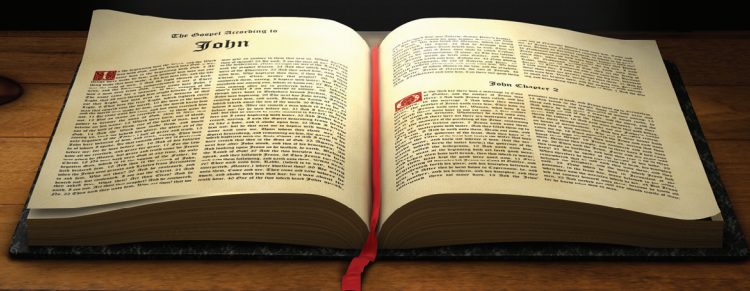


The
LORD
OUR
GOD
IS ONE
LORD



The
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IS ONE LORD



A SCRIPTURAL
EVALUATION
OF THE
TRINITY

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THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD

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CHAPTER ONE



ORIGIN OF THE TRINITY

The original teachings of Christ shone forth with wonderful radiance into the darkness of the Roman world. The Gospel in the beginning was preached in plain terms by simple men, and it was received with gladness by the meek of the earth. The twelve apostles of Jesus Christ, as long as they lived, were the guardians of faith, keeping it pure from human traditions and Pagan influence. Few Christians realize how rapidly corruption entered the church after their death. We are told by historians that the church conquered the world, but in reality the world overcame the church. As the Gospel message increased in popularity, hordes of Pagans entered the church, bringing with them Pagan ideas. Great catechetical schools were formed; ritualism took the place of Bible study; and costly buildings replaced the catacombs. The pastors of the flock, once noted for self-sacrifice and piety, became wealthy lords over the common people. The sacred heritage of the Bible was buried in creeds, superstition, and forgotten languages; and the ruling powers eventually made it a capital crime to translate the Bible into the common tongue.

Sola Scriptura was the rallying cry of the great Reformation, when the Bible was exalted by Protestants as the sole guide of faith. The Catholic doctrine of tradition as an equal authority in religious matters was at that time firmly rejected. Evangelical Christians ever since have relied (theoretically) on the Bible alone as the source of revealed

truth, but in practice they seldom measured up to that high standard.

Thus “historic Christianity,” “historic Protestantism,” and various other euphemisms for tradition are frequently cited in the writings of Protestants as authority for doctrinal positions. We hear them saying that nothing more can be known about basic Christianity than is outlined in the conflicting creeds of established churches; and that to assert any really different opinion about the Holy Scriptures now would be presumptuous, for so many generations of pious Christians could surely not be wrong.

This traditionalism is a serious error. The necessity for upholding the Bible as the only touchstone of truth is manifest throughout church history, particularly as we consider the various Christian teachings on the nature of the Deity—a subject which, though certainly of cardinal importance, has been one of the most hotly debated issues in the history of the church.

Trinitarianism a Gradual Development

The concept of a trinity was widespread throughout the Pagan world. In Japan there was a three-headed divinity called “San Pao Fuh.” In India the trinity was called “Eko Deva Trimurti,” “One God, three forms.” The Babylonians also had a trinity, as did the Pagans of Siberia, Persia, Egypt, and Scandinavia. Long after the apostles died, the teaching that God is a trinity began to be introduced into the Christian church. It was championed chiefly by the educated converts from Paganism and resisted by ordinary believers. “The victory of orthodoxy was a triumph of priests and theologians over the indeed deeply rooted faith of the people....”⁽¹⁾ That the Father and the Son are equal, however, was at first denied by all. Early church writers, such as Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Novatian, Arnobius, and Lactantius were very explicit in affirming that the Heavenly

Father alone is the supreme God and that Jesus is completely subordinate to his authority and will.

During the early years of the fourth century, a heated controversy raged between the Arians (named after Arius, their leader) and the Trinitarians, led by Athanasius. The Arians maintained that Jesus is a created being, pre-existent, though having a beginning in time, a son in the normal sense of the word, and subordinate to the Father. The Athanasian party argued that the Son is fully God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father.

Fearing that religious dissension might disrupt the political unity of the Empire, the Emperor Constantine summoned a general council of bishops to settle the dispute. Meeting at Nicea in 325 A.D., the council upheld the teachings of Athanasius and formulated the Nicene Creed. Arius was excommunicated and banished, along with those of the bishops who held out against the decision of the majority and the threats of the Emperor.

The basic Trinitarian position was finally forged at the Council of Constantinople, A.D. 381, where the holy Spirit was declared to be a divine person, although Harnack states that in the third century the majority of Christians believed it was merely a divine power.⁽²⁾ At the Council of Ephesus, A.D. 431, and again at Chalcedon in 450 A.D., Jesus was asserted to be eternally both human and divine, a unity of two natures. The Council of Ephesus, incidentally, added Mary as a supplement to the Trinity, declaring that she should be received and honored as *Theotokos*, "Mother of God."

Thus the controversy on the nature of God was settled, or so orthodox historians would have us believe. And thus, we are told, the holy Spirit guided the church into an understanding of the truth. In point of fact, however, these councils settled very little. Other councils met as well and upheld Arianism! The fortunes of both sides seesawed according to the politics of the Empire. Whenever the Arians were dominant, they persecuted the Trinitarians; and when

their fortunes were reversed, the Trinitarians persecuted them. The eventual result was not so much the outcome of rational debate and pious scholarship as of power politics and shedding of blood. By the start of the eighth century, Arianism was externally suppressed,⁽³⁾ for the Trinitarians proved to be more efficient in killing the Arians than the latter were in killing them. Thus was orthodoxy established. And the most avid defender of holy tradition cannot deny that, had the Arians been militarily successful, their position would have become the standard of orthodoxy instead of that of their opponents.

The Trinitarian consensus, imposed by force of arms, related more to a formula than to the actual substance of belief. The doctrine of the Trinity was simultaneously declared to be a deep mystery, which nobody can understand, and a dogma which must be accepted to obtain salvation. Artists pictured their beliefs with varied representations. Some portrayed the Deity as three separate men, looking alike; others, as three men distinguished. Still others represented it as three heads on one body, or three faces on one head.

Evangelical Modifications

Since the latter part of the nineteenth century, the Trinitarian position has come under searching criticism throughout the world. To meet these attacks, evangelicals have been modifying their doctrinal formulations. Thus Dr. R. A. Torrey, who held the position of Superintendent of the Moody Bible Institute, has advanced a subordinationist view, stating that the Father, the Son, and the holy Spirit are three separate persons, co-eternal but not co-equal. The Father, according to Dr. Torrey, is superior to the Son, and the holy Spirit is subordinate to both.⁽⁴⁾

Another area of modification by contemporary Trinitarians is relative to three gods in one or "three persons in one

substance.” Walter R. Martin, of the Christian Research Institute, modifies this point with the following definition:

Within the unity of the one God, there are three persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and these three share the same nature and attributes. In effect, then, the three persons are the one God.

Similarly, in an essay entitled “The Triune God,” published by *Christianity Today*,⁽⁵⁾ the term “substance” used in the Athanasian Creed is modified. This Creed was affirmed by Catholics and Protestants for many centuries. However, this essay concedes that the formula of the trinity often read “three persons in one substance (Greek, *treis hypostaseis en mia ousia*, and Latin, *tres personae in una substantia*).”

There is, thus, no uniform Christian position on the nature of God. Reliance upon human tradition has been a great source of difficulty to many Christians who are earnestly seeking to understand God’s Word. The divinely inspired Scriptures are the only valid evidence for Christian belief, and any objective appraisal of their teaching must include all scriptures pertinent to any subject, i.e., the earnest student of God’s Word must be willing to harmonize the Scriptures, not merely selecting those verses which seem to support his position while ignoring the rest. Only thus can a Christian be “a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”—2 Tim. 2:15

In summation, the following facts regarding the origin of the Trinity are irrefutable:

1. The word “Trinity” nowhere appears in the Bible.
2. The word “Trinity” does not even appear in Christian literature till the beginning of the third century. Even then, it meant something very different from the

interpretation now given to the word. Tertullian, the first to use the word, believed that only the Father was without beginning. The Son, according to him, had a beginning, and his pre-human existence was of the angelic nature. The oneness of the Father and the Son was a oneness of purpose and will.

3. Trinitarians themselves are forced to concede that the doctrine of the Trinity was not completely forged until the fourth century.
4. There is not even a hint of the Trinity in the Old Testament. The Jews, God's chosen people from Old Testament times, have never held this belief. In all of the voluminous rabbinical writings (Talmud) which date from Old Testament times, neither the Trinity nor any similar concept is once mentioned.

CHAPTER TWO



THE FATHER OF GLORY IS THE ONE SUPREME GOD

Whenever the Scriptures use the word “God” in the sense of Supreme Deity, they refer to the Father alone. Thus in prayer Jesus calls his Father “the only true God,” excluding himself (John 17:3). The Bible, in fact, refers to the Heavenly Father as Jesus’ God (John 20:17). The Apostle Paul, contrasting the Christian position with the heathen worship of many gods, states that “to us there is but one God, the Father,” although he attributes to Jesus a lesser position of Lordship (1 Cor. 8:6). For despite his present high position of exaltation and divine favor, our Lord Jesus is inferior to the Father and eternally subject to him, as the Apostle expressly states:

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.—1 Cor. 11:3

Then cometh the end, when he [Christ] shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father... But when he saith all things are put under him [the Son] it is manifest that he [the Father] is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him [the Son], then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God [the Father] may be all in all.—1 Cor. 15:24, 27, 28

We, of course, do not deny, but rejoice to affirm, that Jesus Christ is now a divine being, worthy of our worship and adoration.

The appellation "God" may be properly ascribed to him. But even while the Scriptures refer to Jesus as a "God," they do so in contexts showing his distinct inferiority to the Father. And notice that it is not simply Jesus as a man, but Jesus as a "God" who is thus shown to be subordinate.—Heb. 1:1-9

The beautiful oneness of the Father and the Son is declared by our Lord to be the same oneness that shall exist between himself and his church, as he prayed,

Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.... Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; 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. 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.... —John 17:11, 20-23

The only scriptural support for the idea of three divine persons mysteriously being one God is the dubious passage of 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. And there are three that bear witness in earth,** the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

The words in bold above are not found in any of the oldest and most reliable manuscripts, nor in any of the ancient translations. That they are not a genuine part of the original text is the unanimous verdict of contemporary scholars, evangelicals included. Even as it stands, however, the forgery is a poor one, asserting that the Father, the Word, and the holy

Spirit are bearing witness in heaven that Jesus is the Christ. Who in heaven would be ignorant of such a thing? The proposition is pointless. No wonder Trinitarian scholars readily concede these words are spurious.

The claim is often made by Trinitarians that, since there is only one God, and since Jesus is referred to in the Scriptures as God, then the Father and the Son are the same God. This argument totally ignores the usage of the Greek and Hebrew words from which the English word "God" is translated.

The word "God" in the New Testament is most frequently a translation of the Greek word *theos*. It is sufficient to state here that this word does not always apply to the Supreme Deity. Satan, for instance, is called *theos* in 2 Cor. 4:4, which reads, "In whom the god (*theos*) of this world has blinded the minds of them that believe not...."

The same word is used of Herod in Acts 12:22, where the people of Sidon and Tyre shouted after his oration, "It is the voice of a god (*theos*), and not of a man." They surely did not mean to say that Herod was the supreme God.

Whether the Father or the Son is meant by any particular use of *theos* in the New Testament is generally left to the reader's judgment, the person referred to being indicated by context and sentence construction. An exception to this is John 1:1, where the Greek definite article is used to distinguish the Father as "the God" from the Son, who is called "a God." The Greek language, it is true, contains no indefinite article corresponding to the English "a." But the indefinite article is implied by the context and, therefore, must be included in the English translation. Benjamin Wilson gives the correct rendering in his *Emphatic Diaglott*:

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ Λόγος, καὶ ὁ Λόγος

In a beginning was the Word, and the Word

ἦν πρὸς τὸν Θεόν, καὶ Θεὸς ἦν ὁ Λόγος

was with the God, and a god was the Word.

The unbiased reader should have no difficulty understanding these words.

True, a few Trinitarians stress Colwell's idea that, whenever a definite noun in New Testament Greek precedes the verb, the definite article is usually omitted, but that when the noun follows the verb, the article is retained. This rule, though not valid, simply throws the whole question open. According to Colwell's rule, the English translation is to be made according to whatever preconception the translator brings with him to the text, for whether a noun is definite or not cannot be grammatically ascertained. Thus if one believes that the word *theos* in the clause, "and the Word was a god," is definite (referring to **the** God), he will translate the words, "and the Word was God," or, "and the Word was the God." But if he believes the noun to be indefinite, he will translate the clause, "and the Word was a god." The superiority of "and the Word was a god" is that it makes the passage consistent. If one translates the verse in the Trinitarian manner, he is involved in a contradiction, for how can the Word be "with God" if he is the God with whom he is? The context of John 1, consistent with the rest of the Bible, shows clearly that the Word was "a god," not "the God." For a more detailed examination of Colwell's rule, see Appendix One, page 41.

In response to John 1:1, Trinitarians sometimes argue that John 20:28, where, according to the Greek text, Thomas calls Jesus "the Lord of mine and the God of mine," proves that Jesus is the supreme God because he is there called "**the** God." But even the devil is called "**the** God" in 2 Cor. 4:4, which says that "...the God of this world has blinded the minds of them that believe not...."

The use of the article by itself proves nothing; what is significant about John 1:1 is the contrast between the Father, who is called "**the** God," and the Word or Representative of the Most High God, who is himself "**a** god."

Appellations of Deity in the Old Testament

The word "God" in the Old Testament is generally a translation either of *elohim* (with its variations *eloah*, *elah*, and *el*) or *Jehovah* (the Anglicized form of *Yahweh*). Once it is a translation of *Adonai* (Hab. 3:19), properly rendered "Lord," and once of *tsur*, a rock.—Isa. 44:8

The assertion by Trinitarians that, because Jesus and the Father are both called *elohim*, they are, therefore, the same Being, is a very poor argument, displaying only the weakness of the position they are trying to defend. Notice the usage of this word in Scripture:

Angels Called *Elohim*

Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels (*elohim*), and hast crowned him with glory and honor.—Ps. 8:5

Abraham Called *Elohim*

And the children of Heth answered Abraham, saying unto him, Hear us, my lord: thou art a mighty (*elohim*) prince among us....—Gen. 23:5, 6

Moses Called *Elohim*

I have made thee a god (*elohim*) unto Pharaoh.—Ex. 7:1

Judges Called *Elohim*

His master shall bring him unto the judges (*elohim*).—Ex. 21:6

The Church Called *Elohim*

I have said, You are gods (*elohim*); and all of you are children of the most High.—Ps. 82:6

Elohim signifies a mighty one, prince, ruler, or judge; and since it is Scripturally used to refer to men and angels, as well as to God, its use in referring to our Lord Jesus Christ does not in any way prove his equality with God.

Nor is there any validity in the assertion that, because *elohim* is plural in form, its application to God in the Scriptures indicates that there is more than one person in God. Ps. 45:6, "Thy throne, O God (*elohim*), is for ever and ever," is explained by Paul as a statement addressed by the Father to the Son (Heb. 1:8). If *elohim* referred always to more than one person, there would be more than one person in the Son! In the verse quoted above (Ex. 7:1) Moses is called *elohim* by God. Was Moses plural? Certainly not, for the word *elohim*, like our English word "sheep," can be either singular or plural, as the occasion demands.

Unlike *elohim*, however, the word *Jehovah* is applied only to the Father,⁽¹⁾ never to the Son. The translators of our common Bibles have done us a great disservice in leaving the word untranslated only four times, where the context would seem to permit nothing else. In the vast majority of instances it is translated either LORD or GOD. In our common versions, nevertheless, it can be easily recognized, since it is always printed in small capitals (GOD, LORD), while regular print is used to designate translations from other words (God, Lord).

The argument presented by Trinitarians is that both the Father and the Son are called *Jehovah*; therefore, they are both the same God. But the scriptures they cite to prove that Christ Jesus is *Jehovah* do not sustain their claim. We are told that in Jer. 23:5, 6, our Lord Jesus is called *Jehovah*, for that prophecy respecting Messiah reads, "And this is the name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS (*Jehovah-Tsidkenu*)."

They fail to point out, however, that in Jer. 33:16 the church, pictured by Jerusalem, is called by the same name:

“...and this is his name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our righteousness (*Jehovah-Tsidkenu*).”

Certainly the church is not a part of *Jehovah*. To bolster their prejudice, the translators had the words printed in capitals in the first instance, but tucked it away with small letters in the second. *Jehovah-Tsidkenu* could more properly be translated, “Our Righteousness of *Jehovah*” — a fitting title for our Lord Jesus, who in execution of the Father’s will has become the source of justification for believers in his name. The title is appropriate also for the church, to whom is committed the ministry of reconciliation, the great commission of bringing sinners back into harmony with God.—2 Cor. 5:20; Rev. 22:17⁽²⁾

Another citation used to prove that Jesus is Jehovah is Isa. 40:3, which reads, “The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD (*Jehovah*), make straight in the desert a highway for our God.” This prophecy is quoted in the New Testament (Mt. 3:3) and applied to John the Baptist’s work of preparing the Jews to receive Christ. But we remind the reader that Jesus came expressly to do the Father’s work, as he said, “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work” (John 4:34). Jesus was the Father’s instrument in the accomplishment of his gracious plan. Therefore, in preparing the Jews to receive Christ, John the Baptist was preparing the way for the accomplishment of the Father’s work.

The prophecy of Isa. 40:10 is regarded as sure proof that the Son is Jehovah: “Behold, the Lord GOD (*Jehovah*) will come with a strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him.” But notice here that the Father only is called *Jehovah*; Jesus is referred to as his “arm.” Likewise, in Isaiah 53:1 Jesus is called the “arm of Jehovah.”

We are asked to believe that, since Jesus is our great teacher, he must be Jehovah, for Isa. 54:13 reads, “And all thy

children shall be taught of the LORD (*Jehovah*); and great shall be the peace of thy children." But Jesus himself merely claimed to be the Father's representative, saying:

My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.—John 7:16, 17

...whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.—John 12:50

For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me....—John 17:8

All things are of the Father and by the Son (1 Cor. 8:6). It is no difficulty to us that both the Son and the Father are given credit for creation (John 1:3; Isa. 40:28); for Paul explains that the Son, as always, was the Father's honored agency: "God...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..." (Heb. 1:1, 2). Similarly, both the Father and the Son are called "Savior," because the Father himself originated the work of atonement when he "gave his only begotten Son."—John 3:16

Those who insist on referring to Jesus as Jehovah, rather than the Son of Jehovah, are not able to make good sense out of many passages where Jesus and Jehovah are most clearly distinguished. The Second Psalm (vss. 2:7, 8) furnishes a good illustration:

I will declare the decree: the LORD (*Jehovah*) hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

If the Son is Jehovah, he received his inheritance as a gift from himself! The above citation clearly calls the Father

Jehovah, in contradistinction to the Son. In Psalm 110:1, likewise, we read, "The LORD (*Jehovah*) said unto my lord (*Adon*), Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." That the *Adon* here referred to is Christ there can be no doubt, for he himself so states. (Luke 20:42-44) The Son, indeed, is a great Lord; but his authority and power come from Jehovah God, for the Scriptures plainly teach that Christ is Jehovah's servant.—Isa. 42:1; 53:11

Another text chiefly relied upon by Trinitarians to prove that the name *Jehovah* belongs to Jesus is Zech. 12:10, in which Jehovah says:

And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.

Since Jehovah refers to Messiah, the one who is pierced, as "me," they simply cite Revelation 1:7 and consider their proof complete. The thoughtful reader, however, will at once notice a discrepancy: the speaker in this verse refers to Messiah as both "me" and "him" in the same sentence. An error, apparently, has crept into the text. A number of ancient manuscripts give a more consistent reading; thus: "...they shall look upon **him** whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him...." The text, thus corrected, definitely does not teach that Messiah is Jehovah.

"Before Abraham Was, I Am"

John 8:58 is said to be another strong proof that Christ is *Jehovah*, for the name *Jehovah* is said by Trinitarians to mean "I

Am"—"the Self-Existing One"— and Jesus in that verse says, "Before Abraham was, I am." Jesus, however, does not apply "I am" to himself as a title. He uses the words as the subject and verb of an ordinary sentence, meaning simply that from before Abraham's time until the present he had had a continuous existence. To make "I am" a title in this sentence is grammatically absurd. For Jesus to have said, "Before Abraham was, I was," might have been mistaken by his hearers to mean that he had existed at some time in the remote past, had ceased to exist for a time, and had come into existence again. To avoid this misunderstanding, Jesus used the words "I am" to imply a continuous existence. Jesus existed long before Abraham's time; and he continued to exist after Abraham until, as the Word made flesh, he uttered those very words.

The word *Jehovah*, more correctly *Yahweh*, does not really mean "I Am" but "He Who Becometh," as J. B. Rotherham, an authority widely recognized among Protestants, has shown. *Yahweh* is the third person, masculine, singular, imperfect tense of the root *hawah*, the sole meaning of which is "become." And so Jehovah, the Heavenly Father, is forever "He Who Becometh," the unfolding one, eternally revealing himself in creative power.

CHAPTER THREE



THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON

The Pre-human Existence of Christ

Another principal argument of Trinitarians is derived from Micah 5:2, which reads:

But you, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

They assert that, since Jehovah is from everlasting to everlasting, Jesus must be Jehovah; for in the above verse he is said to be from everlasting. The weakness of this argument lies in the translation. There is no word in Hebrew that expresses the concept of eternity. The word *olam*, here rendered "everlasting," more properly signifies an indefinite or extended period of time. It is translated "long" in Psalm 143:3, the context showing that it could not possibly refer there to infinite time: "...he hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been **long** dead." Other translators have rendered *olam* in Micah 5:2 as follows:

...whose origin is from of old, from **ancient days**.
—Revised Standard Version.

...whose comings forth have been from of old, from the days of **age-past time**.—Rotherham

And his comings forth are of old, From the **days of antiquity**.—Young’s Literal Translation .

...whose origin is from olden times, from **most ancient days**.—Leeser

The prophecy in this verse simply teaches Messiah’s prehuman existence. And to this interpretation the remainder of the passage agrees, for the fourth verse does not say that Messiah is Jehovah, but that he “will stand and feed in the strength of the LORD (*Jehovah*), in the majesty of the name of the LORD (*Jehovah*) his God.”

The spiritual, pre-human life of Jesus was glorious, but not without beginning. He was the first creation of God, and the only direct creation of God—the “only begotten” of the Father. Everything else was made by the Father through his chosen instrument, the Son. (Heb. 1:2) In proof that Jesus was a created being, we cite Colossians 1:15, where Paul calls him the “firstborn of every creature” (Greek lit., “of all creation”). Trinitarians assert, the term “firstborn” here indicates priority solely in position rather than in time. This does not harmonize with the context. Verse 18 compares Christ with the church and calls him the “firstborn from the dead.” At his resurrection, Christ was the first in point of time to be born from the dead. The repetition of the word “firstborn” in verses 15 and 18 reveals that Paul is making a direct parallelism between Christ’s relationship to all creation in verse 15 and to the church in verse 18.

If “firstborn from the dead” denotes first to be born from the dead, as well as preeminence over all resurrected, then “firstborn of all creation” denotes the first to be created as well as preeminence over all creation. The attempt to explain away this verse as signifying “firstborn **before** all creation” is an unwarranted tampering with the text. The word “before” simply is not there. They are changing the facts to fit the theory.

Jesus is the “beginning of the creation of God” (Rev. 3:14), and he is the end for which all things are made, the heir of the universe (Heb. 1:2). He is the first and last direct creation of God. The title of “Only Begotten Son” (John 1:18) is his alone for all eternity. No other son of the Highest was, or ever will be, made directly by the Father.

The Trinitarian claim that Jesus was not begotten, but is being eternally generated by the Father, does violence to Bible language.

The very same Greek word (*monogenes*) translated “only begotten” in reference to our Lord in John 1:14 is in Hebrews 11:17, 18, applied to Isaac, the son of Abraham:

By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his **only begotten** son, of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall your seed be called....

Clearly, Isaac was not being continuously generated by Abraham. And the words “only begotten” and “Son” when applied to Jesus Christ are to be interpreted in their straightforward sense.*

Jesus’ pre-human life (we believe he was the highest of all spirit beings, next to the Father) is referred to in Philippians 2:5-9, which we quote from the Revised Standard Version:

Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him....

* For detailed consideration of *monogenes* see Appendix Two, p. 45.

The above text, often cited in favor of the Trinitarian view because of its wretched translation in the King James Version, is here shown to clearly contradict that doctrine. Jesus did not, like Satan, attempt to usurp divine prerogatives (Isa. 14:13), but “emptied” (Greek, “divested”) himself of his high position and spirit nature, becoming “the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). As a perfect man he suffered Adam’s penalty in his stead, thus releasing Adam and his posterity from the curse of death.—1 Cor. 15:21, 22

The King James Version, which reads, “thought it not robbery to be equal with God,” controverts the passage’s true meaning, presenting as much a problem to Trinitarians as to their opponents. For if Jesus were already God, there could be no thought of him robbing God by attempting to be equal with himself. In support of our interpretation of this verse we cite the following:

...Not a thing to be seized accounted the being equal with God....—Rotherham

Yet he did not regard equality with God as something at which He should grasp.—Weymouth

...did not violently strive.—Dickenson

...did not meditate a usurpation.—Turnbull

...did not meditate a usurpation.—Wilson

The word *harpagmos*, variously translated above, is defined by Liddell and Scott’s *Greek-English Lexicon* as “robbery, anything that is seized, plunder.” Because Jesus did not arrogate to himself divine prerogatives, but, contrariwise, humbled himself as the Father’s servant, God gave to him at his resurrection “a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth...” (Phil. 2:9, 10). Jesus was not worshiped

by the angels until he was thus exalted above them to the divine nature and glory.

When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.—Heb. 1:3, 4

“The Man Christ Jesus”

“And the Word was made flesh” (John 1:14). Jesus Christ set aside his spirit nature and became a mere man—a perfect man, to be sure, but a man, nevertheless. Nowhere do the Scriptures refer to Christ as a God incarnate in human flesh. Nowhere in the Bible is taught the extravagant mystery of a Christ consisting of two natures combined into one person. The traditional doctrine of the incarnation is simply without scriptural support. Trinitarians, in fact, are forced by their doctrine to treat our Lord Jesus as though he were two separate persons, saying it was the human, not the divine, Christ who prayed in Gethsemane, “...take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt” (Mark 14:36).

How, indeed, could God pray to himself and have his own prayer refused? And when Christ was highly exalted by the Father at his resurrection, they say that his human body was somehow mysteriously “invested with divine attributes.” Christ as God, they say, was always divine and, therefore, could not be exalted. Yet they claim that this deified body remains truly human! Sympathy with our Christian friends cannot prevent us from realizing that, when treating the humanity of Christ, Trinitarianism becomes a species of (well-intentioned) double talk.

How much simpler and more scripturally harmonious is the Bible declaration that Christ was “put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit” (1 Peter 3:18, R.S.V.). The

King James Version reads, “quicken’d by the Spirit,” but the word “by” simply is not contained in the Greek text.* Paul says of Christ that at his resurrection he was “made a quickening spirit” (1 Cor. 15:45). For though after his resurrection he appeared to his disciples in various human forms assumed for those occasions, he is now a glorious divine being, “dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see...”—1 Tim. 6:16

When difficulties with their teachings are pointed out, Trinitarians often respond that their doctrine is the “historic” position of the church, that any inconsistency therewith is a “mystery” —a line of argument which could be used to support almost anything. Some even cite 1 Timothy 3:16 to prove their claim that the relationship between Christ and the Father need not make sense:

Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of our religion:
He** was manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the Spirit,
seen by angels, preached among the nations, believed on
in the world, taken up in glory.

The Greek word for “mystery” means “a secret,” and so the Gospel has ever been a mystery to unbelievers, though understood by those to whom Christ is revealed. The fallacy of their argument is that in this very verse, Paul explains the mystery or secret of which he is speaking.

* The words “in the” and “by the” have no equivalent Greek words in this passage. Though the dative case of *sarki* (flesh) and *pneumati* (spirit) require a preposition in translating into English, the evident contrast between the words themselves indicates that the same preposition “in” should be used in both instances: “put to death in (the) flesh, but made alive in (the) spirit.”

** So reads the Revised Standard Version. The King James Bible says, “God was manifested,” but that is incorrect. The most ancient manuscripts read “who”—in English read, “He who....”

Neither are we seeking to detract from the glory of the risen Christ, for in him “dwells all the fullness of the Godhead (*theotes*, “Deity”) bodily” (Col. 2:9). The fullness of divine glory (Col. 1:19) — the plenitude of wisdom, grace, and power — make him the able executor of the Father’s wonderful plans. All power in heaven and earth belongs to Jesus since his resurrection (Mt. 28:18). The counsels of God, before kept secret (Mk. 13:32), are now entrusted to his care (Rev. 5:1-5). We look forward with rejoicing to the day when all mankind will join the heavenly chorus singing, “Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be to him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.” —Rev. 5:13

CHAPTER FOUR



THE HOLY SPIRIT

WE turn next in our consideration to the holy Spirit of God—a subject which, despite its great prominence in Scripture and the emphasis placed upon it by Christian groups, has seldom been correctly understood. The cause of this misunderstanding is not the abstruseness of the subject itself, nor the difficulty of Bible language respecting it; but, rather, it results from the continual failure of Bible students to consider the Scripture testimony as a whole. In this subject, as in all others, we must be willing to harmonize apparent contradictions, allowing one passage to shed light upon another and avoiding hasty conclusions. Only thus will we be “rightly dividing the word of truth.”—2 Tim. 2:15

The word “spirit” in the Old Testament is a translation of the Hebrew word *ruach*, the root-meaning of which is “wind.” In the New Testament, also, the word “spirit” comes from a root meaning “wind,” the Greek *pneuma*. Because wind is an invisible and powerful force, both *ruach* and *pneuma* came to have a much broader significance, as the following examples indicate:

And with the blast (*ruach*) of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together....—Ex. 15:8

Thou didst blow with thy wind (*ruach*). —Ex. 15:10

...all flesh, wherein is the breath (*ruach*) of life.
—Gen. 7:15

...which were a grief of mind (*ruach*) to Isaac and to Rebekah.—Gen. 26:35

The wind (*pneuma*) blows where it listeth.—John 3:8

...forasmuch as you are zealous of spiritual (*pneuma*) gifts.—1 Cor. 14:12

And he had power to give life (*pneuma*) unto the image of the beast....—Rev. 13:15

We call attention to the foregoing verses to show that *ruach* and *pneuma* do not signify personality (necessarily) but invisible power or influence. These words were incorrectly translated "Ghost" ninety-two times in our King James Bible, the translators seeking to give the words a coloring of personality which they do not really possess. The translators of the English Revised Version changed the word "Ghost" to "Spirit" in twenty-one occurrences; and the American Revision Committee protested their use of the word "Ghost" the remaining seventy-one times. Thus in the American Standard Revised, as in most modern translations, the term "Holy Ghost" does not appear. It should be noted also that whether or not the word "spirit" ought to be capitalized is not indicated by the original text. It is a matter of personal judgment and preference.

The holy Spirit is variously described in the Bible as "The Spirit of God," "The Spirit of Truth," "The Spirit of Love," "The Spirit of a Sound Mind," "The Spirit of Power," "The Spirit of Grace," "The Spirit of Prophecy," "The Spirit of Wisdom," "The Spirit of Glory," "The Spirit of Meekness," "The Spirit of Christ," "The Spirit of Holiness," etc. These titles all refer to one aspect or another of the mind of God and of his Son, Christ Jesus. The holy Spirit, therefore, is a term which designates the mind of God, or any operation thereof, whether in miracle-working power or in sanctifying, enlightening influence. The following scriptures depict the holy Spirit as—

THE MIND OF GOD:

And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man....—Gen. 6:3

But they rebelled, and vexed his [Jehovah's] holy Spirit: Therefore he was turned to be their enemy.—Isa. 63:10

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy spirit?—Ps. 139:6, 7

THE POWER OF GOD:

But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead...shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.—Rom. 8:11

For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God....—Rom. 15:18, 19

Then Samson went down...and, behold, a young lion roared against him. And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid....—Judges 14:5, 6

THE SANCTIFYING, ENLIGHTENING INFLUENCE OF GOD:

...because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us.—Rom. 5:5

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.—Rom. 8:14

That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man....—Eph. 3:16

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

Our Lord Jesus received wisdom and power by an outpouring of the holy Spirit at his baptism (Isa. 61:1; 11:2, 3; Matt. 3:16). Having received the Spirit without measure and conformed his life thereto, he is now able to send it forth to believers. We, receiving his Spirit, are said to have the Mind or Spirit of Christ:

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus....—Phil. 2:5

For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.—1 Cor. 2:16

Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.—Rom. 8:9

The Holy Spirit Not a Person

Nothing in any of the various titles and descriptions of the holy Spirit substantiates the popular conception of the holy Spirit as a third God. The various designations, "Spirit of Truth," "Spirit of Love," etc., are plainly used in contrast with the opposite spirit, "The Spirit of Fear," "The Spirit of Bondage," "The Spirit of the World," "The Spirit of Divination," "The Spirit of Error," "The Spirit of Slumber," "The Spirit of Antichrist." There is no more justification for saying that the holy Spirit is a divine person than for saying that these descriptions of the wrong spirit or disposition represent one or more additional devils.

It is at least highly conspicuous that Paul omits to mention the holy Spirit in his summary of divinity in 1 Corinthians 8:6; and in John 17:3, Jesus asserts that one must know only two persons to gain eternal life: "And this is life eternal, that they might know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." Paul opens all of his epistles (except Hebrews) with greetings from the Father and the Son only. The holy Spirit does not send greetings because it is not a person. Nowhere in the Bible, furthermore, is the holy Spirit called God.

We cannot overemphasize how clearly the Scriptures teach that the holy Spirit is not a person, but the Spirit of a person, whether of the Father of Glory or of his beloved Son. 2 Corinthians 11:4 contrasts the Spirit of Truth with "another spirit" —the "Spirit of Error." In 2 Timothy 1:7, the "Spirit of Power" is shown to be the opposite of the "Spirit of Fear." Paul in Romans 8:15, 16, contrasts the "Spirit of Bondage" with the "Spirit of Adoption," saying, "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

In 1 Corinthians 2:11, the holy Spirit is explained by a comparison of the Spirit of God to the "spirit of a man." The holy Spirit is to God as the spirit or mind of a man is to man. Verse 12 of the same chapter proceeds to contrast God's Spirit (mind or disposition) with the mentality of the world, the "spirit of the world." The Apostle John in I John 4:2, 3, shows the distinction between the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Antichrist, between the Spirit of Truth and the antichristian Spirit of Error. In these verses the holy Spirit is contrasted with influences, not with persons. These contrasts would be meaningless if the holy Spirit were a person.

Personal Pronouns Wrongly Applied

John 14:26 is often cited to prove that the holy Spirit is a person, because this verse has been wrongly translated as follows:

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

The use of the personal pronoun “whom” in the above text is unwarranted, reflecting simply the translators’ prejudice. The word translated “whom” is in the neuter form and should have been translated “which”; and the pronoun translated “he” (*ekeinos*) in the passage is masculine to agree with the word rendered “comforter,” which is masculine even if the comforter is inanimate. (For example, in French, a knife would be spoken of as “he,” a fork as “she.” It would be just as logical to insist that a fork is a person because the word fork is feminine in French, as to claim that the comforter is a person because the word is masculine in Greek.) The *Emphatic Diaglott* gives a better rendering:

But the Helper, the holy Spirit, which the Father will send in my name, shall teach you all things, and remind you of all things which I said unto you.

A similarly incorrect use of personal pronouns occurs in John 14:17. The *Diaglott*, however, renders it thus:

...the Spirit of Truth, which the world cannot receive, because it beholds it not, nor knows it; but you know it; because it abides with you, and will be in you.

The use of the personal pronoun *heautou*, translated “himself” in John 16:13, does not at all prove the personality of the holy Spirit; for in this case the Greek pronoun simply follows its noun, Comforter, which is masculine. In Greek, as in many other languages, the pronoun agrees with the gender of its noun, regardless of sex or personality. One might just as well cite 1 Corinthians 13:4, 5, “Charity...seeketh not her (*heautes*) own,” to prove that charity is a person, as to claim that the use of *heautou* proves the personality of the holy Spirit.

As illustrations of the translation of the word *heautou* in the neuter form, in our Common Version, note the following:

As the branch cannot bear fruit itself—John 15:4

The whole body makes increase of the body to the edifying of itself in love.—Eph. 4:16

The same principle is true of the personal pronoun which is translated “he” in John 16:13.

Sanctification by the Holy Spirit

All true Christians are sanctified by God through his holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:11; Rom. 8:11). The principal means by which we obtain this sanctifying influence is the study of his Word (John 17:17). By meditating upon the thoughts of God as revealed in his Word, and by applying his counsels diligently in our lives, we acquire by degrees the mind (spirit or disposition) of God himself and of his Son (1 Cor. 2:16). Thus we are exhorted by God to “be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18)—not filled with a person, but with the will, mind, or disposition of a person: that is, God. Likewise, the Prophet Joel, foreseeing the day when God would bless mankind, wrote:

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: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.—Joel 2:28, 29

Compare the above passage with Zechariah 12:10. It is impossible to imagine a person being poured out. Rather, God’s holy influence and loving power are now being shed

forth upon the church, and during Christ's Kingdom on earth, shall be sent forth upon the world at large.

The holy Spirit of God is vastly powerful, but its work in our hearts is a delicate operation, subject to our willingness to be led by it. Therefore, we are exhorted by Paul that we "quench not the Spirit" (1 Thes. 5:19), the influence of God, in our hearts. Again, we are told that we must "grieve not the holy Spirit of God," whereby we are sealed (Eph. 4:30).

It is not a God in heaven that we are not to grieve nor quench: it is the influence of the one true God in our hearts that must not be quenched. It is the new mind within us, the holy Spirit in our hearts, that must not be grieved by the pangs of guilt, doubt, and unrighteous passion.

The new life that we live in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17), the new will, mind, or disposition begotten within us by God's holy Spirit (1 John 5:18), is a treasure carried in an earthen vessel (2 Cor. 4:7), subject to continual assault by the world, the flesh, and the devil. The working of God's holy Spirit in our hearts must be guarded with great care, "for the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."—Gal. 5:17

Apparent Difficulties Considered

Romans 15:30 is sometimes cited to prove the personality of the holy Spirit, for there the Apostle Paul beseeches his fellow Christians, "for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit," to pray for him. Paul is not, however, as the Trinitarians claim, commending the love of the third person of the Trinity to the church. He is rather appealing to their own love for fellow Christians, which was "shed abroad" in their hearts by the holy Spirit. That would not make the holy Spirit a person; for in 2 Thessalonians 2:10 Paul speaks of the "love of the truth," and the truth is not a person either.

The intercessory function of the holy Spirit is said to be another proof of its personality, for Rom. 8:26 reads:

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

This verse refers exclusively, however, to the operation of the Spirit in our hearts. Our new minds, our righteous dispositions, begotten by God's Spirit, cry out in anguish against the sin in our bodies and hearts; but our poor brains, alas, are unable to express this grief in appropriate words. Therefore, we are assured by God's Word that this inward groaning of our new minds against sin, though not fully expressed in words, is considered by the Father as an acceptable prayer for the forgiveness of our sins. It would be a strange thing, indeed, to interpret this verse as signifying that a divine being had to address the other two Gods with unutterable groans. Yet that is precisely what Trinitarians do!

1 Corinthians 2:10-13, similarly, refers to the work of the holy Spirit within us, for God's Spirit in our hearts leads us to search the Scriptures, that we might receive the hidden wisdom of God. The line of argument which says that, since the holy Spirit leads us into truth, it is a teacher, and if a teacher, then a person, ignores the plain Scripture doctrine that the holy Spirit of itself teaches nothing (John 16:13). Rather, God and Christ teach by means of the holy Spirit, which is their agency and medium of communication. Any enlightenment which we receive from the Scriptures is by the power or influence of God, not from a third person.

In the Book of Acts there are a few expressions which, at first glance, seem to give credibility to the idea of a personal holy Spirit. For example, "the Holy Ghost said," "the Spirit said unto Philip," "they...were forbidden of the Holy Ghost," "the Holy Ghost witnessed," "the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers," (Acts 8:29; 13:2; 16:6; 20:23, 28).

When we examine these passages closely, however, in the light of their contexts, all difficulty disappears. Nothing in them necessitates the idea of the holy Spirit as a third God. The holy Spirit, rather, is first of all, the mind of God, and second, any power or influence emanating from God. In these verses the holy Spirit is the agency or power of God by which he communicated to the apostles. An example of the manner in which the holy Spirit guided the apostles is furnished in Acts 16:9, where in Paul's vision a man of Macedonia prayed to him, saying, "Come over into Macedonia and help us." The expression found in Acts 15:28, "it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us," merely indicates that the apostles' own judgments were in accord with the leading which they received from God, through his holy Spirit (power or influence).

When Ananias withheld a part of his gift, Peter rebuked him, saying, "...why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost...? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God" (Acts 5:3, 4). In lying to Peter, Ananias was lying to the holy Spirit, which Peter possessed. He, evidently, did not realize that in attempting to deceive Peter, who had the "gift of discerning spirits," he was trying to put something over on God. The reader should note, however, that nowhere in this text is the holy Spirit itself called God, as some have misconstrued.

John 16:13, a text which is heavily relied upon by Trinitarians as one of their strongest proofs, will be seen upon close inspection to forcefully contradict their claim. The verse reads:

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 show you things to come.

Jesus refers not to the visit of another person from heaven, but the working of God's power in the minds of his disciples.

For the Spirit of God was to be in them, bringing to their remembrance and understanding the many dark sayings which he had committed to them (John 14:26).

The holy Spirit was not to be a teacher itself, but a means of communication between Jesus and his disciples. The holy Spirit does not teach us anything directly: it enables us to appreciate and comprehend the truths already contained in the Word of God. It was the agency by which Jesus and the Father spoke, but it did not speak of itself. Thus the apostles were to understand the leadings of the holy Spirit to be communications from God and from Christ.

To use a simple illustration, one may with propriety say, "The radio said thus and so," and yet the radio does not speak of itself, but simply conveys messages from the producers of its programs. Likewise, a vision instructed Peter to accept Gentiles into the church. Yet the vision did not speak of itself; it was wrought by the holy Spirit (power) of God to communicate a message from God to Peter.

The fact that Jesus uses personification as a mode of speaking in the above text does not give any real support to the Trinitarian position, unless one ignores the united testimony of the Scriptures on this subject. We know that Jesus is merely using personification because many other scriptures plainly teach that the holy Spirit is not a person. Jesus spoke in this manner for the purpose of introducing a new and then difficult subject in the simplest possible way. And the apostles to whom he spoke, with their strong Jewish zeal for the one God *Jehovah*, were in no danger of taking the figure literally.

A similar case of personification occurs in John 3:8, where Jesus said, "The wind blows where it listeth." "Listeth" is an archaic term for "pleases" or "wills." Thus he figuratively attributes the power of choice to the wind, treating it as if it had personality, though, of course, it does not.

Notice also that the veracity of the holy Spirit is commended in John 16:13 by virtue of the fact that it does not speak of itself, but only what it hears. If the holy Spirit were a God, he would be a teacher in his own right and would not be limited to merely explaining the teachings of God and of Christ for his testimony to be reliable. Thus, the traditional dogma of the holy Spirit as a third God co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Son is plainly contradicted.

The Simplicity of Bible Truth

The Trinity is said to be a doctrine of “great richness,” but we are forced to regard it as the cause of much confusion. The real teachings of the Holy Scriptures appear resplendent in contrast with the error of human creeds. The Father is really a Father; the Son is truly a Son. “The man Christ Jesus” was really a man, and when he died for our sins, he actually died. The one God of the Bible is really one God, and the Spirit of “the only true God” is really God’s Spirit, and not another God. The teachings of the Bible are at once harmonious, rational, and comprehensible.

They contain no absurdities which must be rationalized under the slogan of “mystery.” When the basic outline of Bible truth is understood, all the details and ramifications of doctrine—of God’s plan of atonement, of the life and sacrifice of Christ, of the resurrection of the just and the unjust, and of the coming blessing of “all the families of the earth” through Christ—are seen to be one consistent whole, a sublime superstructure which elicits our praise, thanksgiving, and rational assent.



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APPENDIX ONE



JOHN 1:1

The New Testament is written in what is called *Koine* Greek. *Koine* means “common,” and it is an appropriate term, therefore, to designate the language of the common people in the Graeco-Roman world. The *Koine* was the language of everyday life, identical to that found in the wills, trade agreements, petitions, and private letters of New Testament times. It was the language of the street, and, as such, differed greatly from the polished Greek of educated writers, who copied in an artificial way the Attic prose of four centuries before.

Thus, the Greek of the New Testament does not perfectly follow classical rules of grammar, any more than our own everyday language conforms to the rules set down by English grammarians. The rules of grammar guide everyday speech, but they do not find their perfect expression in it.

One could not reasonably expect a study of New Testament Greek to furnish invariable rules of grammar, just as one would not study the letters of clerks, say, or of soldiers today to determine accurate rules for the use of our indefinite article. Thus, Walter Bauer has suggested that it is impossible to form binding rules for the use of the Greek article.⁽¹⁾ The language of the New Testament is flexible and sublime, not grammatically precise. It was written, not for the wise of this world, but for the meek.

E. C. Colwell’s so-called “rule” is not a rule of grammar of the *Koine* Greek, but simply an observation of certain characteristics of the New Testament language—an

observation most Trinitarians agree has many exceptions. N. Turner (a Trinitarian) sums up Colwell's case as follows:

In Colwell's count, which is somewhat arbitrary, only 15 articular predicate nouns precede the verb, while 239 follow it, and only 40 anarthrous predicate nouns follow the verb while 99 precede it. Judicious selection among the MS variants may remove some of the exceptions to Colwell's canon but cannot remove all. So that while the canon may reflect a general tendency it is not absolute by any means; after all, it takes no account of relative clauses or proper nouns, and he has also omitted a considerable class of "qualitative" nouns like that in **ὁ Θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν**. Moreover, he is the first to admit the lack of objectivity in his method of counting; he professes to include only definite nouns among his anarthrous predicates, and the degree of definiteness is extremely difficult to assess.

And in a footnote he adds: "Paul is the most significant breaker of Colwell's rule."⁽²⁾

To whatever extent Colwell's observation may be applicable, the emphasis of Scriptural understanding is placed upon contextual interpretation, since there is no purely objective way to determine whether a noun is definite or indefinite. Colwell asserts that the anarthrous (used without the article) *theos* of John 1:1 is definite because a definite *theos* is applied to Jesus in John 20:28. But it does not follow that every use of *theos* in regard to Jesus must, therefore, be definite.

A predicate nominative may be used to indicate the identity of the subject, or to show some quality about the subject. The confession of the eunuch (Acts 8:37), "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God," identifies the subject. The statement, "God is love," (1 John 4:8) qualifies the subject. If the anarthrous *theos* of John 1:1 be considered as qualifying the subject, the clause containing it could be translated, "and

the Word was like God.” In harmony with this, we read that Christ was “the image of God” (2 Cor. 4:4). That this likeness did not extend to exact sameness of nature or being is clearly proven by other scriptures.

Even since the publication of Colwell’s rule, many Trinitarians have continued to emphasize the qualitative interpretation of John 1:1, rather than considering the anarthrous *theos* definite, as does Colwell. For if the noun is definite, the clause should be translated, “and the Word was the God.” But since the Father is the God, this translation would imply that the Word is the Father—an absurdity even to most Trinitarians. To avoid this trap, they differ with Colwell and interpret the noun “god” as qualitative; and once again the meaning of the verse is found to depend on one’s interpretation of the context.

The following quote from William Barclay on John 1:1 is an example of this qualitative application by Trinitarians:⁽³⁾

Finally John says that the Word was God. There is no doubt that this is a difficult saying for us to understand, and it is difficult because Greek, in which John wrote, had a different way of saying things from the way in which English speaks. When Greek uses a noun it almost always uses a definite article with it. The Greek for God is *theos*, and the definite article is *ho*. When Greek speaks about God it does not simply say *theos*; it says *ho theos*. Now when Greek does not use a definite article with a noun that noun becomes much more like an adjective; it describes the character, the quality of the person. When John said that the Word was God he was not saying that Jesus is identical with God; he was saying that Jesus is so perfectly the same as God in mind, in heart, in being that in Jesus we perfectly see what God is like.

The following is a partial list of Trinitarian authorities on New Testament Greek who wrote before and after Colwell’s rule. All emphasize the qualitative interpretation of the

anarthrous *theos* in John 1:1 and thus disagree with Colwell: William Barclay, Martin Vincent, J. P. Lange, Robert Young, Brook Foss Westcott, Kenneth Wuest, George Turner, Julius Mantey, H. E. Dana, Moulton, James Moffat.

APPENDIX TWO



MONOGENES

Since the title “Only Begotten Son” implies that the Son of God had a beginning, it has proven to be a dilemma for Trinitarians. Many Trinitarians, aware of the weakness of modifying “only begotten son” to mean eternally generated by the Father, have used another approach. They claim the Greek word *monogenes*, when applied to the Son of God, means the only one of a class or kind instead of only begotten. Hence, they refer to Jesus as the “only Son,” not “only begotten Son.”

Kittel’s THEOLOGICAL DICTIONARY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT (Vol. 5, pp. 738-741) 1967, a staunch Trinitarian work, observes that *monogenes* can have a broader meaning than only begotten. However, it goes on to state that when *monogenes* is used in the New Testament,

It means ‘only begotten’....In (John) 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9; (John) 1:18 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. In John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9 *monogenes* denotes more than the uniqueness or incomparability of Jesus. In all these verses He is expressly called the Son, and He is regarded as such in 1:14. In John *monogenes* denotes the origin of Jesus. He is *monogenes* as the only begotten.

In addition to the five foregoing citations in which “only begotten” refers to Jesus, *monogenes* is used four other times

(Luke 7:11, 12; 8:41, 42; 9:38; Heb. 11:17-18). These four instances confirm Kittel's observation that in New Testament usage, *monogenes* solely denotes an only begotten son or daughter.

John 1:18 points up a further difficulty of *monogenes* for Trinitarians. According to some of the oldest and best manuscripts (Example: Sinaitic Codex and Vatican Codex 1209), the phrase "only begotten Son" should read "only begotten God." Most scholars recognize the superiority of this reading. Therefore, John 1:18 reads: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten God, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." In harmony with John 1:1, our Lord Jesus Christ is a god separate and distinct from the heavenly Father. Further, he had a beginning. He is the "only begotten god." The heavenly Father alone was without beginning.

To circumvent this scriptural logic, some Trinitarians arbitrarily change the phrase "only begotten God" to "God only begotten." But as the Trinitarian W. J. Hickie, in his *Greek-English Lexicon to the New Testament* (1963 edition) observes,

It is hard to see why *monogenes huios* must be translated "the only begotten Son," while *monogenes theos*, which is given by Westcott and Tregelles after the very oldest MSS, must not be translated the only begotten god, but god only begotten.

From the foregoing, it is clear that *monogenes*, when used with the Son of God, denotes the Only Begotten Son, who had a beginning. And this nullifies the concept of three Gods, co-eternal, without beginning.

ENDNOTES



Chapter One *Origin of the Trinity*

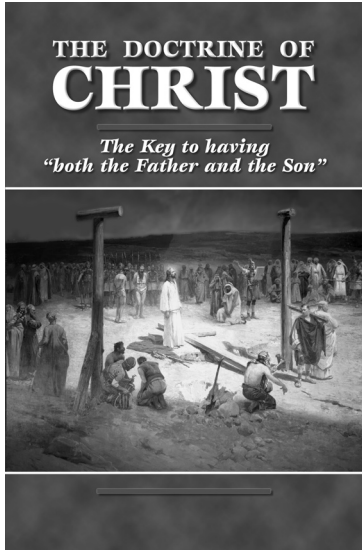
- 1 Adolf Harnack, *OUTLINES OF THE HISTORY OF DOGMA*, trans. E. K. Mitchell (Starr King Press), 1957, p. 266. (A Trinitarian source.)
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. 266.
- 3 McClintock and Strong, *CYCLOPEDIA OF BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND ECCLESIASTICAL LITERATURE* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House), Vol. 1, p. 392, 1895. (A Trinitarian source.)
- 4 R. A. Torrey, *THE PERSON AND WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House), 1910.
- 5 Samuel J. Mikolaski, "The Triune God" (*Christianity Today*), p. 5.

Chapter Two *The Father of Glory*

- 1 Or an angel speaking in his name. (Ex. 3:2, 4, 14; Judges 6:12, 14; Zech. 3:1, 2)
- 2 For other examples of the use of *Jehovah* in a compound word, see Gen. 22:14; Ex. 17:15; Judges 6:23, 24.

Appendix One *John 1:1*

- 1 Gieben, *GRIECHISCH-DEUTSCHES WORTERBUCH ZUM NEUEN TESTAMENT*, 1928.
- 2 N. Turner, *A GRAMMAR OF NEW TESTAMENT GREEK*, Vol. 3, p. 184, 1963.
- 3 William Barclay, *THE GOSPEL OF JOHN*, (*Daily Study Bible Series*), Vol. 1, p. 17.



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