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Bible Doctrine II

Radical, Biblical, Apostolic, Christianity



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BIBLE DOCTRINE II

In the Beginning was the Word

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En arche en ho logos, kai ho logos en pros ton theon, kai theos en ho logos,

“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God”
(John 1:1).

This passage is foundational to understanding the relationship between Jesus and God. Before we look at places where we see a distinction made, such as in the Upper Room Discourse (Ch. 14-17), we must first understand what John is saying here. It is no wonder that John (which makes the most distinction of any New Testament writer), puts this at the outset. He is laying a foundation. John says both, that the Word was with God and that the Word was God. In one and the same breath, the Word is distinguished from God and yet, immediately identified, as being God. How is that possible? I believe that the answer to this, is the key to understanding other passages in Scripture, where a distinction is made.

First, I would like to point out, what John does not say. Notice that John does not say that, “In the beginning was the Son and the Son was with the Father and the Son was also God.” Had John been a Trinitarian we would expect him to say something to this effect, to be consistent with Trinitarian doctrine. To find a Trinity in His Words, we are forced to redefine the Word “God,” in the middle of a verse. John would be saying, that the Word was with *God the Father*, but that, the Word was *God the Son*. But, that is not what he said. The same God, whom John identifies the Word as being with, is the one whom he states that the Word is (*the Word was **with God** and the Word **was God***).

Trinitarians claim, that the distinction is justified, because the second phrase contains the article before God (*ton theon*), but that the last phrase does not (*theos*). My first response would be: Why does the presence of the article, demand that this is God the Father? Why not God the Holy Spirit? For some reason, when a Trinitarian reads

“God,” they first assume it is a reference to God the Father, unless they have reason to believe otherwise. Somehow the Father is more “God” than the other two persons. Second, I would simply point out that almost every time the phrase, “God the Father” or “God our Father” appears in Scripture, the article is lacking. This includes everyone of Paul’s benedictions, as well as several other verses. (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:1,3; Eph. 1:2; Eph. 6:23; Phil. 1:2; 2:11; Col. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1,2; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Titus 1:4; Phm. 1:3; 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Peter 1:17; 2 John 1:3; Jude 1:1). So, there is no justification to claim that the second *theos* in John 1:1, does not refer to God the Father, simply because, there is no article. Finally, John was a devout Jew, who had no concept of persons in the Godhead.

The only God he knew of, was God the Father. Therefore, to identify the Word as God, was to identify Him as the Father.

I have also heard it claimed, that the Greek word, *pros* (with) means, “in a face to face relationship” in this passage. Now *pros* can mean, “in a face to face relationship,” but this would only hold true in our passage if it is first demonstrated, that the word is another person than *theos* (God). If, however, the word does not refer to a person, in this phrase, then it would still mean, “with,” but not “in a face to face relationship.” That it does not refer to a person, can be seen in the parallel account, by the same author, in 1 John. In a very similar statement, John says, “*What was from the beginning . . . concerning the Word of Life . . . which was with (pros) the Father and was manifested to us*” (1 John 1:1,2). God’s life was with Him, but not “in a face to face relationship” with Him. God’s life is not a separate person, from Himself, and neither is His Word.

I believe that the *Word* of God, is simply, a reference to the *expression* of God. In Revelation, 19:13, (John writing again), Jesus is called, “*the Word of God.*” The book of Hebrews tells us that, “*God . . . has spoken to us in His Son*” (Heb. 1:1, 2). Jesus, is Himself, the content of what God has spoken. He is the visible “*image of the invisible God*” (Col. 1:15), “*the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person*” (Heb. 1:3, KJV). “*No man hath seen God, at any time; the only begotten Son, which is*

in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John 1:18, KJV). The word translated, "declared" in this last verse, is *exegeomai*, from which we get the word, *exegete*. Jesus has "made known," "explained," "described," or "revealed" God. No one can see God, but you can see His glory. Jesus is "*the brightness of His glory*" (Heb. 1:3).

Trinitarians, often use analogies, to express their concept of God, such as the three points on a triangle, the three states of water, or three interconnected circles. Analogies can be helpful *if they accurately express the reality*. However, they can be very damaging, if they do not. The only analogy that I am going to use, is found in Scripture. Jesus is said, to be both, the *root* and a *branch* (Isa. 11:1; Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zech. 3:8, 6:12; Rom. 15:12; Rev. 5:5; especially 22:16). This is beyond our comprehension. You cannot diagram it; you can't explain it, but this is what Scripture says. Scripture does not state, that God is three points of a triangle, but it does state, that Jesus is both, the root and a branch. This we must affirm, whether or not we can explain it. And I believe that this will answer the issue of distinction, which we see in the Bible. From the viewpoint of Jesus as root, He is God Almighty and can be called such. From the viewpoint of Jesus, as a branch, he can legitimately be distinguished from God. He is both the Creator and part of the creation. How this is possible, I do not know, but this is what Scripture affirms.

Attention has also been drawn to the fact, that the pronouns, which follow, are in the masculine. It has been claimed, that because of this, the Word must be a person. Now, when such a claim is made, I must conclude, that either the person who said it, knows very little about the Greek language or they are not being fully honest, with what they are saying. The rules of Greek grammar, require that pronouns must agree with the nouns they represent, in case, number, and gender. Since the word, *logos* (word) is masculine, its pronoun, *would of necessity, be masculine!* For example, the word, Church (*ekklesia*), is feminine. So, the Church is called, a "she" in the Greek, whenever a pronoun is used. No one would claim that this makes the Church, a person. This can also be seen, where John later calls the comforter (*parakletos*) a "He." Commenting on

this, Greek scholar, Daniel Wallace, makes this observation:

The use of *ekeinos* [he] here, is frequently regarded by [Trinitarian] students of the NT to be an affirmation of the personality of the Spirit. . . . But this is erroneous. In all these Johannine passages, *pneuma* [spirit] is appositional to a masculine noun. The Gender of *ekeinos* thus, has nothing to do with the natural gender of *pneuma*. The antecedent of *ekeinos*, in each case, is *parakletos* [comforter], not *pneuma*. . . Thus, since *parakletos* is masculine, so is the pronoun. . . . Indeed, it is difficult to find *any* text, in which, *pneuma* is grammatically referred to, with the masculine gender.

Finally, I would also like to state that, this is how we are to understand statements of Christ's pre-existence. In the beginning, was the *logos* (Word). Whether we want to say the Word of God, the Expression of God, or the Glory of God, this is what existed in eternity past, not an eternal second person in the Godhead. Jesus is the visible representation of the one invisible God. It can be said, that He was with God and it can be said, that He was God, but this does not make, God Himself, multiple persons, for the Scriptures emphatically teach, that God is one.

How Can God's Fullness "Fit" in Such a Tiny Place as Christ?

It is often questioned how it could be, that the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ bodily (Colossians 2:9). God is too big for such a small place! Trying to get the fullness of the omnipresent God, into one man, is harder than the wicked stepsisters, trying to get their big feet in Cinderella's glass slipper!

Some have conceived of the incarnation as the time, at which, God ceased inhabiting the heavens, in order to dwell in Christ. Then, upon ascension, God returned to His heavenly abode. This is what is commonly called, the "Jesus Only" view. Jesus is thought of, as the divine Shop Vac, that sucked all of God out of heaven and into one man. From Scripture, we know that this is not so, because Jesus said, the Father was

in heaven (Matthew 5:16; Mark 11:26). Surely, God continued to exist beyond the incarnation. As the Fathers often said, “He remained what He was while becoming what He was not.” The same God, who began to exist as man, in the incarnation, continued to exist as He always had, as God, beyond the incarnation, and unchanged.

So, how is it, that God’s fullness could dwell in Christ, and yet, also continue to inhabit the heavens as He always had? Well, how is it, that God fills us with His Spirit? Does He only fill us with a portion of His Spirit? Is it a diluted form of His Spirit? Such would not be possible. God is fully God, no matter where He is. It is not possible for there to be more of God in one place than in another, or for only a part of God to be in one place, but not another, or for more of God to dwell in one person, than in another. This is because God is a qualitative being, not a quantitative being. God is of a divine quality, not a divine quantity. God is a Spirit and cannot be measured, because as a Spirit being, God does not consist of matter.

When we conceive of God, we often think of Him in material terms, however. While such terms of conception are in error, it is wholly understandable seeing that we are part of the material world and are bound to such ways of thought. We cannot transcend the material world to understand the true nature of the spiritual. For something to possess the fullness of something, in the material world, demands that it possess all of the material substance. For the fullness of the coffee in the coffee pot to be in my cup, requires that every drop of coffee, fit in my cup. If all the coffee will not fit, the cup cannot be said to contain the fullness of the coffee. Why is this so? It is because coffee is a quantitative substance. God, however, is not a quantitative being, and thus, cannot be measured like coffee. As a qualitative and omnipresent being, God is everywhere, and everywhere God is, He is in His fullness. Jesus does not possess the fullness of God’s quantity, for God is not a quantity. Rather, Jesus possesses the fullness of God’s quality. Everything that makes God who He is, Jesus is. All of the divine attributes that are peculiar to God, dwell in Christ, qualitatively. Once we can grasp the fact, that God is a qualitative being, rather than a quantitative being, we will be able to understand, in part, the manner in which Christ can be fully God, and yet, at the same time, God can

continue to inhabit the heavens.

What Did Stephen See?

Upon the stoning of Stephen, it is said, that he “looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God and Jesus, standing on the right hand of God, And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God” (Acts 7:55-56). What exactly did Stephen see? Did he see Jesus standing on a big hand, belonging to God?

It would be hard to believe, that Stephen actually saw a large right hand, belonging to God and Jesus, standing on it. It brings a picture to my mind of the All-State Insurance Company’s trademark, of a man resting in a large pair of cupped hands with the slogan, “You’re in good hands with All-State.”

The “right hand of God” is not indicative of a locale or physical reality. This is an anthropomorphic expression, speaking of exaltation, power, prestige, honor, and strength. Anthropomorphisms are figures of speech speaking of God in human terminology, for the purpose of understanding aspects of His infinity, that could not otherwise be expressed to and understood, by finite human minds. This is understood, by most all prominent Trinitarian conservative evangelical theologians, as well. God does not have a body, thus He cannot have a right hand. The language is only figurative.

Psalm 16:8, demonstrates this well, when the psalmist said, “I have set the Lord always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.” Was the Lord actually, at David’s right hand? If David would have turned around, would God have moved to his other side, or would He have then been at David’s left hand? God is omnipresent and cannot merely, be in one locale. This would include, being specifically, at someone’s right hand. This is poetic language, expressing the way, in which, God was a strength to David, in his distress.

That the right hand is indicative of power, can be seen, in Exodus 15:6, where it is said, that the Lord's "right hand...is become glorious in power." David said, of God's right hand: "Now know I, that the LORD saveth His anointed; He will hear him from His holy heaven with the saving strength of His right hand" (Psalm 20:6). Jesus said, concerning the meaning of God's right hand (the place, to which, He was at, when seen by Stephen), "And ye shall see the Son of Man, sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Mark 14:62; See also Luke 22:69). Jesus testified, that God's right hand, was a term speaking of God's power. (See also, Psalm 77:10; 98:1; 109:31; Isaiah 62:8; 63:12; 1 Peter 3:22).

This type of terminology is even used today in our society and culture, to mean the same thing. For example, to sit on the right side of an important individual is the most honorable place to sit. It shows your prestige, importance, or honor. He who sits there is said to be, at the honoraria's "right hand." When one considers something to be of great value, he might say, "I'd give my right hand (or arm) for this." This type of usage can even be seen in the phrase, "He's my right-hand man."

If we are going to view the right hand of God, as a physical hand, then we must change our view of God, considerably, to fit the rest of the Biblical descriptions of Him into our picture, too. God must have large feet, that He rests on the earth (The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool -- Isaiah 66:1), innumerable eyes (The eyes of the Lord are in every place -- Proverbs 15:3), a big nose (with the blast of God's nostrils, the waters of the Red Sea were parted -- Exodus 15:8), and feathers on His wings (He shall cover thee with His feathers and under His wings shalt thou trust -- Psalm 91:4). Obviously, these are not literal descriptions of God. They are anthropomorphisms, relating God, in human terms with the use of poetic language.

The first description of God, in the series above, is referring to God's omnipresence; the second to both, His omnipresence and omniscience; the third, to the east wind, that God sent to part the waters of the Red sea; and the fourth, is speaking of God's love

and protection. If these types of descriptions were real, then truly, Jesus would have pulled a large finger from out of heaven, with which, He used, to cast out devils (Luke 11:20). The absurdity of such a view only serves to demonstrate the error one gets into when taking the anthropomorphisms of Scripture, too far. In this case, here, I'm speaking of taking "God's right hand," to be a literal hand, in a specific locale.

Now that we know what Stephen did not see, what did he see? It is apparent, that he saw Jesus. He even addressed his prayer to Him, in verse fifty-nine saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." What may not be apparent, is that he saw the exalted Christ. Since the term, "right hand," is used with the idea of power, strength, glory, prestige, honor, and pre-eminence and not with the idea of a physical hand in mind, it must be understood, that Stephen's reference to the right hand of God, was a reference to the same. When he said, he saw Jesus, standing on the right hand of God, He was conveying that he saw Him in this exalted position, as Lord over all. He saw Him in all of His glory, having all authority, might, power, dominion, and strength, not physically standing on God's hand. (It is obvious, that the heavens were not literally opened to Stephen, and Jesus sitting on the right hand of God. Stephen was given a vision, just like the vision given to John the Baptist when he baptized Jesus in the River Jordan).

The Question of Titles

Often when discussing the differences between Oneness and Trinitarian theologies, the primary argument revolves around the relationship between the Son of God and the Father. Trinitarians ask questions such as:

Who was manifest in the flesh, the Father or the Son? When the Scripture says, "He is BEFORE all things" (Col. 1:17), is the Scripture speaking of the Father or the Son? Heb. 1:10, says, "And, Thou, LORD, in the beginning has laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands." Is this verse speaking of the Father or the Son? Is "the Son of the Father," in 2 John 3, "God?" Is He the Father?

These questions are based on one presupposition: The “Father” and the “Son” are words, describing eternal relationships between persons of the Godhead. Arguing from this perspective, one falls into the logical trap of:

The Son is not the Father.

The Son is God.

The Father is God.

Therefore, the Son and the Father, both are God.

From there, the only explanation historic Christianity has come up with, is the Trinity, which claims, that God exists in three persons, who are co-equal and co-eternal, and have existed from eternity, in relationship with each other. A typical Oneness rebuttal asserts, that the Son, is the Father, which is believed to be logically necessary, if both, the Son and Father, are God, but are not two different persons.

This explanation is faulty, because it doesn't explain the Biblical usage of the terms, Father and Son. It is obvious, that the Scripture meant something, by the terms, Father and Son. What does it mean then? If the terms are to be held coherent, then there must be a distinction between the Father and Son. However, assuming from the outset, that the distinction is a distinction of “persons,” is a fallacy.

The Context of the Terms

It must be understood, that the terms, “Father” and “Son” in contradistinction to one another, are first introduced in Scripture, in the context of the incarnation. Christ is God, manifest in the flesh. He is fully God and fully Man. He had a human body and a human mind, but the humanity of Christ was God's humanity. God did not merely assume, the form of man, He, actually became, Man. He was born of a woman, in

space and time. Inserting, at this point, the concept of one person of the Trinity, became man, is an anachronism, in that it argues back from the Greek philosophy of the Church Father's, to the Scriptures. The Scriptures, never introduce the concept of the Trinity. The Trinity is read back into Scriptures.

Therefore, when in Scripture, Jesus refers to His Father, He is referring to God in His transcendence. When the Scriptures speak of the Son, they are referring to God, manifest in the flesh. We must believe, that the Father refers to the One God of Scripture, in the same way, that the Holy Spirit refers to the Spirit of the One God. Any backward interpretation of these words is to do injustice to the radical monotheism of Scripture and is the result of faulty hermeneutics.

How do we answer those questions then?

The truth is, that the questions are unanswerable because they assume definitions and information, that is not Scriptural. Because Father and Son are relational terms, arising from the incarnation, we would not expect to find any passage, which says, the Father became a man. It is God, who became a Man. Who created the world, the Father or the Son? God created the world. The question might as well be, who created the world, the Prince of Peace or the Lamb of God? It is unanswerable because it assumes a difference in persons, where the Scripture doesn't teach a difference in persons. Imagine your Pastor's name, is Bob Smith. If I asked you, who is taller, Pastor Smith or Bob? The question, is obviously, irrelevant. Pastor Smith, is what I would call him in the context of my relationship with him, as Pastor, and Bob is what his wife would call him when they're out shopping.

In conclusion, is there a difference between the Father and Son? Yes. Is that distinction, one of persons? No. The difference between the Father and Son is that the Father is God, in His transcendence, and in His relationship with the Man, Christ Jesus, while the Son, is God, in His incarnation.

Plural Pronouns Used for God

In Genesis 1:26, God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness....” Who is being referred to, by the use of the plural pronoun, our? Does this imply, that God is more than one? Does it indicate, that Jesus pre-existed the incarnation, as the second person of the Trinity? Considering the strict monotheism of the Old Testament, this does not seem likely.

This is not the only occurrence, in the Bible, where a plural pronoun is used of God. The plural usage is found in three other places. In Genesis 3:22, God said, “Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil.” At the building of the Tower of Babel, God said, “Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech” (Genesis 11:7). Isaiah heard the Lord say, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” (Isaiah 6:8). How do we explain these verses?

Four major theories have been proposed, to explain this plural usage, in reference to God. The first theory claims, that God counseled with His own will, or deliberated within His mind, as to what He would do. This is based primarily, on Ephesians 1:11, where it is said, that God works “all things after the counsel of His own will.” God is compared to a human, that reasons in his mind, saying something like, “Let me see....” This view does not seem to be correct when the Hebrew grammar, of these verses, are examined more carefully. The grammar indicates, that God was speaking to somebody, *besides* Himself.

The second theory is, that the plural pronouns are used as a “majestic plural.” This type of language was typically used by royalty, but not exclusively. Biblical examples include Daniel’s statement to Nebuchadnezzar, “We will tell the interpretation thereof before the King” (Daniel 2:36). Daniel, however, was the only one who gave the King the interpretation of his dream. King Artaxerxes wrote in a letter, “The letter which ye

sent unto us hath been plainly read before me” (Ezra 4:18). The letter was sent to Artaxerxes alone (Ezra 4:11), yet, he said, it was sent to “us,; and was read before “me.” Clearly, the letter was only sent to, and read to, Artaxerxes. When Artaxerxes penned another letter to Ezra, he used the first person, singular, pronoun “I” in one place and the first person, plural pronoun, “we” in another (Ezra 7:13, 24).

This view, although not beyond the realm of possibility, does not seem very credible. The question arises as to why God would use singular pronouns of Himself in thousands of places in the Bible, yet, would choose four occasions to use plural pronouns, in a majestic plural sense? It would seem, that God would either use singular pronouns exclusively, or plural pronouns exclusively, when speaking of Himself. The small number of plural pronouns seems to suggest, that there are some special reasons attached to its usage.

The third theory explains these passages by saying, that although not present physically in the flesh, at these times, God spoke to Jesus in a prophetic manner, having foreknowledge of His future arrival. It is reasoned, that since God calls those things which are not as though they were (Romans 4:17), He spoke to the Son, even though He was not physically present. God could do so, because He does not live in time, as we do, and does not view time, as we do (2 Peter 3:8). The Son was present in the mind of God, as the Word (John 1:1). In defense of this, 1 Peter 1:19-20 and Revelation 13:8, are cited, which show that the incarnation and crucifixion, were always in the plan and mind of God.

Specifically, as it relates to the creation of man, in Genesis 1:26, it is said, that God made man in the appearance that Jesus would have in the future. It is reasoned, that God made man in the image of what He knew Jesus would look like. This relegates God’s reference to “our” to be spoken to Jesus in a prophetic sense. He was not actually there, but because He was the lamb, slain from the foundation of the world, His presence had always been in the mind of God (not in the physical, real world, until the incarnation), and therefore, can be spoken of, as being present at the creation (1 Peter

1:19-20; Revelation 13:8).

The other basis for this view, arises from the Biblical teaching, that Jesus created the worlds, and that all things were created for His purpose (John 1:1-3, 10; Colossians 1:16-17; Hebrews 1:2-3). It is argued, that since

Jesus created the worlds, He was present at the creation, and therefore, must have been the One, God was speaking to. When the Bible says, that Jesus created all things, it cannot mean that, Jesus was present at the creation. When speaking of Jesus, we are specifically referring, to God's existence as a Man. This existence, did not begin, until His incarnation, in approximately 6-5 B.C. Jesus (God made flesh) did not exist before this time. Jesus did pre-exist the incarnation, as it pertains to His deity, for Jesus' deity is none other than that of Yahweh Himself, the omnipresent, self-existing Spirit. John called this pre-existence of Jesus, the Word: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was *with* God, and the Word *was* God. The same, was in the beginning, with God. All things were made by Him [Word]; and without Him, was not anything made that was made.....*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" (John 1:1-3,14 italics mine). The same Word that existed at the creation of the worlds, was the Word that became flesh (Jesus Christ). John identifies the Word as being God Himself, not some other God or person.

Speaking in natural terms, a person's word cannot be separated from their person. Their words do not have an identity, separate from their person, but are expressions, of their person. Likewise, Jesus (as the Word) is spoken of, as being with God, but not in the sense as though He was separate from Him. God's Word cannot be separated from Him, any more than our word can be separated from us. The Word is the expression of God's person. John did not stop at the identification of the Word, as being *with* God, but went on to point out that the Word was, in fact, God Himself.

Jesus existed at the creation, in His deity, as God, but not in flesh, as a human.

These Scriptures have nothing to do with another “person: of the Godhead, being present at the creation. They merely assert, Jesus’ pre-existence, as Jehovah. Henceforth, we are still lacking the identity of the person(s), to whom, God was speaking, in these passages. Although not beyond the realm of possibility, there is not much Biblical merit, to the idea, that God was speaking to the Son, “prophetically.”

If Jesus was not physically at the creation, and God was not speaking to Him in some prophetic foreknowledge, then who was God speaking to? If God was not deliberating in His mind, or speaking of Himself, in a majestic, plural sense, who was He speaking to? I believe the answer is to be found in another direction.

We know that this passage, in Genesis 1:26, cannot mean that there was anyone besides God, who created. Jehovah said Himself, “I am the LORD that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by Myself” (Isaiah 44:24). Malachi argued, “Have we not all one father? Hath not one God created us? (Malachi 2:10). It is very clear, that there is only one Creator, and He is Jehovah. Jesus is said, to have created the worlds, but He did so, not as the Son of God, but as God, before the incarnation. This does not deny, however, that the worlds were created with God-incarnate, in mind (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2). Truly, all things were made with Christ, in the center.

Directly following God’s use of plural pronouns, in verse twenty-six, it is said, that “God created man in His *own* image, in the image of *God* created He Him....” (Genesis 2:27, italics mine). Clearly, it was one image, in which, man was created. He was not created in two or more images.

It appears, that God was speaking to angels, in these passages. The grammar of these verses, support this view. The grammar of Genesis 1:26, is as follows: God (plural), said (third person, masculine, singular), Let us make (first person, common, plural) man (singular, masculine, noun) in our image (“image” is a first person, common plural, suffix), after our likeness (“likeness” is a feminine, singular, noun with a first-

person common, plural, suffix). The plural pronouns “us” and “our” must be referring to someone other than God, because the verb used in connection with “God,” is singular. If God was speaking to Himself, in a plural form, or performing self-talk, as some say, the pronouns would also need to be singular, to modify the verb. Because they are not plural, God was truly speaking, to someone else.

The very fact, that God uses singular pronouns when speaking of Himself in thousands of cases, causes us to question why He chose to use plural pronouns, in this passage, and in the other three, I mentioned earlier. In the verses preceding Genesis 1:26, which speak of the creative acts of God, singular pronouns are used exclusively, in reference to God, and in verse twenty-six, a singular verb is used. There must be some reason for this peculiar usage, in these passages. In verse twenty-six, two plural pronouns and a plural verb, are used in connection with God. This change in usage indicates that God is now including others, in His address.

The only beings created, at this point, were the angels, so it seems best to understand angels to be, the recipients of God’s address. The Jews, have always believed that angels were the ones being addressed by God, in these verses. We know that the angels were present at creation (Job 38:4, 7), so it is very possible, that God was speaking to them. He addressed the angels, in a courteous manner, acknowledging that they too, had an image like His. God created man, in the image of Himself, an image shared by the angels, also.

Two objections might occur, at this point. 1. How could angels be said to have an image or likeness to God? 2. How could angels help God create man?

In response to the first objection, it seems best to see the “image,” in which man, was created, to be one of moral, spiritual, intellectual, and emotional qualities, rather than any physical qualities or similarities. God and angels, both possess, all of these attributes that men have. Sometimes, we view angels, as android beings, created by God, that have no choice, but to serve Him in Holiness and righteousness, being

emotionless, and have no way of thinking for themselves. This is an unbiblical view. Peter said, angels are interested in the activities of the Church, when he said, concerning the Gospel being preached with the Holy Ghost, sent down from heaven, “which things the angels desire to look into” (1 Peter 1:12). We see, from this verse, that angels do have a will of their own, by the fact, that *they desire* to look into these things. God does not command them to do this, but they have a desire to do so. This indicates, that angels have an emotional spectrum and intellectual independence. They have spiritual qualities, in that, they worship God and moral qualities, in that, they choose to stay pure.

Regarding the second objection, angels did not participate in any way, with the creation of man, but they did participate in some way, in the making of man. The Hebrew word, translated “make,” in Genesis 1:26, is *asah*. The Hebrew word, meaning “create” is *bara*. Angels do not have the power to create anything but might have shared in the making of man from the dust of the ground. Vine’s comparison and contrast of the two Hebrew words is helpful here:

In Gen. 1:26-27, ...`asah must mean, creation from nothing, since it is used as a synonym for bara.` The text reads, “Let us make [*`asah*] man in our image, after our likeness.... So God created [*bara`*] man in His own image....” Similarly, <Gen. 2:4> states: “These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth, when they were created [*bara`*], in the day, that the Lord God made [*`asah*] the earth and the heavens.” Finally, Gen. 5:1, equates the two as follows: “In the day that God created [*bara`*] man, in the likeness of God made [*`asah*] He Him.” The unusual juxtaposition of *bara`* and *`asah*, in Gen. 2:3, refers to the totality of creation, which God had “created” by “making.”

It is unwarranted to overly refine the meaning of *`asah*, to suggest that it means, creation from something, as opposed to creation from nothing. Only context can determine its special nuance; it can mean either, depending upon the situation.

That the creation consisted of creating and making, can be seen in Genesis 2:3-4: “And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it, He had rested from all His work, which God created [*bara*] and made [*asah*]. These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth, when they were created [*bara*], in the day that the LORD God made [*asah*] the earth and the heavens.” *The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, is also helpful, here:

The significant interchange between the words *bara* “create” and *asah* is of great interest. The word *bara* carries the thought of the initiation of the object involved. It always connotes what only God can do and frequently emphasizes the absolute newness of the object created. The word *asah* is much broader in scope, connoting primarily, the fashioning of the object with little concern for special nuances.

The use of *bara* in the opening statement of the account of creation seems to carry the implication, that the physical phenomena came into existence, at that time, and had no previous existence in the form, in which, they were created by divine fiat. The use of *asah*, may simply connote, the act of fashioning the objects involved in the whole creative process.

The word, *asah* is also used elsewhere, in Scripture, to describe aspects of the creative work of God (Psa. 86:9; Psa. 95:5; Psa. 96:5).

It might be best to understand the creation of man in a two-fold manner. He was both, made and created. He was made (*asah*) in that His body came from the dust of the ground (earth). The earth was already created by God, so Adam was made from a substance, which was already created. He might be said, to have been created (*bara*), in that “God breathed into his nostrils, the breath of life; and He [Adam] became a living soul” (Genesis 2:7). The life invested into the body was a creation of God; a creation, which the angels could not participate in.

Because the angels could not actually create man, it might be wondered why God

even bothered speaking to them, concerning man. The reason might be two-fold. First of all, God might have addressed them in a courteous manner, because of their intimate presence, at this amazing time. Secondly, He addressed them, to declare His intentions of making man in their image, as well as His: a moral, spiritual, intellectual, and emotional image. After God allowed the angels to participate in the making of man, He created in him, a living soul that possessed this image of God and of the angels.

The angel's participation in the making of man might be compared to the manner in which believers work miracles. Jesus said, "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8). This does not mean that we have the power in and of ourselves to work miracles, even though Jesus spoke these things in the imperative, as though it was our responsibility to see that they come about. Although we are to do these things, we do them by relying on the power and will of God. Just as we do not actually work miracles, apart from God, neither could the angels actually make man, apart from the power and will of God.

Genesis 3:22

Genesis 3:22 has a similar grammatical structure to that of Genesis 1:26: "God (plural) said (third-person masculine singular), Behold, the man is become as one of us (first person common plural), to know good and evil." Here again, we see a singular verb, being used with plural pronouns.

Thus far, we know that those to whom God spoke, had an image that was like His, and could be considered to be enough like God, to the extent that He could say, "Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil." It might be argued, that angels do not know the difference between good and evil, or that at least, before the fall of man, they didn't know the difference. Again, this type of response is based on the idea, that angels are Holy androids with no will of their own. If angels could not sin, then Lucifer and the other multitudes of angels that rebelled against God could have never actually done so. God would have had to have made them rebel against Him.

Angels knew the difference between good and evil before man ever sinned. This knowledge was just as much a part of their nature, as it was God's. They did not have to commit evil to know evil, just as God, never had to commit evil to know the difference between evil and good.

In support of the idea, that God addressed His angels in this passage, notice that immediately after man's disobedience and sin, God evicted them from the Garden of Eden and stationed cherubim's at the east end of the Garden, to block its entrance from man. Angelic activity surrounded God's new creation. That God was addressing angels, in Genesis 3:22, flows with the rest of the context, not being hindered by it whatsoever.

Genesis 11:7

The grammar of Genesis 11:7, is even more conclusive, that God must have been addressing angels when He spoke, using the first person plural pronoun, "our" or "us." The grammar of this verse is as follows: "Go to (second person masculine singular), let us go down (first person common plural) and there confound (first person common plural) their language."

"Go to" is an imperative in the Hebrew language. God was giving a command to the one(s) He was speaking to, here. If these "our" and "us" passages are referring to God, speaking to a manifestation of His Spirit or the Son, in some way, then we have a case of one divine person commanding another divine person to do something. One can only be commanded to do a thing, because they are subordinate to and inferior in rank, to the one doing the commanding. If God was speaking to deity, then this deity, was less than God.

Apparently, God was only speaking to one being, because "go to" is in the second person singular. What God was saying was, "You (singular) go to...." God was accompanied by one angel to confound the languages at Babel. Should it seem

strange, that the Lord would choose to have angels accompany Him? Remember the story of Abraham's encounter with God (Genesis 18)? He was visited by three men: one, of which, turned out to be a theophany of the Lord, and the other two, were angels (Genesis 18:10, 13-17; 19:1).

Isaiah 6:8

The final Scripture, in which, God used a plural pronoun in connection with Himself, is Isaiah 6:8. The grammar of this verse is as follows: "Also, I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send (first person common singular), and who will go for us (first person common plural)?" The singular verb cannot have a plural pronoun, as its antecedent. Again, God must be addressing someone else, in this statement. Whatever the situation, we know that it was only God, who was going to do the sending (Isaiah v. 8). Considering that, in the context of chapter six, there is a lot of angelic activity (Isaiah 6:2-3, 6-7), it should not seem strange, to think that the Lord was addressing angels.

It might seem strange to think, that God would ask the angels for a plan of action, to take against the rebels at the Tower of Babel. God does not need anyone else's advice, does He? Even though God does not need advice, it is evident, that He does sometimes, seek after it. There is a detailed account of God corresponding with angels to come up with a plan of action in 1 Kings 22:19-23. In this passage, Micah the prophet, told Ahab and Jehoshaphat, that he "saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven, standing by Him on His right hand and on His left" (v. 19). This is clearly an assembling of the angels. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss a plan of action to bring about Ahab's death. The Lord posed the question to the angelic host, "Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth Gilead?" (v. 20). That there was actual debate, is indicated by the phrase, "And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner" (v. 20).

Finally, an angel came up with a way to persuade Ahab, that God was pleased with (v.

21). His plan was to be a lying spirit in the mouth of the prophets. The Lord gave him permission to do this saying, “Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so” (v. 22). If the Lord wants the input of His angels before executing His plan, that is His prerogative. All we know, is that God does, on some occasions, and for whatever reasons, consult with His angels and involve them on His “missions.”

In conclusion, it seems best to understand the plural references, in Genesis 1:26, 3:22, 11:7, and Isaiah 6:8, to be referring to angels, whom the Lord addressed. Although not beyond the realm of possibility, the first three theories do not carry enough Biblical or grammatical support to be considered valid explanations. When considering the Hebrew grammar behind these verses, angels seem to be the best candidates for the identity of those included in the “us” and “our” statements, made by God.

Jesus, the Voice, and the Dove

“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; See also Mark 1:9-11, Luke 3:21-22, and John 1:32-34).

Many have used the above passage as a proof-text for the Trinity. Is this the point of the passage? In order to get a better understanding of the passage, all four Gospel accounts need to be consulted and compared/contrasted. All three synoptic Gospels agree, that the heavens were opened. Matthew, Mark, and John agree, that the Spirit of God was seen to descend upon Jesus, like a dove. The Gospels of Matthew and Mark use “He,” to refer to the person who saw the Spirit of God descending, like a dove, whereas John uses the personal pronoun, “I,” in reference to the person who saw this phenomenon. Matthew alone, refers to the fact, that the Spirit was lighting upon Him,

and only John describes the spirit, as a dove abiding over Jesus, as He was being baptized. John is also the only writer, who gives the purpose for the spirit descending like a dove. All three synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) speak of the voice from heaven and reiterate what was spoken that day.

Understanding the purpose for Jesus' baptism may also be helpful. There appear to be four purposes. In Jesus' own words, He said the purpose was "to fulfill all righteousness." Jesus was giving us some sort of example to follow.

Secondly, Jesus' baptism served as an official and public inauguration of His earthly ministry (John 1:26-27, 31). It was, at this time, that Jesus was revealed to Israel, as their Messiah.

The third purpose of Jesus' baptism was, that it was there, where Jesus was anointed by the Father with the Holy Ghost and power for ministry. I believe this to be the most important reason of all.

The Old Testament prophets, priests, and kings were always anointed, in some way, to signify that they were chosen of God (Exodus 28:41; 29:7; 1 Kings 19:16). The oil with which they were anointed, was symbolic of the Holy Ghost. Jesus, then, in like manner, was to be anointed by the Holy Ghost, since He came to fulfill the roles of prophet, priest, and king (Psalm 45:7-8; Isaiah 61:1). Instead of being anointed with oil that was symbolic of the Holy Ghost, Jesus was anointed by the Spirit of God Himself. The priests, in particular, were washed with water and anointed for the purpose of consecration to their office (Exodus 29:4, 7). This may have some bearing upon why Jesus was baptized in water. Surely, He was not baptized because of sin, because He was sinless. He was baptized, as a washing for His ordination, as the High Priest for all mankind (See Hebrews 7).

This anointing, Jesus received, does not mean that He became God or the Christ at His baptism. This was merely the point, at which, God anointed Him for ministry. Jesus

had to be anointed for His calling and ministry, in the same way we are anointed for ours. To demonstrate this, notice that it was not until after this anointing at Christ's baptism, that He performed His first miracle (John 2:11; anointed by God in 1:32-33). Why didn't Jesus perform any miracles before this time? Why was it, that God, did not use Him to preach and heal, until after He was over thirty years old (Luke 3:23)? It was because the time for His earthly ministry had not yet come; and therefore, God's anointing and power was not with Him to do so. Unless it is the will of God to heal someone, they will not be healed. If He does not heal the sick, raise the dead, give a word of knowledge, a prophetic word, vision, or revelation, none of these things will happen. We cannot force God to do anything, through us. This can only be done in accordance with divine will. God, for whatever purpose, chose not to do anything substantial (pertaining to ministry) through Jesus, until He was over thirty years of age.

This does not mean that Jesus was not God before His baptism but demonstrates that Jesus ministered, as a man, anointed by the Holy Ghost. It must be remembered, that Jesus did not work miracles, because He was God, He worked miracles, as a Man, anointed by the Holy Ghost in the same sense as we do. It is not that God could not anoint Him to work miracles before His baptism, but He chose not to. Jesus, just as we ourselves, could not do anything apart from God's will. Jesus plainly said that He could not do anything by Himself, but He only did that, which He saw the Father do (John 5:19-20, 30, 36). This is due to the fact, that Jesus operated within the realm of any human being.

In accordance with that thought, note that it was not until after Jesus' baptism, that He stood in the synagogue at Nazareth and proclaimed the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy in Himself, saying, "The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the LORD (Luke 4:18; anointed by God in 3:21-23). It was not until after Christ's anointing, at His baptism, that this Scripture was fulfilled. Before He was anointed at His baptism, it was

still prophetic in nature, although the One who would fulfill it, was alive and well in the world.

Finally, the purpose of Jesus' baptism was to reveal the identity of the Messiah to John the Baptist. John's ministry was to prepare the hearts of Israel for the LORD to visit them, without consuming them, in His wrath for their sins (Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 3:1-7; 4: 5-6). That is why John came preaching repentance from sin, demanding to see visible evidence, stemming from this repentance. He brought the people to understand their moral obligations and the importance of having one's heart right with God (Matthew 3:1-2, 5-12; Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3-14). John preached in the wilderness, telling the people, that although He baptized them with water to repentance, there was One coming after him, who was greater than he, and He would baptize them with the Holy Ghost (Matthew 3:11-12; Mark 1:7-8; Luke 3:16-17; John 1:23, 26, 30-31). John's ministry was to prepare the people for and point the way, toward the Messiah. John, however, did not know who this Messiah was (John 1:30-31). He did not know that his own cousin, was God, manifest in the flesh, the anointed Messiah for Israel, and all the earth. (Luke 1:34-41; John 1:30-31).

The lack of John's knowledge as to the identity of the Messiah, is the purpose for the descent of the Holy Ghost, descending like a dove. Earlier, I mentioned that Matthew and Mark use the third person singular pronoun, "He" in reference to the individual who saw the Spirit of the Lord, descending upon Jesus like a dove, but they never indicate who this "He" was. From the text, it would appear that the "He" was Jesus. In the Gospel of John, John the Baptist used the first person singular "I," referring to who saw the Spirit descending like a dove, indicating that it was he who saw the Spirit of the Lord, descending and abiding upon Jesus. Apparently, John the Baptist was the only one who saw this phenomenon. He explained this in John 1:31-34 when he said:

And I knew Him not: but that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore, am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not: but

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. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.

It was “He that sent” John to baptize which gave him a personal sign, wherewith he could identify the Messiah for whom he prepared the way. This sign was, that the Spirit of the Lord, would descend and abide upon Him. God did not tell John that the Spirit would ascend like a dove, but that was the way it ended up happening. God had to make His Spirit visible to John by revelation because He is invisible. The appearance of the Spirit descending like a dove, was only for John’s sake so that He could finally know the identity of the One he had been preparing the way for. Once the Messiah was manifest to Israel, John’s ministry was close to completion (John 3:30). In defense that John, alone, saw the Spirit descend like a dove, it can be argued that if others would have seen the Spirit descend like a dove, there would have been no reason for John to relate the story to them, as he did (John 1:29-36). After John saw the Spirit descend like a dove, he was able, to boldly proclaim of Jesus, “Behold the Lamb of God!” (John 1:36).

Jesus, the Spirit descending like a dove, and the voice from heaven do not represent the Trinity, as some see this Scripture. The purpose of the Spirit descending like a dove, was that it symbolized the Holy Ghost. It must have been symbolic because the Holy Ghost is not a bird! The appearance of the Spirit descending like a dove was for John’s sake only.

The voice is never said to be the voice of God. It is thought, by some, to be the voice of God, because of the voice’s reference to Jesus as, “my beloved Son.” Since it is God who is said to be Jesus’ Father throughout the New Testament, it is concluded, that this had to be God speaking here. The Scripture says, that Jesus was begotten by the Holy Ghost, thereby making Him Jesus’ Father, so why could the voice not have been the Holy Ghost’s (Matthew 1:20; Luke 1:35)?

Was the Holy Ghost, Jesus' Father, or was it God? Although I believe it was God who spoke, I am making this point, to show the foolishness of trying to find all three members of a Trinity, here. This is a problem one will run into when trying to use this passage to split up the Godhead into members; however, when one understands, that God is one, and that the Holy Ghost and Jesus are manifestations of this one God to man, passages like this, are easily understood.

Just as the Spirit descending like a dove was for the benefit of John, it seems best to understand the voice from heaven, also to be, for the benefit of John. Although this is not said to be the purpose in any of the synoptic Gospels, which mention the voice, the passages do not rule out this idea. In fact, the writers never gave any reason or purpose for the voice. They simply affirmed the historicity of the event, to be factual. I base my hypothesis for the purpose of the voice, on John 12:28-30. In this passage, there was a voice, that came from heaven, too. Jesus said, that this voice was not for Him to hear, but for the people's sake. (A voice from heaven, is a Jewish idiom, meaning that a revelation was given. There was no literal voice, speaking from heaven, at Jesus' baptism. If this was so, the people would have feared and trembled, as was the case near Mount Sinai, in the Old Testament. The only person there that day, was Christ being baptized; however, a special vision was given to John by divine revelation, that Jesus was the Messiah of Israel and was commissioned to baptize with the Holy Ghost).

In conclusion, the baptism of Christ does not indicate a plurality in the Godhead. When the Holy Ghost descended upon Jesus, John saw a symbol of God's Spirit, not a person of the Godhead. The voice from heaven, does not indicate that Jesus was a separate person from God either, but demonstrates the fact that God still existed as the omnipresent Spirit in heaven, even after the incarnation. Jesus was God, manifest in the flesh, and as such, was willingly limited by the incarnation as it pertains to where His presence could be at any given time. To claim that the voice from heaven, or the Spirit descending like a dove, indicates a plurality in the Godhead, is not warranted. This passage only demonstrates the omnipresence of God, and the relationship between the

Father and The Son as it pertains to the incarnation.

Understanding the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

Introduction - The Problem - Alternative Interpretations in the Church - Biblical Teaching - Systematic Formulation - Apologetic Interaction - Relevance to Life and Ministry - Concluding Thoughts

Introduction

This study on the Godhead seeks to understand the relationship of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost as set forth in the Scripture. This is an advanced study. Some of the statements made, or explanations given, might seem startling or non-traditional at first, but when the argument is read in its totality, all such reactions should be pacified. I have attempted to relate all of the relevant Biblical information concerning the subject at hand, and find a working theology to account for all of the data.

I am persuaded that approaching the Scripture with an attitude of humility and openness, realizing that our present understanding may be in error or incomplete, is more important and more noble than merely trying to protect any particular viewpoint. If through this process, one finds that their present understanding is the most adequate understanding, they will be all the better; if this process yields a better understanding or a different understanding, one will also be bettered. Either way, one will be bettered by critically analyzing their own views.

Milton Hall said, "Your ability to learn depends partly on your ability to relinquish what you've held." Although it is not possible to completely divorce one's prior understanding from influencing the reading of Scripture, the author has attempted to approach the Scripture from a non-biased position, not adhering to any theological system. Sometimes, when we receive or adopt a certain system of theology, we have the

tendency to become intellectually dishonest with ourselves, explaining away all that does not fit our model, instead of using it to seriously challenge our present understanding and paradigm. Rather than the theologian having a theology, the theology ends up having him, creating a stumbling block or barrier to discovering truth. I have attempted to distinguish my beliefs from the teaching of the Scripture, not contending for my own personal theology, so that in the end, my theology does not speak more of who I am than of God, and what His truth is.

In order to accomplish the above goal, this course follows a specific theological method known as, “integrative theology,” *which is intended for the exploration and presentation of truth, not for the defense of an already established theology.* In order to understand the flow of this course, a preliminary overview of the method and layout will be helpful.

The first stage states the problem under consideration.

The second stage identifies the various influential solutions to the problems that have arisen throughout Church history.

The third stage explores all relevant Biblical data, addressing the problem in its order of development. Instead of taking a systematic approach to the Scripture, that would combine all information regarding the problem into one package, regardless of the time it was written in, or the author who penned the information, a Biblical theology approach is used, taking into consideration, the time in history, at which, the information was revealed, and the author who penned such information.

There are two underlying assumptions behind this approach. The first, is that revelation is progressive. As time progressed, the content of revelation, also progressed, God, revealing more information to us concerning certain topics. The second assumption, is that each author commonly has his own emphasis or special contribution to the furtherance of this revelation, and therefore, each author’s writings

should be explored separately from the others, to see what particular contribution(s) he gives to the rest of the Biblical revelation.

The presentation of the Scripture is not biased, so as to avoid problematic passages to a certain theological viewpoint. All relevant passages are referenced, but not necessarily exegeted. The purpose of this section, is to do a Scriptural evaluation, constantly looking to see where the Scripture supports the various historical hypotheses, and where it contradicts the same. This section is not apologetically, defending any particular view and condemning any other, but is a simple exploration of the Scripture. There is no authorial statement of belief in this section.

The fourth stage flows from the third - a systematic formulation of the Biblical presentation. After examining the relevant data, a position is taken as to which proposed view is closest to the Biblical revelation, with the fewest number of difficulties. One of the views may be adopted in its totality, modified, or a number of views may be synthesized into one. It is also possible, that none of the views are regarded as being faithful to the Biblical data, and a new model will be adopted.

The fifth stage attempts to defend the position, adopted above, from the attacks leveled against it, by those who hold to the other historical views. As critique is also performed, on the other views, to demonstrate their weaknesses, and to define why they must be rejected, as inadequate.

The sixth stage attempts to demonstrate the practical implication of the view, adopted in the systematic formulation, for life and ministry. Finally, although not considered a separate stage, there is a section of concluding thoughts, leaving the reader with something to reflect on, along with the material presented in the course.

The Problem

The center of any theistic religion, is the god, or gods who are served. Understanding the nature and identity of the deity, or deities, is the heart of most

religions. Judaism is no different. The basis of the Jewish faith is Jehovah. Jews have always maintained, that Jehovah, is one God, one being. With the advent of Jesus Christ and the subsequent inception of the Christian Church, the Jewish understanding of monotheism, was challenged. The teachings of Jesus and His apostles, presented a complex problem to the young Church, because they advocated that Jesus was God Himself, and yet, maintained a distinction between Jesus and the Father. To add to the complication, the Holy Spirit was also spoken of, as being distinct, from the Father and the Son.

Any casual reading of Scripture, presents the reader, with an intricate dilemma. There are three points of seeming discrepancy, that must be resolved. They are as follows: (1) The Bible, clearly teaches, strict monotheism. (2) The Bible also teaches, that the Father is God, Jesus is God, and that the Holy Spirit is God. (3) Finally, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are commonly distinguished, one from another. Christianity has been wrestling with the issue of reconciling these three Biblical teachings, for two millennia. There have been several prominent views, advocated throughout Church history, and many more obscure views, that never gained a large adherence. Today, the Church, must continue to wrestle with the Biblical presentation of the identity of God, and attempt to make sense of the seeming paradox.

How are we to understand the ontological (the essence of being) and economic (function) nature of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? Are there three Gods, or is there one God? What is the relationship of the Father, Son, and Spirit? Is there an ordering relationship of subordinationism, among the three? These questions and many others will be addressed in this course.

Alternative Interpretations in the Church

Several attempts have been made throughout Church history, to reconcile the three difficult teachings of the Christian God, into a working theology. We now turn our attention, to these various theories and to the prominent historical figures, who

embraced them.

Dynamic Monarchianism

Also known as Adoptionistic Monarchianism, this view of the Godhead attempted to preserve monotheism, by denying the absolute deity of Jesus Christ. Jesus was a mere Man, but became endowed with the Holy Spirit, in a special way, at some point in His life (usually attributed to the time of His baptism). Jesus was the *logos* and was *homoousis* (of the same essence) with the Father, but in the same sense as a man's reason, is *homoousios* to Himself. The *logos* was not God, in the strict sense, however, for the same *logos* was present in all men, in degree. The man, Jesus, merely experienced the operation of this power, to such an extent, that the *logos* penetrated the humanity of Christ progressively, resulting in eventual deification. The Holy Spirit was an impersonal force, like the *logos*, and was operative as the grace of God, in the Church.

The founder of this view, was Theodotus of Byzantium. Its most famous proponent, however, was Paul of Samosota.

Modalistic Monarchianism

This form of Monarchianism existed side-by-side Dynamic Monarchianism, but took a different route. This form of Monarchianism embraced a strict monotheism, and opposed the Subordination doctrine of the day, particularly the *logos* doctrine, espoused by the Greek Apologists. It maintained, that God is absolutely one in number, and not one in unity; He is one being, one person. The terms, "Father," "Son," and "Spirit," are three titles for the one God, as He reveals Himself to mankind, relationally and functionally. There is a three-fold mode of revelation of God, but not a tri-personality, within His being.

The Son is not eternal, but is the Father, manifest in flesh for the purpose of redemption. The Holy Spirit is not another personality in the Godhead, nor is He an

impersonal force, but is the Father, as He works among men for the purpose of sanctification.

The major names, attached with this teaching, are Noetus, Praxeas, and Sabellius. The latter, held to a form of Monarchianism, which maintained, that the divine monad projected Himself, through expansion in successive modes. God was known as, Father in creation, as Son in redemption, and as the Holy Spirit in bestowing grace on man. This form of Monarchianism became the prominent Modalistic view, and thus, the belief in Modalism became identified, as Sabellianism.

Modalistic Monarchianism is sometimes referred to, as Patripassianism, meaning that the Father suffered, because the Modalists said, that the Son was the Father, and since the Son suffered on the cross, the Father suffered, likewise.

The historic position of Modalism, is very similar to the doctrinal position, of modern Oneness theology.

Arianism

Although this teaching had its origin in Lucian of Antioch, its most famous propagator and developer, was Arius of Alexandria, from whence, it bears its name. Arius taught, that since God is immutable, His essence cannot be communicated to any other. This being so, the Son and Holy Spirit could not be considered to be God. Jesus was said, to be the first creation of God. In turn, Jesus created everything else. The famous cry of the Arians, concerning Jesus, was, "There was once, when He was not." He was Divine, but not deity. The Spirit, was also created, receiving "His being from the Father through the Son." Only the Father was eternal and immutable. The Son and Spirit, were not consubstantial, coeternal, or coequal with the Father.

Trinitarianism

The Trinitarian doctrine states, that there are three persons within one God: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. According to this view, monotheism is maintained, by confessing God's one essence (*ousia*), but it is also said, that this

essence consists of three distinct persons (*hypostasis*), or subsistences. “Trinity,” simply means, “tri-unity,” expressing the nature of the three-in-one God. The Trinity is not viewed as three separate gods, but as one God, with a three-fold personality. Each subsistence, or personality (person) is coequal, coeternal, and consubstantial with the other two. Each is fully God, in His own right, yet God, could not exist without the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in unity. God’s one essence is, ontologically, three-fold. As Calvin Beisner has said, “...there is one God, who is a being composed of three individuals, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, all of who, are to be worshipped as the same God, and who share in the same substance or essence.

The Trinity is an inseparable, perfect union, in which, each member shares in the work of the other, but there are some unique characteristics, that belong to each member, personally. The distinguishing characteristic of the Father, is that He is unbegotten, the Son is begotten, and the Spirit is proceeding from the Father. Functionally, there is subordination in the Trinity, but only as God works among mankind, for the purpose of redemption. The Father functions as the head. The Son is subject to the Father, and the Spirit is subject to the Son. Ontologically, however, the Trinity is coequal, with no one member of the Trinity being greater or less, than the other two. Ultimately, this tri-unity of God is said to be a mystery, not fully comprehensible, to man.

[Tritheism](#)

Tritheism understands the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost to be three separate Gods, not merely three distinct personalities, within one God. There is not one essence in God’s being, but there are three essences, unified in some manner. Each Person in the Trinity, is similar to the other two, but are as radically separate, as three individual men are separate, one from another.

[Biblical Teaching](#)

In order to determine which of the above views is closest to the Biblical presentation,

we will examine the Biblical data, in its progressive revelation. Due to the plethora of Scriptures, pertaining to the topic at hand, only the most relevant passages, will be cited.

Pentateuch

The beginning of the Bible begins with God, creating the heaven and the earth (Genesis 1:1). It is said, that God's Spirit moved on the face of the waters. This is the first mention of the Spirit of God. Nothing much is said, regarding the nature of God or the Spirit, in this passage. The Book of Numbers, speaks of God, putting His Spirit on people so that they might prophesy the Word of the Lord (11:29). The Spirit is spoken of, as belonging to Jehovah

The heart of the Jewish faith, is the *Shema*, "Hear O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one" (Deuteronomy 6:4). Jehovah was declared to be one, as opposed to the polytheism of the surrounding nations. The word translated, "one" has given rise to serious debate. The Hebrew word is *echad*, appearing 977 times in the OT. The word can signify a unity, rather than an absolute numerical one. Trinitarians see this, as an indication, that God is not absolutely, one in person, but only one, in unity. There is only one essence, but the unity, allowed by *echad*, allows for three persons, in unity. Of the 977 times, this word appears, however, only a handful have the meaning of unity. One such example, is when God said, that man and woman would be *one* flesh (Genesis 2:24). It is obvious that *one*, cannot be referring to one physical body, but rather a unity, between the two. Another example is found in Genesis 11:6, where it is said, that the people (plural) are *echad*. Again, unity is being implied.

It is definitely true, that *echad* can refer to one in unity, but the overwhelming majority of the time, it is used to refer to something singular in number, not in unity. The mere fact that this is the majority use, does not demand that *echad* means singular in number, here in Deuteronomy, any more than the fact that it can mean unity would demand that it must mean unity. If it does refer to a unity of persons, it could easily

imply a plurality of Gods, in unity, just like a committee. God stressed His oneness to Israel, however, to guard against the polytheism of the surrounding nations. *Echad*, being interpreted as a unity, would lend itself to a polytheistic conception of God, which would defeat God's entire emphasis for His singularity.

Two things must be concluded. First, when *echad* is being used to mean unity of one, the context is clear, that this meaning is demanded. Second, it must be confessed, that understanding the nature of God, from this one word alone, is not conclusive (no pun intended).

There is another Hebrew word for "one," namely *yachid*. This word is a strict numerical one. Had Jehovah wanted to conclusively demonstrate, that He is one in number, it is suggested that this word could have been used. Surely, God could have used this word, but it should be noted that this word, is used in a stricter sense for an only child, or for expressing the feelings of solitude, loneliness, and isolation (Genesis 22:16; Judges 11:34; Psalm 25:16; 68:7; Jeremiah 6:26).

The first commandment of the Ten Commandments plainly prohibited the worship of any other gods (Exodus 19:3; Deuteronomy 5:7). Jehovah alone was to be worshipped, as God. Again, monotheism was being emphasized.

The only other reference to God's Spirit in the Pentateuch, is found in Genesis 6:3, where Jehovah said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man...." Here again, the Spirit is identified, as belonging to Jehovah.

Historical Books

There is much more mention of the Spirit in the historical books, than there is in the Pentateuch. The Spirit continues to be mentioned, as belonging to God (Judges 11:29; 1 Samuel 19:20, 23; 1 Kings 22:24). He is also directly connected to God. David said, that the Spirit of Jehovah spoke by Him, and then goes on to say, what *elohim* said (2

Samuel 23:2-3). The Spirit is clearly said, to be God.

The Historical books, may often speak, of the Spirit coming on men to prophesy the Word of Jehovah, anointing them for certain temporal utterances, just as the Spirit was given to men, in the wilderness wandering for the building of the Tabernacle (Exodus 28:3; 31:3; Judges 14:6; 1 Samuel 10:6; 2 Chronicles 15:1).

The phrase, “the angel of the LORD,” appears twenty-five times in the historical books, second in number, only to the Pentateuch. Sometimes the angel seems to be Jehovah Himself (Judges 6:22), while, at other times, He appears to only be an angel (Judges 13:3). The OT data, concerning this one, identified as the “Angel of Jehovah” is unclear, and not much can be gleaned from it. It may simply be an angel, or a theophany of the Lord.

Poetry and Wisdom

As in the historical books, the poetry and wisdom literature, speaks much more of the Spirit, than does the Pentateuch. Job said, that the Spirit of Jehovah had made him, and the breath of the Almighty, had given him life (Job 33:4). This is an example of a Hebrew poetic form, known as *parallelism*. Job was equating the Spirit of God and the breath of God. What is important, is that the Spirit is seen as the creator. In Genesis 2:7, God is said to have breathed into man, His breath, and man became a living soul. Job identified *elohim*, as the Spirit of God.

The term, “Spirit of God” appears many times in the OT, but the first appearance of “Holy Spirit” is in Psalm 51:11, when David pleaded with God, to not take away His Holy Spirit from him, which was tantamount to being cast out of God’s presence. This is one out of three occurrences of *qadosh ruach* in all of the OT. This Holy Spirit pertained to God, and was parallel to *elohim*’s presence.

God is called the “Holy One of Israel,” several times in the poetic books (Psalms

71:22; 78:41; 89:18). The context of these verses, calls *elohim*, this Holy One. This title for God, arises out of the stress on God's Oneness, found in the Pentateuch.

The Prophets

Of all the prophets, Isaiah spoke the most, concerning the person of God. Isaiah is famous for defending God's monotheism against the polytheistic idolatry of his day. Jehovah said through Isaiah, "I am the LORD: that is my name: and My Glory will I not give to another, neither My praise to graven images" (Isaiah 42:9). Again, He said, "...before Me, there was no God formed, neither will there be after me. I, even I, am the LORD; and beside Me there is no Saviour" (Isaiah 43:10-11). Yet, still Jehovah said, "I am the first, and I am the last; and beside Me there is no God. ...Is there a God beside Me? Yes, there is no God; I know not any" (Isaiah 44:6, 8). Jehovah made all things, having stretched forth the heaven alone, and spreading the earth abroad by Himself (Isaiah 44:24). God was making His point clear. He was the only true God, and He was alone. There was none else besides Him. He was unique in His singularity, for He said, "...I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like Me..." (Isaiah 46:9). The language could not have been stronger. Jehovah is unique, one, and alone, in all that He does.

It was previously mentioned, that the phrase "Holy Spirit" only occurs, three times in the OT. One occurrence was in Psalm 51:11. The other two, are found in Isaiah 63:10-11. Here it is said, that the children of Israel, during the wilderness wandering, "vexed His [Jehovah's] Holy Spirit," through their rebellion against Him. It is then said, that the people questioned, "Where is He that put His Holy Spirit within Him?" This Holy Spirit is none other than Jehovah, who brought the children of Israel, out of bondage.

Isaiah did seem to distinguish Jehovah from His Spirit when He said, "and now the Lord Jehovah, and His Spirit, has sent me" (Isaiah 48:16). This seems to say that Jehovah is different than His Spirit, and that the two sent Isaiah to the children of Jacob. It is important to notice, however, that the Hebrew verb for "sent," is singular. If

Jehovah was to be distinguished, in person, from His Spirit, the verb would need to be in the plural.

A famous prophecy of the coming Messiah is very revealing, It was said, “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6). The Son would be God. The author also identifies the Son, as the everlasting Father, which is very telling, as it pertains to the deity of the Messiah. Jesus was the Father of all creation. He was the source of origin, from which, all else has come. This view of Jesus, is not conducive to Arianism, who declared Jesus to be a creation of the Father, for Isaiah said, “the Son would be the everlasting Father Himself.”

Jehovah predicted a time, through the prophet Joel, when He would pour out His Spirit on all flesh (Joel 2:28-29). This Spirit is identified, as the Holy Spirit, in Acts 2:4, when this Scripture was first fulfilled. The Spirit of the OT is the Holy Spirit of the NT, which is consistently identified, as the Spirit of God, in the OT.

Synoptic Gospels

Matthew began his Gospel by speaking of the birth of Christ. To this, he said, “that the child whom Mary carried in her womb, was conceived by the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 1:20). This was in fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy, that a virgin would conceive and bring forth a child, named Emmanuel, meaning “God with us” (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23). This child was Jesus, who is God, among men.

Peter’s bold declaration to Jesus, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16), demonstrates Peter’s belief in the deity of Jesus. Jesus told Peter, that flesh and blood had not revealed this truth to Him, but the Father which was in heaven (v. 17). If “Son of God” here, only refers to Jesus’ humanity, no revelation from the Father would have been necessary. Anybody could have seen that Jesus was a

human being, by just looking at Him. Even the Jews understood that He was a genuine human being. It is what the Jews could not believe, that Peter understood by the revelation of God; Jesus was Divine, being both, God and man, simultaneously.

Although Jesus never overtly proclaimed His deity, He did make certain statements and exercise certain prerogatives, that clearly *implied*, His deity. If Jesus was not God, indeed these statements and allusions He made, concerning Himself, would have been blasphemous. For example, Jesus forgave sins. He said to the paralytic, who was lowered through the roof, "Son, your sins are forgiven" (Mark 2:15). The scribes present in the room thought Jesus' statement was blasphemous, saying, "Who can forgive sin, but God alone?" (v. 7). If Jesus truly did not have the power to forgive, and had not truly forgiven this man's sins (which only God can do), then He had the perfect opportunity to clear up the matter, when the Jews inquired of His Words. Instead of pointing out the scribes misunderstanding of His Words, Jesus said, "Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, "Your sins are forgiven you;" or to say, "Arise, and take up your bed, and walk?" "But, that you may know that the Son of man has Power on earth to forgive sins, (He says to the sick of the palsy,), I say unto you, Arise, and take up your bed, and go your way into your house" (vs. 9-11).

Jesus claimed authority in respect to the Law of God. One such example, is the law of the Sabbath. God established the Sabbath, for Israel, as one of the 613 commandments of the Law of Moses, that they had to obey. Because God had made the Law, He alone had the Power to alter or repeal it. We see Jesus, however, claiming the authority to alter the Sabbath, when His disciples were questioned, by the Pharisees, for picking grain heads on the Sabbath. Jesus' response was to remind them of the time when David ate of the shewbread, when fleeing from Saul (Mark 2:25-26). The shewbread, was strictly for the priests. For anyone else to eat it, was a violation of the Law of Moses, but God never punished David. In conclusion, Jesus said, "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath: Therefore, the Son of Man, is Lord also of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27-28)...Jesus clearly claimed the right to redefine the Sabbath, or disregard it altogether, if He found it necessary, a right

that clearly belonged to God alone.

When John the Baptist made inquiry as to Jesus' identity, Jesus quoted Isaiah 35:5-6, which spoke about the eyes of the blind being opened, the ears of the deaf being opened, etc. He was implying that He was fulfilling this Scripture. When examining that passage in Isaiah, it is to be noticed, that the time of the fulfillment would be, when Israel's God would come to them, with a vengeance (Isaiah 35:4). Jesus, again, was claiming to be the *elohim* of the OT.

John the Baptist was preparing the way of Jehovah, God, in fulfillment of Isaiah 40:3. John the Baptist fulfilled this prophecy, when He came to the wilderness preparing the hearts of the people to receive Christ Jesus (Matthew 3:3). Jesus is Jehovah.

The Holy Spirit is not only seen to be the One who conceived Jesus, but He is also seen, descending on Jesus at His baptism (Mark 1:10), revealing revelation to Simeon (Luke 2:26), leading Jesus into the wilderness (Luke 4:1), and teaching believers what to say when the occasion calls for it (Luke 12:12). This demonstrates, a distinction in function, of the Holy Spirit.

In the Great Commission, Jesus said, "that all power was given to Him in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18). This would make Jesus, the Almighty. The fact that it says it was *given* to Him however, implies that there is one who gives, and one who receives. This draws attention to a distinction between the Father and the Son. Because Jesus had all power, He commanded His disciples to "teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19). This verse is believed to reveal the Trinity by Trinitarians, and the Oneness of God, by the Modalists. Both emphasize the singularity of *name*. To the Trinitarians, this shows that Father, Son, and Spirit are a singular essence. To Oneness believers, the significance of the singular name, is that the Father, Son, and Spirit, are referring to different self-revelations of the same person. Many Bible commentaries and scholars point to the fact, that Matthew 28:19, was not the actual Words of Jesus.

Acts

The Book of Acts is unique, in that, it is the only book in the NT, that gives us the content of the message, preached by the early Church to the lost world. What is very interesting, is that the apostles did not stress the deity of Christ, but rather, they stressed the humanity of Christ. There are numerable Scriptures, which speak

of the Father and the Son, as being distinct. Peter said, that Jesus was a “Man approved of God among you, by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you...” (Acts 2:22). This is definitely relational language, being employed to describe the Father/Son relationship. It is said, that God raised Jesus from the dead (2:32), and made Him Lord and Christ (2:36). This also shows a distinction between one who makes and one who is made.

One clear reference to Christ’s deity, is Peter’s attributing to Him, the title, the Holy One (Acts 3:14). This was a name for Jehovah in the OT, as has been stated previously. This Holy One was denied by the people, condemned to death, but raised again, by His Father and sent to Israel again (3:26). (See also 9:20; 10:36, for other references to Christ’s deity).

After suffering a beating by the Sanhedrin, the unified prayer of the apostles was addressed to God, saying, “For of a truth against your holy child, Jesus, whom you have anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, to do whatsoever your hand and your counsel determined before to be done. And now Lord...grant to your servants, that with all boldness, they may speak your Word, by stretching forth your hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done, by the name of your holy child, Jesus” (Acts 4:27-30). The prayer was addressed to *theos* (God), and they spoke to God *about* His Son, as though He were other than God. Jesus is referred to, in the third person, not the first. They were not praying to Jesus, but to God, about Jesus.

The Holy Spirit is shown to be God, when Peter said, that Ananias lied to the Holy Spirit, and then turned around, in the same manner, and said, that he lied to God (Acts 5:3-4). There is no mention of the Son. If, according to Trinitarianism, each member of the Trinity partook in the activity of each other member's activity, it would seem, that Jesus should also be mentioned. The very fact that the Holy Spirit and God, are used interchangeably, seems to indicate, that the Holy Spirit, is God Himself.

In Paul's final conversation with the Ephesian elders at Miletus, he commanded them to guard the flock, and "to feed the Church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28). God is said to have had blood. We know that a Spirit is not flesh, and therefore, does not have blood, so this must be referring to the humanity of Jesus; yet, it can be said that God, through Christ, shed His blood for the Church. This is a strong case for the absolute deity of Jesus Christ.

Pauline Corpus

There is no doubt that Paul upheld the monotheism of the OT, when he said, that "God is one" (Galatians 3:20). Later, he told the Corinthians, "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 through Him" (1 Corinthians 8:6). The one God, that Paul worshipped, was the Father. He also said, that there is one Jesus Christ. Grammatically, Jesus is not identified with God. The one God was identified with the Father...Paul completed that thought, by speaking further of the Father, and then said, that there is one Jesus Christ. Here we see, a distinction between the Father and Son. This cannot be a distinction of deity, however, lest we have two gods, or an Arian demigod. It is referring to God, as Father, who is transcendent as Spirit, and God, as He is known to us, in the man, Jesus Christ.

Jesus, "is the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15; See also, 2 Corinthians 4:4). What did Paul mean when He declared Jesus to be God's image? We know that

a physical likeness is not in view here, because God is a Spirit, and therefore, cannot have a physical body. The Greek word, translated “image,” is *eikon*. Its root is *eiko*, meaning likeness, resemblance, or representation. *Eikon* denotes, both the representation and manifestation of a substance. Notice, that Paul contrasted Jesus’ image, to that of the *invisible* God. The point Paul was trying to convey to his readers, was that Jesus is the visible representation of God, to man. That is why Jesus could say, “He that has seen Me, has seen the Father” (John 14:9; See also 12:45).

For it to be said, that Jesus is like God, is to say that, He is God. God is unique. What likeness could Jesus have had with God, other than that of His Divine essence? It cannot be speaking of the likeness, in which, all human beings bear of God (Genesis 2:7), because this would not have distinguished Jesus’ likeness with God from ours. The likeness, then, must be that of Divine essence. Because the Divine essence of God cannot be changed, Jesus’ deity cannot be any different than that of the Father’s, because His Divine essence cannot be fragmented.

Paul could have used other Greek words, if he only meant to declare that Jesus was similar to God, as Arianism contends. If Paul believed Jesus to possess a likeness to God, but not His very essence and being, being some sort of a different substance from Him, he could have used *homoioima*. This word indicates a “likeness,” but stresses “the resemblance to an archetype, though the resemblance may not be derived...” Or, Paul could have used *eidos*, meaning “a shape, or form.” This word, however, is only an appearance, “not necessarily based on reality.” Paul used *eikon* instead, to express that Jesus was the exact representation of the Father, in His essence and being.

In another place, Paul said, “For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9). The New International Version translates this verse as, “For in Christ, all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.” “Dwells,” is the translation from the Greek word, *katoikeo*, meaning “to permanently settle down in a dwelling.” “Fullness,” is from the Greek word, *pleroma*, indicating that which “is filled up.” It is the fullness of the Godhead that dwells in Jesus, but what is the Godhead? The word is translated

from *theotes*, meaning “divine essence, or the very person of God.” Considering the Greek behind this verse, then, Paul said, that the fullness of the Divine essence, has permanently settled, in Jesus’ body.

This verse gives us some very important truths concerning Christ’s deity, in relation to His humanity. First of all, we know the fullness of deity, in Jesus, consisted of a completeness of Divine attributes and characteristics, lacking nothing. Jesus did not merely possess some divine attributes, but rather, He possessed every aspect of deity. This verse also demonstrates the permanence of the incarnation. Lastly, this verse declares, that the deity resident, in Jesus, was resident, *bodily*. This indicates a specific and defined form.

In 1 Corinthians 11:3, Paul said, the head of Christ is God. Christ is subjected to the Father. This is a clear indication, that the Father and the Son are distinct. If Christ is to be equated with the Father, there could be no way of speaking of Christ, as being subject to God. This would seem to back up the Arian claims, that Christ is God-like, but not absolute deity. It must be noted, that by distinguishing Christ from God, Paul is either denying any Divinity to Christ, or is simply referring to Christ’s subjected role to God the Father, because of His Humanity. The latter seems to fit the Biblical context.

In his first letter to Timothy, Paul declared that “God was manifest in the flesh” (1 Timothy 3:16). This statement was reminiscent of his earlier statement to the Corinthians, that “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself...” (2 Corinthians 5:19). Jesus was no ordinary man, but was God Himself, in the form of a Man, for the purpose of redemption.

Paul again, affirmed that there is one God, adding that there is also “one mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5). Here again, we see Jesus being separated from God, as though He were not Divine. He is not identified with God, but is the mediator between God and men. This must be referring to Jesus’ role, as redeemer in His humanity. If not, then we have one person of the Godhead,

mediating for another person of the Godhead. If one member of the Godhead, the Father, needed a mediator between He and His Creation, why would the Son also not need a mediator? God needs a mediator. If Jesus, as God, does not need a mediator, then He could not be God.

This Scripture is not denying Jesus' deity, as God, but is distinguishing Him, from God, in His role as our mediator.

Johanine Corpus

John said, that "in the beginning was the *logos*, and the *logos* was with God, and the *logos* was God. The same was in the beginning with God. ...And the *logos* 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 1:1-2, 14). The fact that John says that the *logos* was *with* God, implies a distinction between God and His *logos*. If the *logos* was to be exactly identified as the same as God, "with" could not be used. It implies, that something is being compared. One cannot be *with* someone, if they *are* that someone. You cannot be with yourself! At the same time, however, the *logos* is identified, as being the very essence of God Himself.

In the Johanine Corpus, we find some of Jesus' own statements, as to the nature of the relationship between He and His Father. They truly reveal who Jesus is. Jesus made some statements, that overtly declared, His deity.

Jesus made a very bold statement, when He told the Jews, "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58). Jesus did not say, "I was," because He was referring to the name, by which, Jehovah revealed Himself to Moses, at the burning bush (Exodus 3:14). By this statement, Jesus proclaimed Himself to be the Jehovah of the OT, confirming His pre-existence, as God.

On another occasion, Jesus told the Jews, "He that sees Me, sees Him that sent Me"

(John 12:45). A parallel to this statement occurred during Jesus' discourse with His apostles, as found in John 14:5-9. Jesus declared to Thomas, "If you had known Me, you should have known my Father also: and from henceforth, you know Him and have seen Him" (v.7). Philip could not understand this statement, so he asked Jesus to show the Father to all the disciples, and then they would be satisfied. Jesus responded, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet, have you not known Me, Philip? He that has seen Me, has seen the Father; and how do you say then, Show us the Father?" (v.9). According to Jesus' own testimony, to see Him was to see the Father (God). One cannot get a much clearer statement than this, as to who Jesus claimed to be. He was the Father in visible form.

It is particularly interesting to note the response of those, to whom, Jesus spoke these profound statements. After Jesus told the Jews, "My Father has been working, and I work" (John 5:17), the Jews sought to kill Him. John gave us their reasoning when he said, "Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because He not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God, was His Father, making Himself equal with God" (v. 18). The Jews understood that Jesus was laying a claim to be God Himself. The Greek word, *isos* is translated here, as "equal." It means, to be "the same as" something. Jesus put Himself on the same plane, or grounds of deity as the Father.

From our perspective, Jesus' terminology of "Son" and "Father" seem to imply some sort of subordination to God. It gives us the feeling that He is less than God. ...The Jews, however, did not view this terminology, in the same manner. They believed, that everything produced after its own kind, having the same nature as that which bore it. Jesus calling God His "Father," is tantamount to saying, He is God. This is clearly witnessed in the above passage.

When speaking to the Pharisees, Jesus said that He gives His sheep eternal life, and no man could pluck the sheep out of His hand (John 10:28). Then Jesus said that His Father gave them to Him, and no one was able to pluck them out of His Father's hand (v. 29). Jesus had just claimed that the same sheep were in the Father's hand, and in His own. Jesus, knowing the apparent contradiction of this statement, confirmed the

Jew's suppositions of the importance of His statement, and immediately claimed that He and His Father were one (John 10:30). Immediately, the Jews took up stones to stone Him (v. 31). When Jesus asked them for what good work they desired to kill Him, they responded, "For a good work we stone you not; but, for blasphemy; and because that You, being a Man, make Yourself God" (v. 33). They understood, that by Jesus claiming to have the Father's sheep in His hand, He was claiming to be God. The Jews did not understand Jesus' reference to God as His "Father," to mean that Jesus was less than God, or some sort of a second-rate god.

Rather, they understood His claim to be that of Jehovah, God Himself. Their reasoning was that Jesus, who was a Man, had made Himself God (v. 33). This was blasphemy to the Jews and was deserving of the death penalty. They understood perfectly what Jesus was claiming. If Jesus was not declaring equality with the Father, it would have been the perfect opportunity to explain what He really meant. Instead, He continued to back up His claim (vs. 34-38).

Now that we have heard Jesus' own testimony concerning His deity, let us turn our attention to what the apostles thought of Him. After Jesus' resurrection, Thomas said to Jesus, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). The Greek word *kurios*, translated "Lord," is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *adonai*; and the Greek *theos* translated, "God" is the Greek counterpart to the Hebrew *elohim*. For Thomas, being a monotheistic Jew, to call Jesus his Lord and God, knowing that the only Lord God was Jehovah (Deuteronomy 6:4), would have been blasphemy if Thomas had not believed that Jesus was Jehovah Himself, in flesh.

Although John as some of the most powerful testimonies to the absolute deity of Jesus Christ, he also makes many distinctions between the Father, Son, and Spirit. His Gospel abounds with statements and terminologies that seem to imply an inferiority of Jesus to God, or the Son to the Father. ...Even Jesus Himself, said that His Father was greater than He Himself was (John 14:28). On another occasion, Jesus said, "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the

Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows Him all things that He Himself does” (John 5:19-20; See also 3:32). He plainly said of His own ability, “I can of Mine Ownself, do nothing” (John 5:30).

The Gospel of John abounds with statements like these. According to Jesus, even what He taught He received from His Father. The very words were taught to Him before He ever taught them to others (John 7:16; 8:26, 28, 38, 40; 12:48-50; 17:8). Jesus was the *recipient*, not the *author* of Divine revelation. He spoke of the Father, as being *with* Him (8:29), as proceeding from and being sent by Him (8:42; 14:24; 16:27-28; 17:8, 18), as returning to Him (16:5, 7, 10), and as being sanctified by Him (10:36). The Father is even said, to honor the Son (8:55).

The Spirit is spoken of, as being distinct from the Father and the Son. Jesus said, that He would pray to the Father to give the disciples another Comforter. This Comforter was identified as the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-17, 26). The Holy Spirit would be sent by the Father to teach the disciples. Then, Jesus said, that He was that Spirit that would come to them by saying, “At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you” (John 14:20). He could not have been referring to being in them physically, for that would be impossible. He could only be referring to Himself, as the Spirit.

The Scriptures commonly refer to God and Jesus, as though they are two separate individuals. Jesus continually spoke *of* His Father, and *to* His Father, as though they were separate from one another. He told the Pharisees, speaking of His Father, “Of whom you say, that He is your God” (John 8:54). Jesus also said, “He that has my commandments, and keeps them, it is he that loves Me: and he that loves Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love Him, and will manifest Myself to 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 14:21, 23).

Jesus’ lengthy prayer to God for His disciples, found in John, chapter 17, is

overflowing with this type of terminology. In verse three, He said, “That they might know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” Here, Jesus called the Father, “God,” and the only God at that. ...Even though Jesus was God, He acknowledged the Father, as superior to Himself, and spoke to Him in a manner like any human being would.

Jesus spoke of Himself in the third person. This gives us an indication of the way, in which, the Hebrews used language. It does not make any sense to us to speak of ourselves, by using our own name as though we are speaking of someone else. This peculiar usage of words, might help us to understand, the peculiarities of these, and other Biblical statements.

Jesus also prayed, that those who believed in Him, would be one, even as He and the Father were one (John 7:11). The word, translated one, is the Greek neuter *hen*, which occurs as the predicate nominative to *eimi*, meaning “to be.” In the neuter, when *hen* does not modify a noun, the meaning is *one thing*, not one person. Jesus was not saying that He was one, in person with the Father, but one, in unity. Even the context displays that this was His meaning. Jesus not only said that He and His Father were one, but also prayed that the Church would be one, in the same manner as He and the Father were (again, implying a distinction). It is impossible for the Church to be one, in any other way, than a unified one. We are one, when we have the mind of Christ. Jesus said, that He wanted us to be one, even as He and the Father, are one. This must be one in unity, and not one, in person.

Let it be remembered, however, that Jesus is praying. God does not need to pray, but men do. Jesus was praying because He was a man, albeit God, manifest in flesh. He was unified with the mind of the Father. Jesus plainly declared, that He always did that which pleased His Father, and that, He only did that which the Father was doing, and said what the Father told Him to say (John 8:29; 5:19; 8:26). Even Jesus said, that His will was in unity with the Father’s (Luke 22:42; John 4:34; 5:30). The fact that Jesus said He was in unity with the Father, does not belittle or differentiate Christ’s deity from

the Father's, but shows the genuineness of Jesus' humanity.

Did John record all of these statements to show that Jesus' deity was in some way inferior to the Father or separate from Him? It would not seem likely, since John's Gospel also contains some of the most powerful assertions of Jesus' deity and equality with God. Such statements include, "I and my Father are one," "Before Abraham was, I am," and "He who has seen Me has seen the Father."

The book of Revelation sheds some interesting light on the relationship of the Father to the Son. It is said, that in the New Jerusalem, "there will be no more curse: but, the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it; and His servants shall serve Him" (Revelation 22:3). God and the Lamb, Jesus Christ, are both mentioned, but the singular pronoun *He* is used, denoting that one individual is in view. It further says, that "they will see *His* face; and *His* name will be in their foreheads" (v. 4, italics mine). Jesus is identified as God Himself.

Other New Testament Writings

The author of Hebrews said, that Jesus is the "express image of His [God's] person" (Hebrews 1:3). The English phrase translated, "express image" is from the Greek word, *charakter*. It is this word, from which, we get our English word, "character." This is the only occurrence of the word in the New Testament. It means, "to impress upon or stamp." It denotes an engraving from a tool, which impresses an image into that which is being engraved. This impression, then, is a characteristic of the instrument used to produce it. What is produced, corresponds precisely, with the instrument.

The Greek word translated "person," is *hypostasis*. Although rendered as "person," it is more properly understood as "essence of being, or the substance of a thing." The etymology of this word, has to do with "the sediment or foundation, under a building." It is that which underlies, makes up, or supports something. In this context, we are talking about what underlies, or makes up God, i.e., God's subsistence.

Jesus, therefore, is not just a representation of God, but is the very visible impression of God's invisible substance and essence. He is God's very nature, expressed in humanity. To say it another way, He is the corresponding engraving of God's essence of being, in human form. Liddon summed it up best, when he said, this verse implies that Jesus "is both, personally distinct from, and yet, literally equal to, Him of whose essence, He is the adequate imprint."

What is important to notice here, is that Jesus, is the image of God's *hypostasis*. In context, the God who spoke to us by His Son, is the Father of the Son (Hebrews 1:1-2, 5). The author is declaring Jesus to be the image of God, the Father's subsistence. There is no mention of the Son having His own *hypostasis*, or there being more than one *hypostasis*. Nowhere in the Bible, is God said to be three *hypostases*. Jesus, rather, is the image of the invisible subsistence of God.

Hebrews 1:8-9, quotes Psalm 45:6-7, saying, "But to the Son He says, Your throne, O God, is forever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom. You have loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore, God, even Your God, has anointed You with oil of gladness above Your fellows." Psalm forty-five, was a prophetic psalm, concerning the Messiah. Here, the Son is referred to as God, and yet, He is also said, to have a God ("even Your God"). This verse clearly refers to the Son, in His dual nature, as both Man and God, viewing Him as God, and as one who has a God.

James did not speak much of God, but he did reaffirm the monotheism of the OT saying, "You believe there is one God. You do well: the devils also believe and tremble" (James 2:19).

Peter references the Father, Son, and Spirit, attributing election to the Father; sanctification to the Spirit; and the sacrifice for redemption to Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:2). He also said, that it was the Spirit of Christ, that testified to the prophets, the things they wrote about (1 Peter 1:11). In his second Epistle, Peter attributed this role, to the Holy

Spirit (2 Peter 1:21). The Spirit of Christ is equated with the Holy Spirit.

Peter also used this same terminology, when He said, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy...” (1 Peter 1:3). In the Greek language, the definite article appears with “God,” but, not with “Father.” This means, that “Father” and “God” are two terms, referring to the same individual. The Father of Jesus, is also, the God of Jesus. If Jesus was God, manifest in flesh, how could it be said, that He has a God? This seems contradictory. It seems to imply, that Jesus is not Divine at all, or His deity is inferior to the Father’s, and thus, the Father is Jesus’ God. (See also 2 Corinthians 11:31; Ephesians 1:3).

Jude spoke of being loved by God the Father, kept by Jesus Christ, and praying in the Holy Spirit (Jude 1, 20). All three references are made, and different roles are attributed, to each.

Systematic Formulation

The plethora of Scriptures, which pertain to the problem at hand, is exhausting. The above survey, does not do justice, to all the evidence that could be brought out. Looking at what has been presented, however, what are we to make of it? What is the ontological nature of God? What is the relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? We now turn our attention, to tying up the loose ends, to the extent that this is possible.

The Spirit

First, we will summarize the nature of the relationship of the Spirit to the Father and Son. The OT speaks of the “Spirit of God,” quite frequently. This simply means, that the Spirit belongs to God. God is Spirit (John 4:24), and God is Holy (Joshua 24:19), so it is no surprise, that the Spirit is referred to, as belonging to Jehovah, in the OT, or as being *the Holy Spirit* in the NT. God’s very nature is a Holy Spirit.

We have seen, that the Spirit is distinguished from the Father and the Son (John 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:13; Romans 8:26). We have also seen, that the Spirit is equated with Jesus (John 14:20). The Spirit, is also equated, with the Father. It is said, that the Holy Spirit caused Jesus' conception (Matthew 1:18-20; Luke 1:35), thus making the Holy Spirit, the Father of Jesus. The Father, however, is spoken of, as being Jesus' Father, also. Jesus did not have two fathers, but one. It seems, that the Holy Spirit was Jehovah, *who is spoken of, after the conception, as being Jesus' Father.*

In Romans 9:9, 11, Paul said, "But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of the God dwells in you. Now, if any man does not have the Spirit of Christ, He is none of His...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 give life to your mortal bodies by His Spirit, that dwells in you." In verse fifteen, we are said, to be filled with the Spirit. If the Spirit of God, is the Father, as contrasted with the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of adoption, then we are said to be filled with the Father, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. These names are used, interchangeably. It cannot be that, we are filled with three Spirits, for there is only one Spirit (Ephesians 4:4). It seems that, the Holy Spirit, is the Father, and is the Spirit of Christ (See also 2 Corinthians 3:17; compare Acts 5:3, with 5:4; Romans 8:26, with 8:34; 1 Corinthians 3:16, with 6:19). Calvin, referring to Romans 8:9-11, said, "...the Son is said to be of the Father only; the Spirit of both, the Father and the Son. This is done in many passages, but none more clearly, than in the eighth chapter of Romans, where the same Spirit, is called indiscriminately, the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of Him, who raised up Christ, from the dead."

To this, McGrath also adds:

It is important to realize, that the New Testament tends to think of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ as much as of God. The Spirit is understood to stand in the closest of possible relationships to Christ, so that His presence, among the people of

Christ, is equivalent to the presence of Christ Himself, just as the presence of Christ is treated, as being that of God Himself. In other words, to encounter the Son is to encounter the Father and not some demigod or surrogate. To encounter the Spirit is really to encounter the Son, and hence, the Father.

There is a reason why the Scripture speaks of God, as the Holy Spirit. God's Holy Spirit is "just God Himself, in the innermost essence of His Being." The references to God's Holy Spirit, often speak of God, in activity. The term, serves to signify, a certain aspect of God's self-revelation to man. As a result, the term, "Holy Spirit," should not be overlooked, or substituted with "Father" or "Jesus." There is a reason why God is called the Holy Spirit. If terminology was not important, God would not have called Himself by this name, and associated the Holy Spirit with certain activities, such as sanctification.

We must still ask then, why the Holy Spirit is frequently distinguished, from the Father (or God) and Son. We can make as much distinction between God and His Spirit, as we can between a man and his Spirit. Paul seemed to make this point, when he said, concerning the deep things of God: "But God has revealed them to us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searches all things, yes, even the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man, except the Spirit of man, which is in him? Even so, no one knows the things of God, except the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:12-13). I can distinguish my Spirit from my flesh, and speak of my Spirit, as distinct from me, but my Spirit is not a distinct person, within me. I am one person, a unified whole, being both, body and Spirit. God's Spirit, is no more distinct, from Him, than my Spirit is, from me.

The Father and Son

Concerning the relationship of the Father and Son, the Scriptures seem to teach, that the relationship is one of Spirit to flesh. I say, "seem," because the Bible never defines it in this way, but the evidence best supports, such a conclusion. God, in His transcendence, the One who fathered His unique Son, when He overshadowed Mary, relates to Jesus Christ as a Father, Who is God, immanent in the world, being the

prophesied Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14).

As has already been shown, the Bible clearly teaches, that there is only one God (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:21; Mark 10:18; 12:29; John 5:44; 17:3; Romans 3:30; 1 Corinthians 8:4, 6; Galatians 3:20; Ephesians 4:6; 1 Timothy 1:17; 2:5; James 2:19; Jude 25). One fact, that is commonly overlooked in our attempt to demonstrate that Jesus is God, is that, God is not *identified* with Jesus, as being identically the same. Jesus said to the Father, "...that they might know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17:3). Jesus prayed to the Father, as being the only God, referring to God, as someone other than He, Himself. In 1 Corinthians 8:4-6, the Father is again, identified as the only God, and Jesus Christ, is distinguished from Him.

Other Scriptures, which portray Jesus as being other than God, include Luke 2:52, where it is said of Jesus that, He "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." How does one grow in a favor with God, if one is God? Scripture also speaks, of Jesus, as having a God (Ephesians 1:3; Hebrews 1:9; 1 Peter 1:3). How does God have a God? Even Jesus Himself said, He had a God: "I ascend to My Father, and Your Father; and to My God, and Your God" (John 20:17). Jesus cried out to God on the cross saying, "My God, My God, Why have you forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46). Again, this seems to present a picture, of Jesus, as though He is someone, other than God.

Still another example, is Jesus' statement, "But now, you seek to kill me, a man that has told you a truth, which I heard from God..." (John 8:40). Again, Jesus said, "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe in Me also" (John 14:1). In both of these statements, Jesus is not spoken of, as being God. The disciples were told, to believe in God *and* Jesus. If the Scripture was trying to portray Jesus as God, in this case, Jesus should have said, to believe in Him, because He was God. Other passages include, Acts 2:22; 4:10; 7:55; 10:38; Romans 10:9).

What are we to make of these things? Should we conclude that Jesus is not God? No, for we have already demonstrated, that the Bible teaches, that He is God. What this demonstrates is, that God was not centralized in the person of Christ, so that God could no longer be said, to be in heaven. As Alister McGrath points out:

In one sense, Jesus is God; in another, he isn't. Thus, Jesus is God incarnate - but, He still prays to God, without giving the slightest indication, that He is talking to Himself? Jesus is not identical with God, in that, it is obvious, that God continued to be in heaven, during Jesus' lifetime, and yet, Jesus may be *identified* with God, in that, the New Testament has no hesitation in ascribing functions to Jesus, which, properly speaking, only God could do.

Jesus was very aware, that God was someone other than Himself, existing in heaven. He was also very aware, that He was God, made known, in the flesh. So, in one sense, Jesus is spoken of as God, and in another sense, He is not. This is a very important concept to be aware of, in order to understand the relationship between the Father and the Son.

How can this be? It can be likened to the moon. When the Apollo team landed on the moon for the first time, they astonished the world. They walked on the moon, that had been beyond man's grasp, for as long as man has existed. When they returned to the earth, they brought a sample of *the* moon with them. Scientists studied this sample, as the moon, yet, it was not really the moon. It was only a portion of the moon.

In a similar sense, when we encounter Jesus Christ, we do not encounter all of God, because no man has seen God, nor can see God (John 1:18; 1 Timothy 6:16; 1 John 4:12). God is too great to be seen. Jesus Christ, however, was seen by multitudes. How could Jesus be God, if He could be seen, then? In John 1:18, and 1 John 4:12, *theos* appears without the article, which is emphasizing God's essence. It is God's essence, that no man can see, because He is invisible, by definition, of being a Spirit. When we see Jesus Christ, we encounter the image of the invisible God, but do not see

the essence of God, Himself. Through the *Man*, Jesus is not all of God contained in a body *to the exclusion of God existing beyond Jesus* (transcendent), He is God's image, and therefore, can be said, to be God Himself. This does not mean, that Jesus only, is a portion of God. As it pertains to Jesus' deity, it is said, that the fullness of the Godhead, dwells in His body (Colossians 1:19; 2:9). The Scripture presents Jesus, as being God, on the one hand, and as being other than God (a mere Man), on the other. Thus, we see the paradox of the Scripture, and its bilateral way, of referring to Jesus Christ.

With this basis, let us examine the ontological and functional relationship of the Father and the Son.

The name, *Jesus*, or the term, *Son*, specifically refers, to the incarnation. These appellations are never used of God, before the incarnation. This is very clear, in Luke 1:35, when the angel told Mary, "The Holy Ghost will come upon you, and the power of the Most High, will overshadow you: therefore, also, that Holy thing which will be born, will be called the Son of God." Notice the future tense of *will*. Only after the conception, would Jesus be called, the Son of God, because God would father His existence; not the existence of His deity, but of His humanity. "Son," was not a title of God, before the incarnation. It is a relational term, between God, in His transcendence beyond His existence as a Man, and God in His immanence as a human being. The term, *Father*, also begins to be used for God, after the incarnation. Although God was known, as a Father before this (Malachi 3:10), the term was used between God and His creation, not between God and God, God's fatherhood to Jesus Christ, was of a different nature than that spoken of, in the OT. He was still *Father*, in reference to His relationship to man, but His relationship to the Man, Christ, was much different than His relationship, to any other man. The Jews clearly recognized Jesus' special use of the term (John 5:17-18; 8:42, 54-59; 10:30-38), realizing that He claimed a special relationship to God, that no one else could claim. God was Jesus' Father, because it was God, who caused Jesus' conception, i.e., His existence, as a Man. Jesus, the Man, would have never existed without God's contribution to His humanity. We, on the other hand, are born naturally,

and only become the sons of God, by adoption.

That the Son was not pre-existent, is evidenced by the fact, that Paul said, “But when the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law...” (Galatians 4:4). The Son came, at a certain point in time, from a woman. The fact that Paul said, the Son was sent, does not imply that the Son pre-existed the incarnation, any more than that John the Baptist pre-existed his physical birth, who is also said, to have been sent, by God (John 1:6). The sending of the Son, was not the sending of a pre-existent person of the Godhead, but rather, Jehovah, making Himself known, in the face of Jesus Christ.

The Son was not eternally generated from the Father. Many have claimed that the Son, was eternally begotten by God, based off of Psalm 2:7, which says, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you.” Charles Ryrie had this to say about the doctrine of eternal generation, which is connected with the idea of a pre-existent son: “I agree with Buswell (*A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*, pp. 105-12), that generation is not an exegetically based doctrine. ...The phrase ‘eternal generation,’ is simply an attempt to describe the Father-Son relationship of the Trinity and, by using the word, ‘eternal,’ protect it from any idea of inequality or temporality.” Though Ryrie, most definitely believes, the Son to be eternal, even he confesses, that the doctrine of eternal generation, is not found in Scripture. For the illegitimate use of Psalm 2:7, which speaks prophetically of the Son, Ryrie said, “Least of all should generation be based on Psalm 2:7.” The Psalm is a coronation psalm, referring to the day a king is coronated, not the day of birth or time of origin. It is used of Jesus’ origin in Hebrews 1:5, as contrasted with the angels. Whereas, they were created, the Son was begotten, by God. This is referring to the incarnation, as the context shows (vs. 4, 6). Psalm 2:7, is also used of Jesus’ ascension, in Acts 13:33, demonstrating that the verse, is not strictly speaking of the conception of Jesus, by God.

The only way, in which, the Son of God pre-existed the incarnation, was as the *logos*. In John 1:1, the *logos* is identified, as being God Himself, but He is also said, to be with

God. It was the *logos*, who was made flesh (John 1:14).

The *logos* is the self-expression, Word, or thought (reason) of God.

The Logos is God's self-expression, "God's means of self-disclosure," or God uttering Himself." Before the Incarnation, the Logos was the unexpressed thought or plan, in the mind of God, which had a reality, no human thought can have, because of God's perfect foreknowledge, and in the case of the Incarnation, God's predestination. In the beginning, the Logos was with God, not as a separate person, but as God Himself - pertaining to and belonging to God, much like a man and his word. In the fullness of time, God...expressed Himself in flesh.

According to Philippians 2:6, Jesus was in "the form of God," before the incarnation. "Who being in the form of God," is translated from *hos en morphe theou huparchon*. *Huparchon*, translated as "being" is from two Greek words, *hupo*, "under," and *arche*, "a beginning." It involves existence, both before and after conditions, mentioned in connection with it. In this case, it is speaking of the pre-existence of the "form of God." *Morphe*, referring to the pre-existent "form" of God, speaks of "that external form, that represents what is intrinsic and essential. It indicates, not merely what may be perceived by others, but what is objectively there." The emphasis is primarily upon the essence behind the form, but recognizes the visible form, also *Theou* is in the genitive case, indicating procession. This form was God's form. The word is also anarthrous, thus emphasizing God's person. In this context, then, Paul was pointing out, that this existing visible form of God, was His essential deity.

What exactly this form that God possessed was, we are not told. Nevertheless, it was existing in eternity, probably until the incarnation, or possibly the ascension, at which time, Jesus' body would have replaced the need for the visible form of God. From John, we might gather, that this form of God was the *logos*, that was with God.

This form, was at least visible to the heavenly host, for they presented themselves

before God, in some manner. (1 Kings 22:19; Job 1:6). Since God is omnipresent, there could not be any specific location, at which, to gather, unless, that is, God appeared in some type of visible, albeit, Spirit form. So the *logos* was the visible expression of God's invisible essence. "The Word, was not merely, an impersonal thought existing in the mind of God, but was, in reality, the Eternal Spirit Himself, clothed upon by a visible and personal form..."

God was always speaking His Word in the OT. It was through His Word, that the worlds were created (Hebrews 11:3). Just as a man's words, or his reason are not a separate person from him, the *logos* is not a separate person from the Father (*theos*). We can distinguish between God and His Word, in that, the Word was the thought of God, and had a visible form, but there is no Biblical evidence, that the *logos*, is a distinct person or personality in the Godhead.

Looking to John's first Epistle helps shed some more light on John 1:1. John said, "That which was from the beginning...the *logos* of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show to you, that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested to us." This sounds very reminiscent of John 1). There is a reference to the beginning (John 1:1; 1 John 1:1), the *logos* (John 1:1, 14: 1 John 1:1), and an identification of the *logos* with life (John 1:4; 1 John 1:1-2). If John could say that the *life* was manifested, after being with the Father, and not mean that *life* is a distinct person in the Godhead, likewise, there is no reason to view the *logos* of life, as being a distinct person in the Godhead.

Not only is the life of God spoken of in distinction from Him, but so is wisdom. Proverbs 8, speaks of wisdom as being possessed by God, and present at creation (vs. 22, 29-30). Wisdom is being personified as a person, speaking of itself, as though it is an entity (or person), separate from God. Does this indicate, that God's wisdom, is another person from Him?

Another Biblical example, is that of God's voice. God's voice is said to have walked

in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:8). Psalm 29:3-8, attributes to God's voice, the attributes of God Himself: power, majesty. Several times, the author states a quality of the voice of Jehovah, and then attributes the same to Jesus. This is another example of personification. The Hebrew people would not have understood the voice of Jehovah to be a distinct person from Him. There is no reason to understand logos, in any different manner. The logos can be said, to be with God, just as much as His wisdom and voice, can be said to be with Him, and be spoken of, as distinct from Him.

The Aramaic Targums (Aramaic paraphrases of the Hebrew Scriptures), also shed light on the way we are to understand logos. The Targums used the word, memra to refer to God, especially when referring to God's appearance in a form. Memra, is the Aramaic equivalent of logos. They did not believe that the word was another person, other than Jehovah, but was Jehovah, manifest in a visible appearance.

Jesus' functional relationship to the Father, is made explicit, by Jesus Himself. He commonly spoke of His relationship with the Father saying, "I am in the Father, and the Father in me" (John 10:38; 14:10-11; 17:21). It cannot be said, that the Son is the same as the Father, or that the Father is the same as the Son. The Son, by definition, is both Divine and human, while the Father is only Divine. Although the deity of the Son is of the same essence as that of the Father, the deity of the Son, is inextricably joined with the humanity to form an existence distinct from God's existence, as a transcendent Spirit. The deity of the Father is in the Son, but the Son's existence is different from the Father's. There is, therefore, a distinction between the Son and the Father, but not a separation. The deity of the Son, is none other, than that of Jehovah Himself, having come down in the form of a servant and in the likeness of Men. Therefore, we find statements like, "He that believes on Me, believes not on Me, but on Him, that sent Me. And He that sees Me sees Him that sent Me" (John 12:44-45). On another occasion, Jesus said, "He that receives Me, receives Him that sent Me" (John 13:20).

How is believing on Jesus tantamount to believing in God? Is it not possible to believe in Jesus, without believing in God? How is it possible to have seen God, when

one has, in reality, only seen Jesus' physical body? Can one not accept Jesus, without accepting the Father? According to Jesus' Words, the answer, is a resounding, "No."

Jesus made even more profound statements of this nature. Such include "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man comes unto the Father, but by Me. If you had known Me, you should have known my Father also" (John 14:6-7). Not only is Jesus the way to the Father, but the Father can only be known through the Son. It would seem to us, that the Father could be known apart from the Son, but according to Jesus, this is not possible. To the Jews, who hated Jesus, because of what He said and did, He cautioned them, saying, "He that hates Me hates My Father also" (John 15:23). Probably, one of the best examples demonstrating this point, is found in 2 John 9, where John said, "Whosoever transgresses, and abides not in the doctrine of Christ, does not have God. He that abides in the doctrine of Christ, he has both the Father and the Son." (See also, 1 John 2:23-24). If you accept Christ's person, you will have the Father and the Son. All of these Scriptures relay one common truth, knowing the Father, is bound up, in knowing the Son.

This can be compared to the father/son identities we experience. When a man is born, he experiences the role of a son. Although He knows the role of father exists, he has no personal experience of it. Through the process of time, he can *add* the role of fatherhood, to his identity. Then, he is both, a son and a father. His added identity, as a father, does not negate his identity as a son, but simply adds a role with its corresponding characteristics, to his existing role, as a son.

In the same way, but in reverse, God added another identity to Himself, when He became a Man. God has always been deity, but in the process of His plan to redeem man, he *added* humanity to His deity. His deity was not compromised or mitigated, by adding this role to His identity, but nevertheless, His existence, as exclusive deity and Spirit, was changed. God never gave up His eternal, unlimited, deity when becoming the Son, just as a father does not give up His identity as a son, when he becomes a father. There is no change in his essential person, but there is a change in his life, as

he now experiences the role he once only knew, by concept. The role of father went from being *a priori* (prior to and independent of experience) to *a posteriori* (proceeding from and dependent upon experienced reality). That which was once an abstract concept, became an objectively understood reality, empirical (knowledge gained by experience), in nature.

You may know a person, as a son, without knowing them in their role, as father. When the identity of father is added to their identity, as a son, knowing the person in their role of father, assumes knowing them, as a son, also. In like manner, but in exactly the reverse order (God assumed Sonship, whereas we assume fatherhood), knowing God in His incarnation (deity and humanity), assumes knowing Him, in His deity. His identity as a human, was *added* to His identity as Spirit. Knowledge of the Father, is bound up, in the being of the Son, because the Father's essential deity, is in the Son. To know Jesus (God in His immanence), is to know the Father (God in His transcendence). Knowing the Son, assumes knowing the Father also, but the opposite is not true. You cannot know Jesus, by knowing the Father, because Jesus' identity goes beyond that of the Father, in that, the Son has a component to His existence, the Father (God in His transcendence), does not have, namely humanity. In a sense, it can be said, that Jesus was more than God; not more in His deity, but more with respect, to the addendum of His human existence.

It must be made clear, that "the Son is *not* the same, as the Father. The title, *Father* never alludes to humanity, while *Son* does. ...We cannot say, the Father is the Son." Jesus, the Man, is not the Father *per se* but is the Son of God. But, it was Jehovah, who is the Father, who became flesh, and then related to Jesus, as a Father to a Son, because of the subsequent limitation on His deity, by the addendum of humanity to His previously, unmitigated, existence, as exclusive Spirit.

It cannot be said that the Son is the Father, or that the Father is the Son. The Son, by definition, is both, Divine and human, while the Father, is only Divine. Although the deity of the Son is of the same essence as that of the Father, the deity of the Son is

inextricably joined with the humanity, to form an existence, distinct from God's existence, as a transcendent Spirit. The deity of the Father is in the Son, but the Son's existence is different from the Father's. There is, therefore, a distinction between the Son and the Father, but there is no separation. The deity of the Son, is none other, that that of Jehovah Himself, having come down in the form of a servant and in the likeness of men. Therefore we find statements like, "He that believeth on Me, believeth not on Me, but on Him that sent Me. And He that seeth Me, seeth Him that sent Me" (John 12:44-45).

Jesus is the person of the one uni-personal God, Jehovah. But, in the incarnation, the Spirit of Jehovah, became a human being, resulting in a union of the Divine and human natures of Christ, in such a way, that makes Him a fully, integrated and full, functioning, person. Therefore, the distinction between Jesus and the Father, is the union, which the Father lacks.

Sometimes we fall prey to using the terms, *Father* and *Son*, as though they were a mathematical equation. To this, we must be careful, lest we confuse the Biblical distinction between the two terms. To say, that Jesus is the Father, is legitimate, if we use it in the right context. The Bible uses the term, Father for God, in three distinct ways: He is the Father of mankind, in the sense that, He is the Creator of all things (origins), He is the Father of believers, in the sense, that He has adopted them as His children (familial), and He is the Father of Jesus Christ, in the sense, of begetting Him (filial, paternal). It is only in this last usage of the word, that we must beware of calling Jesus the Father, lest we obliterate the distinction made between God and Jesus Christ, in the NT, (especially, the Gospels, where we see Jesus relating to God, as His Father).

There can be no doubt about it, that the deity of the one Jesus related to as His Father, was the deity that was in Christ; however, there is a vast difference in saying, that the deity of the Father is in the Son, and saying that the Son, who is God, manifest in the flesh, is the Father. *Father*, specifically refers to God transcendent, without a human body, as He fills the heavens, being unlimited by the incarnation. The *Son*,

specifically refers to God, immanent in a human body, as He is temporally located in the person of Jesus Christ, being limited by the incarnation. *To confuse the terms, is to confuse God's existence as Spirit, and God's existence, as Spirit, made flesh.* I emphasize, *terms*, because we are not speaking about two different Gods. Let there be no mistaking it, that the deity of Jesus Christ, is the Father. Ontologically then, (pertaining to the nature and essential properties of existence), Jesus is the same God, identified as the Father. Functionally, however, because of the addition of a genuine human existence to God's person, Jesus is referred to, as the Son of God. *Jesus is the person of the Father, but in a distinct manner of existence, because of the hypostatic union. In such a manner of existence, He is known as the Son of God, Jesus Christ.*

Old Testament Usage of "Father"

The Old Testament speaks of God as Father, on several occasions. It most often speaks of God, as Father in the sense, of Creator, as a Protector or Comforter of His Creation, and in a covenantal sense. Angels are called the Sons of God, because God created them (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7). Jehovah was Israel's Father, because it was He, who created them (Deuteronomy 32:6; Malachi 2:10).

It must be known, that Father was not a special or revealed name for God. God never said, "My name is Father." Father was a mere appellation, describing the way, in which, God related to man. God is Father, just as He is also our Provider, our Righteousness, our Victory, and our Peace.

God's revealed name in the OT was Jehovah, to which, He is referred to over 6,800 times. He is also referred to as, *elohim* (God) over 2,600 times, which is a generic term for God. In comparison, God is only likened to a father, or calls Himself *Father*, thirteen times in the OT (Numbers 11:12; 2 Samuel 7:14; 1 Chronicles 29:10; Psalms 68:4-5; 89:24-27; 103:13; Isaiah 9:6; 63:16; 64:8; Jeremiah 3:4, 19; 31:9; Malachi 2:10). God's role, as a father, is portrayed, when the Bible speaks about Israel as being His children, in a covenantal sense (Exodus 4:22; Deuteronomy 1:31; 8:5; 14:1; Isaiah 64:8; Malachi

2:10), and of David and Solomon, as being His sons, like a suzerain to a vassal (Psalm 2:7; 2 Samuel 7:14).

These OT uses of “Father” pertain to God’s relationship to the created realm. This is important to understand, because Trinitarians claim, that God is eternally Father, and then argue, that God cannot be eternally Father, if there is not an eternal Son. This argument reads NT designations for God, back in the OT, as though God has eternally been Father. The OT never speaks of “God the Father,” and never speaks of God’s fatherhood, in relationship to another divine person. We only see this prevalent usage for God, in the NT, with the advent of the incarnation.

All of this is not to say, that God is not identified as *Father* in the OT, but that Father was never a proper name for God, in the OT, *and neither was it commonly used of God, as it is in the NT*. While it is true, that it became common for the Jews to refer to God as “Father,” by the time of Jesus’ day, this was a later development, and such frequency of usage, is not found in the OT Scripture. Even so, their usage of the appellation, is that of creator and/or covenant-maker.

New Testament Usage of “Father”

While the NT continues to use *Father*, to designate God as the Creator and/or covenant-maker, the NT adds two other dimensions to Father, that were not seen in the OT. The first use of “Father,” pertains to believers’ adoption, by God. Romans 8:15, speaks of us having received the Spirit of adoption, that makes us cry out to God, “Abba Father.” Elsewhere, Paul speaks of this same concept of adoption, whereby, we become the Sons of God, and by implication, God becomes our Father. (Galatians 4:5; Ephesians 1:5). God makes us His children by faith, and we inherit all of His blessings, for us.

The second use of *Father*, is that used by Jesus Christ in the Gospels, when He was speaking about His relationship to God. It is this use, to which, we center our attention.

Jesus continually spoke of God, and to God as the *Father*. In the Gospel of John, Jesus used the term, “God,” twenty-three times, while He called God His “Father,” 109 times. To my knowledge, Jesus only called the Father, “God,” in direct address, a mere three times (Matthew 27:46; John 17:3; 20:17). He consistently spoke of God, as *Father*.

It is legitimate to call Jesus the Father, in the first two uses of the name. Jesus pre-existed the incarnation, as Jehovah, and therefore, can be called, *Father*, in the sense, of Creator, because the deity of Jesus, is the God of the OT, who created the worlds. Jesus can be called Father, in the sense, of our Adopter, because in the NT, the Spirit of Christ, is the Holy Spirit, who adopts us as God’s children. It is in the statements where Jesus identifies God, as being His Father, that we need to be extremely careful. What I am specifically speaking to, is the temptation to exchange the name “Jesus” for “Father,” simply because, we know that Jesus’ deity is the deity of the Father. Jesus called God, *Father*, for a reason, and the *Father* called Jesus His Son, for a reason. The Biblical terminology is there, for a reason. What we must do, is understand why different terminology is employed of God; not change the terminology, to fit our theology.

Why the distinct use of “Father” and “Son” if Jesus and the Father are the Same God?

We must ask ourselves, why it is that Jesus, is consistently identified, as the Son of God, and Jesus consistently identified God, as His Father, *as though* the Father were someone other than Himself. God spoke down from heaven to earth and called Jesus His Son (Mark 1:11; 9:7). The Son spoke from the earth up to heaven and called God His Father (John 11:41; 17:1). We must ask ourselves, If Jesus is the Father, why

didn’t God call Him such, when He spoke from heaven? If Jesus is the Father, why didn’t He say, that His name was the Father? He consistently called Himself, the Son of God, the Son of Man, the one sent from heaven, or some similar, Messianic title.

If we maintain, that when Jesus was speaking about His Father, or praying to the Father (as found in the Gospel accounts), that He was speaking about *Himself*, or praying to *Himself*, since He was the Father, we fall into error. Jesus never portrayed the idea, that when He was speaking of the Father, that He was speaking of Himself, or when He prayed to the Father, that He was praying to Himself. Such an explanation, is seriously lacking for Biblical support, and fails to explain the Biblical language.

All of the statements Jesus made about the Father would cease to make sense, if we are to equate the Father and Son, as being identically, the same. Jesus said, that His Father sent Him into the world. If it is argued, that because Jesus is the Father, we could just as easily say, that the Father sent the Father into the world, then we have the Father sending Himself. If language means anything at all, this cannot be true. There is one sending and one being sent. Jesus also spoke of His Father, showing Him what to do (John 5:19-20), and telling Him what to speak (John 12:49-50). There is one showing, and one doing. There is one telling, and one being told. The father in heaven, did not tell the Father on earth; the Bible is very clear, that the Father in heaven, told the Son on earth. This is not implying two Gods. This phenomenon must be understood, in light of the incarnation. With the assumption of humanity to God's deity, there arose a distinction between God in flesh, and God beyond flesh. This distinction is not in the Godhead, but is in, and due, to the humanity. As a human being, God willingly limited, the exercise of His Divine attributes.

To demonstrate the Biblical distinction between the use of the terms, Father and Son, we will explore the Gospel of John, which presents the relationship of Jesus to the Father, like no other book in the NT. Although the same kind of statements can be found elsewhere in the NT, John gives us some of the best attestations to Jesus' absolute deity, and portrays Jesus' relationship to the Father, like no other author/book does.

Jesus clearly portrayed Himself as being someone other than the Father.

Concerning His doctrine, Jesus said, “He that does not love Me does not keep My sayings: and the Word, which you hear is not Mine, but the Father’s which sent Me” (John 14:24). Jesus’ Words did not belong to Him, but they belonged to the Father. How can this be, if Jesus is to be identified as the Father? What is very interesting, is that Jesus made this statement in the same discourse after He said, that whoever had seen Him had seen the Father (John 14:7, 9). After such a powerful statement, Jesus still maintained a clear distinction between He and the Father. (See also vs. 10, 12, 20, 21, 23-24, 26, 28, 31).

Jesus also said concerning His will: “...I seek not My own will, but the will of the Father, which has sent Me” (John 5:30). The Father had a will, and Jesus had a will. Jesus sought the will of His Father, not His own will. If Jesus’ will was not the same as the will of the Father, then how can Jesus be identical to the Father? If He was the Father, He would have had the Father’s will, but instead He had His own will.

On another occasion, Jesus said, “My Father has not left Me alone; for I always do those things that please Him” (John 8:29). How could the Father leave the Father? One cannot leave himself, yet Jesus said, that the Father had not left Him. Jesus also said, He always pleased the Father. Did He mean to say that He always pleased Himself, or that His human nature pleased His divine nature? It seems evident, that Jesus was speaking of the Father, as being someone other than Himself.

Jesus said that the Father was greater than He was (John 14:28). Did Jesus mean that He was greater than Himself? Jesus also said, “...even as I have kept My Father’s commandments, and abide in His love” (John 15:10). Did Jesus command Himself and keep His own commandments? Did Jesus abide in His own love? The examples could go on and on, but these are sufficient enough to demonstrate that Jesus thought of the Father, as being someone other than He Himself, though He also realized that the deity of the Father was in Him (John 10:38; 14:10-11, 20), and that He pre-existed the incarnation as Jehovah (John 8:56-59). What is important to notice, is the distinction in terminology. Jesus is called the Son of God, and the Spirit of God, who fills the

heavens, is called the Father. We do not understand these statements to mean, that Jesus is a different God than the Father, nor a distinct aspect of deity in the Godhead, but rather understand these statements, to show the genuineness of Christ's humanity. Jesus is differentiated from the Father, because of His humanity, not because He is a distinct or separate deity from Him. Jesus is the Father, but the Father, made known in the flesh. In this existence, although the deity of God is unchanged, the way He is known to us, is by the name Jesus, the Son of God.

Some find evidence for equating the names of "Jesus" and "Father," in Isaiah 9:6. Here it is said, that the coming Messiah's name would be called, "eternal Father." This is not decisive, because this verse is describing the ontological identity of the Messiah, not the name, by which, He would be called in His human existence (remember, the issue I am tackling, is the name, by which, the Messiah was identified, not the identity of His Divine nature, for it is clear, that Jesus' deity, is the deity of the Father). We know that He was named "Jesus," at His birth. The Hebrew concept of a name, is that it describes who a person is, their character, worth, and authority. Jesus would be the eternal Father. We must remember, that this is in the OT context, where the meaning of Father was that of Creator/covenant-maker. We have no reason to believe, that Isaiah had any other concept in mind. The Messiah would be the everlasting Father, who created the worlds. Isaiah was not envisioning the NT use of "Father," referring to God's fathering of a child, by the Holy Ghost.

The closest Jesus came to calling Himself the Father, was when He told Philip, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9; See also v. 7), or when He said, "He who has seen Me has seen Him who sent Me" (John 12:45). Jesus said, time and time again, that it was His Father, who had sent Him, thus declaring, that those who saw Him (Jesus) were seeing the Father. Notice, however, that in both of these verses, Jesus does not identify Himself, as being identically the same, as the Father. Elsewhere, Jesus said, the Father was in Him. If "Father" can be attributed to Christ's person, which includes humanity, then there was another human inside of the human Jesus. It is obvious, that when Jesus said, the Father was in Him, that He understood

the Father to be Spirit only.

If *Father* is the way the Scripture speaks of God beyond His human existence in Christ, then how could Jesus say, that the disciples had seen the Father? God, as Spirit, is invisible. The Bible is clear, that no man can see God (John 1:18; 1 Timothy 6:16; 1 John 4:12). Though Jesus' deity was that of the Father, all that was visible to man, was His humanity. Everybody who met Jesus, recognized Him as a Man, but not everybody recognized Him, as Father. Since God's essence cannot be seen, Jesus must have meant, that those who have seen Him, were seeing the Father's image (Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3). Jesus is the image of the invisible God. He was not saying, that in His flesh, He was the Father, *but that the deity of the Father was in Him*, thus making Him the only visible image of the Father.

This claim is in stark contrast to the Trinitarian doctrine, which says, that Jesus is the second person of the Trinity, made flesh. Jesus was clear, that His deity was that of God, the Father. One could say, that if you have seen them, you have also seen their spouse. The only way Jesus could say, that those who had seen Him, had seen the Father, was if Jesus was the Father, manifest in flesh, known to us as Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The point that needs to be made clear, is that the disciples were seeing the deity of the Father, manifest in flesh, yet, they still did not refer to Jesus, as *Father*. This name was reserved for God as Spirit, beyond flesh.

An analogy would be helpful here. This phenomenon could be compared to a balloon and air. Air permeates our atmosphere. This is likened to the Spirit of God, who is invisible and omnipresent. Jesus is likened to the balloon, that is filled with air. The air has no shape, but when it fills the balloon, it shapes the balloon into a certain size and appearance. When we look at the balloon, we are not viewing the air, but we are viewing that which contains the air. Without the balloon, we would not be able to see the invisible air; and without the air, the balloon would never have the shape and size that it does.

Just as the air in the balloon is no different than the air that is outside of the balloon, even so the deity in the Man, Christ Jesus, is the same deity, that exists as the omnipresent Spirit. We would not call the balloon the *air*, nor would we refer to the air outside of the balloon, as the *balloon*. We realize, that the material object (balloon) filled with air, is distinct from the air itself, although the same air fills, both the balloon and the atmosphere. Keeping with the analogy, if the balloon and air were conscious beings, we could say, that because of the willing limitations placed on the air by the balloon, the balloon is thought of, as being distinct, from the air. *With any distinction, there arises the need to relate the distinctions to one another.* If I distinguish by body from my Spirit, though I am only one person, I speak of the way, in which, my body relates to my Spirit and vice-versa. With the distinction of humanity from Spirit, the Son is distinguished from the Father, and a relational language is employed, to describe the relationship of the Spirit, transcendent to the Spirit, made flesh. This does not indicate two Gods or two Spirits, but recognizes a distinction, and therefore, a relationship, between God transcendent and unlimited, and God's existence, as a Man, which is limited.

The distinction arises out of the humanity of Christ. The deity, of the Son, is in no way different, than the deity of the Father. This is why Jesus could say, that whosoever had seen Him, had seen the Father (John 12:45; 14:9). This being so, Jesus still did not refer to Himself, as being the Father, but always referred to Himself, as being the Son, or the one whom was sent, by the Father. We must maintain, a distinction of terms, because the Bible does so. Jesus is our Father, in the sense of Creation and adoption, but in His humanity, *as He relates to God transcendent without humanity*, He is called the Son of God, while the God in heaven, is called the Father.

The Reason for, and Significance of the Terms, "Father" and "Son"

The Biblical distinctions between *Father* and *Son*, do not imply, that there are two gods, or that Jesus, is not God. What it demonstrates, is the genuineness of Jesus' humanity, and the subsequent relationship, that He had, with God, because of the

willing limitations imposed on the exercise of the Father's deity, that was in Jesus. Jesus operated within the limits of any other human being, in order to experience all that we experience, so that He could be a faithful High Priest for our redemption. Jesus, the God-Man, who was immanent on this earth, bound by time and space, finite and without all knowledge, related to God, who was in Heaven, who was not bound by space or time, being infinite and omniscient. Jesus' ontological deity, as the Father, is not being objected to. What is being objected to, is the designation of "Father" for Jesus, because the Biblical authors seem to use "Father," to refer to God's existence beyond flesh, and "Jesus" or "Son," to refer to God's existence, in flesh.

The terms, *Father* and *Son* are relational terms, that took on a new significance, after God's incarnation in Mary. Although Jesus' deity was the deity of the Father, we cannot juxtapose the term, *Son* with the *Father*, because *Father* is used of the Spirit alone, while *Son* is used of that Spirit made flesh. The *Father* is God beyond flesh, and the *Son* is that same God, in flesh. *Father* is the appellation used by Jesus for God, because it was God who fathered Jesus' human existence. Jesus did not beget Himself, but was begotten of the Father, and therefore, He is spoken of, as being distinct from the Father; not in deity, but as it pertains to His assumption of humanity. It is because of the addition of humanity to God's existence, as Spirit, that we cannot say, that the Father and the Son are the same. The deity of the Father is in the Son, but the Son is a human being, and the Father, who is Spirit only, is not.

The reason many have insisted on equating the names, "Jesus" and "God the Father," is because they are attempting to show that the deity of Jesus is no different than that of the Father, and that Jesus is not a different person in the Godhead, but is God Himself. Although it is true, that Jesus' deity, is the deity of the Father, we need not confuse the Biblical terminology in order to protect this truth. Jesus referred to God, as Father, because of the fact, that God fathered His existence in the flesh. This does not mean that He never spoke of God, as Father, in the sense of Creator, but that when Jesus was speaking of His own personal relationship to the Father, He spoke of Him, in a paternal sense. *If we understand, that "Father" is a relational term, that had a*

specialized use, by Jesus, because of the incarnation, which use it did not have before the incarnation, it is easy to preserve the truth that Jesus' deity is the same as the Father's, without confusing the Biblical terms. We do not need to show that Jesus' name is "God the Father," to show that Jesus pre-existed the incarnation as Jehovah. "Father" became attributed to the Spirit of God, in a different way in the NT, because of the paternal relationship between God and Jesus, and to distinguish between God's existence as a Man, and His existence, as the omnipresent Spirit. The deity of the Son of God, is that of Jehovah, but His name, is "Jesus." Jehovah's existence beyond humanity, as the Father of Jesus' human existence, is called the Father.

Subordination of the Son to the Father

We have just examined many Scriptures, which *distinguish* between the Father and the Son, but now we will take this one step further, in examining Scriptures, which show the Son, as being subordinate to the Father. How are we to understand the subordinistic language of the New Testament? Why did Jesus pray, if He was God? How can the Scripture speak of Jesus, having a God? How could Jesus not know certain things (Mark 13:32)? How could Jesus say that His Father was greater than He was (John 14:28)? How can it be said, that Jesus has authority over Him (1 Corinthians 11:3)? Why does the Scripture, consistently distinguish between the Father and the Son? Why is One sending, and One being sent? Why is One giving, and One receiving? The list of such Scriptural declarations could go on, but what are we to make of these statements and the employment of such language?

These types of statements cannot be ignored or denied, but we tend to do one of the either, or both. The solution to understanding these types of Scriptures will not be found in denying Jesus's deity, nor will they be solved by positing a Godhead, which consists of three distinct beings who share equality of deity. The solution lies in the acknowledgment of Jesus' complete, authentic, and genuine humanity; a humanity, which imposed limitations (accepted willingly and intentionally) upon His deity, so that He could live on the same plane as any other human, sharing in all of their experiences,

so that He could relate to man and be a sufficient High Priest (Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:14-16; 5:1-9; 7:13-28).

When God assumed humanity, He acquired a consciousness and identity, which He never possessed, before the incarnation. He had a human psyche, not overwhelmed or consumed, by His deity. The exercise of Jesus' human nature, (such as His consciousness, Spirit, will, mind, emotions, and flesh), in such a way, requires that in the incarnation, Jesus be spoken of as possessing an identity distinct from, but not separate from the Father. Just as we find a distinction, but not a separation of Christ's two natures, we also find a distinction, but not a separation between God and Jesus; the Father and the Son. This view does not "compromise the deity of Christ or the radical monotheism of Biblical theology. But, it does give credit to the completeness and genuineness of His [Jesus'] human nature. Any other explanation compromises the completeness of His deity or His humanity.

All of the above Scriptures demonstrate the relationship between the genuine and complete humanity of Jesus (latent deity in genuine humanity), and the transcendent Spirit of the Father. Because Jesus would not rely upon His deity in order to experience the limitations of humanity, He needed a relationship with God. As pertaining to His humanity, Jesus could say, that His Father was greater than He Himself. The Father was greater, not because His deity was greater than that of Jesus' (Jesus was Jehovah, become flesh), but in the respect, that the Father (God, as the all existing Spirit) was not subject to any of the limitations of human existence, as was Jesus. In His willing limitation of His deity, living life as a Man, anointed by the Holy Ghost, Jesus could say, that He could do nothing, but what He saw the Father do. Jesus had to rely upon His Father to give Him what to teach and show Him what He wanted Him to do. In His humanity, Jesus' knowledge was limited, so that He did not know the day and hour of the second coming. Finally, in His genuine humanity, it can even be said, of Jesus, that He had a God!

Building on the above, we might ask why it is, that usually only the Father and Jesus are mentioned in Paul's benedictions? It seems, that Paul only mentioned the Father and Jesus, because we now know God, in two major manifestations: God transcendent, as the all existing Spirit, and God immanent, as He came, in flesh, to redeem our souls. Paul and others did not write, in this manner, to show a separation in the Godhead, but to show the distinction between the existence of Father and the Son, because of the addendum of humanity, and yet, at the same time, the unity of the Godhead.

The fundamental difference between the Oneness concept of God, and the Trinitarian concept, is where the Biblical distinctions are placed. Trinitarians place an *eternal* distinction in personhood between the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Oneness theology maintains, that there is no distinction of personality in the Godhead. Rather, the Holy Spirit has always been Jehovah, the Father of all Creation. Since the Son of God did not come into being until the incarnation when Jehovah became a Man, there is no eternal distinction between the Father and the Son. The Scripture never distinguishes between the deity of the Son and the deity of the Father, but all distinctions are between God, as He exists omnipresent and transcendent, and God, as He exists as a genuine human being. The distinction is not in the Godhead, but in the humanity of Jesus Christ. There is a three-fold revelation of God to man, but not a tri-personality, in the Godhead.

In conclusion, we can affirm the Divinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, without referring to them, as three persons, or comprising monotheism. By no means, would such an affirmation imply three gods, but would simply state, that the one God of the Bible, is experienced in three different ways, all of which, are valid. It could not be said, much better than that expressed by McGrath:

A helpful way of looking at this, is to say that three essential models must be used, if the full depth, of the Christian experience and understanding of God, is to be expressed adequately. No one picture, image, or model of God is good enough - and

these three models [Father, Son, and Holy Ghost] are essential, if the basic outlines of the Christian understanding of God, is to be preserved. The first model, is that of the transcendent God, who lies beyond the world, as its source and Creator; the second, is the human face of God, revealed in the person of Jesus Christ; the third, is that of the immanent God, who is present and active throughout His Creation.

Apologetic Interaction

Arianism Critique

Arius was right, in saying, that there was a time when the Son was not, but what he meant by it, is wrong nonetheless. Since the Son is not eternal, but is God, manifest in flesh, the Son “was not” until the incarnation. Arius attributed the beginning of the Son to be before the Creation, maintaining that the Son was the first Creation of God. This teaching is gathered from Colossians 1:15-16, where Jesus is called the “firstborn of every creature.” The passage goes on to say, that Jesus Created everything. Arius took this to mean, that Jesus was Created by the Father, and then, Jesus, in turn, Created everything else.

The term, *firstborn* is from the Greek *prototokos* (from *protos*, first, and *titko*, to beget). It can refer, to first in order of origins, or first, in the sense of pre-eminence or priority. The context of Colossians, chapter one, is emphasizing Christ’s pre-eminence, in His image (v. 15), over everything created (v. 15-16), in His power to sustain the universe (v. 17), and his pre-eminence over the Church (v. 18). In fact, verse eighteen says, “[Christ], who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things, He might have the pre-eminence.”

Dynamic Monarchianism Critiqued

That Jesus was not born an average man, is evidenced, by many Scriptures. The prophet, Micah said, that the ruler of Israel (the Messiah) would come out of Bethlehem. This ruler’s origins were from old, from everlasting (Micah 5:2). Also, the Son brought

forth from Mary's womb, was to be called Immanuel, being interpreted "God with us" (Matthew 1:23). These two verses demonstrate, that Jesus was God, before the incarnation, and that, He was God, even as a babe.

Tritheism Critiqued

The belief in three separate Gods, is shown to be faulty, by doing a comparative study of different Scriptures, where the Father is said to have done something in one place, the Son, the same in another, and the Holy Spirit, another. One such example, given previously, is comparing the accounts of Who indwells believers. Romans 8:9-11, speaks of the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, and the Holy Spirit as filling the believers, yet, there is only one Spirit (Ephesians 4:4). Another example, involving only the Father and the Spirit, is the conception of Christ. The Holy Ghost is said to have caused the conception (Matthew 1:20), but the Father is consistently identified, as the father of Jesus. If there are three separate Gods, the Scripture could not attribute one action to all three.

Trinitarianism Critiqued

One of the most obvious differences between Oneness theology and Trinitarianism, is the language employed to describe the Godhead. It has been said, by many honest individuals, that the real barrier between Trinitarians and Oneness believers, is not the concept of God they hold to, but the way, in which, they describe their concept. Although I must ultimately disagree, that our concepts of God are identical (for it can vary greatly, depending on which Trinitarian or Modalist, you are speaking with), I do agree, that terminology has been a barrier.

What is the significance of terminology? How important is it? Calvin was insightful, when he was rebutting those who argued against the Trinity, based on the terms used to explain it. He said, "If they call it [the word "person"] a foreign term, because it cannot be pointed out in Scripture in so many syllables, they certainly impose an unjust law - a law, which would condemn every interpretation of Scripture, that

is not composed of other Words of Scripture.” Calvin realized the fact, that the vocabulary of the Bible, is not adequate to express the *meaning and interpretation* of the Bible’s teaching. If all we used was the Bible’s terminology to explain the Bible, ultimately we would not explain the meaning of the Bible, but would merely, quote its pages. To understand the Bible, other words must be employed, whether they be in spoken-form, or in thought-form. To this, B.B. Warfield, had a truthful insight when he said, “...the definition of a Biblical doctrine, in such un-Biblical language, can be justified only on the principle, that it is better to preserve the truth of Scripture, than the Words of Scripture.” Most evangelicals use words such as, “rapture” and “inerrancy,” and think nothing of it, because the terms express a Biblical teaching. Though they are not found on the pages of the Bible, the Bible does teach the concepts that these un-Biblical words represent.

The question, ultimately boils down to what Warfield was speaking about - do the words used to explain the doctrine of the Trinity, preserve the truth of the Biblical teaching, on God? Certain words, which have either been coined, or altered, from their Biblical meaning, include these: essence, three persons, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, and eternally begotten. I maintain, that the Son is God, and that He is the Son of God, but these Words are Biblical, and they can convey a different concept of God, than is present in the NT. God the Son and God the Holy Ghost, present the idea that they are separate Gods, although this is by no means, what Orthodox Trinitarianism, is trying to convey; nevertheless, the terminology employed, tends to make many people fall into some form of tritheism.

The danger of such terminology, as employed in the creeds, is not only that of possibly misunderstanding the concept of God, as presented in the Bible without those words, but it is as Daniel Segraves said, so succinctly: “Any time non-Biblical words become benchmarks of Orthodoxy, it is at least, dangerously close to affirming extra-Biblical revelation. If Christians cannot be saved by making their confession of faith, using only Biblical language, it is hard to escape the conclusion, that the language that is required (e.g., “three persons”), is equally authoritative with Scripture.”

Oneness Theology Defended

Patricianism

One of the charges, that has always been brought against a Oneness view of God, is that it holds to the idea, that the Father suffered and died on the cross. This conclusion has been arrived at, because Oneness believers insist, that Jesus is the Father incarnate. This view, is known as Patricianism (Latin, meaning “the Father suffers”). In fact, it was this concept, which was one of the main reasons, that Modalistic Monarchianism was declared to be heretical. As Millard Erickson notes, however, “It may well be, that the chief reason for the repudiation of Patricianism, was not its conflict with the Biblical revelation, but with the Greek philosophical conception of impassibility.”

Oneness theology, does not teach, that the Father suffered in His essence, but that the Father suffered, in the Man, Christ Jesus, the Son of God. The Father did not die, nor was He crucified. Acts 20:28 says, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock...to feed the Church of God, *which He has purchased with His own blood.*” (italics mine) The antecedent of “His” is “God.” Paul declared, that God shed His blood for the Church. Three questions arise from this Scripture: 1. How can it be said, that God has blood? 2. Jesus shed His blood, by dying on the cross. If this blood is actually the blood of God, did God die? 3. If the blood of Jesus, is identified as God’s blood, then Jesus’ physical humanity, was God’s. This being true, was Jesus’ body still God, when in the grave?

We know that it was actually Jesus who shed His blood on the cross, so calling Jesus’ blood, the blood of God, demonstrates the deity of Jesus Christ; however, the implications of this verse, do not stop here. If the human blood, shed at Calvary can be said to be God’s, this indicates that even the humanity of Christ, can be said to be Divine. When we understand the true nature of the hypostatic union, we must confess, that the humanity God assumed in the incarnation, has now been permanently

incorporated into His eternal existence, as Spirit. The Scripture declares this when it says, “the Word [God] was *made* flesh.” The humanity of Jesus was not the essence of God’s being, but because of the hypostatic union, the deity was miraculously manifest in every aspect of Jesus’ humanity. It is in this manner, that the body of Jesus can be said, to be the body of God. As a result it might be said, that God was born of a virgin, suffered, died, and rose again. This is not to say, that Jesus’ death was any different than any other man’s death. When Jesus died on the cross, He died like any other human being would die. His Spirit separated from His body (Matthew 27:50; James 2:26).

If Jesus’ humanity was permanently incorporated into the Godhead, becoming a part of God’s existence, then was Jesus’ deceased body, the body of God? Daniel Segraves answered this question saying, “The fullness [sic] of deity, continued to be expressed in His immaterial being, even during the time of His death, and at His resurrection, His immaterial and material parts, were reunited permanently.” The body of Jesus, was even God’s body, while in the grave.

When it is implied, that God died, it must be understood that it is not being alleged that the Spirit of God died. A Spirit cannot die. What is being referenced, is God’s existence, as a human being. As a Man, God could and did, die. The way to lessen the impact of this hard-to-swallow truth, might lie in the usage of terminology. The term, “Son of God” is used in reference to God’s existence, as a human being, throughout the New Testament. This term, specifically refers to God’s assumption of, and existence, as humanity. It was in this state, that God died. It seems better, then, to say that the Son of God, died. This is consistent with the terminology of the New Testament, and in no way takes away from, the truth of Acts 20:28.

Sabellianism

Another charge brought against Oneness believers, is that they believe God exists in successive modes of existence. When we say that Jesus did not exist until Bethlehem,

or that the Holy Spirit was given after Pentecost, we are not saying, that God exists only in successive modes as Sebellius claimed, nor are we saying, that Christ was a created deity as in Arianism, but we are saying that, God's eternal *ousia* became flesh in 5/6 B.C., and that the unique experience of the Holy Ghost prophesied about, in the OT (Joel 2:28; Ezekiel 36:24-28) did not occur, until after Jesus' ascension (Luke 24:49; John 7:37-39; 14:16-18, 26; 15:26; Acts 2:4). This does not mean, that the Father ceased being the Father, while in Jesus on the earth. It also does not mean, that the Holy Spirit was first introduced on the day of Pentecost. Throughout the Gospels, we see references to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, simultaneously.

When such terms as "manifestation," "mode," or "role" are attributed to God, by Oneness believers, it is perceived that our conception is that, Jesus is only a role that God is existing in, at this time, but He could cease existing, in that role, at some point in the future. What is meant by "role" is the way, in which, God reveals Himself to mankind. What we mean when we speak of "modes" or "roles" is the way, in which, God reveals Himself to mankind. Oneness believers maintain, that God reveals Himself to humanity, in three primary ways (I prefer this way of saying this over "roles" or modes"): Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These ways, in which, God reveals Himself, however, are not distinct persons or personalities, within God. As a human being, God reveals Himself, to man, in redemption. The purpose of the Son, was to accomplish our redemption, and subsequently stand, in the place of a mediator, between us and the Father (1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 4:14-16; 6:20; 7:24-8:2). Presently, one of the major revelations of the Spirit, is sanctification.

As it pertains to Jesus, God will never discard His humanity. The humanity of Christ, has been forever incorporated, into the Godhead. The place of the Son, as the mediator between God and man, will cease (1 Corinthians 15:24-28), but the Son of God, will never cease to be. The Son had a beginning in the incarnation, but He will have no end, just as we will also, live eternally.

The Pre-existence of Jesus

There are many Scriptures, which teach, that Jesus pre-existed the incarnation. Such include Jesus' statement, "What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where He was before?" (John 6:62). Jesus plainly said, that He was in heaven before coming to the earth. On another occasion, He said, "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58). One very telling statement is, "I came forth from the Father, and entered the world; now I am leaving the world, and am going to the Father" (John 16:28). Finally, Jesus said, "And now, O Father, Glorify Me with Yourself with the Glory I had with You before the world was" (John 17:5).

There is not enough space to deal with each of these passages individually, but some general observations will be given to help shed some light on this topic. It is obvious, that Jesus was not referring to His humanity, previously having Glory, or being in heaven, since His humanity did not exist, until the incarnation. In John 17:5, Jesus' reference to "Me," includes His humanity. That this must be so, is due to the nature of the incarnation. Jesus' deity was not speaking here, but the God-Man, was speaking. Since Jesus' humanity did not pre-exist, He must be referring to His deity. The question is, in what way did Jesus' deity pre-exist the incarnation? Did He pre-exist, as a distinct person from the Father and Spirit?

As has already been demonstrated, as it pertains to the deity of the Son, He was Jehovah. The Bible never says, that the *Son* of God pre-existed the incarnation, but Jesus, as the Spirit, did pre-exist as the *logos*, both in the *morphe* of God (Philippians 2:6), and as the expression of God. Just as Jesus can be said to be the Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8), without having a physical body, until the incarnation and having been slain in time, God can give Glory to His *logos* before the *logos* is ever made flesh, to actuate the plan. God does call those things, which are not as though they were (Romans 4:17). Jesus could rightly say, that He came forth, from the Father. The *logos* was *with* God, and then was made flesh, coming to the earth (John 1:1, 14). Jesus did return to heaven. He ascended to the Father, from

whence He came, some thirty-seven years or so, before. Since the *logos* was God, He did not come as one of the three personalities in the Godhead, but it was the deity of the Father Himself, who came.

Who Did Jesus Pray To?

A common question asked to a Oneness believer is, “Who was Jesus praying to?” Some Oneness believers have explained the phenomenon of Jesus’ prayers, to be that Jesus’ human nature was praying to His Divine nature. The result is, that Jesus is divided up into two parts, one Divine and one human (Nestorianism), and Jesus ends up praying to Himself. Another response, is that Jesus did not need to pray; His prayers were only for our example. Neither of these responses are Orthodox Oneness explanations.

The author of Hebrews attested to the genuineness of Jesus’ prayers, when He said, “Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with *strong crying* and *tears* unto Him, that was able to save Him from death, and was *heard*, in that He feared “ (Hebrews 5:7, italics mine). The author validated, that Jesus did indeed pray, and those prayers were prayed to the One Who was able to save Him from death (God). Jesus did not pray to Himself, but He prayed to the Father. These prayers were with strong crying and tears. Clearly, these adjectives and verbs demonstrate true action, on the part of Jesus, and intense action, at that. There would be no reason for such expressive language, if Jesus’ prayers, were not real.

To explain the prayers of Jesus, as the human nature of Jesus praying to the Divine nature of Jesus, poses problems. For one, natures do not pray, people do. Secondly, the Scripture declares, that He prayed to God, not Himself. It would make no sense for Jesus to pray to Himself. Surely, if this was the case, there would have been no need for verbal expressions of prayer, because Jesus could have communicated to the deity within Him, in some transferable, telepathic, manner. This is not the view of Scripture.

To explain the prayers, of Jesus, as one Divine person praying to another, poses even greater problems. If this were the case, then there is a subordination of one Divine person to another. Prayer, is addressed to one who is superior in power and ability, or else there would be no need for prayer. If this is a case of deity praying to deity, then there is a hierarchy in the Godhead, and a ditheistic Godhead, at best.

It seems best to understand the prayers of Jesus, in light of His humanity. Jesus possessed a complete human psyche, through which, He communicated with man and with God, as all other human beings do. The verse quoted above demonstrates this well, when it explains Jesus' prayers as being prayed "in the days of His flesh." This doesn't mean that the body, Jesus possessed during His earthly ministry was dissolved somehow, upon His glorification and ascension, but was speaking of the days, in which, Jesus walked in this earth before His ascension into heaven. It was during that time, that Jesus prayed in the manner the author described.

That Jesus' prayers were genuine is witnessed by the fact, that Jesus prayed in solitary places and at night (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16). Not only did Jesus pray alone, but He prayed all night long, at times (Luke 6:12). For Peter, He prayed that his faith would not fail (Luke 22:31-32).

There is probably no greater example of the genuineness of Jesus' prayers, than those recorded of, in the Garden of Gethsemane before His betrayal and crucifixion. It was here, that Jesus prayed so earnestly, that it is said, "His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:44).

Jesus needed to pray as much as we do, and He did. He prayed, because He needed a relationship with God, and depended upon God's strength and power that comes from His anointing, to minister to the world and finish the works the Father gave Him to do (John 4:34; 5:36).

Oneness Theology Defended Against Claims of Heresy

As far as the orthodoxy of Oneness theology, most Trinitarians will admit that the differences between Oneness believers and Trinitarians, is rather minute and not always so apparent... Calvin Beisner had this to say concerning the differences: “As the differences between Modalism and pure Trinitarianism, are rather minute, it is not surprising that a great number of Christians, in mainline denominations...hold a modalistic conception of the Trinity, at least unconsciously.”

There is a great continuity between modern Oneness believers and Trinitarians. The following are quotes from some recent works by prominent Trinitarians that are congruent with Oneness teaching. In fact, there are some points that are now being made by modern Trinitarians, that Oneness has contended for, for years.

Frank Stagg had this to say regarding the person of Jesus Christ:

Jesus Christ is God, uniquely present in a truly human life, but He is not a second God, nor only one-third of God. Jesus Christ is the Word, made flesh (John 1:1). The Word, which became flesh, was God, not the second person of the Trinity. John does not say, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was the Second Person of the Trinity” (1.1). He says, that “the Word was God.” Jesus Christ is more than “the Second person of the Trinity;” He is Immanuel, God with us.

Likewise, concerning the Holy Spirit, Stagg said:

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, not the Spirit of the third person of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit is God, in His nearness and power, anywhere and anytime, the very Divine presence, incarnated in Jesus Christ, now present in His people. He is not a third God or one-third of God. He is God, Himself relating to us in judgment, guidance, strength, redemption, or otherwise.

Alister McGrath offered some insight, pertaining to the word, *persons* in reference to the Trinity, that modern Oneness believers completely agree with:

The word, “person” has changed its meaning, since the third century, when it began to be used in connection with the “threefoldness of God.” When we talk about God as a person, we naturally think of God, as being *one* person. But, theologians such as Tertullian, writing in the third century, used the word “person,” with a different meaning. The word, “person” originally derives from the Latin word, *persona*, meaning, an actor’s face mask-and, by extension, the role which he takes, in a play.

By stating that there were three persons, but only one God, Tertullian was asserting, that all three major roles, in the great drama of human redemption, are played by the one and the same God. The three great roles, in this drama, are all played by the same actor: God. Each of these roles may reveal God in a somewhat different way, but it is the same God, in every case. So, when we talk about God, as one person, we mean, one person *in the modern sense of the word*, and when we talk about God as three persons, we mean three persons *in the ancient sense, of the word*. ...Confusing the word, “person” inevitably leads to the idea, that God is actually, a committee...

By no means do the above quotes, demonstrate that these men, are unorthodox Trinitarians, nor do they demonstrate, that they are orthodox Oneness believers. For other terminologies employed, and other explanations given by them, are not plausible to Oneness believers. What these quotes do demonstrate, is that Oneness believers and Trinitarians have more in common than what may have been previously realized.

Oneness believers and Trinitarians 1. both believe in one God; 2. both believe, that the Father, Son, and Spirit, are God; 3. both confess, that the Scripture makes a distinction between the Father, Son, and Spirit; 4. both believe, that the Son of God died on the cross, and not the Father; both believe that Jesus was praying to the Father,

and not to Himself.

Oneness believers and Trinitarians differ in that, 1. Trinitarians believe that the one God consists of three eternal persons, while Oneness believes that the one God is one person; 2. Trinitarians believe that the second person of the Trinity became incarnated, while Oneness believes that the Father, who is one person, became incarnated, as the Son of God; 3. Trinitarians believe that the Son is eternal, while Oneness believes that the Son did not exist until the incarnation, because the term refers to God as He exists as a Man, and not as He exists in His essential deity; 4. Trinitarians sees the Biblical distinctions between the Father and the Son, to be a distinction in both, personality and flesh, while Oneness believes that all distinctions are a result of the relationship of the Spirit of God, to the incarnate God-Man.

Relevance to Life and Ministry

As was mentioned in the beginning of this course, one's view of God, is central, to most religions of the world.

To the Christian, God is the source of all reality. The way we understand the ontological nature of God, will affect the way we interpret the way we are to relate to Him. Having a Oneness view of the Godhead, will affect the way we pray. A Trinitarian, commonly struggles, with the dilemma of who to pray to. Some only addresses one member of the Godhead, at a time, or only pray to one. Some Trinitarians have confessed to me, that they get confused, as to who they should pray to for what, so they end up praying the same prayer, three times, addressing it to each member of the Trinity. Oneness believers do not have this confusion. They know that when they pray, it does not matter whether the Father, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit is addressed. Because God is one, and Father, Son, and Spirit, are all manifestations of the same Person, we are assured, that our prayers are heard.

This means, that we can encounter God first-hand. We do not go to some Arian demigod, or to a man, who is only adopted, as deity by *the* God, nor do we encounter one part of God, but we encounter God, Himself.

When ministering to this world, and they desire to see an example of love, we can show them, that Jehovah, Himself, became flesh, so that He could die on a cross, to atone for our sins. He did not send somebody else. He did not send a second-person, but He came, Himself. What a glorious and great God, we serve.

Concluding Thoughts

After studying the Godhead so intently, and using such technical words to express the nature of God, as precisely as possible, one could be left feeling that they have pinned the tail on the theological donkey. To leave this study with an over-confidence in one's personal understanding of God, is not good. The subject of the Godhead, should not be thought of, as so far beyond our comprehension, that no claim can be made to understanding, but neither should the subject be thought of, as so understandable, that there is no element of mystery left to God. Our awe of God, should increase in conjunction with our understanding of God, producing humility before His infinite presence.

God cannot be limited to our puny vocabulary and ways of explaining His existence. He is beyond us. Trying to grasp the way in which He exists, is like trying to cut a tunnel through a mountain with a spoon -- we may make some progress, but no matter how long we try or how hard we work, our progress is minute and barely noticeable.

We must always remember, that God's revelation, the Bible, is a reduction of reality. God has attempted to express particular things about Himself, using human language and material concepts. But God is beyond words, and is Spiritual, not material. Let's be honest, how can we put God's infiniteness into words? How can we grasp the concept of an eternal God, who has no beginning or ending? How can we understand

how God could become a Man? How can the infinite become finite, and yet, still be infinite. There is so much of God that we do not know and cannot explain, but can only experience glimpses of. Such concepts are very difficult to grapple with. The answers, which we come up with, should always be held in a tentative manner, realizing that our understanding of God will progress, in time. We attempt to fill in the gaps between the Biblical statements to make sense out of them, and unify them into one working theology, but the ways in which we fill in the gaps of the Scriptural facts should be held, on a provisional status, while we await more understanding. As Michael Bauman has said, "Sometimes our theological reach exceeds our grasp. We simply do not know much of what we think we know." Who God is, and the relationship of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is not beyond some level of understanding, but truly, being able to put our finger on God and define His eternal majesty, in any theology book, is beyond our grasp. I choose, rather to admit, that I know what little I know, and to confess, that I do not know, that which I do not know, for this is the beginning of knowledge. I pray you will do the same.

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