque Should Be Maintained

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in FILIOQUE, REFORMED VIEW

by Marc A. Pugliese

The point of the filioque is that the Son is also the source of the Holy Spirit along with the Father. The Holy Spirit receives the divine



essence not only from the Father, but also from the Son. In the West it has been proper to make the distinction that the Holy Spirit comes from the Father alone with respect to absolute, unoriginate, unbegotten cause, because only the Father is unbegotten and unoriginate, in which case one can say that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father through (διὰ) the Son. However, in the West it is said that one must at the same time say that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son also, as from a mediate, originated, begotten cause, and that the Son communicates the divine essence to the Spirit in exactly the same way as the Father.

Reasons Why the Filioque Should Be Maintained

1. The Eastern Churches contention that the idea of the Holy Spirit also proceeding from the Son, in the sense intended by the filioque, did not develop in the Church until much later is not true.

Photius and others claim that none of the Church Fathers nor any council has said that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son. **As any survey of church history will show, the concept of the “unanimous consent of the fathers” is a chimerical ideal that does not exist in reality.** In fact, there are plenty of witnesses, in the Greek as well as Latin Church Fathers, who say what the filioque affirms. **Among the Greek Fathers, Athanasius (d. 373), the great defender of Trinitarian and Christological orthodoxy, said that the Spirit originates παρὰ τοῦ λόγου, and compared how the Spirit receives His deity from the Son to how the Son receives His deity from the Father.** Likewise defenders of Trinitarian orthodoxy, **the Cappadocian Fathers bear witness to the Holy Spirit deriving His being from both the Father and the Son.** In defending the Holy Spirit’s consubstantiality with the Father and Son, **Basil expressly said that the Holy Spirit “has His being” from the Son.** Gregory Nazianzus similarly linked the Holy Spirit’s being with the being of the Son. **Epiphianus (367–403) referred to the Holy Spirit as proceeding from the Father and “receiving” from the Son.** He also said that the Spirit “has his consubstantial being” from the Father and the Son, and referred to the Holy Spirit as “the bond of the Trinity” similar to the way Augustine would later see the Holy Spirit as the bond of love between the Father and the Son. **Cyril of**

Alexandria (d. 444) said that the Spirit is proper to the Son, He proceeds from the Son, and that He proceeds from the Father and the Son. Maximus the Confessor (d. 662) said that the Holy Spirit is διὰ μέσου τοῦ λόγου, “by means of the Word.” Gregory of Palamas (d. 1359) attested that the Spirit is the bond of love between the Father and the Son, much in the way Augustine did.

As for the West, in the 200s **Tertullian, combating Sabellian modalism in Against Praxeas, compared the Spirit to the fruit of a tree, the Father being the tree’s roots and the tree being the Son.** Using similar analogies, he says the Holy Spirit is “third from God and the Son.” **Hilary of Poitiers (d. 367) explicitly said that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. In 381 Ambrose of Milan also expressly said that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, and referred to the Son, along with the Father, as the “fount” of the Spirit.** In 382 a local synod in Rome interpreted the sending of the Holy Spirit by both the Father and the Son in the economy of salvation, as testified to in Scripture, as reference to the origin of the Holy Spirit. **Augustine’s teaching on the Holy Spirit proceeding from both the Father and the Son is, of course, well-known.**

Leo the Great, who was the bishop of Rome during the Council of Chalcedon, clearly said in 447 that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, and stated explicitly that this procession is that the Holy Spirit receives His divine essence from the Father and the Son. In 447, the Second Council of Toledo, directly addressing Visigothic Arianism, plainly said that the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son, which of course means that the Son is as fully divine as the Father. In the following centuries further councils in Toledo said the same, and Gregory the Great, bishop of Rome from 594–600, clearly said that the Holy Spirit proceeds essentially from the Son.

Now while in their contexts these various statements of the Church Fathers often were said in making a point other than that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son also, **they nonetheless stated that the Spirit receives His divinity from the Son just as much as He does from the Father. In fact, many of the statements about the double procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son were made in defense of Christ’s full divinity and**

consubstantiality with the Father; the Son is so much God as the Father that the Son likewise spirates the Spirit along with the Father, putting the Spirit in possession of the divinity just as the Father does.

These testimonies from the Church Fathers, to which many more could be added, serve both to (1) prove that there is no paucity of testimony to the Holy Spirit's procession from the Father and the Son among the Church Fathers and early councils, and (2) show that the intention behind the filioque was a part of Christian theology practically from its incipience and was not a novelty imported into theology at the time that the filioque clause became an official part of the creed.

2. The Reformed Confessions have consistently affirmed the Double Procession, or the filioque, with the same intention as the Western Church as a whole.

Again with the caveat that creeds or confessions are fallible and that, while sources for theology, they hold a far second place with the Word of God in Scripture, it is significant that almost every great Reformed confession that deals at length with the Trinity contains the Double Procession. These include the French Confession of Faith (1559), the Belgic Confession (1561, revised 1619), the Second Helvetic Confession (1566), and the Westminster Confession of Faith (1647).

3. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ

Calvin proves the filioque using Scripture by appealing to the passages that speak of the Holy Spirit as also the "Spirit of Christ" or the "Spirit of the Son":

For this reason, the Son is said to come forth from the Father alone; the Spirit, from the Father and the Son, at the same time. This appears in many passages, but nowhere more clearly than in chapter 8 of Romans, where the same Spirit is indifferently called sometimes the Spirit of Christ [v. 9], sometimes the Spirit of him 'who raised up Christ . . . from the dead' [v. 11]—and not without justification. For Peter also testifies that it was by the Spirit of Christ that the prophets prophesied [2 Pet 1:21; cf. 1 Pet 1:11], even though Scripture often teaches it was the Spirit of God the Father.

Similarly, later the Westminster Confession uses Gal 4:6, "Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying 'Abba, Father,'" to prove that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son as well as from the Father. Photius, of

course, had already dealt with Gal 4:6 and the “spirit of Christ” passages by making the distinction between being “of” and “proceeding from”; the Scriptures say the former, which is quite unqualified and thus ambiguous in itself, but never say the latter.

4. Although the filioque is not taught explicitly and expressly in Holy Scripture, it is taught implicitly and virtually, just as the Doctrine of the Trinity as a whole is only taught implicitly and virtually, not explicitly and expressly.

As just mentioned above, the Holy Spirit is sometimes called the “Spirit of the Son” and the “Spirit of Christ,” and not just the “Spirit of the Father” (Rom 8:9; Gal 4:6; Phil 1:19; 1 Pet 1:11). The “Spirit of His Son in our hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Gal 4:6) tightly ties the Son and the Spirit together. The Holy Spirit in us is the Spirit that relates to God as a beloved Father. The Spirit in us has filial characteristics. He is called the Spirit of His Son. **There seems more to the relationship between the Son and the Holy Spirit than a mutual procession from the Father. Is this Spirit ever encountered apart from the Word, the Second Person of the Trinity?** An ancillary deductive proof is that if God is Spirit (John 4:24) and if the Son is fully God (John 1:1; 5:18; 8:58), then the Son must be Spirit, as 2 Cor 3:17–18 expressly says, and whence proceeds the Third Person of the Trinity. How can it not be, then, that the Holy Spirit does not proceed from the Son as well as from the Father? The fact that the Spirit is fully the Spirit of the Son as much as the Spirit of the Father shows how the Trinity is a tight unity. In defending the Double Procession, Francis Turretin says on John 16:13–15:

Whatever the Spirit has, he has from the Son no less than from the Father (John 16:13–15), and as the Son is said to be from the Father because he does not speak of himself, but of the Father (from whom he receives all things), so the Spirit ought to be said to be and to proceed from the Son because he hears and speaks from him.

Based on the statements regarding the Son in relationship to the Father in the Gospel of John, Turretin concludes that the Holy Spirit must proceed from the Son in the same way as He proceeds from the Father, by logical inference, or as the Westminster Confession says, “by good and necessary consequence.” He

writes: “It is implied because the mission of the Spirit is ascribed to him and whatever the Father has, the Son is said to have equally (John 16:15).”

Turretin’s point is also buttressed from John 5:18–32, where Jesus explains how many of the Father’s attributes (giving life, judging, receiving glory and honor, and resurrecting) are the Son’s as well. Jesus clearly says here that “whatever the Father does, these things also the Son likewise does” (John 5:19b). Upon such revelation is the venerable Trinitarian axiom, *In Deo omnia sunt unum, ubi non obviat relationis oppositio*. That is, the Father and the Son share everything in common, except for their relations of origin; the Father begets and the Son is begotten. These opposing relations of origin are the only things that they do not share. Thus they both participate in the procession of the Holy Spirit, which is the relation of opposition distinguishing the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Holy Spirit from the Son. Theologically, it is argued that if the axiom is correct, then the Holy Spirit must proceed from the Son as well as from the Father, or else there would be no opposing relation of origin between the Son and the Spirit, and thus no distinction between the Son and the Spirit. Actually, Yves Congar explains that Photius’s condemnations were based on the supposition that properties differentiate the divine persons instead of solely the genetic relations of opposition.

It must be readily admitted that the Scripture never openly and overtly discusses the eternal relationship between the Holy Spirit and the Son in the ontological or immanent Trinity. However, much the same can be said about eternal relationship between the Father and the Son, most of which is known from the relationship between the Father and the Son in the economic Trinity, or from the relationship between the Son and the Father in salvation history. It is to the economic Trinity that we now turn.

5. The economic Trinity, including the missions of the persons of the Trinity, corresponds to the immanent or ontological Trinity.

John 15:26 says that the Spirit of Truth “proceeds” or “goes out from” the Father (ἐκπορεύεται), yet this by no means constitutes a denial that He also proceeds or goes out from the Son. John 14:26 says that the Father will send the Holy Spirit without mentioning the Son, but this does not imply that the Son will not send the Holy Spirit, since, in fact, John 16:7 says that the Son will send the Holy Spirit.

In fact, in the same sentence in John 15:26 where He says that the Holy Spirit proceeds or goes out from the Father, Jesus also says that He will send the Holy Spirit from the Father. In this way, Photius's "mystical teaching" in John 15:26 about the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father by no means constitutes a teaching that the Holy Spirit does not proceed from the Son.

The Scriptures do clearly say, however, that the Son will send, or has sent, the Holy Spirit (John 1:33b; 15:26; 16:7; Acts 2:33). Many see here a reflection of the eternal relationship between the Son and the Holy Spirit:

And if the Son together with the Father sends the Spirit into the world, by analogy it would seem appropriate to say that this reflects eternal ordering of their relationships. This is not something that we can clearly insist on based on any specific verse (much like the Doctrine of the Trinity in general), but much of our understanding of the eternal relationships among the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit comes by analogy from what Scripture tells us about the way they relate to the creation in time. It is natural to suppose that the double sending of the Spirit reflects, and so reveals, a double procession in the divine life-pattern, but Scripture speaks only of the former, leaving the latter totally opaque to us in fact, however much it is argued over.

Since the beginnings of Christian theology, theologians have seen revelations of intratrinitarian life in the Gospel of John, especially between the Father and the Son. Examples include: "For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself" (John 5:26); "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself, he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does" (John 5:19); "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me" (John 8:42); ". . . no one can snatch them out of my hand . . . no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one" (John 10:28b; 29b–30); "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me" (John 11:41); and "Philip said, 'Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.' Jesus answered, 'Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father and that the Father is in me?'"

(John 14:8–10a). It would also seem that the references to sending and missions in the Gospel of John, too, reveal a deeper reality about the intratrinitarian life.

In fact, Karl Rahner's famous trinitarian axiom that "the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity, and the immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity" is predicated on the fact that if God truly reveals himself in the economy of salvation, that is, in how the persons of the economic Trinity work, then the economic Trinity must reveal something about the inner, immanent, intratrinitarian divine life:

If we admit that every divine person might assume a hypostatic union with a created reality, then the fact of the incarnation of the Logos 'reveals' properly nothing about the Logos himself, that is, about his own relative specific features within the divinity. For in this even the incarnation means for us practically only the experience that God in general is a person, something which we already knew. It does not mean that in the Trinity there is a very special differentiation of persons. . . . we cling to the truth that the Logos is really as he appears in revelation, that he is the one who reveals to us (not merely one of those who might have revealed to us) the triune God, on account of the personal being which belongs exclusively to him, the Father's Logos. . . . what Jesus is and does as man reveals the Logos himself . . . here the Logos with God and the Logos with us, the immanent and the economic Logos, are strictly the same.

Charles Hodge came to similar conclusions over a century earlier:

That the Latin and Protestant Churches, in opposition to the Greek Church, are authorized in teaching that the Spirit proceeds not from the Father only, but from the Father and the Son, is evident, because whatever is said in Scripture of the relation of the Spirit to the Father, is also said of his relation to the Son. He is said to be the 'Spirit of the Father,' and 'Spirit of the Son;' He is given or sent by the Son as well as by the Father; the Son is said to operate through the Spirit. The Spirit is no more said to send or to operate through the Son, than to send or operate through the Father. The relation, so far as revealed, is the same in the one case as in the other.

Bishop Pearson reasoned from the economic Trinity that just as the Father is never sent by the Son because the Father did not receive the Godhead from the Son but rather the Son received the Godhead from the Father, so too, the Father and the Son are never sent by the Holy Spirit because they did not receive the

Godhead from the Holy Spirit, but rather the Holy Spirit received the Godhead from the Father and the Son. Therefore, the Scriptures attest that both the Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit. Karl Barth neatly summed up the importance of the economic Trinity for knowing anything about the immanent Trinity: “All our statements concerning what is called the immanent Trinity have been reached simply as confirmations or underlinings or, materially, as the indispensable premises of the economic Trinity.”

6. The filioque is the only way to preserve the real distinction between the Son and the Holy Spirit.

As mentioned briefly above, the divine persons are distinguished by “mutually opposed relations.” For example, the Father cannot at the same time be His own Son, because begetting the Son is what distinguishes the Father as such. Systematic theology has traditionally averred that everything in God apart from these mutually opposed relations of origin, is “one.”

It has also traditionally been held that the activities causing the mutually opposed relations are the only “works of God” that are not the works of all three persons. As such they are works internal to God (*opera ad intra*). The *opera ad intra* are generation and spiration/procession. All works of God that terminate on a creature (i.e., are “outside” of God, or *opera ad extra*) are works of all three persons. These include the decrees, creation, providence, the covenants, redemption, the application of redemption, and consummation. Traditionally these external works of God can be “appropriated” or “ascribed” to one particular person (e.g., creation to the Father, redemption to the Son, and sanctification to the Holy Spirit), although in truth they are always and everywhere the works of all three persons.

The relations of generation and procession (the *opera ad intra*) in God produce personal attributes characterizing each of the three individual persons: The Father possesses paternity, is the only person who does an act of generation (begetting), is the only one who is unoriginated (*ingenitus*, *innascible*) and takes part in the active spiration (“breathing”; cf. “respiration”) of the Holy Spirit. The Son is the only person possessing the property of filiation or “sonship” or “begottenness,” and also participates in the active spiration of the Holy

Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the only person who undergoes procession and passive spiration (i.e., He is the only person who is “breathed”).

The mutually opposed relations are those relations that cannot be simultaneously held by the same person (e.g., the Son cannot also be His own Father, and vice versa). The Father’s unoriginateness/unbegottenness, or His Paternity, is mutually opposed to the Son’s filiation or Sonship. The Spirit’s having been breathed or spirated (passive spiration) is opposed to the ones who do the breathing or active spiration, namely the Father and the Son. In this way all three persons stand in one mutually opposed relationship to the other two. The Father and the Son share a common attribute of active spiration, and this is not a mutually opposed relationship.

By imparting the properties unique to each individual person, the mutually opposed relations of origin provide the attributes distinguishing the persons from one another. If the Son does not also breathe or spirate the Holy Spirit, then there is no relation of opposition between the Son and the Holy Spirit (i.e., active spiration vs. passive spiration). Louis Berkhof summarizes:

The following points of distinction between the two may be noted, however: (1) Generation is the work of the Father only; spiration is the work of both the Father and the Son. (2) By generation the Son is enabled to take part in the work of spiration, but the Holy Spirit acquires no such power. (3) In logical order generation precedes spiration. It should be remembered, however, that all this implies no essential subordination of the Holy Spirit to the Son. In spiration as well as in generation there is a communication of the whole of the divine essence, so that the Holy Spirit is on an equality with the Father and the Son.

7. The analogy of spiration or “breathing” confirms the filioque.

If, as argued above, the economic trinity or economic missions of the divine persons reflect intratrinitarian realities, the eternal spiration or breathing of the Holy Spirit by the Son is reflected in Jesus’ impartation of the Holy Spirit through breathing (John 20:22). Turretin writes of John 20:22 that the “temporal procession presupposes the eternal.” Lewis Sperry Chafer comments in his systematic theology:

... the very term by which the third person in the trinity is designated WIND OR BREATH may, as to the third person, be designed, like the term Son applied to the second, to convey, though imperfectly, some intimation of that manner of

being by which both are distinguished from each other, and from the Father; and it was a remarkable action of our Lord, and one certainly which does not discountenance this idea, that when he imparted the Holy Ghost to his disciples, 'he BREATHED on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost' (John 20:22).

8. The filioque is the only way to preserve the full deity of the Son.

With respect to the divine persons of the Trinity, the Eastern Churches tend to focus on the Father as the hypostatization (embodiment) of the divine essence, who as a result is the unique fountainhead of the deity, the one bearing the deity (theotetos). However, the West notes that when the Father, through generation (genesis), puts the Son in possession of the divine nature, He also communicates to the Son the ability to spirate or breathe the Holy Spirit. In this way the Holy Spirit is breathed from both the Father and the Son. The Father does not communicate His characteristic of "unbegottenness" (ingenitus or inascibilitas) to the Son however, because the Son by definition must be "begotten."

Calvin argues that the fact that the Holy Spirit also proceeds from the Son must be maintained in order to preserve the full deity of the Son (a very important point), and that the Holy Spirit also proceeds from the Son shows that the Son has the entire, full divine essence or substance.

Now they are compelled from their own presupposition to concede that the Spirit is of the Father alone, because if he is a derivation from the primal essence, which is proper only to the Father, he will not rightly be considered the Spirit of the Son. Yet this is disproved by Paul's testimony, where he makes the Spirit common to Christ and the Father [Rom 8:9].

Furthermore, if the person of the Father is expunged from the Trinity, in what respect would he be different from the Son and the Spirit except that only he is God himself? They confess Christ to be God, and yet to differ from the Father. Conversely, there must be some mark of differentiation in order that the Father may not be the Son. Those who locate that mark in the essence clearly annihilate Christ's true deity, which without essence, and indeed the whole essence, cannot exist. Certainly the Father would not be different from the Son unless he had in himself something unique, which was not shared with the Son. Now what can they find to distinguish him? If the distinction is in the essence, let them answer

whether or not he has shared it with the Son. Indeed, this could not be done in part because it would be wicked to fashion a half-God. Besides, in this way they would basely tear apart the essence of God. It remains that the essence is wholly and perfectly common to Father and Son. If this is true, then there is indeed with respect to the essence no distinction of one from the other.

If they make rejoinder that the Father in bestowing essence nonetheless remains the sole God, in whom the essence is, Christ then will be a figurative God, a God in appearance and name only, not in reality itself.

Calvin also says:

Furthermore, this distinction is so far from contravening the utterly simple unity of God as to permit us to prove from it that the Son is one God with the Father because he shares with the Father one and the same Spirit; and that the Spirit is not something other than the Father and different from the Son, because he is the Spirit of the Father and the Son. For in each hypostasis the whole divine nature is understood, with this qualification—that to each belongs his own peculiar quality. The Father is wholly in the Son, the Son wholly in the Father, even as he himself declares: ‘I am in the Father and the Father in me.’ [John 14:10] And ecclesiastical writers do not concede that the one is separated from the other by any difference of essence. By these appellations which set forth the distinction (says Augustine) is signified their mutual relationships and now the very substance by which they are one. In this sense the opinions of the ancients are to be harmonized, which otherwise would seem somewhat to clash. Sometimes, indeed, they teach that the Father is the beginning of the Son; sometimes they declare that the Son has divinity and essence from himself, and thus has one beginning with the Father. . . . Therefore, when we speak simply of the Son without regard to the Father, we well and properly declare him to be of himself; and for this reason we call him the sole beginning. But when we mark the relation that he has with the Father, we rightly make the Father the beginning of the Son.

While Calvin’s doctrine of the theotetos of the Son may seem to mitigate against this understanding, later Reformed theologians make the distinction that the Father does not produce the divine essence of the Son, but rather communicates it to the Son. Louis Berkhof says that the generation of the Son by the Father is a generation of the personal subsistence rather than of the divine essence of the Son. Some have spoken as if the Father generated the essence of the Son, but this

is equivalent to saying that He generated His own essence, for the essence of both the Father and the Son is exactly the same. It is better to say that the Father generates the personal subsistence of the Son, but thereby also communicates to Him the divine essence in its entirety.

All of this to say that Calvin's stress on the full deity of the Son is certainly support for the inclusion of the filioque in Reformed theology, and against its exclusion, since denial of the filioque has been associated with a subordination of the Son to the Father. This results in a subordination of the Son's essence and deity, and not just the Son's mission.

9. Denying the filioque results in denying crucial aspects of orthodox soteriology.

In the graduate Trinity course at Fordham University, Aristotle Papanikalaou insisted that the filioque is not only an issue of speculation concerning the inner workings of the Godhead, but it is also the doctrine of God's life for us, *pro nobis*. In other words the filioque has implications for soteriology and God's economy of salvation. Papanikalaou, who is Greek Orthodox, remarked,

"There is something lacking in trinitarian theology when you do not relate the Son and the Spirit together as does the filioque."

If the aspect of salvation in which God comes to us and communicates himself to us (regeneration, indwelling, and sanctification by the Holy Spirit) is to be always and necessarily tied to the Son, Jesus Christ, then the Holy Spirit must be as completely the Spirit of Christ or of the Son as He is the Spirit of the Father. That is, the Holy Spirit cannot only come through the Son, but must proceed from the Son, as from a source. It is only in this way that the axiom "No one who denies the Son has the Father (1 John 2:23a)" is fully true. In fact, some who are trying to answer the question of salvation in other religions and communities outside the realm of the gospel appeal to a universal working of the Holy Spirit independent of the Word or the person of Jesus Christ.

Also, the fact that the filioque preserves the full deity of the Son bears on salvation since the Son must be fully and completely God in order for Him to be able to effect salvation. Athanasius made this same argument against the Arians in the fourth century. Since salvation is only ever from the LORD, Jesus Christ must be fully God as much as the Father, which the filioque is intended to aver.

Louis Berkhof cites key Arminians who held to a subordinationist Christology that bordered on, if not became, neo-Arianism. The connection between Arminian theology and Arian christology is that the more that man can do to save himself, the less supernatural, divine power is needed. If man can do something to save himself, then salvation is not entirely dependent on the Almighty God. The divinity and transcendence of Christ decrease in direct proportion to the power of man to work something for his own salvation. That the Reformed tradition has always held the full and complete divinity of Christ as of utmost importance is seen from Calvin with his theototes of the Son, up to Karl Barth, who spends the second half of the first volume of his *Church Dogmatics* arguing for the full and complete divinity of Christ within the context of discussing the Trinity.

This is related to the filioque insofar as the filioque is an assertion of the full and complete divinity of the Son, as discussed above. The East alleges that the West is too “Christocentric,” a symptom of which is the filioque. Is not the preeminence of Christ a pillar of the Reformed tradition?

The Holy Spirit is the love of God poured out into our hearts (Rom 5:5)—this corresponds to the Augustinian idea that the Holy Spirit is the bond of love between the Father and the Son. Is there any love of God apart from Jesus Christ? Karl Barth argues for the necessity of the filioque in order to make sense of the work of the Holy Spirit in uniting humans to God and the intratrinitarian divine life:

‘And the Son’ means that not merely for us, but in God Himself, there is no possibility of an opening and readiness and capacity for God in man—for this is the work of the Holy Ghost in revelation—unless it comes from Him, the Father, who has revealed Himself in His Word, in Jesus Christ, and also, and no less necessarily, from Him who is His Word, from His Son, from Jesus Christ, who reveals the Father. . . . The Filioque expresses recognition of the communion between the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is the love which is the essence of the relation between these two modes of being of God. And recognition of this communion is no other than recognition of the basis and confirmation of the communion between God and man as a divine, eternal truth, created in revelation by the Holy Spirit. The intra-divine two-sided fellowship of the Spirit, which proceeds from the Father and the Son, is the basis of the fact that there is

in revelation or fellowship in which not only is God there for man but in very truth—this is the *donum Spiritus sancti* [gift of the Holy Spirit]—man is also there for God. Conversely, in this fellowship in revelation which is created between God and man by the Holy Spirit there may be discerned the fellowship in God Himself, the eternal love of God: discerned as the mystery, surpassing all understanding, of the possibility of this reality of revelation; discerned as the one God in the mode of being of the Spirit. . . . This whole insight and outlook is lost when the immanent Filioque is denied. If the Spirit is also the Spirit of the Son only in revelation and for faith, if He is only the Spirit of the Father in eternity, i.e., in His true and original reality, then the fellowship of the Spirit between God and man is without objective ground and content [i.e., Jesus Christ]. Even though revealed and believed, it is a purely temporal truth with no eternal basis, so to speak, in itself. No matter, then, what we may have to say about the communion between God and man, it does not have in this case a guarantee in the communion between God the Father and God the Son as the eternal content of its temporal reality. Does not this mean an emptying of revelation?

A final practical ecclesiological note can also be made regarding the filioque. **The Eastern formulation runs the danger of suggesting an unnatural distance between the Son and the Holy Spirit, leading to the possibility that even in personal worship an emphasis on more mystical, Spirit-inspired experience might be pursued to the neglect of an accompanying rationally understandable adoration of Christ as Lord.**

Excerpt taken from :*How Important Is The Filioque For Reformed Orthodoxy?*Westminster Theological Journal Volume 66 (vnp.66.1.159). Westminster Theological Seminary.

Review Questions

- 1.) What is the correct pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton, and why?
- 2.) Why is it important to believe in the Trinity?
- 3.) You should be able to know the definitions of the Trinity given in your handouts well enough that you can see if any of them have been altered, and should understand all the central terms in them; that is, you should be able to recognize and understand key information about the *London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, the *Nicene Creed*, the *Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan Creed* (including the *Filioque* added at the Council of Toledo), the *Chalcedonian Creed*, and the *Athanasian Creed*. You should have the short definition memorized: “One God in essence who eternally exists in three distinct Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”
- 4.) Which of these terms pertain to the oneness of God, and which to the threeness of God? *Essence; substance; person; nature; being; ousia; subsistence; hupostasis; Godhead; incarnation*
- 5.) Defend the use of the terms in the above question Biblically.
- 6.) What does *mia ousia, tres hupostaseis* mean?
- 7.) Define and explain the significance of the terms *homoousios*, *homoiousios*, and *heteroousios*, and state who believes in which term(s), and which one is the correct one.
- 8.) The Personal distinction in God is greater than the distinction of _____ but less than the distinction of _____.
- 9.) What are the identifying particularities, personal properties, and/or personal relations of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit?
- 10.) In what context did the doctrine of the Trinity develop?
- 11.) Define the following terms and state their significance in church history: *Arianism; Sabellianism; dyophysitism; monarchianism; modalism; subordinationism; dyothelitism; Nestorianism; Apollinarianism; monophysitism; monothelitism; Unitarianism; Patripassianism*.
- 12.) Give three passages where Jesus Christ is worshipped in the New Testament.
- 13.) Give a passage where the unity of the three Persons of the Trinity is defined as greater than that of mere agreement.

- 14.) Name some of the key modern advocates of the two major anti-Trinitarian heresies. What imbalance leads advocates of these heresies into their false doctrines?
- 15.) Do most orthodox, Bible-believing Trinitarians place a high value on illustrations of the Trinity from things in this world? Why or why not?
- 16.) Do the Father, Son, and Spirit each possess 1/3 of the Divine essence? Why or why not?
- 17.) Can Trinitarian terminology that is not explicitly found in the text of Scripture be defended? Why or why not?
- 18.) Define the *economic* and the *ontological* Trinity. Is there subordination in the economic or ontological Trinity? What is the connection between the manner of working of the Trinity in the economic Trinity and the order of Persons in the ontological Trinity?
- 19.) Provide some basic information about Origen. How was he significant in the history of the doctrine of the Trinity?
- 20.) What did Arius believe about Jesus Christ's Deity and humanity?
- 21.) What is the level of unity in Christ as the God-Man, and what is the level of distinction?
- 22.) Define *communicatio idiomatum* or the "Communication of Properties" in Jesus Christ, and provide Biblical support for this truth.
- 23.) Is there a distinction between the terms *Holy Ghost* and *Holy Spirit*?
- 24.) What is the difference between a *Logos-sarx* and a *Logos-anthropos* (Word-flesh & Word-man) Christology? Which is Biblical, and why?
- 25.) What is the hypostatic union?
- 26.) What is the Trinitarian *perichoresis* or *circumincession*?
- 27.) Is Mary the mother of God? Why or why not? How was this question played out in church history?
- 28.) Were the ancient Trinitarian creeds made by true churches, and if so/if not, what is the significance of this fact for the authority of the creeds?
- 29.) What is the difference between *ad intra* and *ad extra* distinctions in the Trinity?
- 30.) What is *spiration* as it pertains to the Trinity?

- 31.) What do the writings of the Apostle John reveal about knowing, understanding, and believing in the ontological and economic Trinity and sanctification? Provide texts from the writings of John to support your position.
- 32.) What is the difference between *successive* and *simultaneous* modalism?
- 33.) Who says Jesus Christ is Michael the Archangel? Why is this false?
- 34.) What is the problem modern Seventh Day Adventists have on the Trinity?
- 35.) Did the Trinity come from paganism? What sort of evidence is advanced for this idea, and why is it false?
- 36.) How can you respond to those who say that the Trinity came from Platonism?
- 37.) What are some of the problems with the historical analysis in the Watchtower Society's *Should You Believe in the Trinity?*
- 38.) What are the dates of the Council of Nicea, the Council of Constantinople, the Council of Chalcedon, and the Council of Toledo? Approximately when was the Athanasian Creed written?
- 39.) Prove from the Scripture that Jesus Christ is prayed to and explain why that requires His Deity.
- 40.) Prove from the Scripture that when Jesus Christ is called "the Son of God" the Bible is teaching that Christ is equal in nature to the Father, not teaching that Jesus Christ is created by God.
- 41.) What do Oneness Pentecostals believe the term "Son of God" refers to?
- 42.) What historical facts prove that the ante-Nicene patristics were Trinitarians, rather than Arians or Sabellians?
- 43.) What was Origen willing to call the Father but not the Son—an error that was picked up by the Arians?
- 44.) Anti-Trinitarians charge that the Trinity was a late doctrine because the detailed Trinitarian creeds were written centuries after the composition of the New Testament. How can a Trinitarian respond to this argument?
- 45.) What is the difference between the doctrine of the ancient modalists and the modern United Pentecostal Church?
- 46.) What was the key term in the Nicene Creed? Why was it necessary to use that term?

47.) Is the Person or the essence of the Son and Spirit respectively generated and proceeding? Is this generation/procession an optional act of the Father's will or a necessary act of His nature (with which His will certainly concurs)? Why does this question matter?

48.) What is the difference between the way a believer is a son of God and the way Jesus Christ is the Son of God?

49.) Did both the Arians and the Trinitarians in the State "Church" which developed after the days of Constantine use the power of the State to persecute those who disagreed with them?

50.) Who were the Pneumatomachians?

51.) Name two key doctrinal slogans of the Arians.

52.) Who were the Socinians?

53.) What are the four key elements necessary to an accurate doctrine of Christ? How are these four elements explained and set forth in the Creed of Chalcedon?

54.) What are the necessary consequences of a Chalcedonian doctrine of the Person of Christ that were explained in class?

(Note: the question #s repeat here because the review questions were originally for two different tests; consider them for two parts of this one course.)

1.) List twelve passages where Trinitarianism is assaulted by the modern critical Greek text, and provide brief justification for the *Textus Receptus* in these passages. Provide a more lengthy defense of the text that speaks of the three heavenly witnesses in the writings of John.

2.) State what the identifying particularities of the Persons in the ontological Trinity are, and prove these from Scripture. Give significant exegetical evidence.

3.) Explain carefully the Oneness Pentecostal view of God. What does this cult mean when it speaks of the "Father," and what when it speaks of the "Son," and when it speaks of the "Holy Spirit"? What is the Oneness Pentecostal doctrine of salvation?

4.) What do Arians mean, and what do Oneness Pentecostals mean, when they speak of the "Son of God" in relation to His preincarnate existence?

5.) Prove the preexistence of the Son, contra modalism, from the Old Testament.

6.) Prove the eternality of the Son from the New Testament, contra both modalism and Unitarianism.

- 7.) What false doctrines should you specifically attack, and what should you make sure a Oneness Pentecostal understands you believe, when witnessing to him?
- 8.) Explain the concept of the “burden of proof” as it relates to proof-texts.
- 9.) Prove the Personal distinction between the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ with at least five categories of evidence. What is the central argument Oneness Pentecostals employ to attempt to evade this distinction? Why does their attempt fail? Also, provide at least four categories of evidence that distinguish between the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.
- 10.) Refute Sabellianism and Arianism from John 1—deal with attempts by these heresies to get out of the teaching of the passage.
- 11.) Refute modalism and Arianism from John’s Gospel, using texts not employed elsewhere in this assignment. Be detailed.
- 12.) Refute modalism and Unitarianism from Colossians, Philippians, and Hebrews. Deal with their objections to your proof-texts. Be detailed.
- 13.) Refute both the Arian and the modalist view of the Son from the book of Hebrews.
- 14.) Prove the Personal distinctions among the Trinitarian Persons with at least five lines of evidence from portions of the canon not mentioned in the three immediately preceding questions.
- 15.) State and refute both the modalist and Arian view of John 10:30.
- 16.) State and refute the modalist view of 2 Corinthians 3:17.
- 17.) State and refute the modalist argument that since the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit have the same functions, they are the same Person. Why is this argument invalid for modalism, but of value for Trinitarianism against Arianism?
- 18.) A Oneness Pentecostal asks you, “Do you think when people get to heaven they will see one throne, with one God seated on the throne, or three thrones, with three gods seated on them? We believe the former, while the Trinity teaches the latter.” Refute this argument.
- 19.) State and refute in detail the modalist argument from Isaiah 9:6.
- 20.) Explain and refute the Oneness Pentecostal view of Acts 2:38.
- 21.) Prove the Personality and Deity of God the Father. Why is the Father called “God” more often than the other two Trinitarian Persons?

- 22.) Who is the Angel of the LORD? Prove it from Scripture, using at least five passages. What relevance does the Angel of the LORD have for the OT testimony to the Trinity?
- 23.) What does the word “angel” fundamentally mean in the Old and New Testaments? How is this relevant for the identity of the Angel of the LORD?
- 24.) Which Person or Persons of the Godhead appeared in bodily form in the Old Testament? Prove this fact from Scripture, and explain why it was peculiarly appropriate for this Person (or these Persons) to appear.
- 25.) Provide five arguments from the Old Testament for the Deity of Christ, in addition to whatever arguments were discussed in the immediately preceding questions.
- 26.) Discuss, and provide evidence for, the Deity of Christ from the book of Isaiah, from the Psalter, and from the rest of the Old Testament.
- 27.) Exposit the New Testament passages (other than the texts corrupted by the Greek critical text) where Jesus Christ is called “God.” Explain and refute Arian attempts to escape the significance of these passages. Give significant detail on each of these passages.
- 28.) Refute both Arianism and modalism and prove Trinitarianism from Matthew 28:18-20.
- 29.) Explain the pervasive character of the NT witness to the Deity of Christ. Give examples.
- 30.) Give at least five examples of texts that deal with Christ’s attributes, that deal with Christ’s works, and that deal with descriptions of Christ, that prove His Deity.
- 31.) State the major Arian categories of argument against the Deity of Christ, and refute their arguments.
- 32.) Explain in detail why each of the key Arian proof-texts against the Deity of Christ fail to establish Arianism.
- 33.) Prove, with at least seven lines of evidence, the Personality of the Holy Spirit, against Unitarianism. Then prove, with multiple lines of evidence, His Deity. Refute Arian objections and attempts to escape the validity of these conclusions. Include texts that deal with His attributes, texts that deal with His works, and texts that deal with descriptions of Him. Passages that prove both His Personality and Deity can be employed in relation to the proof of both truths. Do not use texts employed in other related questions of similar character.

- 34.) “Since the Holy Spirit can be ‘poured out,’ the Spirit is not a Person.” Refute this argument with at least one specific counter-example.
- 35.) How do modern Arians argue against the Personality and Deity of the Spirit? Why are their arguments invalid? Give and refute specific examples of anti-Trinitarian argumentation. Do not include the immediately preceding argument as an example for this question.
- 36.) Reproduce Owen’s definition of communion with God.
- 37.) Is prayer addressed directly to the Person of the Holy Spirit the model for prayer in Scripture? Is it lawful? In answering this question, explain Owen’s position and argument.
- 38.) What is Luke 11:13 talking about in relation to the believer’s fellowship with the Holy Spirit? How is this passage misused—including by Owen?
- 39.) Explain why a non-Trinitarian piety is sub-Christian. How close should the Trinity be to the center of a believer’s devotional life? How does a Trinitarian piety protect the believer from both dry rationalism and fanatical or pantheistic mysticism?
- 40.) Explain the connection between the revelation of Trinitarian ontology in Scripture and the revelation of Trinitarian economy in Scripture for Christian piety.
- 41.) Prove from Scripture that the believer has distinct communion with all three Persons of the Trinity.
- 42.) What is the classical doctrine of *Appropriations*? How do the distinct roles of the Persons in the economic Trinity relate to distinct communion?
- 43.) What is the difference between affirming that the believer has *distinct* communion with the Trinitarian Persons and affirming that the believer has *exclusive* communion with any one of the Three? Which position is true, and why?
- 44.) How does the believer hold distinct communion with the Father? Explain both the distinct ways in which the Father reveals Himself to the believer and the believer’s distinct return to Him. Prove your position from Scripture.
- 45.) What are four distinguishing qualities in the attribute wherein Owen affirms the believer has distinct communion with the Father? What are the specific ways in which Owen breaks down the believer’s return to the Father of what the Father holds out to him?
- 46.) How does the believer hold distinct communion with the Son? Explain both the distinct ways in which the Son reveals Himself to the believer and the believer’s distinct return to Him. Prove your position from Scripture.

47.) What are the two main divisions into which Owen divides the way the believer holds distinct communion with the Son? What two things in Christ are focused upon in these two main divisions? Break down, within these two main divisions, what the Son distinctly holds out to the believer and what the believer returns to the Son.

48.) What type of unity is unveiled, according to Owen, in John 17:20-23? What significance does this have for Christian living?

49.) How does the believer hold distinct communion with the Holy Ghost? Explain both the distinct ways in which the Holy Spirit reveals Himself to the believer and the believer's distinct return to Him. Prove your position from Scripture.

50.) Have you completed all the assigned reading for the course, both in the textbooks and in the course handouts?

Hymns Praising the Triune God
From Isaac Watts' hymnal

Meter: L. M.

*A song of praise to the ever-blessed Trinity, God
the Father, Son, and Spirit.*

Blest be the Father and his love,
To whose celestial source we owe
Rivers of endless joy above,
And rills of comfort here below.

Glory to thee, great Son of God,
From whose dear wounded body rolls
A precious stream of vital blood,
Pardon and life for dying souls.

We give the sacred Spirit praise,
Who in our hearts of sin and woe
Makes living springs of grace arise,
And into boundless glory flow.

Thus God the Father, God the Son,
And God the Spirit, we adore;
That sea of life and love unknown,
Without a bottom or a shore.

Hymn 27

Meter: C. M.

Glory to God the Father's name,
Who from our sinful race
Chose out his favorites to proclaim
The honors of his grace.

Glory to God the Son be paid,
Who dwelt in humble clay;
And, to redeem us from the dead,
Gave his own life away.

Glory to God the Spirit give,
From whose almighty power
Our souls their heav'nly birth derive,
And bless the happy hour.

Glory to God that reigns above,
Th' eternal Three in One,
Who by the wonders of his love
Has made his nature known.

Hymn 28

Meter: S. M.

Let God the Father live
For ever on our tongues;
Sinners from his first love derive
The ground of all their songs.

Ye saints, employ your breath
In honor to the Son,
Who bought your souls from hell and death
By off'ring up his own.

Give to the Spirit praise
Of an immortal strain,
Whose light, and power, and grace conveys
Salvation down to men.

While God the Comforter
Reveals our pardoned sin,
O may the blood and water bear
The same record within.

To the great One in Three
That seal this grace in heav'n,
The Father, Son, and Spirit, be
Eternal glory giv'n.

Hymn 29

Meter: L. M.

Glory to God the Trinity,
Whose name has mysteries unknown;
In essence One, in persons Three,
A social nature, yet alone.

When all our noblest powers are joined
The honors of thy name to raise,
Thy glories overmatch our mind,
And angels faint beneath the praise.

Hymn 30

Meter: C. M.

The God of mercy be adored,
Who calls our souls from death;
Who saves by his redeeming word,
And new-creating breath.

To praise the Father, and the Son,
And Spirit, all divine,
The One in Three, and Three in One,
Let saints and angels join.

Hymn 31

Meter: S. M.

Let God the Maker's name
Have honor, love, and fear;
To God the Savior pay the same,
And God the Comforter.

Father of lights above,
Thy mercy we adore,
The Son of thine eternal love,
And Spirit of thy power.

Hymn 32

Meter: L. M.

To God the Father, God the Son,
And God the Spirit, Three in One,
Be honor, praise, and glory giv'n,
By all on earth and all in heav'n.

Hymn 33

Meter: L. M.

All glory to thy wondrous name,
Father of mercy, God of love;
Thus we exalt the Lord, the Lamb,
And thus we praise the heav'nly Dove.

Hymn 34

Meter: C. M.

Now let the Father, and the Son,
And Spirit, be adored,
Where there are works to make him known,
Or saints to love the Lord.

Hymn 35

Meter: C. M.

Honor to the Almighty Three
And everlasting One;

All glory to the Father be,
The Spirit, and the Son.

Hymn 36

Meter: S. M.

Ye angels round the throne,
And saints that dwell below,
Worship the Father, love the Son,
And bless the Spirit too.

Hymn 37

Meter: S. M.

Give to the Father praise,
Give glory to the Son,
And to the Spirit of his grace
Be equal honor done.

Hymn 38

Meter: 6, 6, 6, 6, 4, 4, 4, 4

A song of praise to the blessed Trinity.

I give immortal praise
To God the Father's love,
For all my comforts here,
And better hopes above:
He sent his own
Eternal Son
To die for sins
That man had done.

To God the Son belongs
Immortal glory too,
Who bought us with his blood
From everlasting woe:
And now he lives,
And now he reigns,
And sees the fruit
Of all his pains.

To God the Spirit's name
Immortal worship give,
Whose new-creating power
Makes the dead sinner live:
His work completes
The great design,

And fills the soul
With joy divine.

Almighty God! to thee
Be endless honors done,
The undivided Three,
And the mysterious One:
Where reason fails
With all her powers,
There faith prevails
And love adores.

Hymn 39

Meter: 8, 8, 8, 8, 4, 4, 4, 4

To him that chose us first,
Before the world began;
To him that bore the curse
To save rebellious man;
To him that formed
Our hearts anew
Is endless praise
And glory due.

The Father's love shall run
Through our immortal songs;
We bring to God the Son
Hosannahs on our tongues:
Our lips address
The Spirit's name
With equal praise,
And zeal the same.

Let every saint above,
And angel round the throne,
For ever bless and love
The sacred Three in One;
Thus heav'n shall raise
His honors high,
When earth and time
Grow old and die.

Hymn 40

Meter: 8, 8, 8, 8, 4, 4, 4, 4

To God the Father's throne
Perpetual honors raise;
Glory to God the Son,

To God the Spirit praise:
And while our lips
Their tribute bring,
Our faith adores
The name we sing.

Hymn 41

Meter: 8, 8, 8, 8, 4, 4, 4, 4

To our eternal God,
The Father, and the Son,
And Spirit, all divine,
Three mysteries in One,
Salvation, power,
And praise be giv'n,
By all on earth
And all in heav'n.