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Old Testament

Genesis 1:1

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. (*KJV*)

1. The word “God” is *Elohim*, which is itself a plural form and, like most other words, has more than one definition. It is used in a plural sense of “gods” or “men with authority,” and in a singular sense for “God,” “god,” or “a man with authority, such as a judge.” The Hebrew lexicon by Brown, Driver and Briggs, considered to be one of the best available, has as its first usage for *Elohim*: “*rulers, judges*, either as divine representatives at sacred places or as reflecting divine majesty and power, *divine ones*, superhuman beings including God and angels, *gods*.”¹

Elohim is translated “gods” in many verses. Genesis 35:2 reads, “Get rid of all the foreign gods you have with you,” and Exodus 18:11 says, “Now I know that the Lord is greater than all other gods.” It is translated “judges” in Exodus 21:6; 22:8 and 9. It is translated “angels” (*KJV*) or “heavenly beings” (*NIV*) in Psalm 8:5. That is its plural use, and there is no evidence that anyone thought of these “gods” as having some kind of plurality of persons within themselves.

2. *Elohim* is also translated as the singular “god” or “judge,” and there is no hint of any “compound nature” when it is translated that way. An example is Exodus 22:20, which reads, “Whoever sacrifices to any *god* other than the LORD must be destroyed.” Another example is Judges 6:31: “If Baal really is a *god*, he can defend himself when someone breaks down his altar.” In Exodus 7:1, God says that He has made Moses a “god” (*Elohim*) to Pharaoh. Again, in Judges 11:24, the pagan god Chemosh is called *Elohim*, and in 1 Samuel 5:7, the pagan god Dagon is called *Elohim*, yet Christians do not conclude that those gods were somehow composite or “uniplural,” or that the people who worshipped them thought they were.

¹ Francis Brown, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Hendrickson Pub., Massachusetts, 1906), p. 43.

Exactly how to translate *Elohim* in 1 Samuel 2:25 has been debated by scholars. The question is whether *Elohim* in the verse refers to a human judge or to God. The *KJV* says “judge.” The versions are divided between them, some translating *Elohim* as a man, others as God Himself. The fact that the scholars and translators debate about whether the word *Elohim* refers to a man or God shows vividly that the word itself does not have any inherent idea of a plurality of persons. If it did, it could not be translated as “god” when referring to a pagan god, or as “judge” when referring to a man. The evidence in Scripture does not warrant the conclusion that the Hebrew word *Elohim* inherently contains the idea of a compound nature.

3. Some teach that the word *Elohim* implies a compound unity when it refers to the true God. That would mean that the word *Elohim* somehow changes meaning when it is applied to the true God so that the true God can be a compound being. There is just no evidence of this. The first place we should go for confirmation of this is to the Jews themselves. When we study the history and the language of the Jews, we discover that they never understood *Elohim* to imply a plurality in God in any way. In fact, the Jews were staunchly opposed to people and nations who tried to introduce any hint of more than one God into their culture. **Jewish rabbis have debated the Law to the point of tedium, and have recorded volume after volume of notes on the Law, yet in all of their debates there is no mention of a plurality in God.** This fact in and of itself ought to close the argument.

No higher authority on the Hebrew language can be found than the great Hebrew scholar, Gesenius. He wrote that the plural nature of *Elohim* was for intensification, and was related to the plural of majesty and used for amplification. Gesenius states, “That the language has entirely rejected the idea of numerical plurality in *Elohim* (whenever it denotes *one* God) is proved especially by its being almost invariably joined with a singular attribute.”²

The singular pronoun is always used with the word *Elohim*. A study of the word will show what Gesenius stated, that the singular attribute (such as “He,” not “They,” or “I,” not “We”) always follows *Elohim*. Furthermore, when the word *Elohim* is used to denote others beside the true God, it is understood as singular or plural, never as “uniplural.” To us, the evidence is clear: God is not “compound” in any sense of the word. He is the “one God” of Israel.

4. Scripture contains no reproof for those who do not believe in a “Triune God.” Those who do not believe in God are called “fools” (Ps. 14:1). Those who reject Christ are condemned (John 3:18). Scripture testifies that it is for “doctrine, reproof, and correction” (2 Tim. 3:16 - *KJV*), and there are many verses that reprove believers for all kinds of erroneous beliefs and practices. Conspicuous in its absence is any kind of reproof for not believing in the Trinity.

Buzzard, pp. 13-15,125 and 126
Morgridge, pp. 88-96

² E. Kautzsch, ed., *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1910), p. 399.

Genesis 1:26

And God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." (*KJV*)

1. *Elohim* and *Adonim*, Hebrew words for God, occur in the plural. If this literally meant a plurality of persons, it would be translated "Gods." But the Jews, being truly monotheistic and thoroughly familiar with the idioms of their own language, have never understood the use of the plural to indicate a plurality of persons within the one God. This use of the plural is for amplification, and is called a "plural of majesty" or a "plural of emphasis," and is used for intensification (see note on Gen. 1:1). Many Hebrew scholars identify this use of "us" as the use of the plural of majesty or plural of emphasis, and we believe this also.

2. The plural of majesty is clearly attested to in writing from royalty through the ages. Hyndman writes:

The true explanation of this verse is to be found in the practice which has prevailed in all nations with which we are acquainted, of persons speaking of themselves in the plural number. "Given at our palace," "It is our pleasure," are common expressions of kings in their proclamations (p. 54).

Morgridge adds:

It is common in all languages with which we are acquainted, and it appears to have always been so, for an individual, especially if he be a person of great dignity and power, in speaking of himself only, to say *we*, *our*, *us*, instead of *I*, *my*, *me*. Thus, the king of France says, "*We*, Charles the tenth." The king of Spain says, "*We*, Ferdinand the seventh." The Emperor of Russia says "*We*, Alexander," or "*We*, Nicholas" (p. 93).

The plural of majesty can be seen in Ezra 4:18. In Ezra 4:11, the men of the Trans-Euphrates wrote, "To King Artaxerxes, from your servants." The book of Ezra continues, "The king sent this reply: Greetings. The letter you sent us has been read and translated..." Thus, although the people wrote to the king himself, the king used the word "us." It is common in such correspondence that the plural is used when someone speaks of his *intentions*, and the use of the more literal singular is used when the person *acts*. Morgridge adds more insight when he says:

It is well known that Mohammed was a determined opposer of the doctrine of the Trinity: yet he often represents God as saying *we*, *our*, *us*, when speaking only of Himself. This shows that, in his opinion, the use of such terms was not indicative of a plurality of persons. If no one infers, from their frequent use in the Koran, that Mohammed was a Trinitarian, surely their occurrence in a few places in the Bible ought not to be made a proof of the doctrine of the Trinity (p. 94).

3. Some scholars believe that the reason for the “us” in Genesis 1:26 is that God could have been speaking with the angels when he created man in the beginning. Although that is possible, because there are many Scriptures that clearly attribute the creation of man to God alone, we believe that the plural of emphasis is the preferred explanation.

4. The name of God is not the only word that is pluralized for emphasis (although when the plural does not seem to be good grammar, the translators usually ignore the Hebrew plural and translate it as a singular, so it can be hard to spot in most English versions).

After Cain murdered Abel, God said to Cain, “the voice of your brother’s *bloods* cries to me from the ground” (Gen. 4:10). The plural emphasizes the horror of the act. In Genesis 19:11, the men of Sodom who wanted to hurt Lot were smitten with “blindness.” The Hebrew is in the plural, “blindnesses,” and indicates that the blindness was total so Lot would be protected. Leviticus tells people not to eat fruit from a tree for three years, and in the fourth year the fruit is “an offering of praise to the Lord” (Lev. 19:24). The Hebrew word for “praise” is plural, emphasizing that there was to be *great* praise. Psalm 45:15 tells of people who are brought into the presence of the Messiah. It says, “They are led in with joy and gladness.” The Hebrew actually reads “gladnesses,” emphasizing the great gladness of the occasion. In Ezekiel 25, God is speaking of what has happened to Israel and what He will do about it. Concerning the Philistines, He said, “the Philistines acted in vengeance...I will carry out great vengeance on them” (Ezek 25:15 and 17). In the Hebrew text, the second vengeance, the vengeance of God, is in the plural, indicating the complete vengeance that the Lord will inflict. Although many more examples exist in the Hebrew text, these demonstrate that it is not uncommon to use a plural to emphasize something in Scripture.

Buzzard, p. 13

Farley, pp. 25-27

Hyndman, pp. 53 and 54

Morgridge, pp. 92-96

Snedeker, pp. 363-366

Genesis 11:7

Let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. (*KJV*)

For an explanation applicable to this verse, see the note on Genesis 1:26.

Genesis 16:7-13

(7) The angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur.

(8) And he said, “Hagar, slave-girl of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?” She said, “I am running away from my mistress Sarai.”

(9) The angel of the LORD said to her, “Return to your mistress and submit to her.”

(10) The angel of the LORD also said to her, “I will so greatly multiply your offspring that they cannot be counted for multitude.”

(11) And the angel of the LORD said to her: “Now you have conceived and shall bear a son; you shall call him Ishmael, for the LORD has given heed to your affliction.

(12) He shall be a wild ass of a man, with his hand against everyone, and everyone’s hand against him; and he shall live at odds with all his kin.”

(13) So she named the LORD who spoke to her, “You are El-roi”; for she said, “Have I really seen God and remained alive after seeing him?” (NRSV)

1. It is believed by some Trinitarians that in the Old Testament “the angel of the Lord” is Jesus Christ before he supposedly “incarnated” as a human. This point is disputed by many, and with good reason. There is not a single verse that actually says that Jesus Christ is the angel of the Lord. The entire doctrine is built from assumption. Why then, if the doctrine is not stated, do so many people believe it? The reason is that it is very awkward for Trinitarians to believe that Jesus is co-equal and co-eternal with God from the beginning of time, and yet he never appears in the Old Testament. Since one cannot miss the active role that Jesus plays today as Head of the Church, is it possible that he could have been around throughout the entire Old Testament and yet never have gotten involved with mankind? A Trinitarian answer to this question is to place Jesus in the Old Testament by assumption: he must be “the angel of the Lord.”

However, we answer the question by asserting that this is very strong evidence for our position that Jesus Christ did not yet exist during the Old Testament, but was the plan of God for the salvation of man. We believe that physically he *began* when God impregnated Mary (Matt. 1:18). Exactly what are the reasons Trinitarians say that the angel of the Lord is Jesus? Trinitarians differ on the points of evidence (which is to be expected when working from assumptions), but the standard reasons are: he seems superior to other angels; he is separate from the Lord; he is able to forgive sins (Ex. 23:21); he speaks with authority as though he were God; his countenance struck awe in people; he was never seen after Jesus’ birth, and, most importantly, he is addressed as God himself. All these points will be considered, and we will start with the last, which is the most essential point of the argument.

2. A study of the appearances of the angel of the Lord reveals that sometimes he is addressed as the angel and sometimes he is addressed as “the Lord” or “God” (see Gen. 16:13 and Judges 6:16). The Jewish law of agency explains why this is so. According to the Jewish understanding of agency, the agent was regarded as the person himself. This is well expressed in *The Encyclopedia of the Jewish Religion*:

Agent (Heb. *Shaliah*): The main point of the Jewish law of agency is expressed in the dictum, “a person’s agent is regarded as the person himself” (*Ned.* 72b; *Kidd.* 41b). Therefore any act committed by a duly appointed agent is regarded as having been committed by the principal, who therefore bears full responsibility for it with consequent complete absence of liability on the part of the agent.³

³ R. J. Z. Werblowsky and Geoffrey Wigoder. *op. cit.*, *Encyclopedia*, p. 15.

In the texts in which the angel is called “God” or “the Lord,” it is imperative to notice that he is always identified as an angel. This point is important because God is never called an angel. God is God. So if a being is called “God,” but is clearly identified as an angel, there must be a reason. In the record in Genesis quoted above, the angel is clearly identified as an angel four separate times. Why then would the text say that “the Lord” spoke to her? It does so because as God’s agent or messenger, the angel was speaking for God and the message he brought was God’s message. The same basic idea is expressed when “God” is said to “visit” His people, when actually He sends some form of blessing (see the notes on Luke 7:16). God Himself does not show up, but someone unfamiliar with the culture might conclude from the wording that He did. Also, some of the people to whom the angel appeared, clearly expressed their belief he was an angel of God. Gideon exclaimed, “I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face!” (Judges 6:22).

There is conclusive biblical evidence that God’s messengers and representatives are called “God” (see the notes on Heb. 1:8). This is important because, if representatives of God are called “God,” then the way to distinguish God from His representative is by the context. We have already shown that when the angel of the Lord is called “God,” the context is careful to let the reader know that the agent is, in fact, an angel.

3. Another piece of evidence that reveals that the angel of the Lord is an angel and not a “co-equal” member of the Trinity is that he is under the command of the Lord. In one record, David disobeyed God and a plague came on the land. “God sent an angel to destroy Jerusalem” (1 Chron. 21:15). We learn from the record that it was the angel of the Lord afflicting the people, and eventually “the LORD was grieved because of the calamity and said to the angel who was afflicting the people, ‘Enough! Withdraw your hand.’ The angel of the LORD was then at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite” (2 Sam. 24:16). These verses are not written as if this angel was somehow God himself. There is no “co-equality” here. This is simply the Lord giving commands to one of His angels.

4. Another clear example showing that the angel of the Lord cannot be God in any way is in Zechariah. Zechariah was speaking with an angel about a vision he had. The Bible records, “Then the angel of the LORD said, ‘LORD Almighty, how long will you withhold mercy from Jerusalem and from the towns of Judah, which you have been angry with these seventy years?’ So the LORD spoke kind and comforting words to the angel who talked with me” (Zech. 1:12 and 13). The fact that the angel of the Lord asked the Lord for information and then received comforting words indicates that he is not co-equal with God in power or knowledge. It is unthinkable that God would need information or need comforting words. Thus, any claim that the angel of the Lord is the pre-incarnate Christ who is in every way God just cannot be made to fit what the Bible actually says.

5. It is interesting that two pieces of evidence that Trinitarians use to prove that the angel of the Lord must be the pre-incarnate Jesus are that the Bible clearly states that he is separate from God and that he speaks with God’s authority. We would argue that the reason he is separate from God is because he is exactly what the text calls him, *i.e.*, an angel, and that he speaks with authority because he is bringing a message from God. The

prophets and others who spoke for God spoke with authority, as many verses affirm. Also, the angel of the Lord speaks about God in the third person. For example, in Genesis 16:11 above, the angel says, “The LORD has heard of your misery.” The angel does not say, “I have heard of your misery,” as if he were God. In Genesis 22:12, the angel said, “Now I know that you fear God,” not “Now I know you fear me.” In Judges 13:5, the angel says Samson will be “set apart to God,” not “set apart to me.” So although the text can call the angel God, which is proper for a representative of God, the angel never said he was God and even referred to God in the third person.

Also, if Jesus were the angel of the Lord who spoke to Moses at the burning bush, then he did not say so in his teaching. Mark 12:26 records Jesus speaking with the Sadducees and saying, “Have you not read in the book of Moses, in the account of the bush, how God said to him, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’” If Jesus had been the angel in the bush, and was openly proclaiming himself to be “the pre-existent God,” he would have used this opportunity to say, “I said to Moses.” The fact that Jesus said it was *God* who spoke to Moses shows clearly that he was differentiating himself from God.

6. That the angel of the Lord seems superior to other angels is no reason to assume he is somehow part of the Trinity. Many scholars agree that angels differ in power and authority. The Bible mentions archangels in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 and Jude 9, for example. It would not be unusual that this angel would be one with greater authority. Neither is the fact that the angel of the Lord can forgive sins any reason to believe that he is God. God’s agents can forgive sins. God gave Jesus the authority to forgive sins, and then he in turn gave the apostles the authority to forgive sins (see the notes on Matt. 9:2).

7. Although it is true that the countenance of the angel of the Lord occasionally struck awe in people, that is no reason to assume he is God. A careful reading of the passages where he appears shows that sometimes the people did not even realize that they were talking to an angel. For example, when the angel of the Lord appeared to Samson’s mother, she returned to her husband Manoah with this report: “A man of God came to me. He looked like an angel of God, very awesome. I didn’t ask him where he came from, and he didn’t tell me his name” (Judges 13:6). Note that angels had a reputation for having an awe-inspiring countenance, and the woman thought this “man of God” did too, but she still did not believe he was an angel. When Manoah met the angel of the Lord and the two of them talked about how to raise Samson, Manoah did not discover he was an angel until he ascended to heaven in the smoke of Manoah’s sacrifice. Therefore, just because someone’s countenance may be awesome, he is not necessarily God.

8. It is also argued that Jesus is probably “the angel of the Lord” because those words never appear after his birth, and it seems reasonable that this angel would appear right on through the Bible. The fact is, however, that the angel of the Lord does appear after Jesus’ *conception*, which seems inconsistent with the premise that the angel of the Lord is the “pre-incarnate Christ.” The record of Jesus’ birth is well known. Mary was discovered to be pregnant with Jesus before she and Joseph were married, and Joseph, who could have had her stoned to death, decided to divorce her. However, “an angel of

the Lord” appeared to him in a dream and told him the child was God’s. Matthew 1:24 states, “When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.” Two conclusions can be drawn from this record. First, Jesus was already in Mary’s womb when the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph. From this we conclude that “the angel of the Lord” cannot be Jesus because Jesus was at that time “in the flesh” inside Mary. Second, it should be noted that in the same record this angel is known both as “an” angel of the Lord and as “the” angel of the Lord. This same fact can be seen in the Old Testament records (Cp. 1 Kings 19:5 and 7).

There are many appearances of “an” angel of the Lord in the New Testament (Cp. Acts 5:19; 8:26; 12:7 and 23). From this we conclude that it is likely that the same angel who is called both “the” angel of the Lord and “an angel” in the Old Testament still appears as “an angel of the Lord” after Christ’s birth. When all the evidence is carefully weighed, there is good reason to believe that the words describing the “angel” of the Lord are literal, and that the being referred to is an angel, just as the text says.

Genesis 18:1 and 2

(1) The LORD appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day.

(2) Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.
(NIV)

1. These verses pose a problem for Christians who have been taught that no one has ever seen God. The Hebrew text clearly says that *Yahweh* appeared to Abraham in the form of a man, and He was with two angels, who also took on human appearance. This is not a problem. God created mankind so He could intimately fellowship with us. It is reasonable that He would occasionally become visible and take on human form to be intimate with His creation. In fact, Scripture records a number of people to whom God appeared: Adam and Eve (they heard His footsteps, Gen. 3:8), Abraham (Gen. 12:7;15:1;17:1;18:1), Jacob (Gen. 28:13), Moses and the elders of Israel (Ex. 24:9-11), Samuel (1 Sam. 3:10), Solomon twice (1 Kings 3:5;9:2;11:9), Micaiah (1 Kings 22:19-22), Isaiah (Isa. 6:1-5), Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:26-28), Daniel (Dan. 7:9-14), Amos (Amos 7:7), Stephen (Acts 7:56) and the Apostle John (Rev. 5:1-8).

2. A study of Genesis 18:1 in Christian commentaries reveals that most theologians do not believe that *Yahweh* can appear in the form of a man. Before we examine why they say that, we must remember that, difficult to believe or not, that is *exactly* what the text says. Many theologians who do not believe that the text can be literal have postulated other explanations. The standard explanations of the verse are: it was actually a dream and not real; it was the pre-incarnate Christ who appeared; it was an angel that appeared carrying the name of *Yahweh*.

Some theologians teach that the record of Genesis 18:1ff was a dream because of the circumstances, *i.e.*, it was the heat of the day and the time for naps. However, the Bible never says it was a dream, and there certainly was no time when Abraham “woke up.”

The record of Sodom and Gomorrah is certainly not a dream. The angels left Abraham and went to the city of Sodom where they rescued Lot and his daughters from God's judgment. There is just no solid Scriptural evidence that *Yahweh's* appearance was a dream. Neither would this account for the many other times *Yahweh* appears.

Many Trinitarian theologians say that Genesis 18:1 is an appearance of the pre-incarnate Christ. The evidence they give for their conclusion is twofold: *Yahweh* is invisible and no one has or can see Him, so it cannot be He; and the record clearly says it is *Yahweh*, so it must be the pre-incarnate Christ since "Christ is a member of the Godhead." However, if it could be shown that *Yahweh* does indeed occasionally appear in the form of a man, then there would be no reason not to take the Bible literally. Furthermore, the fact that Scripture never says that the one appearing is Christ is strong evidence that this is not Christ. And there are at least two occasions where *Yahweh* and Christ appear together (Dan. 7 and Rev. 5). This seems to us to force the conclusion that *Yahweh* cannot be Christ.

The major reason to make the "*Yahweh*" of this record into an angel is the same as the reason to make the record a dream or to make *Yahweh* into the pre-incarnate Christ. It comes from the preconceived idea that *Yahweh* just cannot appear in human form. Therefore, the temptation here is to make *Yahweh* of necessity a dream, an angel or Christ. Even though in other records angels are called God, this record is different. We have seen from other verses that angels are occasionally called "God" (see the notes on Gen. 16:7-13). However, a study of the records where the angel of the Lord is called "God" shows that he was always clearly identified as an angel, and it was clear that he was bringing a message from God. This record, and the others mentioned above in which *Yahweh* appears, are decidedly different. The "man" identified as *Yahweh* is among other angels, and the entire record identifies Him as *Yahweh*. And while other records show the angel of the Lord carefully avoiding the use of the first person, "I," "me" and "my," referring to God, the "*Yahweh*" in this record uses the first person over and over.

3. Most Christians have not been taught that God can appear in a form resembling a person. They have always heard, "no one has seen God at any time." In *Don't Blame God!*, the language of that phrase is examined and explained. John 1:17 and 18 states: "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God..." We write:

Please note that truth, in its fullness, came not with Moses, but with Jesus Christ. It was he who for the first time in history made God truly understandable. It is not that the Old Testament believers knew nothing of God, but rather that their knowledge and understanding of Him were quite limited ("veiled"). Since truth came by Jesus Christ ("For the law was given through Moses; grace and **truth** came through Jesus,"), we believe that the first part of John 1:18—"no man hath seen God at anytime"—means that no man had "known" God [as He truly is] at any previous time. It is Jesus Christ who reveals, or makes known, God to man. In many languages, "to see" is a common idiom for "to know." In the Hebrew language, one of the definitions for "see" (Hebrew = *ra' ah*) is "see, so as to learn,

to know.” Similarly, the Greek word translated “see” in verse 18 (*horaō*) can be “to see with the eyes” or “to see with the mind, to perceive, know.” Even in English, one of the definitions for “see” is “to know or understand.” For example, when two people are discussing something, one might say to the other, “I see what you mean.”

The usage of “see” as it pertains to knowing is found in many places in the New Testament. Jesus said to Philip, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). Here again the word “see” is used to indicate knowing. Anyone who *knew* Christ (not just those who “saw” him) would know the Father. In fact, Christ had made that plain two verses earlier when he said to Philip, “If you really knew me you would know my Father as well” (John 14:7).⁴

Further evidence that “see” means “know” in John 1:18 is that the phrase “no man has seen God” is contrasted with the phrase “has made Him known.” The verse is not talking about “seeing” God with one’s eyes, it is saying that the truth about God came by Jesus Christ. Before Jesus Christ came, no one really knew God as He truly is, a loving heavenly Father. Jesus Christ made that known in its fullness. Our study has led us to conclude that verses seeming to say that no one has ever “seen” God are either using the word “seen” as meaning “to know,” and thus referring to knowing Him fully, or they are referring to seeing Him in all His fullness as God, which would be impossible. We agree with the text note on John 1:18 in the *NIV Study Bible*, which says, “Since no human being can see God as He really is, those who saw God saw Him in a form He took on Himself temporarily for the occasion.”

Another point should be made about the word “seen” in John 1:18. If Trinitarians are correct in that Jesus is “God incarnate,” “God the Son” and “fully God,” then it seems to us that they would be anxious to realize that “seen” means “known” because it makes no sense to say that no man has seen God with his eyes and then say Jesus is God. Theologians on both sides of the Trinitarian debate should realize the idiom of “seen” meaning “known” in John 1:18.

The Bible also calls God “the invisible God.” This is true, and God’s natural state is invisible to us. However, that does not prevent Him from occasionally becoming visible. Angels and demons are also naturally invisible, but they can and do become visible at certain times. If angels and demons can sometimes become visible, then God certainly can too. We remind the reader that the Bible plainly says, “*Yahweh* appeared to Abraham,” and to others as well.

It is often stated that the people could not have really seen *Yahweh* because a person will die if he sees God. This idea comes mainly from the conversation Moses had with God. Moses asked to see the glory of God, and God responded, “You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live” (Ex. 33:20). It is clear from the context that the “face” of God was the “glory” of God, because that is what Moses asked to see. We would concur that human beings are not equipped to comprehend God in all His fullness, and exposure

⁴ *Don’t Blame God!* (CES, fourth edition, 1994) pp. 59 and 60.

to all that God is would be lethal. However, we know that God did create mankind so He could fellowship with us, and we assert that the human-like form that He has sometimes assumed in order to be near us is not His fullness in any way.

There are two records very important to this subject because they describe God and also show Jesus Christ with Him. The first is a revelation vision of the future that Daniel the prophet had.

Daniel 7:9,10,13 and 14

(9) As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze.

(10) A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened.

(13) In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.

(14) He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

The “Ancient of Days” is *Yahweh*. Note his description as a man. Into his presence comes “a son of man” who is given authority and dominion. It is quite universally agreed among Christians that the “Ancient of Days” is God the Father, and the “son of man” is Jesus Christ, who receives his authority from God. Note that in this passage there is no hint of the Trinity. There is no “Holy Spirit” and no indication that the “son of man” is co-equal or co-eternal with the Father. On the contrary, while God is called the “Ancient of Days,” a title befitting His eternal nature, Christ is called “a son of man,” meaning one who is born from human parents. This prophecy is one of many that shaped the Jewish belief about their Messiah: he was not foretold as “God in the flesh,” but rather a man like themselves who would receive special honor and authority from God. For our purposes in understanding Genesis 18:1, these verses in Daniel demonstrate very clearly that God can and does appear in human form. And because in Daniel’s vision He is with the Messiah when He does so, there is no reason to assume that the other times He appears it is actually Jesus Christ.

The other very clear record is Revelation 4 and 5. The length of the record prohibits us from printing it here, but the reader is encouraged to read those two chapters. They portray God sitting on a throne surrounded by elders and creatures who repeat, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty.” God is holding in His right hand a scroll that is written on both sides but sealed shut with seven seals. An angel calls out to summon those who could open the scroll, but no one was worthy. As John began to weep, an angel comforted him with the words, “Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll.” Then “a Lamb” (the

context makes it clear it is Jesus Christ) “came and took the scroll from the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.” At that point the creatures and the elders fell down before the Lamb and started singing a “new song.”

The record is clear. God is described as sitting on a throne and even holding in His hand a scroll that Jesus comes and takes from Him. This record again shows that God can and does occasionally take on human form so that we can better identify with Him.

4. This record and the others like it show a glimpse of what Christians have to look forward to. God loves us and created us to have a deep and abiding relationship with Him. He will not always remain as distant as He now sometimes seems. The Bible tells of a time when “the dwelling of God is with men, and He will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God” (Rev. 21:3).

Deuteronomy 6:4

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. (*NIV*)

1. It is believed by some that the Hebrew word “one” (*echad*) that is used in Deuteronomy 6:4 and other verses indicates a “compound unity.” This is just not true. Anthony Buzzard writes:

It is untrue to say that the Hebrew word *echad* (one) in Deut. 6:4 points to a compound unity. A recent defense of the Trinity argues that when “one” modifies a collective noun like “cluster” or “herd,” a plurality is implied in *echad*. The argument is fallacious. The sense of plurality is derived from the collective noun, not from the word “one.” *Echad* in Hebrew is the numeral “one.” Isa. 51:2 describes Abraham as “one” (*echad*), where there is no possible misunderstanding about the meaning of this simple word (p. 15).

There is no reference to the word “one” as to a plurality of any kind. It is used of “one” in number, “the first” in a series, “one” in the sense of “the same,” and “one” in the sense of “each” or “a certain one.” A study of its uses in the Old Testament will reveal its simple meaning and the truth it conveys. It is translated “first” in Genesis 1:5, when God made light on the “first” day. The whole earth spoke “one” language before Babel (Gen. 11:1). Hagar cast her child under “one” of the bushes (Gen. 21:15). In Pharaoh’s dream, there were seven ears of grain on “one” stalk (Gen. 41:5). In the plague on Egypt’s livestock, not “one” cow died in Israel (Ex. 9:6). Exodus 12:49 says that Israel shall have “one” law for the citizen and the foreigner. The examples are far too many to list. *Echad* is used more than 250 times in the Old Testament, and there is no hint in any Jewish commentary or lexicon that it somehow implies a “compound unity.”

The history of the Jews is well known. They were infamous in the ancient world for being downright obnoxious when it came to defending their “one God,” as civilizations down through the ages found out. Snedeker quotes Eliot:

One thing, very important, is certain, that if any such hints [that God was a plurality of persons] were conveyed, the Jews never understood them. The presumption is that they knew their own language, and it is certain they understood that the Unity of God was taught by their Scriptures in the most absolute and unqualified manner. Such was their interpretation of Moses and the Prophets at the time when Christ came. In all Palestine there probably could not have been found a single man or woman, who supposed that there was any distinction of persons, such as is now taught, in the Unity of God (p. 293).

2. Deuteronomy 6:4 is one of the strongest texts *against* the Trinity. God is “one,” not “three-in-one” or some other plurality. This has been the rallying cry of Jews down through the ages who have stood aggressively against any form of polytheism or pantheism. Jesus quoted this verse as part of the first and great commandment: “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength” (Mark 12:29 and 30). It is quite inconceivable that Christ would be promoting some form of the doctrine of the Trinity while at the same time quoting Deuteronomy that God is “one” to a Jewish audience who would be sure to misunderstand him. It is much more reasonable to believe that Jesus was simply affirming that if we are to love God with all our heart we must be certain who He is—the one God of Israel.

Buzzard, pp. 12-15, 126 and 127

Hyndman, pp. 51-53

Snedeker, pp. 283-90

Psalm 45:6

Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom. (*NIV*)

This verse is quoted in Hebrews 1:8 and our explanation can be found there.

Psalm 110:1

The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet” (*NIV*)

Trinitarian commentators frequently argue that “my Lord” in this verse is the Hebrew word *adonai*, another name for God, and is therefore proof of the divinity of the Messiah. But not only is this not a valid argument, this verse is actually one of the great proofs of the complete humanity of the promised Messiah. The Hebrew word translated “my lord” is *adoni* (pronounced “Adon nee”⁵) in the standard Hebrew texts. This word is always used in Scripture to describe human masters and lords, but *never* God. Unfortunately, most Hebrew concordances and lexicons give only root words, not the word that actually

⁵ *Adonai* is pronounced “Adon eye,” because the “*ai*” sounds like “eye.” *Adoni* is pronounced “Adon nee” because the final “*i*” is pronounced like a long “e.”

occurs in the Hebrew text. This is one reason why biblical research done by people using only tools such as a *Strong's Concordance* will often be limited.⁶ While this usually does not affect the interpretation of the text, sometimes it makes a great deal of difference, such as in Psalm 110:1. *Focus on the Kingdom* reports:

The Bible in Psalm 110:1 actually gives the Messiah the title that *never describes God*. The word is *adoni* and in all of its 195 occurrences in the Old Testament it means a superior who is human (or occasionally angelic), created and not God. So Psalm 110:1 presents the clearest evidence that the Messiah is not God, but a supremely exalted man.⁷

The difference between *adon* (the root word), *adoni* (“lord,” always used of men or angels) and *adonai* (which is used of God and sometimes written *adonay*) is critical to the understanding of Psalm 110:1. The Hebrew Lexicon by Brown, Driver and Briggs (*BDB*), considered by many to be the best available, makes the distinction between these words. Note how in *BDB* the word *adoni* refers to “lords” that are not God, while another word, *adonai*, refers to God:⁸

(1) Reference to **men**: *my lord, my master*: (*adoni*)

(a) *master*: Ex. 21:5 (Covenant code) Gen. 24:12+, 44:5 (J, 20t.), 1 Sam. 30:13 and 15; 2 Kings 5:3, 20 and 22; 6:15;

(b) *husband*: Gen. 18:12 (J);

(c) *prophet*: 1 Kings 18:7 and 13; 2 Kings 2:19; 4:16 and 28; 6:5; 8:5;

(d) *prince*: Gen. 42:10 (E), Gen. 23:6,11 and 15 (P), Gen 43:20; 44:18+ ; 47:18, + (J, 12t.); Judges. 4:18;

(e) *king*: 1 Sam. 22:12+ (S&K 75t.);

(f) *father*: Gen. 31:5 (E);

(g) *Moses*: Ex. 32:22; Num. 11:28; 12:11; 32:26 and 27 (J); Num. 36:2 (2x) (P);

(h) *priest*: 1 Sam. 1:15 and 26 (2x);

(i) *theophanic angel* [an angel representing God]: Josh. 5:14; Judges. 6:13;

⁶ People wanting to study this for themselves will need to be able to work with the Hebrew text itself and not just the root words. A good source for this is the Bible study computer program, *Bibleworks* 5.0 resold by CES.

⁷ (Anthony Buzzard, ed., *Focus on the Kingdom*, Atlanta Bible College, Morrow, GA, March 2000), p. 3, Emphasis his. We found 198 uses of *adoni*, but in a personal conversation with Mr. Buzzard he stated that his figure of 195 could understate the situation slightly since it was not the result of an exacting study.

⁸ Hebrew reads from right to left, so the first letter of the word looks like a glorified “X.”

(j) *captain*: 2 Sam. 11:11;

(k) general recognition of superiority: Gen. 24:18; 32:5+; 33:8+; 44:7+ (J 13t.), Ruth 2:13; 1 Sam. 25:24+ (15t.).

(2) Reference to God: [*adonai*]. Notice that when the word refers to God, it changes from when it refers to men. The vowel under the “n” (the second letter from the left) has changed.⁹

In the above definition, *adoni* and *adonai* have the same root, *adon*, which is the word listed in the concordances and most lexicons. However, the exact words used are different. *Adoni*, the word used in Psalm 110:1, is never used of God. It is always used of a human or angelic superior. The fact that the Hebrew text uses the word *adoni* of the Messiah in Psalm 110 is very strong proof that he is not God. If the Messiah was to be God, then the word *adonai* would have been used. This distinction between *adoni* (a lord) and *adonai* (the Lord, God) holds even when God shows up in human form. In Genesis 18:3, Abraham addresses God who was “disguised” as a human, but the text uses *adonai*.

Scholars recognize that there is a distinction between the words *adoni* and *adonai*, and that these distinctions are important. The *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* notes:

The form ADONI (“my lord”), a royal title (1 Sam. 29:8), is to be carefully distinguished from the divine title ADONAI (“my Lord”) used of *Yahweh*.¹⁰

There are several uses of *adonai* that refer to angels or men, giving them an elevated status, but not indicating that the speaker believed they were God. This is in keeping with the language as a whole. Studies of words like *Elohim* show that it is also occasionally used of humans who have elevated status. Examples of *adonai* referring to humans include Genesis 19:18 and 24:9, 39:2. In contrast to *adonai* being used occasionally of men, there is no time when *adoni* is used of God. Men may be elevated, but God is never lowered.

The following 148 verses contain 166 uses of the word (*adoni*)¹¹ and every one of them either refers to a human lord or an angel. None refers to God: Gen. 23:6, 11,15;

⁹ Francis Brown, S. R. Driver and Charles Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, reprint 1996), p. 11 (*Adon*, “Lord”). We have changed the punctuation and reference abbreviations to make it consistent with the abbreviations we use for ease of reading. The letters in parenthesis mark their belief as to the exact writer or redactor of that portion of Scripture, something we do not agree with theologically.

¹⁰ Geoffrey Bromiley, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 1979), “Lord.”

24:12(2x), 14, 18, 27(3x), 35, 36, 37, 39, 42, 44, 48(2x), 49, 65; 31:35; 33:8, 13, 14(2x), 15; 39:8; 42:10; 43:20; 44:5, 7, 18(2x), 19, 20, 22, 24; 47:18(2x), 25; Exod. 21:5; 32:22; Num. 11:28; 12:11; 32:25, 27; 36:2; Josh. 5:14; 10:1, 3; Judg. 1:5, 6, 7; 4:18; 6:13; Ruth 2:13; 1 Sam. 1:15, 26(2x); 22:12; 24:8; 25:24, 25(2x), 26(2x), 27, 28, 29, 31, 41; 26:17, 18,19; 29:8; 30:13, 15; 2 Sam. 1:10; 3:21; 9:11; 11:11; 13:32, 33; 14:9, 12, 15, 17(2x), 18,19(2x), 22; 15:15, 21(2x); 16:4, 9; 18:31, 32; 19:19(2x), 20, 26, 27, 30, 35, 37; 24:3, 21, 22; 1 Kings 1:13, 17, 18, 20(2x), 21,24, 27(2x), 31, 36, 37(2x); 2:38; 3:17, 26; 18:7, 10; 20:4; 2 Kings 2:19; 4:16, 28; 5:3, 18, 20, 22; 6:5, 12, 15, 26; 8:5, 12; 10:9; 18:23, 24, 27; 1 Chron. 21:3(2x), 23; 2 Chron. 2:14, 15; Isa. 36:8, 9, 12; Jer. 37:20; 38:9; Dan. 1:10; 10:16, 17(2x), 19; 12:8; Zech. 1:9; 4:4, 5, 13; 6:4.

The following 24 uses can be found under [l'adoni], "to my Lord." While we in English separate the preposition from the noun or verb following, in Hebrew the preposition is attached directly to the word. Gen. 24:3,54,56; 32:5,6,19; 44:9,16,33; 1 Sam. 24:7; 25:27,28,30,31; 2 Sam. 4:8; 19:29; 1 Kings. 1:2; 18:13; 20:9; 1 Chron. 21:3; Ps. 110:1. All these refer to human lords, not God.

The following 6 references can be found under [v'adoni]: Gen. 18:12; Num. 36:2; 2 Sam. 11:11; 14:20; 19:28; 24:3.

The following reference can be found under [m_adoni]: Gen. 47:18.

Students of Hebrew know that the original text was written in an "unpointed" form, *i.e.*, without the dots, dashes and marks that are now the written vowels. Thus some scholars may point out that since the vowel points of the Hebrew text were added later, the rabbis could have been mistaken. It should be pointed out, however, that the two Hebrew words, *adonai* and *adoni*, even though written the same in unpointed text, sound different when pronounced. This is not unusual in a language. "Read" and "read" are spelled the same, but one can be pronounced "red," as in "I read the book yesterday," while the other is pronounced "reed," as in "Please read the book to me." The correct way to place the vowels in the text would have been preserved in the oral tradition of the Jews. Thus when the text was finally written with the vowels it would have been written as it was always pronounced.

Further evidence that the Jews always thought that the word in Psalm 110:1 referred to a human Messiah and not God come to earth is given in the Greek text, both in the Septuagint and in quotations in the New Testament. It is important to remember that the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, was made about 250 BC, long before the Trinitarian debates started. Yet the Septuagint translation is clearly supportive of Psalm 110:1 referring to a human lord, not God. It translates *adoni* as *ho kurios mou*.

¹¹ WTT or BHS Hebrew Old Testament, edited by K. Elliger and W. Rudolph of Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart, fourth corrected edition, copyright © 1966, 1977, 1983, 1990 by the German Bible Society.

The translators of the LXX [the Septuagint] in the 3rd century BC attest to a careful distinction between the forms of *adon* used for divine and human reference by translating *adoni* as *ho kurios mou*, “my lord.”¹²

When Psalm 110:1 is quoted in the New Testament the same truth about the human lordship of the Messiah is preserved:

The New Testament, when it quotes Psalm 110:1, renders *l’adoni* as “to my lord” (*to kurio mou*). But it renders *adonai* ([Psalm 110] v. 5 and very often elsewhere) as “the Lord” (*kurios*). This proves that the difference between *adonai* and *adoni* was recognized and reported in Greek long before the Masoretic vowel points fixed the ancient, oral tradition permanently in writing.¹³

It is interesting that scholars have often not paid close attention to the text of Psalm 110 or the places it is quoted in the New Testament, and have stated that it shows that Christ must have been God. The well-known Smith’s Bible Dictionary contains an article on “Son of God,” written by Ezra Abbot. He writes:

Accordingly we find that, after the Ascension, the Apostles labored to bring the Jews to acknowledge that Jesus was not only the *Christ*, but was *also a Divine Person*, even the *Lord* Jehovah. Thus, for example, St. Peter...[Abbot goes on to say how Peter said that God had made Jesus “both Lord and Christ.”]¹⁴

We believe Abbot’s conclusion is faulty because he did not pay attention to the exact wording of the Hebrew text. Even scholars who contributed to Smith’s Dictionary of the Bible apparently agree, because there is a footnote after the above quotation that corrects it. The footnote states:

In ascribing to St. Peter the remarkable proposition that “God hath made Jesus JEHOVAH,” the writer of the article appears to have overlooked the fact that *kurion* (“Lord”) in Acts 2:36 refers to *to kurio mou* (“my Lord”) in verse 34, quoted from Ps 110:1, where the Hebrew correspondent is not Jehovah but *adon*, the common word for “lord” or “master.” St. Peter’s meaning here may be illustrated by his language elsewhere; see Acts 5:31 [where Peter calls Jesus a “prince,” *etc.*].¹⁵

The footnote is quite correct, for the word in Psalm 110 is the word for a “lord” or “master” and not God. Thus Psalm 110:1 gives us very clear evidence that the expected

¹² Anthony Buzzard and Charles Hunting, *The Trinity, Christianity’s Self-inflicted Wound* (Atlanta Bible College and Restoration Fellowship, Morrow, GA, 1994), p. 28.

¹³ Anthony Buzzard, *Focus on the Kingdom, “Who is Jesus? God or Unique Man?”* (Atlanta Bible College, Morrow, GA, 1998), p. 8.

¹⁴ H. B. Hackett, *Dr. William Smith’s Dictionary of the Bible, “Son of God?”* (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, reprint 1981), vol. 4, p. 3090.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* Vol. 4, p. 3090.

Messiah of God was not going to be God himself, but a created being. The Jews listening to Peter on the Day of Pentecost would clearly see the correlation in Peter's teaching that Jesus was a "man approved of God" (v. 22 - *KJV*), and a created being, the "my lord" of Psalm 110:1 which Peter quoted just shortly thereafter (v. 34). The use of *adoni* in the first verse of Psalm 110:1 makes it very clear that the Jews were not expecting their Messiah to be God, but were expecting a human "lord."

Proverbs 8:23

I [wisdom] was appointed from eternity, from the beginning, before the world began. (*NIV*)

Occasionally, a Trinitarian will use this verse to try to support the Trinity and the pre-existence of Christ by saying that "wisdom" was appointed from eternity, Christ is the "wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:24) and, therefore, Christ was from eternity. This position has not found strong support even among Trinitarians, and for good reason. This wisdom in Proverbs was "appointed" (literally, "set up") by God, and is therefore subordinate to God. Carefully reading the verse and its context shows that wisdom was "brought forth as the first of His works" (v. 22). If this "wisdom" were Christ, then Christ would be the first creation of God, which is an Arian belief and heretical to orthodox Trinitarians. Therefore many of the Church Fathers rejected this verse as supportive of the Trinity, among them such "heavyweights" as Athanasius, Basil, Gregory, Epiphanius and Cyril. We reject it also, but for different reasons. Taking a concept and speaking of it as if it were a person is the figure of speech *Personification*. *Personification* often makes it easier to relate to a concept or idea because, as humans, we are familiar with relating to other humans. *Personification* was common among the Jews, and the wisdom of God is personified in Proverbs. Christ is considered the wisdom of God in Corinthians because of what God accomplishes through him.

Racovian Catechism, pp. 73-75

Isaiah 7:14

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. (*NIV*)

Some people believe that because Jesus was to be called "Immanuel" ("God with us"), he must be God incarnate. That is not the case, and for a full explanation of this, see the note on Matthew 1:23 below.

Isaiah 9:6

"And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace...." (*NIV*)

1. Trinitarians should admit that this verse is translated improperly just from the fact that Jesus is never called the "Everlasting Father" anywhere else in Scripture. Indeed, Trinitarians correctly deny that Jesus is the "Everlasting Father." It is a basic tenet of

Trinitarian doctrine that Christians should “neither confound the Persons nor divide the Substance” (Athanasian Creed). Thus, if this verse is translated properly, then Trinitarian Christians have a real problem. However, the phrase is mistranslated. The word translated “everlasting” is actually “age,” and the correct translation is that Jesus will be called “father of the [coming] age.”

In the culture of the Bible, anyone who began anything or was very important to something was called its “father.” For example, because Jabal was the first one to live in a tent and raise livestock, the Bible says, “he was the father of those who live in tents and raise livestock” (Gen. 4:20). Furthermore, because Jubal was the first inventor of musical instruments, he is called, “the father of all who play the harp and flute” (Gen. 4:21). Scripture is not using “father” in the sense of literal father or ancestor in these verses, because both these men were descendants of Cain, and all their descendants died in the Flood. “Father” was being used in the cultural understanding of either one who was the first to do something or someone who was important in some way. Because the Messiah will be the one to establish the age to come, raise the dead into it, and rule over it, he is called “the father of the coming age.”

2. The phrase “Mighty God” can also be better translated. Although the word “God” in the Hebrew culture had a much wider range of application than it does in ours, the average reader does not know or understand that. Readers familiar with the Semitic languages know that a man who is acting with God’s authority can be called “god.” Although English makes a clear distinction between “God” and “god,” the Hebrew language, which has only capital letters, cannot. A better translation for the English reader would be “mighty hero,” or “divine hero.” Both Martin Luther and James Moffatt translated the phrase as “divine hero” in their Bibles. (For more on the flexible use of “God,” see the notes on Heb. 1:8).

3. A clear example that the word translated “God” in Isaiah 9:6 can be used of powerful earthly rulers is Ezekiel 31:11, referring to the Babylonian king. The Trinitarian bias of most translators can be clearly seen by comparing Isaiah 9:6 (*el* = “God”) with Ezekiel 31:11 (*el* = “ruler”). If calling the Messiah *el* made him God, then the Babylonian king would be God also. Isaiah is speaking of God’s Messiah and calling him a mighty ruler, which of course he will be.

The phrase translated “Mighty God” in Isaiah 9:6 in the NIV in the Hebrew, *el gibbor*. That very phrase, in the plural form, is used Ezekiel 32:21 where dead “heroes” and mighty men are said, by the figure of speech personification, to speak to others. The phrase in Ezekiel is translated “mighty leaders” in the NIV, and “the strong among the mighty” in the KJV and NASB. The Hebrew phrase, when used in the singular, can refer to one “mighty leader” just as when used in the plural it can refer to many “mighty leaders.”

4. The context illuminates great truth about the verse, and also shows that there is no justification for believing that it refers to the Trinity, but rather to God’s appointed ruler. The opening verse of the chapter foretells a time when “there will be no more gloom for

those in distress.” All war and death will cease, and “every warrior’s boot...will be destined for burning” (v. 5). How will this come to pass? The chapter goes on: “for to us a child is born and to us a son is given” (v. 6). There is no hint that this child will be “God,” and reputable Trinitarian scholars will assert that the Jews of the Old Testament knew nothing of an “incarnation.” For them, the Messiah was going to be a man anointed by God. He would start as a child, which of course *Yahweh*, their eternal God, could never be. And what a great ruler this man would grow to be: “the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty Hero, Father of the Coming Age, Prince of Peace.” Furthermore, “he will reign on David’s throne (v. 7), which could never be said of God. *God* could never sit on *David’s* throne. But God’s Messiah, “the Son of David,” could (Matt. 9:27, *et al*). Thus, a study of the verse in its context reveals that it does not refer to the Trinity at all, but to the Messiah, the son of David and the Son of God.

Buzzard, pp. 45 and 51

Farley, pp. 47-49

Morgridge, pp. 105 and 106

Snedeker, pp. 397-403

Isaiah 43:11

I, even I, am the LORD, and apart from me there is no savior.

For the usage of Savior in the Bible, see notes on Luke 1:47 and Chapter 17, under the heading “Can Only God Save?”

Isaiah 44:6

This is what the LORD says— Israel’s King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God. (*NIV*)

See the notes on Revelation 1:17.

Jeremiah 17:5

This is what the LORD says: “Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the LORD.” (*NIV*)

Occasionally, a Trinitarian will argue that Jesus cannot be a man because we are expected to trust Jesus, but not to trust men. We feel that analysis misses the point of this verse, and we remind the reader that the entire verse and its context must be read to get its proper meaning. The immediate context reveals that a person is cursed if he trusts man *and also* turns his heart away from the Lord. But we are not turning our hearts away from God by trusting in His Son Jesus. On the contrary, “he who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father” (John 5:23). God is the one who made Jesus our Lord and Head of the Church. Indeed, our hearts would be turning from the Lord if we did *not* trust Jesus. This same logic applies to other servants of God. The people were not cursed when they followed Moses, or Joshua, or David, and trusted in what they said,

because these men were acting for God. Exodus 14:31 says the people trusted God and Moses. The husband of the virtuous woman is blessed when he trusts in his wife, as Proverbs 31:11 (*KJV*) says, “The heart of her husband safely trusts in her.” Truth is never obtained by taking a piece or a part of a verse and ignoring its context. The entire Bible is God’s Word, and it must be handled in a holy and godly way, with diligence and dignity and attention to the entire context. Grabbing a piece of a verse and forcing it to take on a meaning not fitting to the context, just to substantiate a theology, is never appropriate.

Racovian Catechism, pp. 155 and 156

Jeremiah 23:6

This is the name by which he will be called...the LORD our Righteousness. (*NIV*)

1. When something is “called” a certain name, that does not mean that it is literally what it is called. Jerusalem is also called “the Lord our Righteousness,” and Jerusalem is obviously not God (Jer. 33:16). So, calling something “the LORD our Righteousness” does not make it God. Abraham called the mountain on which he was about to sacrifice Isaac “the LORD will provide,” and no one would believe that the mountain was *Yahweh*. Similarly, no one would believe an altar was *Yahweh*, even if Moses called it that: “Moses built an altar and called it ‘the LORD is my Banner’” (Ex. 17:15). Later, Gideon built an altar and called it *Yahweh*: “So Gideon built an altar to the LORD there and called it ‘The LORD is Peace.’ To this day it stands in Ophrah of the Abiezrites” (Judges 6:24). These verses prove conclusively that just because something is called *Yahweh*, that does not make it *Yahweh*.

2. The Messiah will be *called* (not will *be*) “the LORD our Righteousness” because God Almighty will work His righteousness through His anointed one, Jesus the Christ. The city of Jerusalem will also be called “the Lord our Righteousness” because God will work His righteousness there, and that righteousness will reach over the entire world (For more on “names” and “called,” see the notes on Matt. 1:23).

Farley, pp. 49 and 50

Racovian Catechism, pp. 76-78

Snedeker, pp. 403-406

Micah 5:2

But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times. (*NIV*)

1. “Origins” literally signifies a “going out,” hence a beginning or birth, and thus the verse is saying that the birth of the Messiah has been determined, or appointed, from everlasting. In contrast to the Messiah who had an origin, the true God is without origin.

2. The ancient Jews read this verse and realized that it spoke of the birth and birthplace of the Messiah. One of the few things the Jews at the time of Jesus did understand about the Messiah was that he would be born in Bethlehem (Matt. 2:3-6). Yet of the Jews who read, studied, and understood the verse, there is no record that any of them concluded from the wording that Jesus had to be “God incarnate.”

3. The context of Micah makes it clear that the “ruler” from Bethlehem will not be God. This ruler will be born, and have “brothers.” No Jew ever thought *God* could be born, and the thought of the Creator of the Heavens and earth having brothers was absurd to them. These verses are speaking of God’s anointed king, and the Word declares, not that this ruler will be God, but rather that *Yahweh* will be “his God” (v. 4). Thus, this text of Micah is clear: a child will be born in Bethlehem and the Israelites will be his brothers, but he will grow up to deliver and rule the nation and stand in the strength of *Yahweh* his God.

Morgridge, p. 120
Racovian Catechism, pp. 69-71

New Testament

Matthew 1:23

“Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.” (*KJV*)

1. The name can be translated as, “God with us” or “God is with us.” We know that God was with the people in Jesus Christ, and Jesus himself said that if one had seen him, he had seen the Father.

2. The significance of the name is symbolic. God was with us, not literally, but in His Son, as 2 Cor. 5:19 (*NASB*) indicates: “That God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself.” It is important to read exactly what was written: God was *in* Christ, not God *was* Christ. Symbolism in names can be seen throughout the Bible. It is not unique to Jesus Christ. Many people were given names that would cause great problems if believed literally. Are we to believe that Elijah was “God Jehovah,” or that Bithiah, a daughter of Pharaoh, was the sister of Jesus because her name is “daughter of Jehovah?” Are we to believe that Dibri, not Jesus, was the “Promise of Jehovah,” or that Eliab was the real Messiah since his name means “My God [is my] father?” Of course not. It would be a great mistake to claim that the meaning of a name proves a literal truth. We know that Jesus’ name is very significant—it communicates the truth that, as the Son of God and as the image of God, God is with us in Jesus, but the name does not make Jesus God. For more on the fact that calling something does not make it that thing, see the notes on Jeremiah 23:6.

Buzzard, p. 135
Farley, pp. 46 and 47
Morgridge, p. 119
Snedeker, pp. 355-359

Matthew 4:10

Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.’” (NIV)

1. It is sometimes stated that since we are to worship only God, and, because we are also supposed to worship Jesus, therefore he must be God. That argument is not valid because, although there is a special worship that is reserved just for God, we can “worship” certain people as well. This is an issue of the heart. There is no special word for “worship” reserved only for God. The special worship due Him comes from the heart. In fact the entire temptation of Christ by the Devil proves that Jesus was not God. God cannot be tempted (James 1:13). Also, if Jesus were God, the Devil would never have asked Jesus to worship him. It was for desiring to be like God (and thus be worshiped like God) that the Devil was thrown out of heaven in the first place (Isa. 14:12-15), and it is unreasonable to think that the Devil would have believed that God could now be persuaded to worship him.

2. In the biblical culture, the act of worship was not directed only to God. It was very common to worship (*i.e.*, pay homage to) men of a higher status. This is hard to see in the English translations of the Bible. The translators usually translate the same Hebrew or Greek word as “worship” when it involves God, but as some other word, such as “bow before,” or “pay homage to,” when it involves men. Nevertheless, worship is clearly there in the Hebrew and Greek texts. For example:

- Lot “worshipped” the two strangers that came to Sodom (Gen. 19:1).
- Abraham “worshipped” the pagan leaders of the land in which he lived (Gen. 23:7).
- Jacob “worshipped” his older brother when they met after being apart for years (Gen. 33:3).
- Joseph had a dream that his parents and brothers “worshipped” him (Gen. 37:10).
- Joseph’s brothers “worshipped” him (Gen. 43:26).
- Joshua fell down and “worshipped” an angel (Joshua 5:14).
- Ruth “worshipped” Boaz (Ruth 2:10).
- David “worshipped” Jonathan (1 Sam. 20:41).
- Abigail “worshipped” David (1 Sam. 25:41).

The above list is just a small sampling of all the examples that could be drawn from Scripture. Checking the references in most Bibles will confirm what has already been pointed out—that the translators avoided the word “worship” when men are worshipping men, but used it in reference to worshipping God. These scriptures are more than enough proof that “worship” was a part of the culture, and a way of showing respect or reverence.

Because of the theological stance that only God should be worshipped, translators have avoided the English word “worship,” in spite of the fact that it is clearly in the original text. We assert that not translating what is clearly in the text has created a false impression in the Christian community. It is very clear in the biblical text that men “worshipped” men.

There is a sense, of course, in which there is a very special worship (homage, allegiance, reverent love and devotion) to be given only to God, but there is no unique word that represents that special worship. Rather, it is a posture of the heart. Scripturally, this must be determined from context. Even words like *proskuneo*, which are almost always used of God, are occasionally used for showing respect to other men (Acts 10:25). And the word “serve” in Matthew 4:10 is *latreuo*, which is sometimes translated worship, but used of the worship of other things as well as of the true God (Acts 7:42 - *KJV*), “worship the host of heaven” and Romans 1:25, “served created things”). Thus, when Christ said, “You shall worship the Lord thy God and Him only shall you worship,” he was speaking of a special worship of God that comes from the heart, not using a special vocabulary word that is reserved for the worship of God only.

Understanding that in the Bible both God and men are worshipped forces us as readers to look, not at the specific word for “worship,” but rather at the heart of the one doing the worship. It explains why God rejects the worship of those whose hearts are really not with Him. It also explains why there are occasions in the Bible when men reject the worship of other men. In Acts 10:26, Peter asks Cornelius to stand up. In Revelation 19:10, an angel stops John from worshipping him. In these cases it is not the worship, *per se*, that was wrong, or it would have been wrong in all the other places throughout the Bible. In the aforementioned accounts, the one about to be worshipped saw that it was inappropriate or felt uncomfortable in the situation. Actually, the example of John in Revelation is another strong proof that men did worship others beside God. *If it were forbidden to worship anyone beside God, the great apostle John would never have even started to worship the angel.* The fact that he did so actually proves the point that others beside God were worshipped in the biblical culture.

It is clear why people fell down and worshipped Jesus while he walked the earth and performed great miracles: people loved him and respected him greatly. It is also clear why we are to worship him now—he has earned our love and our highest reverence. He died to set us free, and God has honored him by seating him at His own right hand above all other powers and authorities.

Broughton and Southgate, pp. 194 and 195

Dana, p. 21

Morgridge, pp. 46-52

Norton, pp. 447 and 448

Snedeker, pp. 389 and 390

Matthew 9:2 and 3

(2) Some men brought to him a paralytic, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven.”

(3) At this some of the teachers of the law said to themselves, “This fellow is blaspheming!” (*NIV*)

This is a similar record to Mark 2:7 and the explanation can be found there.

Matthew 9:8b

They praised God, who had given such authority unto men. (*NIV*)

Although this verse is sometimes used to “prove” that Christ is God, the verse actually militates against the idea. Scripture states very clearly that Jesus was a *man*. The only “man” with authority in the entire context is Jesus. When the crowd saw Jesus performing miracles, they praised God for giving such power to the man, Jesus. We do the exact same thing today. For example, Christians praise God for giving such a powerful outreach ministry to Billy Graham. We trust that no one would think we Christians are saying that Dr. Graham is God just because we believe God has given him power.

Snedeker, p. 306

Matthew 28:18

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” (*NIV*)

Carefully reading a verse is the only way to begin to properly interpret it. In this case, it is clear that Christ’s authority was *given* to him. Many other scriptures say the same thing: “God has *made* Jesus both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36). God “placed” everything under his feet and “appointed” him to be Head of the Church (Eph. 1:22). If Christ were really God, and co-equal and co-eternal with the Father as the Trinitarians teach, then it is illogical to say Christ was *given* authority. God, by definition, *has* authority. The authority Jesus now has is delegated and derived, and is not a function of his “divine nature.” The wording of these scriptures is, in actuality, a refutation of the Trinity. Jesus is that man to whom God gave “all authority.”

Dana, p. 215

Matthew 28:19

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. (*NIV*)

1. Eusebius (c. 260—c. 340) was the Bishop of Caesarea and is known as “the Father of Church History.” Although he wrote prolifically, his most celebrated work is his *Ecclesiastical History*, a history of the Church from the Apostolic period until his own

time. Today it is still the principal work on the history of the Church at that time. Eusebius quotes many verses in his writings, and Matthew 28:19 is one of them. He never quotes it as it appears today in modern Bibles, but always finishes the verse with the words “in my name.” For example, in Book III of his *History*, Chapter 5, Section 2, which is about the Jewish persecution of early Christians, we read,

But the rest of the apostles, who had been incessantly plotted against with a view to their destruction, and had been driven out of the land of Judea, went unto all nations to preach the Gospel, relying upon the power of Christ, who had said to them, “Go ye and make disciples of all the nations **in my name.**”

Again, in his *Oration in Praise of Emperor Constantine*, Chapter 16, Section 8, we read,

What king or prince in any age of the world, what philosopher, legislator or prophet, in civilized or barbarous lands, has attained so great a height of excellence, I say not after death, but while living still, and full of mighty power, as to fill the ears and tongues of all mankind with the praises of his name? Surely none save our only Savior has done this, when, after his victory over death, he spoke the word to his followers, and fulfilled it by the event, saying to them, “Go ye and make disciples of all nations **in my name.**”

Eusebius was present at the council of Nicaea and was involved in the debates about Arian teaching and whether Christ was God or a creation of God. We feel confident that if the manuscripts he had in front of him read “in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” he would never have quoted it as “in my name.” Thus, we believe that the earliest manuscripts read “in my name,” and that the phrase was enlarged to reflect the orthodox position as Trinitarian influence spread.

2. If Matthew 28:19 is accurate as it stands in modern versions, then there is no explanation for the apparent disobedience of the apostles, since there is not a single occurrence of them baptizing anyone according to that formula. All the records in the New Testament show that people were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus, just as the text Eusebius was quoting said to do. In other words, the “name of Jesus Christ,” *i.e.*, all that he represents, is the element, or substance, into which people were figuratively “baptized.” “Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the **name** of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins’ “ (Acts 2:38). “They had simply been baptized into the **name** of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 8:16). “So he ordered that they be baptized in the **name** of Jesus Christ” (Acts 10:48). “On hearing this, they were baptized into the **name** of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 19:5). We cannot imagine any reason for the Apostles and others in Acts to disobey a command of the risen Christ. To us, it seems clear that Christ said to baptize in his name, and that was what the early Church did.

3. Even if the Father, Son and holy spirit are mentioned in the original text of this verse, that does not prove the Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity states that the Father, Son and “Holy Spirit” together make “one God.” This verse refers to three, but never says they are “one.” The three things this verse refers to are: God the Father, the Lord Jesus and

the power of holy spirit (We say “holy spirit” instead of “Holy Spirit” because we believe that this verse is referring to God’s gift of holy spirit that is born inside each believer. It is lower case because it refers to the gift of God and not God. The original Greek texts were all written in what scholars call “uncial script,” which uses all capital letters. Thus, although we today make a distinction between “Spirit” and “spirit,” in the originals every use was just “SPIRIT.” Whether or not it should be capitalized is a translator’s decision, based on the context of the verse. For more on the form of the early texts, see the note on Heb. 1:8).

It should be clear that three separate things do not make “one God.” Morgridge writes:

No passage of Scripture asserts that God is three. If it be asked what I intend to qualify by the numeral three, I answer, anything which the reader pleases. There is no Scripture which asserts that God is three persons, three agents, three beings, three Gods, three spirits, three substances, three modes, three offices, three attributes, three divinities, three infinite minds, three somewhats, three opposites, or three in any sense whatever. The truth of this has been admitted by every Trinitarian who ever wrote or preached on the subject.”

4. It is sometimes stated that in order to be baptized into something, that something has to be God, but that reasoning is false, because Scripture states that the Israelites were “baptized into Moses” (1 Cor. 10:2).

5. It is sometimes stated that the Father, Son and spirit have one “name,” so they must be one. It is a basic tenet of Trinitarian doctrine not to “confound the persons” (Athanasian Creed), and it does indeed confound the persons to call all three of them by one “name,” especially since no such “name” is ever given in Scripture (“God” is not a name). If the verse were teaching Trinitarian doctrine and mentioned the three “persons,” then it should use the word “names.” There is a much better explanation for why “name” is used in the singular.

A study of the culture and language shows that the word “name” stood for “authority.” Examples are very numerous, but space allows only a small selection. Deuteronomy 18:5 and 7 speak of serving in the “name” (authority) of the Lord. Deuteronomy 18:22 speaks of prophesying in the “name” (authority) of the Lord. In 1 Samuel 17:45, David attacked Goliath in the “name” (authority) of the Lord, and he blessed the people in the “name” (authority) of the Lord. In 2 Kings 2:24, Elisha cursed troublemakers in the “name” (authority) of the Lord. These scriptures are only a small sample, but they are very clear. If the modern versions of Matthew 28:19 are correct (which we doubt, see above), then we would still not see this verse as proving the Trinity. Rather, they would be showing the importance of the three: the Father who is God, the Son (who was given authority by God [Matt. 28:18]) and the holy spirit, which is the gift of God.

6. In reading the book of Matthew, we note that there is no presentation of the doctrine of the Trinity. Some prominent Trinitarians doubt that the apostles were even introduced to the doctrine until after they received holy spirit. It would be strange indeed for Christ

to introduce the doctrine of the Trinity here in the next-to-last verse in the book without it being mentioned earlier.

Morgridge, pp. 13-15, 28, 98-101

Norton, pp. 215-218

Racovian Catechism, pp. 36-39

Snedeker, pp. 109-115

Matthew 28:20b

And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. (*NIV*)

Occasionally this verse is used to prove the Trinity because it is said that the only way that Jesus could always be with his Church is if he were God. However, that is an unproven assumption, and is not stated in Scripture. Scripture shows us that there is a use of “with us” that is spiritual in nature, not physical. We must be careful not to underestimate the power and authority God gave Christ when He set him at His own right hand and gave him a name that is above every name. Just two verses before this one, Christ said he had been given “all authority.” God gave Christ all authority, and made Christ Head of the Church, so it is only logical to conclude that God also gave Christ the power to stay in communion with his Church.

Snedeker, pp. 408 and 409

Mark 2:7

Why does this fellow talk like that? He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone? (*NIV*)

On several occasions the Lord Jesus told the Pharisees that their doctrine was wrong. Mark 2:7 records an instance where this was the case. There is no verse of Scripture that says, “only God can forgive sins.” That idea came from their tradition. The truth is that God grants the authority to forgive sins as He pleases. He granted that authority to the Son and, furthermore, to the apostles. John 20:23 records Jesus saying to them: “If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven.” If the Pharisees were right, and only God can forgive sins, then God, Jesus and the apostles were all God, because they all had the authority to forgive sins.

Buzzard, pp. 21 and 22

Morgridge, pp. 127 and 128

Luke 1:35

The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.” (*NIV*)

1. There are some Trinitarians who insist that the term “Son of God” implies a pre-existence and that Jesus is God. Once the doctrine of pre-existence was propounded, a vocabulary had to be developed to support it, and thus non-biblical phrases such as “eternally begotten” and “eternal Son” were invented. Not only are these phrases not in the Bible or secular literature, they do not make sense. By definition, a “Son” has a beginning, and by definition, “eternal” means “without beginning.” To put the two words together when they never appear together in the Bible or in common usage is doing nothing more than creating a nonsensical term. The meaning of “Son of God” is literal: God the Father impregnated Mary, and nine months later Mary had a son, Jesus. Thus, Jesus is “the Son of God.” “This is how the birth [Greek = “beginning”] of Jesus Christ came about,” says Matthew 1:18, and that occurred about 2000 years ago, not in “eternity past.”

2. When the phrase “Son of God” is studied and compared with phrases about the Father, a powerful truth is revealed. The phrase “Son of God” is common in the New Testament, but the phrase “God the Son” never appears. In contrast, phrases like “God the Father,” “God our Father,” “the God and Father” and “God, even the Father” occur many times. Are we to believe that the Son is actually God just as the Father is, but the Father is plainly called “God, the Father” over and over and yet the Son is not even once called “God the Son”? This is surely strong evidence that Jesus is not actually “God the Son” at all.

3. Anyone insisting that someone is somehow God simply because he is called “Son of God” is going to run into trouble explaining all the verses in the Bible that call other beings “sons of God.” The phrase, “son of God” was commonly used of angels in the Old Testament (see Gen. 6:2; Job 1:6; 2:1 (the phrase in these verses is often translated as “angels”), and used of Israel (Ex. 4:22; *etc.*). In the New Testament, it is used of Christians, those who are born of God (see 1 John 3:1 and 2—occasionally, “sons” gets translated into “children” to be more inclusive, but the original language is clear). A study of Scripture reveals quite clearly that “son of God” does not in any way mean “God.”

4. Trying to prove the Trinity from the phrase “Son of God” brings up a point that often gets missed in debates about whether or not the Trinity exists, and that point has to do with words and the way they are defined. The Bible was not written in a vacuum, and its vocabulary was in common use in the culture of the times. Words that are spoken “on the street” every day have a meaning. If someone writes a letter, it is natural for the reader to assume that the definitions of the words in the letter are the definitions common to the contemporary culture. If the person writing uses the words in a new or unusual way, he would need to say that in the letter, or the reader might misunderstand what he was saying.

The word “son” is a good example. We know what the word means, and we know that if there is a father and a son, the son came *after* the father. God is clearly called the Father and Christ is clearly called the Son. Thus, the meaning should be simple and clear. But according to Trinitarian doctrine, the Father and Son are both “eternal.” This teaching

nullifies the clear definitions of the words and makes the vocabulary “mysterious.” There is no place in Scripture where the meanings of the words describing the Son are said to be changed from their ordinary meaning to some “new and special” meaning.

To explain the problem their doctrine has created, Trinitarians say that the Son was “eternally begotten,” but that phrase itself creates two problems. First, it is not in Scripture, and leads to the erroneous teaching that the Bible does not contain a vocabulary sufficient to explain its own doctrines. Second, the phrase itself is nonsense, and just lends to the belief that the Bible is basically “mysterious” and cannot be fathomed by the average Christian. After all, “eternal” means “without beginning,” and “begotten” means “born,” which clearly indicates a beginning. The fact that the two words are inherently contradictory is why we say that combining them makes a nonsense word.

The doctrine of the Trinity has caused a number of problems with the vocabulary of the New Testament. For example, Hebrews 1:2 mentions that Jesus Christ was made “heir” by God. By definition, no one is his own heir. To say that Christ is God and then say that Christ is the *heir* of God is nonsense, and abuses the vocabulary that God used to make His Word accessible to the common Christian and believable to those not yet saved. It changes the simple truth of the Bible into a “mystery” no one can understand.

There are many words that indicate that Jesus was not equal to the Father. Christ was “made Lord”; he was “appointed” by God; he “obeyed” God; he did God’s will and not his own; he prayed to God; he called God “my God,” *etc., etc.* Trinitarian teaching contradicts the conclusion that any unindoctrinated reader would arrive at when reading these scriptures, and insists that the Father and the Son are co-equal. Trinitarians teach that the human nature (but not the God nature) of Christ was subservient to the Father and that is why the Bible is worded the way it is. We believe that teaching twists the clear and simple words of Scripture, and we point out that there is not one verse that says that Christ had two natures. Historians admit that the doctrine of the two natures was “clarified” late in the debates about the nature of Christ (actually six out of the seven Ecumenical Councils dealt in some way with the nature of Christ), and we believe that the only reason the doctrine of the two natures was invented was to support the Trinity.

The Trinitarian concept of the two natures also forces a “mysterious” interpretation of the otherwise clear verses about Jesus’ humanity. Interpreting the verses about Jesus is quite simple. He was from the line of David and “made like his brothers in every way” (Heb. 2:17). He was “the Last Adam” (1 Cor. 15:45) because, like Adam, he was a direct creation of God. Over and over, the Bible calls him a “man.” However, these words are less than genuine if Christ were both 100 percent God and 100 percent man. How can anyone honestly say that Jesus is both *fully* God and *fully* man, and then say that he is like his brothers in every way? The standard “explanation” given is that, “It is a mystery and no one can understand it.” We ask the reader to consider carefully the choice before you. We are arguing for reading the words in the Bible and then just believing what they say. We assert that one cannot do that if he believes in the Trinity. Trinitarian doctrine forces

the meanings of clear and simple words like “Father,” “Son,” “heir” and “man” to take on new and “mysterious” meanings.

Buzzard, pp. 155-157
Morgridge, pp. 139-142

Luke 1:47

My spirit rejoices in God my Savior. (*NIV*)

1. Some Trinitarians believe that Christ must be God because they are both called “Savior.” There are many references to God the Father being called “Savior.” That makes perfect sense because He is the *author* of the plan of salvation and is also very active in our salvation. For example, God, the Father, is called “Savior” in Isaiah 43:11, 1 Timothy 1:1; 2:3; 4:10; Titus 1:3; 2:10; 3:4; Jude 25. Jesus Christ is called “Savior” because he is the *agent* who carried out God’s plan, and without whom it could not have come to pass.

2. The term “savior” is used of many people in the Bible. This is hard to see in the English versions because, when it is used of men, the translators almost always translated it as “deliverer.” This in and of itself shows that modern translators have a Trinitarian bias that was not in the original languages. The only reason to translate the same word as “Savior” when it applies to God or Christ, but as “deliverer” when it applies to men, is to make the term seem unique to God and Jesus when in fact it is not. This is a good example of how the actual meaning of Scripture can be obscured if the translators are not careful when they translate the text. God’s gracious provision of “saviors” is not recognized when the same word is translated “Savior” for God and Christ but “deliverer” for others. Also lost is the testimony in Scripture that God works through people to bring His power to bear. Of course, the fact that there are other “saviors” does not take away from Jesus Christ, who is the only one who could and did save us from our sins and eternal death.

If all the great men and women who were “saviors” were openly portrayed as such in the English versions, the grace and mercy God demonstrates in saving His people by “saviors” He has raised up would be openly displayed. Furthermore, we believe no reader would confuse the true God with the people He was working through. A good example that shows God raising up “saviors” to rescue Israel through history occurs in Nehemiah in a prayer of confession and thanksgiving to God. The Israelites prayed, “But when they [Israel] were oppressed they cried out to you. From heaven you heard them, and in your great compassion you gave them deliverers [saviors], who rescued them from the hand of their enemies” (Neh. 9:27). Some other examples of men designated as “savior” are in 2 Kings 13:5; Isaiah 19:20; Obadiah 21. It is incorrect to say that because Christ and God are both called “Savior,” they are one and the same, just as it would be incorrect to say that the “saviors” God raised up throughout history were the same individual as Jesus Christ.

Norton, pp. 304 and 305

Snedeker, pp. 378-380

Luke 5:20 and 21

(20) When Jesus saw their faith, he said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven.”

(21) The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, “Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?” (NIV)

There are those who believe that only God can forgive sins, but that is not true. For an explanation applicable to this verse, see Mark 2:7.

Luke 7:16

And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, that a great prophet is risen up among us; and, that God hath visited his people. (KJV)

1. Occasionally, Trinitarians will cite this verse as proof that Jesus is God, because it states that God visited His people. However, that phrase in no way proves the Trinity. Any word or phrase in Scripture must be interpreted in light of both its immediate and remote contexts. In this case, the immediate context alerts us to the truth being presented. The people called Jesus “a great prophet,” which tells us right away that they did not think he was God.

2. God “visits” His people by sending them some blessing. This is clear from verses like Ruth 1:6, “Then she [Naomi] arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the LORD had visited his people in giving them bread.” In the Book of Ruth, *Yahweh* visited His people by sending them bread, while, in the Gospels, God visited His people by sending them “a great prophet” who raised a widow’s son from the dead.

3. A lesson we should learn from this verse and others like it is that God works through His people. When He does, He often gets the credit even when people do the actual work. When God works through people, the Word records things like, “God visited His people” (Luke 7:16) and “God has done great things” (Luke 8:39). Americans today use the same language. If an acquaintance gives you some money when you need it and says, “The Lord put it on my heart to give this to you,” you might well say to someone else, “The Lord really blessed me today.” Neither you nor any other person would believe that you were saying that the person who gave you money was “the Lord.” Everyone understands that the Lord works through people, and so our language, like biblical language, reflects that knowledge.

Morgridge, p. 118

Luke 8:39

“Return home and tell how much God has done for you.” So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him. (NIV)

1. God works His miracles through people. Thus, whenever a miracle is performed, there are thanks for the one who stood in faith and performed the miracle, and also thanks and glory to God who supplied the power and actually did the work. The whole lesson of Hebrews 11, which speaks of the heroes of faith, is that almost always someone has to walk in faith for God's power to work, and the people listed in Hebrews 11 were "commended for their faith" (verse 39). So when Jesus performed miracles, it was not just he, but God acting also, just as it is when we, as Christians, do miracles, healings, *etc.* In fact, Jesus gave credit to the Father for what he was accomplishing. "The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work" (John 14:10b).

2. The note on Matthew 9:8 is applicable to this verse.

John 1:1

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (*NIV*)

1. It is imperative that the serious student of the Bible come to a basic understanding of *logos*, which is translated as "Word" in John 1:1. Most Trinitarians believe that the word *logos* refers directly to Jesus Christ, so in most versions of John *logos* is capitalized and translated "Word" (some versions even write "Jesus Christ" in John 1:1). However, a study of the Greek word *logos* shows that it occurs more than 300 times in the New Testament, and in both the *NIV* and the *KJV* it is capitalized only 7 times (and even those versions disagree on exactly *when* to capitalize it). When a word that occurs more than 300 times is capitalized fewer than 10 times, it is obvious that when to capitalize and when not to capitalize is a translators' decision based on their particular understanding of Scripture.

As it is used throughout Scripture, *logos* has a very wide range of meanings along two basic lines of thought. One is the mind and products of the mind like "reason," (thus "logic" is related to *logos*) and the other is the expression of that reason as a "word," "saying," "command" *etc.* The Bible itself demonstrates the wide range of meaning *logos* has, and some of the ways it is translated in Scripture are: account, appearance, book, command, conversation, eloquence, flattery, grievance, heard, instruction, matter, message, ministry, news, proposal, question, reason, reasonable, reply, report, rule, rumor, said, say, saying, sentence, speaker, speaking, speech, stories, story, talk, talking, teaching, testimony, thing, things, this, truths, what, why, word and words.

Any good Greek lexicon will also show this wide range of meaning (the words in italics are translated from *logos*):

- speaking; words you say (Rom. 15:18, "what I have *said* and done").
- a statement you make (Luke 20:20 - (*NASB*), "they might catch him in some *statement*").
- a question (Matt. 21:24, "I will also ask you one *question*").
- preaching (1 Tim. 5:17, "especially those whose work is *preaching* and teaching).

- command (Gal. 5:14, “the entire law is summed up in a single *command*”).
- proverb; saying (John 4:37, “thus the *saying*, ‘One sows, and another reaps’”).
- message; instruction; proclamation (Luke 4:32, “his *message* had authority”).
- assertion; declaration; teaching (John 6:60, “this is a hard *teaching*”).
- the subject under discussion; matter (Acts 8:21, “you have no part or share in this *ministry*.” Acts 15:6 (NASB), “And the apostles... came together to look into this *matter*”).
- revelation from God (Matt. 15:6, “you nullify the *Word of God*”).
- God’s revelation spoken by His servants (Heb. 13:7, “leaders who spoke the *Word of God*”).
- a reckoning, an account (Matt. 12:36, “men will have to give *account*” on the day of judgment).
- an account or “matter” in a financial sense (Matt. 18:23, A king who wanted to settle “*accounts*” with his servants. Phil. 4:15, “the *matter* of giving and receiving”).
- a reason; motive (Acts 10:29 - NASB), “I ask *for what reason* you have sent for me”).¹⁶

The above list is not exhaustive, but it does show that *logos* has a very wide range of meaning. With all the definitions and ways *logos* can be translated, how can we decide which meaning of *logos* to choose for any one verse? How can it be determined what the *logos* in John 1:1 is? Any occurrence of *logos* has to be carefully studied in its context in order to get the proper meaning. We assert that the *logos* in John 1:1 cannot be Jesus. Please notice that “Jesus Christ” is not a lexical definition of *logos*. This verse does not say, “In the beginning was Jesus.” “The Word” is not synonymous with Jesus, or even “the Messiah.” The word *logos* in John 1:1 refers to God’s creative self-expression—His reason, purposes and plans, especially as they are brought into action. It refers to God’s self-expression, or communication, of Himself. This has come to pass through His creation (Rom. 1:19 and 20), and especially the heavens (Ps. 19). It has come through the spoken word of the prophets and through Scripture, the written Word. Most notably and finally, it has come into being through His Son (Heb. 1:1 and 2).

The renowned Trinitarian scholar, John Lightfoot, writes:

The word *logos* then, denoting both “reason” and “speech,” was a philosophical term adopted by Alexandrian Judaism before St. Paul wrote, to express the *manifestation* of the Unseen God in the creation and government of the World. It included all modes by which God makes Himself known to man. As His *reason*, it denoted His purpose or design; as His *speech*, it implied His revelation. **Christian teachers, when they adopted this term, exalted and fixed its meaning by attaching to it two precise and definite ideas: (1) “The Word is a Divine Person,” (2) “The Word became incarnate in Jesus Christ.”** It is obvious

¹⁶ Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (University of Chicago Press, 1979).

that these two propositions must have altered materially the significance of all the subordinate terms connected with the idea of the *logos*.¹⁷

It is important to note that it was “Christian teachers” who attached the idea of a “divine person” to the word *logos*. It is certainly true that when the word *logos* came to be understood as being Jesus Christ, the understanding of John 1:1 was altered substantially. Lightfoot correctly understands that the early meaning of *logos* concerned reason and speech, not “Jesus Christ.” Norton develops the concept of *logos* as “reason” and writes:

There is no word in English answering to the Greek word *logos*, as used here [in John 1:1]. It was employed to denote a mode of conception concerning the Deity, familiar at the time when St. John wrote and intimately blended with the philosophy of his age, but long since obsolete, and so foreign from our habits of thinking that it is not easy for us to conform our minds to its apprehension. The Greek word *logos*, in one of its primary senses, answered nearly to our word *Reason*. The *logos* of God was regarded, not in its strictest sense, as merely the Reason of God; but, under certain aspects, as the Wisdom, the Mind, the Intellect of God (p. 307).

Norton postulates that perhaps “the power of God” would be a good translation for *logos* (p. 323). Buzzard sets forth “plan,” “purpose” or “promise” as three acceptable translations. Broughton and Southgate say “thoughts, plan or purpose of God, particularly in action.” Many scholars identify *logos* with God’s wisdom and reason.

The *logos* is the expression of God, and is His communication of Himself, just as a “word” is an outward expression of a person’s thoughts. This outward expression of God has now occurred through His Son, and thus it is perfectly understandable why Jesus is called the “Word.” Jesus is an outward expression of God’s reason, wisdom, purpose and plan. For the same reason, we call revelation “a word from God” and the Bible “the Word of God.”

If we understand that the *logos* is God’s expression—His plan, purposes, reason and wisdom, it is clear that they were indeed with Him “in the beginning.” Scripture says that God’s wisdom was “from the beginning” (Prov. 8:23). It was very common in Hebrew writing to personify a concept such as wisdom. No ancient Jew reading Proverbs would think that God’s wisdom was a separate person, even though it is portrayed as one in verses like Proverbs 8:29 and 30: “...when He marked out the foundations of the earth, I [wisdom] was the craftsman at His side.”

2. Most Jewish readers of the Gospel of John would have been familiar with the concept of God’s “word” being with God as He worked to bring His creation into existence. There is an obvious working of God’s power in Genesis 1 as He brings His plan into concretion by speaking things into being. The Targums are well known for describing the wisdom and action of God as His “word.” This is especially important to note

¹⁷ J. B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon* (Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1993), pp. 143 and 144. Bold emphasis ours, italics his.

because the Targums are the Aramaic translations and paraphrases of the Old Testament, and Aramaic was the spoken language of many Jews at the time of Christ. Remembering that a Targum is usually a paraphrase of what the Hebrew text says, note how the following examples attribute action to the word:

- And the word of the Lord was Joseph's helper (Gen. 39:2).
- And Moses brought the people to meet the word of the Lord (Ex. 19:17).
- And the word of the Lord accepted the face of Job (Job 42:9).
- And the word of the Lord shall laugh them to scorn (Ps. 2:4).
- They believed in the name of His word (Ps. 106:12).¹⁸

The above examples demonstrate that the Jews were familiar with the idea of God's Word referring to His wisdom and action. This is especially important to note because these Jews were fiercely monotheistic, and did not in any way believe in a "Triune God." They were familiar with the idioms of their own language, and understood that the wisdom and power of God were being personified as "word."

The Greek-speaking Jews were also familiar with God's creative force being called "the word." J. H. Bernard writes, "When we turn from Palestine to Alexandria [Egypt], from Hebrew sapiential [wisdom] literature to that which was written in Greek, we find this creative wisdom identified with the Divine *logos*, Hebraism and Hellenism thus coming into contact."¹⁹ One example of this is in the Apocryphal book known as the Wisdom of Solomon, which says, "O God of my fathers and Lord of mercy who hast made all things by thy word (*logos*), and by thy wisdom hast formed man..." (9:1). In this verse, the "word" and "wisdom" are seen as the creative force of God, but without being a "person."

3. The *logos*, that is, the plan, purpose and wisdom of God, "became flesh" (came into concretion or physical existence) in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the "image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15) and His chief emissary, representative and agent. Because Jesus perfectly obeyed the Father, he represents everything that God could communicate about Himself in a human person. As such, Jesus could say, "If you have seen me, you have seen the Father" (John 14:9). The fact that the *logos* "became" flesh shows that it did not exist that way before. There is no pre-existence for Jesus in this verse other than his figurative "existence" as the plan, purpose or wisdom of God for the salvation of man. The same is true with the "word" in writing. It had no literal pre-existence as a "spirit-book" somewhere in eternity past, but it came into being as God gave the revelation to people and they wrote it down.

4. The last phrase in the verse, which most versions translate as "and the Word was God," should not be translated that way. The Greek language uses the word "God" (Greek = *theos*) to refer to the Father as well as to other authorities. These include the Devil (2

¹⁸ Dr. John Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica* (Hendrickson Pub., Peabody, MA), Vol. 3, p. 238.

¹⁹ *The International Critical Commentary: St. John*. Vol. 1, p. cxxxix.

Cor. 4:4), lesser gods (1 Cor. 8:5) and men with great authority (John 10:34 and 35; Acts 12:22). At the time the New Testament was written, Greek manuscripts were written in all capital letters. The upper and lower case letters were not blended as we do today. Thus, the distinction that we today make between “God” and “god” could not be made, and the context became the judge in determining to whom “*THEOS*” referred.

Although context is the final arbiter, it is almost always the case in the New Testament that when “God” refers to the Father, the definite article appears in the Greek text (this article can be seen only in the Greek text, it is never translated into English). Translators are normally very sensitive to this (see John 10:33 below, point #4). The difference between *theos* with and without the article occurs in John 1:1: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with **the** *theos*,” and the Word was “*theos*.” Since the definite article is missing from the second occurrence of “*theos*” (“God,”) the usual meaning would be “god” or “divine.” The *New English Bible* gets the sense of this phrase by translating it, “What God was, the Word was.” James Moffatt who was a professor of Greek and New Testament Exegesis at Mansfield College in Oxford, England, and author of the well-known *Moffatt Bible*, translated the phrase, “the *logos* was divine.”

A very clear explanation of how to translate *theos* without the definite article can be found in *Jesus As They Knew Him*, by William Barclay, a professor at Trinity College in Glasgow:

In a case like this we cannot do other than go to the Greek, which is *theos en ho logos*. *Ho* is the definite article, *the*, and it can be seen that there is a definite article with *logos*, but not with *theos*. When in Greek two nouns are joined by the verb “to be,” and when both have the definite article, then the one is fully intended to be identified with the other; but when one of them is without the article, it becomes more an adjective than a noun, and describes rather the class or sphere to which the other belongs.

An illustration from English will make this clear. If I say, “The preacher is *the* man,” I use the definite article before both preacher and man, and I thereby identify the preacher with some quite definite individual man whom I have in mind. But, if I say, “The preacher is man,” I have omitted the definite article before man, and what I mean is that the preacher must be classified as a man, he is in the sphere of manhood, he is a human being.

[In the last clause of John 1:1] John has no article before *theos*, God. The *logos*, therefore, is not identified as God or with God; the word *theos* has become adjectival and describes the sphere to which the *logos* belongs. We would, therefore, have to say that this means that the *logos* belongs to the same sphere as God; without being identified with God, the *logos* has the same kind of life and being as God. Here the *NEB* [*New English Bible*] finds the perfect translation: “What God was, the Word was.”²⁰

²⁰ William Barclay, *Jesus as They Knew Him* (Harper and Row, N.Y., 1962), pp. 21 and 22.

5. It is important to understand that the Bible was not written in a vacuum, but was recorded in the context of a culture and was understood by those who lived in that culture. Sometimes verses that seem superfluous or confusing to us were meaningful to the readers of the time because they were well aware of the culture and beliefs being propounded by those around them. In the first century, there were many competing beliefs in the world (and unfortunately, erroneous beliefs in Christendom) that were confusing believers about the identities of God and Christ. For centuries before Christ, and at the time the New Testament was written, the irrational beliefs about the gods of Greece had been handed down. This body of religious information was known by the word “*muthos*,” which we today call “myths” or “mythology.” This *muthos*, these myths, were often irrational, mystical and beyond understanding or explanation. The more familiar one is with the Greek myths, the better he will understand our emphasis on their irrationality. If one is unfamiliar with them, it would be valuable to read a little on the subject. Greek mythology is an important part of the cultural background of the New Testament.

The myths were often incomprehensible, but nevertheless, they had been widely accepted as the “revelation of the gods.” The pervasiveness of the *muthos* in the Greco-Roman world of the New Testament can be seen sticking up out of the New Testament like the tip of an iceberg above the water. When Paul and Barnabas healed a cripple in Lystra, the people assumed that the gods had come down in human form, and the priest of Zeus came to offer sacrifices to them. While Paul was in Athens, he became disturbed because of the large number of idols there that were statues to the various gods. In Ephesus, Paul’s teaching actually started a riot. When some of the locals realized that if his doctrine spread, “the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited, and the goddess herself, who is worshiped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty” (Acts 19:27). There are many other examples that show that there was a *muthos*, *i.e.*, a body of religious knowledge that was in large part incomprehensible to the human mind, firmly established in the minds of some of the common people in New Testament times.

Starting several centuries before Christ, certain Greek philosophers worked to replace the *muthos* with what they called the *logos*, a reasonable and rational explanation of reality. It is appropriate that, in the writing of the New Testament, God used the word *logos*, not *muthos*, to describe His wisdom, reason and plan. God has not come to us in mystical experiences and irrational beliefs that cannot be understood; rather, He reveals Himself in ways that can be rationally understood and persuasively argued.

6. In addition to the cultural context that accepted the myths, at the time John was written, a belief system called Gnosticism was taking root in Christianity. Gnosticism had many ideas and words that are strange and confusing to us today, so, at the risk of oversimplifying, we will describe a few basic tenets of Gnosticism as simply as we can.

Gnosticism took many forms, but generally Gnostics taught that there was a supreme and unknowable Being, which they designated as the “Monad.” The Monad produced various gods, who in turn produced other gods (these gods were called by different

names, in part because of their power or position). One of these gods, called the “Demiurge,” created the earth and then ruled over it as an angry, evil and jealous god. This evil god, Gnostics believed, was the god of the Old Testament, called *Elohim*. The Monad sent another god, “Christ,” to bring special *gnosis* (knowledge) to mankind and free them from the influence of the evil *Elohim*. Thus, a Gnostic Christian would agree that *Elohim* created the heavens and earth, but he would not agree that He was the supreme God. Most Gnostics would also state that *Elohim* and Christ were at cross-purposes with each other. This is why it was so important for John 1:1 to say that the *logos* was *with* God, which at first glance seems to be a totally unnecessary statement.

The opening of the Gospel of John is a wonderful expression of God’s love. God “wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). He authored the opening of John in such a way that it reveals the truth about Him and His plan for all of mankind and, at the same time, refutes Gnostic teaching. It says that from the beginning there was the *logos* (the reason, plan, power), which was with God. There was not another “god” existing with God, especially not a god opposed to God. Furthermore, God’s plan was like God; it was divine. God’s plan became flesh when God impregnated Mary.

7. There are elements of John 1:1 and other phrases in the introduction of John that not only refer back in time to God’s work in the original creation, but also foreshadow the work of Christ in the new administration and the new creation. Noted Bible commentator F.F. Bruce argues for this interpretation:

It is not by accident that the Gospel begins with the same phrase as the book of Genesis. In Genesis 1:1, ‘In the beginning’ introduces the story of the old creation; here it introduces the story of the new creation. In both works of creation the agent is the Word of God.²¹

The *Racovian Catechism*, one of the great doctrinal works of the Unitarian movement of the 14th and 15th centuries, states that the word “beginning” in John 1:1 refers to the beginning of the new dispensation and thus is similar to Mark 1:1, which starts, “The beginning of the Gospel about Jesus Christ.”

In the cited passage (John 1:1) wherein the Word is said to have been in the beginning, there is no reference to an antecedent eternity, without commencement; because mention is made here of a *beginning*, which is opposed to that eternity. But the word *beginning*, used absolutely, is to be understood of the subject matter under consideration. Thus, Daniel 8:1, “In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar a vision appeared to me, even unto me Daniel, after that which appeared unto me AT THE FIRST.” John 15:27, “And ye also shall bear witness because ye have been with me FROM *the beginning*.” John 16:4, “These things I said not unto you AT *the beginning* because I was with you. And Acts 11:15, “And as I began to speak the Holy Spirit fell on them, as on us AT *the beginning*.” As then the matter of which John is treating is the Gospel, or the things

²¹ F.F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 1983) pp. 28 and 29.

transacted under the Gospel, nothing else ought to be understood here beside the beginning of the Gospel; a matter clearly known to the Christians whom he addressed, namely, the advent and preaching of John the Baptist, according to the testimony of all the evangelists [*i.e.*, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John], each of whom begins his history with the coming and preaching of the Baptist. Mark indeed (Chapter 1:1) expressly states that this was the beginning of the Gospel. In like manner, John himself employs the word beginning, placed thus absolutely, in the introduction to his First Epistle, at which beginning he uses the same term (*logos*) Word, as if he meant to be his own interpreter [“That which is from the beginning...concerning the Word (*logos*) of life.” 1 John 1:1].²²

While we do not agree with the *Catechism* that the only meaning of beginning in John 1:1 is the beginning of the new creation, we certainly see how the word beginning is a double entendre. In the context of the new creation, then, “the Word” is the plan or purpose according to which God is restoring His creation.

8. To fully understand any passage of Scripture, it is imperative to study the context. To fully understand John 1:1, the rest of the chapter needs to be understood as well, and the rest of the chapter adds more understanding to John 1:1. We believe that these notes on John 1:1, read together with the rest of John 1 and our notes on John 1:3, 10, 14, 15, and 18 will help make the entire first chapter of John more understandable.

Broughton and Southgate, pp. 238-248

Buzzard, pp. 111-119

Morgridge, pp. 107-109

Norton, pp. 307-374

Robinson, *Honest to God*, p. 71

Snedeker, pp. 313-326

John 1:3

All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. (*KJV*)

1. Trinitarians use this verse to show that Christ made the world and its contents. However, that is not the case. What we have learned from the study of John 1:1 above will be helpful in properly interpreting this verse.

John 1:1-3

(1) In the beginning was the Word [the wisdom, plan or purpose of God], and the Word was with God, and the Word was divine.

(2) The same was in the beginning with God.

(3) All things were made by it [the Word]; and without it was not anything made that was made.

²² *The Racovian Catechism* (Reprinted by CES, Indianapolis, IN, 1994) pp. 63 and 64.

2. The pronoun in verse 3 can legitimately be translated as “it.” It does not have to be translated as “him,” and it does not have to refer to a “person” in any way. A primary reason why people get the idea that “the Word” is a person is that the pronoun “he” is used with it. The Greek text does, of course, have the masculine pronoun, because like many languages, including Spanish, French, German, Latin, Hebrew, *etc.*, the Greek language assigns a gender to all nouns, and the gender of the pronoun must agree with the gender of the noun. In French, for example, a table is feminine, *la table*, while a desk is masculine, *le bureau*, and feminine and masculine pronouns are required to agree with the gender of the noun. In translating from French to English, however, we would never translate “the table, she,” or “the desk, he.” And we would *never* insist that a table or desk was somehow a person just because it had a masculine or feminine pronoun. We would use the English designation “it” for the table and the desk, in spite of the fact that in the original language the table and desk have a masculine or feminine gender.

This is true in the translation of any language that assigns a gender to nouns. In Spanish, a car is masculine, *el carro*, while a bicycle is feminine, *la bicicleta*. Again, no English translator would translate “the car, he,” or “the bicycle, she.” People translating Spanish into English use the word “it” when referring to a car or bicycle. For another example, a Greek feminine noun is “anchor” (*agkura*), and literally it would demand a feminine pronoun. Yet no English translator would write “I accidentally dropped the anchor, and *she* fell through the bottom of the boat.” We would write, “it” fell through the bottom of the boat. In Greek, “wind” (*anemos*) is masculine, but we would not translate it into English that way. We would say, “The wind was blowing so hard *it* blew the trash cans over,” not “the wind, *he* blew the trash cans over.” When translating from another language into English, we have to use the English language properly. Students who are studying Greek, Hebrew, Spanish, French, German, *etc.*, quickly discover that one of the difficult things about learning the language is memorizing the gender of each noun—something we do not have in the English language.

Greek is a language that assigns gender to nouns. For example, in Greek, “word” is masculine while “spirit” is neuter. All languages that assign gender to nouns demand that pronouns referring to the noun have the same gender as the noun. Once we clearly understand that the gender of a pronoun is determined by the gender of the noun, we can see why one cannot build a doctrine on the gender of a noun and its agreeing pronoun. No student of the Bible should take the position that “the Word” is somehow a masculine person based on its pronoun any more than he would take the position that a *book* was a feminine person or a *desk* was a masculine person because that is the gender assigned to those nouns in French. Indeed, if one tried to build a theology based on the gender of the noun in the language, great confusion would result.

In doctrinal discussions about the holy spirit some people assert that it is a person because the Bible has “he” and “him” in verses that refer to it. So, for example, John 14:16,17 reads:

John 14:16 and 17

(16) And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—

(17) the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

In the Greek language, “spirit” is neuter and thus is associated with the neuter pronoun, “it.” So, for example, verse 17 above should be literally translated as: “The world cannot accept it (the spirit), because it neither sees it nor knows it. But you know it, for it lives with you and will be in you.” Any *Analytical Lexicon* will confirm that the pronouns in this verse that refer to spirit are neuter, not masculine.

If the pronouns in the Greek text are neuter, why do the translators translate them as “he” and “him?” The answer to that question is that translators realize that when you are dealing with a language that assigns genders to nouns, it is the context and general understanding of the subject at hand that determines how the pronouns are to be translated into English as we have seen in the above examples (desk, bicycle, car, wind, *etc.*). It is amazing to us that Trinitarian translators know that the same neuter pronoun can be converted to an English masculine pronoun (*e.g.*, “it” becomes “he”) but are evidently not as willing to see that a Greek masculine pronoun could be translated as an English *neuter* pronoun (*e.g.*, “he becomes “it”), if the subject matter and context warrant it. Linguistically, both conversions could be completely legitimate. But any change depends, not on the gender assigned by the Greek language, but rather on the subject matter being discussed. For example, the *logos* is God’s plan and should be an it,” and “holy spirit,” when used as God’s gift, should also be translated into English as an “it.” To the unindoctrinated mind, plans and gifts are obviously not “persons.”

Trinitarian Christians believe “the Holy Spirit” is a masculine being and translate the pronouns that refer to it as “he” in spite of the fact that the noun is neuter and call for an “it,” not a “he” in Greek. Similarly, even though the masculine noun calls for the masculine pronoun in the Greek language, it would still not be translated into English as the masculine pronoun, “he,” unless it could be shown from the context that the subject was actually a male; *i.e.*, a man, a male animal, or God (who represents Himself as masculine in the Bible). So the question to answer when dealing with “the Word,” “the Comforter” and “the holy spirit” is not, “What gender are the noun and associated pronoun in the Greek language?” Rather, we need to ask, “Do those words refer to a masculine *person* that would require a “he” in English, or do they refer to a “thing” that would require the pronoun “it?”” When “holy spirit” is referring to the power of God in action or God’s gift, it is properly an “it.” The same is true for the “comforter.” For a much more exhaustive treatment of the subject of holy spirit see, *The Gift of Holy Spirit, Every Christian’s Divine Deposit*, available from CES.

In Hebrew, “spirit” is feminine and must have feminine pronouns, while in Greek, “spirit” is neuter and takes neuter pronouns. Thus, a person trying to build a theology on the basis of the gender of the noun and pronoun would find himself in an interesting situation trying to explain how it could be that “the spirit” of God somehow changed genders as the New Testament was written.

Because the translators of the Bible have almost always been Trinitarians, and since “the Word” has almost always been erroneously identified with the person of Christ, the pronouns referring to the *logos* in verse 3 have almost always been translated as “him.” However, if in fact the *logos* is the plan, purpose, wisdom and reason of God, then the Greek pronoun should be translated into the English as “it.” To demand that “the Word” is a masculine person and therefore a third part of a three-part Godhead because the pronouns used when referring to it are masculine, is poor scholarship.

3. Viewed in light of the above translation, the opening of the Gospel of John reveals wonderful truth, and is also a powerful polemic against primary heresies of the day. We have already seen (under John 1:1) that Gnostics were teaching that, in the hierarchy of gods, the god *Elohim* and the god Christ were actually opposed to each other. Also active at the time John was written were the Docetists, who were teaching that Christ was a spirit being and only appeared to be flesh. The opening of John’s Gospel shows that in the beginning there was only one God, not many gods. It also shows that this God had reason, wisdom, a plan or purpose within Himself, which became flesh in Jesus Christ. Thus, God and Christ are not at cross purposes as some were saying, and Christ was not a spirit being as others were saying.

The opening of John reveals this simple truth in a beautiful way: “In the beginning there was one God, who had reason, purpose and a plan, which was, by its very nature and origin, divine. It was through and on account of this reason, plan and purpose that everything was made. Nothing was made outside its scope. Then, this plan became flesh in the person of Jesus Christ and tabernacled among us.” Understanding the opening of John this way fits with the whole of Scripture and is entirely acceptable from a translation standpoint.

Racovian Catechism, pp. 86-88
Snedeker, pp. 411 and 412

John 1:10

He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.
(*KJV*)

1. This verse is a reference to the Father, not to Christ. A study of the context reveals that this section opens in verse 6 by telling us, “There came a man who was sent by God.” We are told, “God is light,” and that God’s light shown through Jesus Christ and made him “the light of the world.” Though God was in the world in many ways, including through His Son, the world did not recognize him. He came unto his own by sending his exact image, Jesus Christ, to them, but even then they did not receive God, in that they rejected His emissary. The fact that the world did not receive Him is made more profound in the context as Scripture reveals how earnestly God reached out to them—He made his plan and purpose flesh and shined His light through Christ to reach the world—but they did not receive Him, even though He was offering them the “right to become children of God” (v. 12).

2. Some scholars make the phrase, “the world was made by him,” a reference to the new creation only (see Col. 1:15-20 and Heb. 1:2 and 10), but we see it as a double entendre referring to both the original and the new creations (see #7 under John 1:1 above, and Chapter 9).

Racovian Catechism, pp. 89-91

John 1:14a

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. (*NIV*)

1. The “Word” is the wisdom, plan or purpose of God (see John 1:1) and the Word “became flesh” as Jesus Christ. Thus, Jesus Christ was “the Word in the flesh,” which is shortened to “the Word” for ease of speaking. Scripture is also the Word, but it is the Word in writing. Everyone agrees that the “Word” in writing had a beginning. So did the “Word” in the flesh. In fact, the Greek text of Matthew 1:18 says that very clearly: “Now the beginning of Jesus Christ was in this manner.” Some ancient scribes were so uncomfortable with the idea of Jesus having a “beginning” that they tried to alter the Greek text to read “birth” and not “beginning,” but they were unsuccessful. The modern Greek texts all read “beginning” (*genesis*) in Matthew 1:18. “Birth” is considered an acceptable translation of “*genesis*,” since the beginning of some things is birth, and so most translations read “birth” in Matthew 1:18. Nevertheless, the proper understanding of Matthew 1:18 is the “beginning” (*genesis*) of Jesus Christ.

In the beginning, God had a plan, a purpose, which “became flesh” when Jesus was conceived. To make John 1:14 support the Trinity, there must first be proof that Jesus existed before he was born and was called “the Word.” We do not believe that such proof exists. There is a large body of evidence, however, that Jesus was foreknown by God, and that the “the Word” refers to God’s plan or purpose. We contend that the meaning of the verse is straightforward. God had a plan (the Word) and that plan became flesh when Jesus was conceived. Thus, Jesus became “the Word in the flesh.”

2. It is quite fair to ask why John would say, “the Word became flesh,” a statement that seems so obvious to us. Of course Jesus Christ was flesh. He was born, grew, ate and slept, and Scripture calls him a man. However, what is clear to us now was not at all clear in the early centuries of the Christian era. In our notes on John 1:1, we explain that the Bible must be understood in the context of the culture in which it was written. At the time of John’s writing, the “Docetic” movement was gaining disciples inside Christianity (“Docetic” comes from the Greek word for “to seem” or “to appear”). Docetic Christians believed Jesus was actually a spirit being, or god, who only “appeared” to be human. Some Docetists did not believe Jesus even actually ate or drank, but only pretended to do so. Furthermore, some Jews thought that Jesus was an angel. In theological literature, theologians today call this “angel-Christology.” John 1:14 was not written to show that Jesus was somehow pre-existent and then became flesh. It was to show that God’s plan for salvation “became *flesh*,” *i.e.*, Jesus was not a spirit, god or angelic being, but rather a

flesh-and-blood man. A very similar thing is said in 1 John 4:2, that if you do not believe Jesus has come *in the flesh*, you are not of God.

Hyndman, p. 113
Racovian Catechism, pp. 117-119

John 1:15

John testifies concerning him. He cries out, saying, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’” (*NIV*)

This verse is occasionally used to support the Trinity because it is assumed that for Jesus to come “before” John he would have had to exist before John. While it is true that the Greek word “before” (*protos*) can mean “before in time,” it can just as easily be “first,” “chief,” “leader,” *etc.* The “first” and great commandment was not the first given in time, but the first in rank. There are many examples of this in Scripture, including: Matt. 20:27; 22:38; Mark 6:21; 10:44; Luke 11:26. John the Baptist recognized that Jesus was above him in rank, and said so plainly.

Buzzard, pp. 86 and 87

John 1:18

No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*. (*KJV*)

1. As it is written in the *KJV*, there is no Trinitarian inference in the verse.
2. There are versions such as the *NIV* and *NASB*, however, that are translated from a different textual family than the *King James Version*, and they read “God” instead of “Son.”

NIV: “No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known.”

NASB: “No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained *Him*.”

The *NIV* and *NASB* represent theologians who believe that the original text read “*ho monogenes theos*” = “the unique, or only begotten God,” while the *KJV* is representative of theologians who believe that the original text was “*ho monogenes huios*” = “the only begotten Son.” The Greek texts vary, but there are good reasons for believing that the original reading is represented in versions such as the *KJV*. Although it is true that the earliest Greek manuscripts contain the reading “*theos*,” every one of those texts is of the Alexandrian text type. Virtually every other reading of the other textual traditions, including the Western, Byzantine, Caesarean and secondary Alexandrian texts, read *huios*, “Son.” The two famous textual scholars, Westcott and Hort, known for their

defense of the Alexandrian text type, consider John 1:18 to be one of the few places in the New Testament where it is not correct.

A large number of the Church Fathers, such as Irenaeus, Clement and Tertullian, quoted the verse with “Son,” and not “God.” This is especially weighty when one considers that Tertullian argued aggressively for the incarnation and is credited with being the one who developed the concept of “one God in three persons.” If Tertullian had had a text that read “God” in John 1:18, he certainly would have quoted it, but instead he always quoted texts that read “Son.”

It is difficult to conceive of what “only begotten God” would have meant in the Jewish culture. There is no use of the phrase anywhere else in the Bible. In contrast, the phrase “only begotten Son” is used three other times by John (3:16 and 18; 1 John 4:9 - *KJV*). To a Jew, any reference to a “unique God” would have usually referred to the Father. Although the Jews of John’s day would have had a problem with “only begotten God,” Christians of the second century and beyond, with their increasingly paradoxical understanding of Christology and the nature of God, would have been much more easily able to accept such a doctrine.

The reason that the text was changed from “Son” to “God” was to provide “extra evidence” for the existence of the Trinity. By the second century, an intense debate about whether or not Jesus was God raged in Alexandria, Egypt, the place where all the texts that read “God” originated. The stakes were high in these debates, and excommunication, banishment or worse could be the lot of the “loser.” Changing a text or two in order to “help” in a debate was a tactic proven to have occurred. An examination of all the evidence shows that it is probable that “the only begotten son” is the original reading of John 1:18. For a much more detailed accounting of why the word “Son” should be favored over the word “God,” see *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, by Bart Ehrman (Oxford University Press, New York, 1993, pp. 78-82).

3. Even if the original text reads “God” and not “Son,” that still does not prove the Trinity. The word “God” has a wider application in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek than it does in English. It can be used of men who have divine authority (See John 10:33 and Heb. 1:8 below). There is no “Trinitarian Formula” in this verse that forces a Trinitarian interpretation.

John 2:19

Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up. (*NASB*)

1. Many verses plainly state that it was *the Father* who raised Jesus, and the Bible cannot contradict itself.

2. Jesus was speaking to the Jews after he had just turned over their tables and driven their animals out of the Temple. This was the first of the two times when he did this, and this occurrence was at the beginning of his ministry. He did it once again at the end of his ministry, and that event is recorded in other Gospels. The Jews were angry and

unbelieving, and Jesus was speaking in veiled terms, so much so that the Gospel of John has to add, “but he was speaking of the temple of his body,” (John 2:21 - *NASB*) so the reader would not be confused. Since Jesus was standing in the actual Temple when he said, “Destroy this temple,” the natural assumption would be the one his audience made, that he was speaking of the Temple where he was standing at the time.

3. The fact that Jesus was speaking in veiled terms to an unbelieving audience should make us hesitant to build a doctrine on this verse, especially when many other clear verses say that *the Father* raised Jesus. For example, 1 Corinthians 6:14 states: “By his power, God raised the Lord from the dead.” Jesus was not in a teaching situation when he was speaking. Tempers were flaring and the Jews were against Jesus anyway. It was common for Jesus to speak in ways that unbelievers did not understand. Even a cursory reading of the Gospels will show a number of times when Jesus spoke and the unbelievers who heard him (and sometimes even the disciples) were confused by what he said.

4. We know that Jesus was speaking in veiled terms, but what did he mean? He was almost certainly referring to the fact that he was indeed ultimately responsible for his resurrection. How so? Jesus was responsible to keep himself “without spot or blemish” and to fully obey the will of the Father. In that sense he was like any other sacrifice. A sacrifice that was blemished was unacceptable to the Lord (Lev. 22:17-20; Mal. 1:6-8). Since this event in John was at the start of his ministry, he knew he had a long hard road ahead and that obedience would not be easy. If he turned away from God because he did not like what God said to do, or if he were tempted to the point of sin, his sin would have been a “blemish” that would have disqualified him as the perfect sacrifice. Then he could not have paid for the sins of mankind, and there would have been no resurrection. The reader must remember that Jesus did not go into the Temple and turn over the money tables because he “just felt like it.” John 2:17 indicates that he was fulfilling an Old Testament prophecy and the will of God, which he always did. Had he not fulfilled the prophecy spoken in Psalm 69:9, he would not have fulfilled all the law and would have been disqualified from being able to die for the sins of mankind. Thus, his destiny was in his own hands, and he could say, “I will raise it up.”

5. It is common in speech that if a person has a vital part in something, he is spoken of as having done the thing. We know that Roman soldiers crucified Jesus. The Gospels say it, and we know that the Jews would not have done it, because coming in contact with Jesus would have made them unclean. Yet Peter said to the rulers of the Jews, “you” crucified the Lord (Acts 5:30). Everyone understands that the Jews played a vital part in Jesus’ crucifixion, so there really is a sense in which they crucified him, even though they themselves did not do the dirty work. A similar example from the Old Testament is in both 2 Samuel 5 and 1 Chronicles 11. David and his men were attacking the Jebusite city, Jerusalem. The record is very clear that David had sent his men ahead into the city to fight, and even offered a general’s position to the first one into the city. Yet the record says, “David captured the stronghold of Zion.” We know why, of course. David played a vital role in the capture of Jerusalem, and so Scripture says he captured it. This same type of wording that is so common in the Bible and indeed, in all languages, is the

wording Jesus used. He would raise his body, *i.e.*, he would play a vital part in it being raised.

6. Christ knew that by his thoughts and actions he could guarantee his own resurrection by being sinlessly obedient unto death. That made it legally possible for God to keep His promise of resurrecting Christ, who was without sin and therefore did not deserve death, the “wages of sin.”

Racovian Catechism, pp. 362 and 363
Snedeker, pp. 413 and 414

John 2:24

But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men. (*NIV*)

1. It is obvious from Scripture that Jesus did not know everything, for he grew in wisdom (Luke 2:52), and he did not know certain things (Matt. 24:36). Whenever the word “all” is used, the student of Scripture must be careful to ascertain from the context whether it means “all” in a totally inclusive sense, or whether it means “all” in a more limited sense (see note # 5 on Col. 1:15-20). For example, 1 John 2:20 (*KJV*) says of Christians, “ye know all things.” Surely there is no Christian who actually believes that he knows everything. The phrase is taken in a limited sense of “all” according to the context.

2. Trinitarians explain the fact that Jesus did not know certain things by appealing to his “manhood” in contrast to his “Godhood,” or “God-nature.” However, when there is a verse that can be construed to mean that Jesus knows everything, they abandon that argument and say that his omniscience proves he is God. We think it is reasonable to assert that you cannot have it both ways. Either Christ did not know everything, or he did. There are very clear verses that say he did not, and no verse that actually says that Jesus did know *everything* the same way God does. When a verse seems at first to say Jesus “knew all men,” it should be understood in a limited sense according to the context, just as when Scripture says Christians “know all things.”

Trinitarians are aware that some verses say that Jesus did not know everything and others say he did. Rather than accept the common use of “all” in a limited sense, they press onward with their doctrine by asserting that Christ had both a God nature and a human nature within himself. They claim that the “God nature” knew everything, but the “human nature” was limited. This argument falls short on many counts. First, Jesus Christ was “made like his brothers in every way” (Heb. 2:17, *et al.*), and we are not “part God, part human,” or “fully God and fully man.” In order for the integrity of Scripture to be preserved, Jesus must actually be like we are, *i.e.*, fully human.

Second, there is no place in Scripture where this doctrine of the “dual nature” of Christ is actually stated. Trinitarians are asking us to believe something they cannot prove from the Word of God. We, on the other hand, are asking them to believe something that we can read line by line in the Bible: that Jesus was flesh and bone, not spirit; that he was a man, and that he partook in our humanity. Third, the very concept involves a self-

contradiction. God is infinite and man is finite, and so Christ would have to be a finite-infinite being, which we believe is inherently impossible. That is not the Jesus described to us in the Bible. No wonder Tertullian, an early Trinitarian, said, “*Credo quia impossibile est*” (I believe because it is impossible). We realize it is not only “impossible,” but also *unscriptural*, so we choose not to believe it.

3. Jesus needed to hear from God to know how to judge (John 5:30), and he knew all men the same way—by hearing from God.

4. In saying that Jesus knew all men, the Bible was confirming that Jesus was in touch with God just as were the prophets of old (but, of course, much more intimately). It was a common belief that prophets knew people’s thoughts (Luke 7:39, *etc.*), and it is substantiated in Scripture that God did show prophets what people were thinking. Nathan knew of David’s secret sin (2 Sam. 12:7). Ahijah knew what the wife of Jeroboam wanted, and who she was, even though he was blind and she was wearing a disguise (1 Kings 14:4 and 6). Elijah knew that Ahab had committed murder by framing Naboth (21:17-20), and he knew the information that the king of Israel wanted to know (2 Kings 1:1-4). Elisha knew that Gehazi was lying and knew of the greed in his heart (2 Kings 5:19-27). Daniel knew Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, even though Nebuchadnezzar had not revealed it to anyone (Dan. 2:5 and 28ff). By saying that Jesus knew all men, Scripture confirms that he was, like the prophets of old, in communication with God.

Morgridge, pp. 124-126

John 3:13

No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. (*NIV*)

The Jews would not have taken John’s words to mean that Christ “incarnated.” It was common for them to say that something “came from heaven” if God were its source. For example, James 1:17 says that every good gift is “from above” and “comes down” from God. What James means is clear. God is the Author and source of the good things in our lives. God works behind the scenes to provide what we need. The verse does not mean that the good things in our lives come directly down from heaven. Most Christians experience the Lord blessing them by way of other people or events, but realize that the ultimate source of the blessings was the Lord. We should apply John’s words the same way we understand James’ words—that God is the source of Jesus Christ, which He was. Christ was God’s plan, and then God directly fathered Jesus.

There are also verses that say Jesus was “sent from God,” a phrase that shows God as the ultimate source of what is sent. John the Baptist was a man “sent from God” (John 1:6), and it was he who said that Jesus “comes from above” and “comes from heaven” (John 3:31). When God wanted to tell the people that He would bless them if they gave their tithes, He told them that He would open the windows of “heaven” and pour out a blessing (Mal. 3:10 - *KJV*). Of course, everyone understood the idiom being used, and no one believed that God would literally pour things out of heaven. They knew that the phrase

meant that God was the origin of the blessings they received. Still another example is when Christ was speaking and said, “John’s baptism—where did it come from? Was it from heaven or from men?” (Matt. 21:25). Of course, the way that John’s baptism would have been “from heaven” was if God was the source of the revelation. John did not get the idea on his own, it came “from heaven.” The verse makes the idiom clear: things could be “from heaven,” *i.e.*, from God, or they could be “from men.” The idiom is the same when used of Jesus. Jesus is “from God,” “from heaven” or “from above” in the sense that God is his Father and thus his origin.

The idea of coming from God or being sent by God is also clarified by Jesus’ words in John 17. He said, “As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world” (John 17:18). We understand perfectly what Christ meant when he said, “I have sent them into the world.” He meant that he commissioned us, or appointed us. No one thinks that we were in heaven with Christ and incarnated into the flesh. Christ said, “As you have sent me, I have sent them.” So, however we take the phrase that Christ *sent* us, that is how we should understand the phrase that God sent Christ.

Buzzard, pp. 154-157

Norton, pp. 246-248

John 5:18b

He was even calling God his own father, making himself equal with God. (*NIV*)

1. The peoples in the time and culture of the Bible knew that children often carried the authority of the family. For example, the son of a king had authority. When Christ said that God was his Father, the Pharisees correctly interpreted that to mean that he had God’s authority on earth, something that Jesus *was* in fact saying (cp. John 5:17ff).
2. This verse is actually unsupportive of the Trinity. It accurately records that Jesus was saying that God was his father, not that he was himself God, or that he was “God the Son.” It is clear that Jesus’ authority came from the fact that he was the Son of God, not God Himself.
3. The concept of people being “equal” is found in several places in the Bible. For example, when Joseph was ruling Egypt under Pharaoh, Judah said to him, “You are equal to Pharaoh himself” (Gen. 44:18). Paul wrote about men who wanted to be considered “equal with us” (2 Cor. 11:12). No Christian we are aware of believes that Joseph and Pharaoh or Paul and his opponents are “of one substance,” and make up “one being” simply because they are called “equal.” We believe that John 5:18 should be handled like the other verses that mention equality. Jesus was using God’s power and authority on earth, and was thus “equal” to God in the same way Joseph, who was using Pharaoh’s authority and power, was equal to Pharaoh.

Morgridge, p. 43

Racovian Catechism, p. 133

John 6:33

For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. (NIV)

See notes on John 3:13.

John 6:38

For I have come down from heaven not to do my will, but to do the will of him who sent me. (NIV)

See notes on John 3:13.

John 6:62

What if you see the Son of man ascend to where he was before? (NIV)

1. This verse is referring to the *resurrection* of Christ. This fact is clear from studying the context. Because the translators have chosen to translate *anabaino* as “ascend,” people believe it refers to Christ’s ascension from earth as recorded in Acts 1:9, but Acts 1:9 does not use this word. *Anabaino* simply means “to go up.” It is used of “going up” to a higher elevation as in climbing a mountain (Matt. 5:1; 14:23, *et al.*), of Jesus “coming up” from under the water at his baptism (Matt. 3:16; Mark 1:10), of plants that “grow up” out of the ground (Matt. 13:7; Mark 4:7, 8 and 32), or of even just “going up,” *i.e.*, “climbing,” a tree (Luke 19:4). Christ was simply asking if they would be offended if they saw him “come up” out of the ground, *i.e.*, be resurrected, and be where he was before, *i.e.*, alive and on the earth.

2. The context confirms that Jesus was speaking about being the bread from heaven and giving life via his resurrection. Verses such as 39, 40 and 44 confirm this: Jesus repeatedly said, “I will raise him [each believer] up at the last day.” Christ was amazed that even some of his disciples were offended at his teaching. He had been speaking of the resurrection, and they were offended, so he asked them if they would be offended if they saw *him* resurrected, which has been unfortunately translated as “ascend” in verse 62.

Norton, pp. 248-252
Snedeker p. 215

John 6:64

Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. (NIV)

1. Some Trinitarians act as if this verse proves that Jesus was God just because the word “beginning” is in the verse. Nothing could be further from the truth. Even a cursory word study will show that the word “beginning” has to be defined by its context. Any good lexicon will show that the word “beginning” is often used to describe times other

than the start of creation. Examples abound: God made them male and female at the “beginning,” not of creation, but of the human race (Matt. 19:4). There were “eyewitnesses” at the “beginning,” not of creation, but of the life and ministry of Christ (Luke 1:2 and 3). The disciples were with Christ from the “beginning,” not of creation, but of his public ministry (John 15:27). The gift of holy spirit came on Peter and the apostles “at the beginning,” not of creation, but of the Church Administration that started on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 (Acts 11:15). John 6:64 is simply saying that Christ knew from the time he began to choose the Apostles which one would betray him.

2. When this verse is understood in its context, it is a powerful testimony of how closely Jesus walked with his Father. First, there is nothing in the context that would in any way indicate that the word “beginning” refers to the beginning of *time*. Jesus had just fed the five thousand, and they said, “Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world” (6:14). Right away that tells you that the people did not think Jesus was *God*, but a prophet. The people wanted to make Jesus king, but only because he filled their stomachs (6:15 and 26). When he challenged them to believe in him (6:29), they grumbled (6:41). As Jesus continued to teach, the Jews began to argue among themselves (6:52), and even some of Jesus’ disciples began to grumble at the commitment Jesus was asking from them (6:60 and 61). Jesus, knowing his disciples were upset with his teaching, did not back off, but rather pressed on, even saying that he knew some would not believe (6:64). The result of this discussion was that some of his disciples left him (6:66). Since some disciples left him after this teaching, it would be easy to say that perhaps Jesus acted unwisely by pressing on with his difficult teaching. Not so. Scripture reminds us that Christ knew from the beginning who would not believe, and even who would betray him. Thus, he also knew that his hard words would not drive any of the true sheep away. The “beginning” being referred to here is the beginning of his ministry. When he started gathering disciples and apostles and teaching them, God showed him by revelation who would believe and who would betray him.

Snedeker, p. 215

John 8:24b

For if ye believe not that I am *he*, ye shall die in your sins. (*KJV*)

Trinitarians occasionally cite this verse to try to show the necessity of believing their doctrine, and unfortunately sometimes even to intimidate those who doubt it. They supply the word “God” after “I am,” not from the text, but from the dictates of their doctrine, and make the verse read: “For if you believe not that I am [God], ye shall die in your sins.” This is a distortion of the biblical text as a whole, and the Gospel of John in particular. The purpose of the Gospel is clearly stated in 20:31: “But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is [“God”? No!] the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” In light of the explicitly stated purpose of the Gospel of John, teaching that unless one believes in Christ’s “deity,” he will die in his sins, is particularly unwarranted. The true meaning of the text is that if one does not believe that *Jesus is the Christ*, he will die in his sins, and this teaching can be found in a number of scriptures in the New Testament. Obviously, if one chooses to not believe in

the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, he will die in his sins. We believe the *NIV* does a good job with this particular text, especially in light of the way Christ was veiling his role as Messiah: “If you do not believe I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins.” This then fits with other times he said similar things, such as in John 13:19 when he said to disciples at the last supper, “I am telling you this before it [his betrayal] happens so that when it does happen you will believe that I am he.”

John 8:58b

Before Abraham was, I am. (*KJV*)

1. Trinitarians argue that this verse states that Jesus said he was the “I am” (*i.e.*, the *Yahweh* of the Old Testament), so he must be God. This is just not the case. Saying “I am” does not make a person God. The man born blind that Jesus healed was not claiming to be God, and he said “I am the man,” and the Greek reads exactly like Jesus’ statement, *i.e.*, “I am.” The fact that the exact same phrase is translated two different ways, one as “I am” and the other as “I am the man,” is one reason it is so hard for the average Christian to get the truth from just reading the Bible as it has been translated into English. Most Bible translators are Trinitarian, and their bias appears in various places in their translation, this being a common one. Paul also used the same phrase of himself when he said that he wished all men were as “I am” (Acts 26:29). Thus, we conclude that saying “I am” did not make Paul, the man born blind or Christ into God. C. K. Barrett writes:

Ego eimi [“I am”] does not identify Jesus with God, but it does draw attention to him in the strongest possible terms. “I am the one—the one you must look at, and listen to, if you would know God.”²³

2. The phrase “I am” occurs many other times in the New Testament, and is often translated as “I am he” or some equivalent (“I am he”—Mark 13:6; Luke 21:8; John 13:19; 18:5, 6 and 8. “It is I”—Matt. 14:27; Mark 6:50; John 6:20. “I am the one I claim to be”—John 8:24 and 28.). It is obvious that these translations are quite correct, and it is interesting that the phrase is translated as “I am” only in John 8:58. If the phrase in John 8:58 were translated “I am he” or “I am the one,” like all the others, it would be easier to see that Christ was speaking of himself as the Messiah of God (as indeed he was), spoken of throughout the Old Testament.

At the Last Supper, the disciples were trying to find out who would deny the Christ. They said, literally, “Not I am, Lord” (Matt. 26:22 and 25). No one would say that the disciples were trying to deny that they were God because they were using the phrase “Not I am.” The point is this: “I am” was a common way of designating oneself, and it did not mean you were claiming to be God.

3. The argument is made that because Jesus was “before” Abraham, Jesus must have been God. There is no question that Jesus figuratively “existed” in Abraham’s time. However, he did not actually physically exist as a person; rather he “existed” in the mind of God as

²³ C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St John* (Westminster Press, London, 1978), p. 342.

God's plan for the redemption of man. A careful reading of the context of the verse shows that Jesus was speaking of "existing" in God's foreknowledge. Verse 56 is accurately translated in the *King James Version*, which says: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw *it*, and was glad." This verse says that Abraham "saw" the Day of Christ, which is normally considered by theologians to be the day when Christ conquers the earth and sets up his kingdom. That would fit with what the book of Hebrews says about Abraham: "For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (Heb. 11:10). Abraham looked for a city that is still future, yet the Bible says Abraham "saw" it. In what sense could Abraham have seen something that was future? Abraham "saw" the Day of Christ because God told him it was coming, and Abraham "saw" it by faith. Although Abraham saw the Day of Christ by faith, that day existed in the mind of God long before Abraham. Thus, in the context of God's plan existing from the beginning, Christ certainly was "before" Abraham. Christ was the plan of God for man's redemption long before Abraham lived. We are not the only ones who believe that Jesus' statement does not make him God:

To say that Jesus is "before" him is not to lift him out of the ranks of humanity but to assert his unconditional precedence. To take such statements at the level of "flesh" so as to infer, as "the Jews" do that, at less than fifty, Jesus is claiming to have lived on this earth before Abraham (8:52 and 57), is to be as crass as Nicodemus who understands rebirth as an old man entering his mother's womb a second time (3:4).²⁴

4. In order for the Trinitarian argument that Jesus' "I am" statement in John 8:58 makes him God, his statement must be equivalent with God's "I am" statement in Exodus 3:14. However, the two statements are very different. While the Greek phrase in John does mean "I am," the Hebrew phrase in Exodus actually means "to be" or "to become." In other words God is saying, "I will be what I will be." Thus the "I am" in Exodus is actually a mistranslation of the Hebrew text, so the fact that Jesus said "I am" did not make him God.

Buzzard, pp. 93-97
Dana, Letter 21, pp. 169-171
Morgridge, pp. 120-21
Norton, pp. 242-246
Snedeker, pp. 416-418

John 10:18

No one takes it [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father. (*NIV*)

See the notes on John 2:19.

²⁴ J. A. T. Robinson, *The Priority of John* (Meyer Stone Pub., Oak Park, IL, 1985), p. 384.

John 10:30

I and my father are one. (*KJV*)

1. There is no reason to take this verse to mean that Christ was saying that he and the Father make up “one God.” The phrase was a common one, and even today if someone used it, people would know exactly what he meant—he and his father are very much alike. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians about his ministry there, he said that he had planted the seed and Apollos had watered it. Then he said, “he who plants and he who waters are one” (1 Cor. 3:8 - *KJV*). In the Greek texts, the wording of Paul is the same as that in John 10:30, yet no one claims that Paul and Apollos make up “one being.” Furthermore, the *NIV* translates 1 Corinthians 3:8 as “he who plants and he who waters have **one purpose**.” Why translate the phrase as “are one” in one place, but as “have one purpose” in another place? In this case, translating the same phrase in two different ways obscures the clear meaning of Christ’s statement in John 10:30: Christ always did the Father’s will; he and God have “one purpose.”

2. Christ uses the concept of “being one” in other places, and from them one can see that “one purpose” is what is meant. John 11:52 says Jesus was to die to make all God’s children “one.” In John 17:11,21 and 22, Jesus prayed to God that his followers would be “one” as he and God were “one.” We think it is obvious that Jesus was not praying that all his followers would become one being or “substance” just as he and his Father were one being or “substance.” We believe the meaning is clear: Jesus was praying that all his followers be one in purpose just as he and God were one in purpose, a prayer that has not yet been answered.

3. The context of John 10:30 shows conclusively that Jesus was referring to the fact that he had the same purpose as God did. Jesus was speaking about his ability to keep the “sheep,” the believers, who came to him. He said that no one could take them out of his hand and that no one could take them out of his Father’s hand. Then he said that he and the Father were “one,” *i.e.*, had one purpose, which was to keep and protect the sheep.

Buzzard, pp. 135 and 136

Farley, pp. 60 and 61

Morgridge, pp. 39-42

John 10:33

“We are not stoning you for any of these,” replied the Jews, “but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.” (*NIV*)

1. Any difficulty in understanding this verse is caused by the translators. Had they faithfully rendered the Greek text in verse 33 as they did in verses 34 and 35, then it would read, “...you, a man, claim to be *a god*.” In the next two verses, John 10:34 and 35, the exact same word (*theos*, without the article) is translated as “god,” not “God.” The point was made under John 1:1 that usually when “God” is meant, the noun *theos* has

the definite article. When there is no article, the translators know that “god” is the more likely translation, and they are normally very sensitive to this. For example, in Acts 12:22, Herod is called *theos* without the article, so the translators translated it “god.” The same is true in Acts 28:6, when Paul had been bitten by a viper and the people expected him to die. When he did not die, “they changed their minds and said he was a god.” Since *theos* has no article, and since it is clear from the context that the reference is not about the true God, *theos* is translated “a god.” It is a general principle that *theos* without the article should be “a god,” or “divine.” Since there is no evidence that Jesus was teaching that he was God anywhere in the context, and since the Pharisees would have never believed that this *man* was somehow *Yahweh*, it makes no sense that they would be saying that he said he was “God.” On the other hand, Jesus was clearly teaching that he was sent by God and was doing God’s work. Thus, it makes perfect sense that the Pharisees would say he was claiming to be “a god” or “divine.”

2. We take issue with the *NIV* translation of “mere man” for the Greek word *anthropos*. The English word “anthropology,” meaning “the study of man,” is derived from *anthropos*. Spiros Zodhiates writes, “man, a generic name in distinction from gods and the animals.”²⁵ In the vast majority of versions, *anthropos* is translated as “man.” The word *anthropos* occurs 550 times in the Greek text from which the *NIV* was translated, yet the *NIV* translated it as “mere man” only in this one verse. This variance borders on dishonesty and demonstrates a willingness to bias the text beyond acceptable limits. Unfortunately, the *NIV* is not the only translation that puts a Trinitarian spin on this verse. The Jews would have never called Jesus a “mere” man. They called him what they believed he was—a “man.” They were offended because they believed that he, “being a man, made himself a god (*i.e.*, someone with divine status).

3. For more on *theos* without the article, see the notes on John 1:1 and Hebrews 1:8.

Morgridge, pp. 39-42

Racovian Catechism, pp. 34-36

Snedeker, p. 422

John 14:11

Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves. (*NIV*)

This verse is sometimes used to prove the Trinity, but it proves nothing of the kind. The exact same language about being “in” is used many times of Christians. We assert that when the same exact language is used both of Christ and of Christians, it needs to be understood the same way. We are “in” Christ, and Christ is “in” us (cp. John 14:4-7; 17:21,23 and 26). When used in the sense of “in God,” or “in Christ,” the word “in” refers to a close communion, a tight fellowship. It was part of the covenant language of the day, when people spoke of being either “in” or “cut off from” the covenant.

²⁵ *Complete Word Study Dictionary*, (AMG Publishers, Chattanooga, TN, 1992), p. 180.

Morgridge, pp. 116 and 117
Racovian Catechism, pp. 142 and 143

John 14:16 and 17

(16) And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—

(17) the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. (*NIV*)

Some people assert that “the Holy Spirit” is a person because the Bible has “he” and “him” in these verses in John and in some other places. This assertion is invalid because the gender of the noun and pronoun have nothing to do with whether or not a person or thing is actually a person. See notes on John 1:3.

John 17:5

And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began. (*NIV*)

1. There is no question that Jesus “existed” before the world began. But did he exist literally as a person or in God’s foreknowledge, “in the mind of God?” Both Christ and the corporate be in the Body of Christ, the Church, existed in God’s foreknowledge before being alive. Christ was the “*logos*,” the “plan” of God from the beginning, and he became flesh only when he was conceived. It is Trinitarian bias that causes people to read an actual physical existence into this verse rather than a figurative existence in the mind of God. When 2 Timothy 1:9 says that each Christian was given grace “before the beginning of time,” no one tries to prove that we were actually alive with God back then. Everyone acknowledges that we were “in the mind of God,” *i.e.*, in God’s foreknowledge. The same is true of Jesus Christ. His glory was “with the Father” before the world began, and in John 17:5 he prayed that it would come into manifestation.

2. Jesus was praying that he would have the glory the Old Testament foretold, which had been in the mind of God, the Father, since before the world began, and would come into concretion. Trinitarians, however, teach that Jesus was praying about glory he had with God many years before his birth, and they assert that this proves he had access to the mind and memory of his “God nature.” However, if, as a man, Jesus “remembered” being in glory with the Father before the world began, then he would have known he was God in every sense. He would not have thought of himself as a “man” at all. If he knew he was God, he would not and could not have been “tempted in every way just as we are” because nothing he encountered would have been a “real” temptation to him. He would have had no fear and no thought of failure. There is no real sense in which Scripture could actually say he was “made like his brothers in every way” (Heb. 2:17) because he would not have been like us at all. Furthermore, Scripture says that Jesus “grew” in knowledge and wisdom. That would not really be true if Christ had access to some type of God-nature with infinite knowledge and wisdom.

We believe that John 17:5 is a great example of a verse that demonstrates the need for clear thinking concerning the doctrine of the Trinity. The verse can clearly be interpreted in a way that is honest and biblically sound, and shows that Christ was a man, but was in the foreknowledge of God as God's plan for the salvation of mankind. It can also be used the way Trinitarians use it: to prove the Trinity. However, when it is used that way it reveals a Christ that we as Christians cannot truly identify with. We do not have a God-nature to help us when we are tempted or are in trouble or lack knowledge or wisdom. The Bible says that Christ can "sympathize with our weakness" because he was "tempted in every way, *just as we are*" (Heb. 4:15). The thrust of that verse is very straightforward. *Because* Christ was just like we are, *and* was tempted in every way that we are, he can sympathize with us. However, if he was not "just as we are," then he would not be able to sympathize with us. We assert that making Christ a God-man makes it impossible to really identify with him.

3. Jesus' prayer in John 17 sets a wonderful example for us as Christians. He poured out his heart to his Father, "the only true God" (John 17:3), and prayed that the prophecies of the Old Testament about him would be fulfilled.

4. For Christ's relation to the Plan of God, see notes on John 1:1. For more on Christ in God's foreknowledge, see the note on John 8:58.

Racovian Catechism, pp. 144-146
Snedeker, pp. 424 and 425

John 20:17

Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God. (*KJV*)

1. This verse is no problem at all in all the major versions we checked except for the *NIV*. The translators of the *NIV* caused a problem by using the word "return" instead of "ascend," and making Christ say, "I have not yet *returned* to my Father." The Greek word means, "to go up" and although it occurs 82 times in the Greek New Testament, even the *NIV* translators have translated it "returning" only in this one place, and as "returned" in the next verse. Christ did not "return" to his Father as if he had been there before, rather he "went up" to his Father. The Trinitarian "problem" in this verse is caused by a mistranslation, but, thankfully, other versions translate the verse more accurately.

2. This verse is one of the strongest proofs in the Bible that there is no Trinity. This event occurred after the resurrection, and Jesus said to Mary that he was ascending to "my God, and your God." Jesus' statement makes it clear that "God" is both his God and Mary's God. If Jesus *is* God, he cannot *have* a God, for by definition if someone has a "God," he cannot *be* "God." If Jesus had a "God" as he said, then he cannot be part of that God. This is especially clear in this verse, because he and Mary have the same God. If he were God, then he would have been Mary's God, too. He would not have said that

he was going up to her God, because “her God,” *i.e.*, Jesus himself, was standing right there. One of the most recognized principles of Bible interpretation, and one that is accepted by conservative scholars from all denominations, is that to be properly understood, the Bible must be read in a literal, “normal,” or “standard” way, *i.e.*, the words of the Word should be understood the way we understand them in everyday speech, unless figurative language is demanded by the context. Everyone understands the phrase, “my God.” Christ used it both before and after his resurrection. He called to “my God” when he was on the Cross. He told Mary he was going to ascend to “my God.” He spoke of “my God” to both the churches of Sardis and Philadelphia (Rev. 3:2 and 12). It is hard to see how Jesus can be assumed to be co-equal and co-eternal with God when he calls Him, “my God.” The Bible simply means what it says in this verse: God is indeed both our God and Jesus’ God.

John 20:28

And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. (*KJV*)

1. Jesus never referred to himself as “God” in the absolute sense, so what precedent then did Thomas have for calling Jesus “my God?” The Greek language uses the word *theos*, (“God” or “god”) with a broader meaning than is customary today. In the Greek language and in the culture of the day, “GOD” (all early manuscripts of the Bible were written in all capital letters) was a descriptive title applied to a range of authorities, including the Roman governor (Acts 12:22), and even the Devil (2 Cor. 4:4). It was used of someone with divine authority. It was not limited to its absolute sense as a personal name for the supreme Deity as we use it today.

2. Given the language of the time, and given that Jesus did represent the Father and have divine authority, the expression used by Thomas is certainly understandable. On the other hand, to make Thomas say that Jesus was “God,” and thus 1/3 of a triune God, seems incredible. In *Concessions of Trinitarians*, Michaelis, a Trinitarian, writes:

I do not affirm that Thomas passed all at once from the extreme of doubt to the highest degree of faith, *and acknowledged Christ to be the true God*. This appears to me too much for the then existing knowledge of the disciples; and we have no intimation that they recognized the divine nature of Christ before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. I am therefore inclined to understand this expression, which broke out in the height of his astonishment, in a figurative sense, denoting only “whom I shall ever reverence in the highest degree”...Or a person raised from the dead might be regarded as a divinity; for the word *God* is not always used in the strict doctrinal sense” [Michaelis is quoted by Dana, ref. below].

Remember that it was common at that time to call the God’s representatives “God,” and the Old Testament contains quite a few examples. When Jacob wrestled with “God,” it is clear that he was actually wrestling with an angel (Hosea 12:4—For more on that, see the note on Genesis 16:7-13).

3. There are many Trinitarian authorities who admit that there was no knowledge of Trinitarian doctrine at the time Thomas spoke. For example, if the disciples believed that Jesus was “God” in the sense that many Christians do, they would not have “all fled” just a few days before when he was arrested. The confession of the two disciples walking along the road to Emmaus demonstrated the thoughts of Jesus’ followers at the time. Speaking to the resurrected Christ, whom they mistook as just a traveler, they talked about Jesus. They said Jesus “was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God...and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel” (Luke 24:19-21). The Bible is clear that these disciples thought Jesus was a “prophet.” Even though some of the apostles realized that Jesus was the Christ, they knew that according to the Old Testament prophecies, the Christ, the anointed of God, was to be a man. There is no evidence from the gospel accounts that Jesus’ disciples believed him to be God, and Thomas, upon seeing the resurrected Christ, was not birthing a new theology in a moment of surprise.

4. The context of the verse shows that its subject is the fact that Jesus was *alive*. Only three verses earlier, Thomas had ignored the eyewitness testimony of the other apostles when they told him they had seen the Lord. The resurrection of Christ was such a disputed doctrine that Thomas did not believe it (the other apostles had not either), and thus Jesus’ death would have caused Thomas to doubt that Jesus was who he said he was—the Messiah. Thomas believed Jesus was *dead*. Thus, he was shocked and astonished when he saw—and was confronted by— Jesus Himself. Thomas, upon being confronted by the *living* Christ, instantly believed in the resurrection, *i.e.*, that God had raised the man Jesus from the dead, and, given the standard use of “God” in the culture as one with God’s authority, it certainly makes sense that Thomas would proclaim, “My Lord and my God.” There is no mention of the Trinity in the context, and there is no reason to believe that the disciples would have even been aware of such a doctrine. Thomas spoke what he would have known: that the man Jesus who he thought was dead was alive and had divine authority.

5. For other uses of *theos* applicable to this verse, see Hebrews 1:8 below.

Buzzard, pp. 39-41,61 and 62,136 and 137

Dana, pp. 23-25

Farley, pp. 62-64

Morgridge, pp. 109 and 110

Norton, pp. 299-304

Snedeker, pp. 271 and 272, 426-430

Acts 5:3 and 4

(3) Then Peter said, “Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land?

(4) Didn’t it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn’t the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men, but to God.” (NIV)

1. We must understand that both “God” and “*pneuma hagion*” (“holy spirit”) can refer to something other than a separate “person” in the Trinity. Since there is no verse that actually states the doctrine of the Trinity, its existence is built from assumption and by piecing verses together. Verses such as Acts 5:3 and 4 are used as “proof,” for the doctrine, but that is actually circular reasoning. The doctrine is assumed, and then, because this verse fits the assumption, it is stated to be proof of the doctrine. However, at best these verses could offer minimal support for the Trinity because there are other completely acceptable ways to handle them, specifically that “the Holy Spirit” is sometimes another designation for God.

2. It is clear in these verses that God and “the Holy Spirit” are equated, and this has caused Trinitarians to claim that this proves their case that God and “the Holy Spirit” are the same. But these verses are clearly an example of Semitic parallelism, which is one of the most commonly employed literary devices in Scripture. “God” is equated with “the Holy Spirit.” Obviously, the point is that Ananias did not lie to two different persons, but to one person, God, and the parallelism serves to emphasize that fact.

3. Trinitarians believe that “the Holy Spirit” is the third “person” in the three-person Trinity. Non-Trinitarians say that no “third person” exists. The original texts were all capital letters, so every use was “HOLY SPIRIT.” There are times in the English versions when “spirit” is spelled with a capital “S” and times when it has a lower case “s.” This is all the work of the translators, because all the early Greek manuscripts were in all capital letters. Thus, whether “HOLY SPIRIT” should be translated as “Holy Spirit” or “holy spirit” must be determined from the context (for more on capitalization and punctuation, see the notes on Hebrews 1:8).

To the non-Trinitarian, the holy spirit is either 1) another name for God the Father (in which case it is capitalized), 2) the power of God in operation, or 3) the gift of God’s nature (spirit) that is given to each believer. Peter spoke of this gift on the Day of Pentecost when he said, “ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38 - *KJV*). Because *pneuma* has several meanings the context of a passage of Scripture must always be studied carefully to determine the correct meaning.

4. God is known by many names and designations in the Bible. *Elohim*, *El Shaddai*, *Yahweh*, *Adon*, “the Holy One of Israel,” “the Most High” and “the Father” are just a few. Since God is “holy” and God is “spirit,” it should not surprise us that one of the names of God, the Father, is “the Holy Spirit.” The distinguished scholar and author of *Young’s Concordance*, Robert Young, wrote: “Spirit—is used of God himself, or the Divine Mind, His energy, influence, gifts.”²⁶ When *pneuma hagion*, “holy spirit,” is being used as another name for the Father, it should be capitalized, just as any name is capitalized.

When “holy spirit” refers to the spirit that God gives as a gift, it should not be capitalized. Biblically, “the Holy Spirit” is quite different from “the holy spirit.” The record of the birth of Christ in Luke provides a good example of why it is important to recognize

²⁶ *Young’s Concordance*, Hints and Helps #66 (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 1964).

whether the “Holy Spirit” refers to the power of God or another name for God. “The angel answered, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God’ “ (Luke 1:35). This verse and Matthew 1:18-20 make Jesus Christ the Son of the Holy Spirit, yet all the other references to Jesus make him the Son of the Father. Did Jesus have two fathers? Of course not. In the records of Christ’s birth, “the Holy Spirit” is another way of referring to God Himself, and not a third person in the Trinity. This eliminates the “problem” of which person in the Trinity actually fathered Jesus. Also in Acts 5:3, “Holy Spirit” is another name for God. For a much more complete explanation of the uses of “holy spirit,” see *The Gift of Holy Spirit, Every Christian’s Divine Deposit*, available from CES. See also Appendix I.

Buzzard, pp. 101-107

Farley, pp. 96-108

Morgridge, pp. 129-138

Acts 7:45

Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Jesus into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David. (*KJV*)

1. Although the *King James* English makes this verse a little hard to understand, it is saying that Jesus was the one who brought the Israelites into the Promised Land. This is a case of mistranslation. The name “Jesus” and the name “Joshua” are the same, and on two occasions the translators of the *KJV* confused them. This point is well established by William Barclay, a professor and author at Trinity College in Glasgow. He writes:

The name “Jesus” underlines the real humanity of our Lord. To us the name Jesus is a holy and sacred name, and we would count it almost blasphemy to give it to any child or call any person by it. But in New Testament times it was one of the commonest of names. It is the Greek form by which three Hebrew Old Testament names are regularly represented—Joshua (*e.g.*, Ex. 17:10); Jehoshua (*e.g.*, Zech. 3:1); Jeshua (Neh. 7:7). There are indeed two occasions in the *AV* [the *KJV*] in which Joshua is very confusingly called “Jesus.” In Acts 7:45, we read that the fathers brought the tabernacle into the land of Palestine with Jesus. In Hebrews 4:8, it is said that if “Jesus” had been able to give the people rest, there would have been no need to speak of still another day. In both cases, “Jesus” is Joshua, a fact which is made clear in all the more modern translations. By the second century, the name “Jesus” was vanishing as an ordinary name. Amongst the Jews it vanished because it had become a hated name by which no Jew would call his son; and amongst the Christians it has vanished because it was too sacred for common use.²⁷

²⁷ Wm. Barclay, *Jesus As They Saw Him* (Harper and Row, New York, 1962), pp. 10 and 11.

2. One of the easiest and most accessible keys to correct biblical interpretation is the context. Examine the context of Acts 7:45, and it becomes exceedingly clear that the verse is not speaking of Jesus.

Acts 7:44-46

(44) Our forefathers had the tabernacle of the Testimony with them in the desert. It had been made as God directed Moses, according to the pattern he had seen.

(45) Having received the tabernacle, our fathers under **Joshua** brought it with them when they took the land from the nations God drove out before them. It remained in the land until the time of David,

(46) who enjoyed God's favor and asked that he might provide a dwelling place for the God of Jacob.

There is no record anywhere in the Old Testament that shows Jesus with the Tabernacle, and, as Barclay pointed out, all the modern translations read "Joshua."

Acts 7:59

While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." (*NIV*)

This verse supports the idea of the Trinity only as it appears in some translations. The *KJV* has the phrase, "calling upon *God*," but puts "God" in italics to show that the translators added the word and that it was not in the original text. The truth is that "God" does not appear in *any* Greek text of the verse. Thus, this verse does not support the Trinity.

Acts 20:28b

Be shepherds of the Church of God, which he bought with his own blood. (*NIV*)

1. There are some Greek manuscripts that read "the church of the Lord" instead of "the church of God." Many Trinitarian scholars believe that "Lord" is the original reading, because there is no mention anywhere in the Bible of God having blood. If the Greek manuscripts that read "Lord" are the original ones, then the "problem" is solved. However, it is the belief of the authors that good textual research shows that "the church of God" is the correct reading.

2. Both the American Bible Society and the Institute For New Testament Research in Germany (which produces the Nestle-Aland Greek text) agree that the manuscript evidence supports the reading *tou haimatios tou idiou*, literally, the blood of His own (Son), and not *idiou haimatios*, "his own blood." God paid for our salvation with the blood of His own Son, Jesus Christ.

3. The text note at the bottom of the very Trinitarian *NIV Study Bible* gets the meaning of the verse correct: "*his own blood*. Lit. 'the blood of his own one,' a term of endearment (such as 'his own dear one') referring to His own Son."

Norton, pp. 184,199-203
Ehrman, pp. 87 and 88
Racovian Catechism, pp. 83 and 84
Wilson, p. 429

Romans 9:5

Christ, who is God over all, be praised. (*NIV*)

1. The student of the Bible should be aware that the original text had no punctuation, and thus in some instances there is more than one way a verse can be translated without violating the grammar of the text (see the notes on Heb. 1:8). Then how do we arrive at the correct translation and meaning, the one that God, the Author, meant us to believe? In the majority of cases, the context, both immediate and remote, will reveal to us what He is trying to say. The entire Bible fits together in such a way that one part can give us clues to interpret another part. The serious student of the Bible will glean information from the scope of Scripture to assist in the interpretation of any one verse. Romans 9:5 is one of the verses that can be translated different ways, and thus the context and scope of Scripture will help us determine the correct interpretation. Note from the examples below that translators and translating committees vary greatly in their handling of Romans 9:5:

- *RSV*: “to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ. God who is over all be blessed forever. Amen.”
- *Moffatt*: “the patriarchs are theirs, and theirs too (so far as natural descent goes) is the Christ. (Blessed for evermore be the God who is over all! Amen.)”
- *KJV*: “Whose *are* the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ *came*, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.”
- *NAS*: “whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.”
- *NIV*: “Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.”

Although the exact wording of the above translations differs, they fall into two basic categories: those that are worded to make Christ into God, and those that make the final phrase into a type of eulogy or doxology referring to God the Father. The *RSV* and *Moffatt* are outstanding examples of the latter.

2. In *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, R. S. Franks, a Trinitarian and the Principal *Emeritus* of Western College in Bristol, writes,

It should be added that Rom. 9:5 cannot be adduced to prove that Paul ever thought of Christ as God. The state of the case is found in the R.V. margin...He [Paul] never leaves the ground of Jewish monotheism. It has been pointed out that Rom. 9:5 cannot be brought in to question this statement. On the contrary,

God is spoken of by the Apostle as not only the Father, but also the God of our Lord Jesus Christ”²⁸

3. There is good evidence from both the immediate remote contexts that the last phrase of this verse is a eulogy or doxology to God the Father. “God over all” and “God blessed forever” are both used of God the Father elsewhere in the New Testament (Rom. 1:25; 2 Cor. 11:31; Eph. 1:3; 4:6; 1 Tim. 6:15). In contrast, neither phrase is ever used of Christ. It would be highly unusual to take eulogies that were commonly used of God and, abruptly and without comment or explanation, apply them to Christ.

4. Asking why the words are even in the text gives us a key to understanding them. Paul is writing about the way that God has especially blessed the Jews. The verses immediately before Romans 9:5 point out that God has given them the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the law, the worship, the promises, the patriarchs and even the human ancestry of Jesus Christ. How blessed they are! No wonder a eulogy to God is inserted: “God, who is over all, be blessed forever! Amen.”

5. The entire context of Romans 9:5 is describing God’s blessings to the Jews, who have a heritage of being aggressively monotheistic. An insert about Christ being God seems most inappropriate. This is especially true when we understand that Paul is writing in a way designed to win the Jews. For example, he calls them “my kindred in the flesh” (v. 3 - *NRSV*), and says he has sorrow and anguish in his heart for them (v. 2 - *NRSV*). Would he then put into this section a phrase that he knew would be offensive to the very Jews for whom he is sorrowing and who he is trying to win? Certainly not. On the contrary, after just saying that Christ came from the line of the Patriarchs, something about which the Jews were suspicious, a eulogy to the Father would assure the Jews that there was no idolatry or false elevation of Christ intended, but that he was part of the great blessing of God.

Buzzard, pp. 131 and 132

Farley, pp. 67-69

Morgridge, pp. 111-114

Norton, pp. 203-214

Snedeker, pp. 434-440

Romans 10:9

That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. (*NIV*)

1. Christ is Lord, but “Lord” is not “God.” “Lord” (the Greek word is *kurios*) is a masculine title of respect and nobility, and it is used many times in the New Testament. To say that Jesus is God because the Bible calls him “Lord” is very poor scholarship. “Lord” is used in many ways in the Bible, and others beside God and Jesus are called “Lord.”

²⁸ R. S. Franks, *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, (Gerald Duckworth and Co., London, 1953), pp. 34-36.

- Property owners are called “Lord” (Matt. 20:8, “owner” = *kurios*).
- Heads of households are called “Lord” (Mark 13:35, “owner” = *kurios*).
- Slave owners are called “Lord” (Matt. 10:24, “master” = *kurios*).
- Husbands are called “Lord” (1 Pet. 3:6, “master” = *kurios*).
- A son calls his father “Lord” (Matt. 21:30, “sir” = *kurios*).
- The Roman Emperor is called “Lord” (Acts 25:26, “His Majesty” = *kurios*).
- Roman authorities are called “Lord” (Matt. 27:63, “sir” = *kurios*).

The problem these verses cause to anyone who says Christ is God because he is called “Lord” is immediately apparent—many others beside Christ would also be God (For a concise study of the uses of “lord” in the New Testament, see Appendix B).

2. We must recognize that it was God who made Jesus “Lord.” Acts 2:36 says: “God has *made* this Jesus...both Lord and Christ.” If “Lord” equals “God,” then somehow God *made* Jesus “God,” which is something that even Trinitarians do not teach, because it is vital to Trinitarian doctrine that Jesus be co-equal and co-eternal with the Father. The fact that the Bible says God *made* Jesus “Lord” is an argument *against* the Trinity.

Romans 10:13

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. (*NIV*)

The context of this verse in Romans makes it clear that the “Lord” referred to in this verse is the Lord Jesus Christ. However, this verse is a quotation from Joel 2:32 in the Old Testament, and in Joel the “Lord” is *Yahweh*. That has caused some Trinitarians to say that Jesus is God. The argument is not valid, however. There is nothing in the context or scope of Scripture that shows that *Yahweh* and Jesus Christ are the same being. What it shows is simple and straightforward: In the Old Testament, one called upon *Yahweh* for salvation, and now we call upon Jesus Christ for salvation. This does not show an identity of persons, rather it demonstrates a shift of responsibility. This responsibility that Jesus now has was foreshadowed in the Old Testament record of Joseph: the people would go to Pharaoh for their needs to be met, but after Pharaoh elevated Joseph to second-in-command, he told them, “Go to Joseph” (Gen. 41:55). No one would conclude that Pharaoh and Joseph were the same being, and there is no reason to conclude that Jesus and God are both “God” just because Jesus now has some of the responsibilities that God had until He exalted Jesus.

Part of the confusion surrounding this issue is that in the Old Testament, many versions do not print the name *Yahweh*, but instead say “Lord.” Although God never commanded it, it was the custom of the Jews, out of reverence for God, not to pronounce the name of God, so they wrote “Lord” when the Hebrew text said *Yahweh*. Many Christian Bibles do not have God’s name clearly translated, but have “Lord” where the Hebrew has *Yahweh*. This confuses many Christians who see “Lord” in both the Old and New Testaments, and assume it is the same person. Also, many Christians who have some training in the Scriptures have been taught that *Yahweh* in the Old Testament was Jesus Christ. So, instead of seeing *Yahweh* in Joel and “Lord” in Romans, and then realizing

that the Lord Jesus is now doing what *Yahweh* did, they erroneously believe the same person is acting in both places.

God made Jesus Lord and gave him all authority. This verse and others show that Jesus has taken on many of the jobs God used to do. We understand that perfectly in our culture, because we know what it means to get a promotion and take over a job someone else used to do. With the promotion and new job often comes a new title. Thus, “this same Jesus” was made “Lord” and “Christ” and was given all authority, including raising the dead and judging the people (John 5:21-27). The verses in the Old Testament that speak of God’s authority are often quoted in the New Testament and applied to Christ because God gave the authority to Christ.

Snedeker, pp. 403-406

1 Corinthians 8:6

Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live. (*NIV*)

1. Trinitarians say that this verse supports their position because of the final phrase in the verse, *i.e.*, that all things came through Jesus Christ. But what the verse actually says is that all things came “from” God, “through” Jesus. This testimony stands in contradiction to Trinitarian doctrine because it places Jesus in a subordinate role to God. According to this verse, he is not “co-equal” with the Father.
2. The context is the key to understanding what the phrase “all things came through him” means. There is no mention in either the immediate or the remote context about the creation of all things in the beginning. Therefore it would be unusual for this verse to mention God’s original creation of Genesis 1:1, which it is not. Rather, it is speaking of the Church. God provided all things for the Church via Jesus Christ. The whole of 1 Corinthians is taken up with Church issues, and Paul starts 8:6 with “for us,” *i.e.*, for Christians. The very next two verses speak about the fact that, for the Church, there are no laws against eating food sacrificed to idols. Verse 8 says, “But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do.” This revelation was new for the Church. The Old Testament believers did not have this freedom. They had dozens of food laws. The verse is powerful indeed, and states clearly that Christians have one God who is the ultimate source of all things, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, who is the way by which God provided all things to the Church.
3. This verse, when properly understood, is actually strong evidence that Jesus Christ is not God. Polytheism was rampant in Corinth, and Scripture is clear that “there is no God but one” (1 Cor. 8:4). Then the text continues with the statements that although there may be many gods and lords, for Christians there is but one God, the Father, and one Lord, Jesus Christ. If the doctrine of the Trinity is correct, then this text can only be construed as confusing. Here was the perfect opportunity to say, “for us there is only one God made up of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost,” or something similar, but, instead,

Scripture tells us that only the Father is God. That should stand as conclusive evidence that Jesus is not God.

Hyndman, pp. 58-63
Morgridge, pp. 35-36

1 Corinthians 10:4b

They drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ.
(*KJV*)

1. This verse is only a problem if it is misunderstood or mistranslated. Some Trinitarians use it to teach that Christ was actually *with* the Israelites, following them around. However, the Old Testament makes no mention of Christ being with the Israelites in the wilderness. And if he had been, he certainly would not have been “following” them.

2. The word “follow” means “to go after,” and that can mean either in time or space. The Israelites did “drink,” *i.e.*, *get* nourishment, from knowing about the Christ who was to come after them. The very Trinitarian *NIV* translates the word “follow” as “accompany,” as if Jesus were accompanying the Israelites on their journey. The Greek word usually translated “follow” is *akoloutheo*. It appears in the *Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament* 90 times. Even in the *NIV* it is translated as some form of “follow” (like “follows,” “following,” *etc.*) 83 times. The *NIV* translates *akoloutheo* as “accompanied” only twice, here and in Mark 6:1, and we submit that the *NIV* does so here because of the translators’ Trinitarian bias and not because the context calls for it. Although it is true that *akoloutheo* can be translated as “accompany,” it should not be translated that way here, but would be better translated as “followed.” The vast majority of translations agree. As we have said, there is no verse in the Old Testament that records Jesus Christ traveling with the Israelites, so the translation “accompanied” does not fit with the rest of Scripture. Christ was the hope of Israel, and people who looked forward to him were strengthened by their anticipation of their coming Messiah.

3. Since this verse mentions the Israelites in the desert, the desert wanderings become the “remoter context” against which one must check any interpretation. As we have already noted, there is no reference that can be brought forward to show that Christ was either with the Israelites or was somehow following them around. Are there verses that show that the Israelites were looking forward to the Messiah? Yes, many. The Passover Lamb foreshadowed the Messiah. The manna anticipated Christ being “the true bread from heaven.” The Tabernacle, with all its offerings, foreshadowed Christ in many ways, including being the place where people would meet God. The High Priest was a type of the Great High Priest, Jesus Christ. It was in the wilderness where that great prophecy of the coming Messiah was given: “A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel,” and “their kingdom will be exalted” (Num. 24:7,17). There is no question that the lesson from these verses is that the people looked forward to the coming of the Messiah and “drank,” *i.e.*, got strength and nourishment, from knowing that he was coming.

Buzzard, pp. 52 and 53
Snedeker, pp. 440 and 441

1 Corinthians 10:9

We should not test the Lord, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes.
(*NIV*)

1. The reason this verse is a problem verse is that the Greek manuscripts differ. Some texts read “Christ,” while others read “the Lord.” As it is translated in versions like the *NIV*, *Amplified*, *NASB* and others that take the word “Lord” as original, there is no problem at all. This verse is only a problem in some versions that have “Christ” instead of “the Lord.”

2. The subject of textual criticism is very involved, and it is common that scholars differ in their opinions as to which texts are more original and which texts have been altered. In this case, there are early texts that read “Lord,” and some that read “Christ,” so the job of determining the original reading from textual evidence becomes more difficult. We agree with the conclusion of Bart Ehrman (*The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*) that “Lord” is the original meaning, and refer anyone who wants to examine the textual argument to his work.

3. Every translator will testify to the importance of *context* in determining the correct translation of Scripture. We feel the context makes it clear that “Lord” is the correct reading. Although there are dozens of times that the Israelites were said to tempt “God” or “the Lord” in the Old Testament, there is not even a single reference to tempting Christ. By reading the verse carefully, we obtain a vital clue to its meaning and the proper translation. The verse says that when the Israelites tempted the Lord, they were “destroyed by serpents.” This phrase allows us to find the exact record in the Old Testament that is being referred to. In Numbers 21:5, the Israelites “spoke against God” and then “the Lord sent venomous snakes among them.” In the record of this event in the Old Testament, “God” and *Yahweh* are both mentioned, but “Christ” is never mentioned. Furthermore, there is no scripture anywhere in the Old Testament that says “Christ” poured out his “wrath,” and certainly not by sending serpents. Thus, if some Greek texts read “the Lord” and others read “Christ,” the context points to “Lord” as the correct interpretation.

Ehrman, pp. 89 and 90
Norton, pp. 473 and 474
Snedeker, pp. 441 and 442

1 Corinthians 12:4-6

(4) There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit.

(5) There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.

(6) There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. (*NIV*)

1. There is no mention here of the “Trinity.” The verses speak of three: God, Christ and the spirit, but do not speak of a Trinitarian formula. We put “spirit” with a lower case “s” because it refers to God’s gift of holy spirit that is born in each believer. For more on this use of “spirit,” see the notes on Acts 5:3 and 4, Appendix I and *The Gift of Holy Spirit, Every Christian’s Divine Deposit*, available from CES.

2. We find it significant, especially in light of Trinitarian doctrine, that the three mentioned in this verse are “spirit,” “Lord” and “God” instead of “spirit,” “Lord” and “Father.” Morgridge writes:

Three objects are distinctly mentioned—God, Christ and the Spirit. If Christ and the Spirit were persons in the Trinity, the distinct mention of them would be superfluous, they being included in “God.” But as one of the objects mentioned is called “God,” it follows that neither of the other two can be God; for we know that “there is none other God but one.” If the three objects were the three persons in the Trinity, why is the name “God” given to one of them only?

We agree with Morgridge that the mention of “God” as one of the three, precludes the other two from being “God.” The language of the text is plain and simple. There are three distinct things being mentioned, and any attempt to force them together into “one” distorts the simple truth being communicated by the Word of God.

Morgridge, pp. 101 and 102

2 Corinthians 5:19

That God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. (*NIV*)

1. As this verse is translated in the *NIV*, it does not have a Trinitarian meaning. Some Trinitarians use the concept from some other translations that “God was in Christ” to prove the Trinity. If the Trinity were true, then God could not be “in” Christ as if Christ were a container. If the Trinity were in fact a true doctrine, then this would be a wonderful place to express it and say, “God was Christ.”

2. The fact that in some versions the verse reads that “God was in Christ” is evidence against the Trinity. If the phrase “God was in Christ” means that Christ is God, then when the Bible says that Christ is “in” Christians (Col. 1:27), it would mean that Christians are Christ. Since we know that Christ being “in” Christians does not make us Christ, then we also know that God being “in” Christ does not make Christ God. The correct understanding of the verse is that God was in Christ in the sense that God placed His spirit in Christ, and Christ is in us in the same way—via the gift of holy spirit.

Snedeker, pp. 442 and 443

2 Corinthians 12:19b

We have been speaking in the sight of God as those in Christ; and everything we do, dear friends, is for your strengthening. (*NIV*)

1. The Greek text contains a difficult construction, and reads, “God in Christ,” which has caused some to believe it is a reference to the Trinity. Not at all. If anything, it tends to refute the Trinity (see the notes on 2 Cor. 5:19).
2. This verse is translated in several different ways by Trinitarian translators. It is noteworthy that some Trinitarians do not believe this verse is referring to the Trinity, and how they translate it. A good example is the *NIV*, quoted above, which is especially meaningful because the *NIV* translation favors the Trinitarian position in most instances.

2 Corinthians 13:14

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. (*NIV*)

1. This closing verse of the epistle of 2 Corinthians is a doxology, and is typical of how Paul closes his epistles. Galatians, Philippians and both Thessalonian epistles close with “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The close of Ephesians includes “love with faith from God.” There is no reason to conclude that a closing doxology would not incorporate three wonderful attributes: the love of God, the grace of Christ and the fellowship of the spirit.
2. There is no presentation of the Trinity in this verse. Three different things are mentioned, but they are never said to be “one,” or “of one substance,” or “making up one God,” or anything like what would be needed for a Trinitarian formula. There are many times that three things are mentioned together in the Bible, yet Trinitarians do not make them “one” just because they are mentioned together. For example, “Peter, James and John” are often mentioned together, but that fact does not make them “one.” Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are often mentioned together also, and that fact does not make them “one.” If three things are actually “one,” there must be a clear verse that says so, and as even Trinitarians will admit, there is no such verse that articulates that God, Jesus and the spirit equal “one God.”
3. Although this verse is used by some to support the Trinity, a careful reading shows that it actually contradicts it. The three mentioned in the verse are “God,” “Jesus Christ” and the “Holy Spirit” (which we believe should be accurately translated as “holy spirit”). Yet the Trinitarian position is that “God” is composed of the Father, Christ and the Spirit. So the fact that the verse mentions “God” *separate from* Christ and the holy spirit is strong evidence that they are indeed separate from “God” and that there is no Trinity (see also the note on 1 Cor. 12:4-6).
4. This verse does not mean that we have fellowship with the “person,” the Holy Spirit, who is part of the Trinity. It refers to the fellowship that Christians have with each other because of the presence of God’s gift, holy spirit, in each of us. The “fellowship of the

spirit” is a phrase that is also used in Philippians 2:1, and the text note on this verse in the *NIV Study Bible* is fairly accurate. It says: “The fellowship among believers produced by the Spirit, who indwells each of them.” We would replace “Spirit” with “spirit,” (because we believe it refers to God’s gift) and translate “who” as “which” (“spirit” is neuter in the Greek text), but the point is made beautifully. The fellowship of the spirit is the fellowship Christians enjoy with other believers because of the presence of the spirit in each of us (For more on God’s gift of holy spirit, see the notes on Acts 5:3 and 4).

Dana, pp. 213 and 214
Morgridge, pp. 101 and 102
Snedeker, pp. 115-118

Ephesians 1:22 and 23

(22) And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church,

(23) which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. (*NIV*)

There are some Trinitarians who assert that the last phrase of verse 23 proves the Trinity. Not so, for there is no mention of any Trinitarian concept such as “three-in-one.” This verse clearly teaches that God was the one who “appointed” Christ to be over the Church. Surely if Christ were a co-equal part of God, he needed no such appointment, because by nature he would already have been over the Church. The way to properly understand this verse is to read it with a standard sense of the word “appointment.” If Christ were “appointed” to the position of “Head” over the Church, then it is obvious that he would not have been “Head” without the appointment, which could not be true if Christ were God.

Again the *context* is the great key in discovering what a verse is saying. The context of the last phrase is plainly given in the words immediately before it: “the church, which is his body.” Christ does indeed fill everything in every way for his Church, as other verses in the New Testament verify. We know, however, that Christ’s authority stretches even beyond his Church, for God gave “all authority” to him (Matt. 28:18). Thus, it is possible, although the context of this verse would not demand it, that it refers to the wide-ranging authority that God gave to Christ. This verse does not prove the Trinity, it simply confirms what other scriptures teach, *i.e.*, that Christ is the Head of his Body, the Church, that God has set everything under his feet, that he is Lord and that he has been given all authority.

Ephesians 3:9

And to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. (*NIV*)

This verse is not a problem in most translations, because most do not have the phrase, “by Jesus Christ,” at the end of the verse. Apparently this phrase was added to some Greek manuscripts as debates about the Trinity caused some scribes to “augment” their position

by adding to the Word of God, or it could have been a marginal note that was accidentally copied into some manuscripts. It is not well supported in the textual tradition. *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* notes that the omission of the phrase is “decisively supported” by the texts, as well as by the “early patristic quotations” (*i.e.*, the places where the Church Fathers quoted the verse). For more information about how Trinitarian information was added, see the notes on 1 John 5:7 and 8.

Ephesians 4:7 and 8

But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says, “When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.”
(*NIV*)

1. Verse 8 is a quotation from the Old Testament, where the context is referring to what God did, so there are some who say that if the verse is applied to Christ, then Christ must be God. However, it is common for a verse to be interpreted one way in the Old Testament and then applied or interpreted differently in the New Testament. Examples of this are quite abundant, and this is not disputed by theologians. Thus, it is not unusual that an Old Testament quotation would be accommodated to Christ.

A lot has been written on the subject of accommodating Old Testament verses to New Testament circumstances, and we refer interested readers to any good theological library. One illustration of this is the title, “the First and the Last,” (see the notes on Rev. 1:17). Another is the prophecy in Hosea 11:1. Hosea is speaking of Israel coming up out of Egypt, but in Matthew 2:15 God accommodates the meaning to Christ coming out of Egypt as a child. Another good example is Jeremiah 31:15. In that prophecy, “Rachel,” the mother of Benjamin, was weeping because her children, the Israelites, were taken captive to Babylon. She was told not to weep because “they will return from the land of the enemy” (31:16). However, the verse about Rachel weeping was lifted from its Old Testament context and accommodated to the killing of the children in Bethlehem around the birth of Christ (Matt. 2:18).

Another example occurs in the accommodating of Psalm 69:25 to Judas. In Psalm 69, David is appealing to God to deliver him from his enemies. He cried to God, “Those who hate me without reason outnumber the hairs of my head” (v.4). He prayed, “Come near and rescue me, redeem me because of my foes” (v.18), and he continued, “May their place be deserted, let there be no one to dwell in their tents” (v.25). Peter saw by revelation that Psalm 69:25 could be accommodated to Judas, and spoke to the disciples around him: “It is written in the Book of Psalms, ‘May his place be deserted, let there be no one to dwell in it’” (Acts 1:20).

Since it is clear that prophecies in the Old Testament are brought into the New Testament and accommodated to the New Testament circumstances, it is easy to understand that some prophecies of God working in the Old Testament are pulled into the New Testament and applied to Christ. That is completely understandable because now Christ has “all authority” and has been made Head over the Church. He has been set above all

principalities and powers, and given a name above every name. So, when God accommodates a prophecy or a scripture about Himself to Christ, it does not mean that Christ is God any more than Hosea 11:1 being accommodated to Christ means that Christ is actually the nation of Israel.

2. For more information that pertains to God working through Christ and Christ taking on the responsibilities that were God's, see Luke 7:16 (God "visited" His people through Jesus), Luke 8:39 (God works through people) and Romans 10:17 (Jesus is given responsibilities that God had in the Old Testament).

Racovian Catechism, pp. 158-160

Ephesians 5:5

For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. (*NIV*)

1. Using this verse, some Trinitarians try to make Christ into God by what is known as the "Granville Sharp Rule." The following explanation is lengthy, but it is necessary to show that this "rule" has been properly analyzed and shown to be invalid for proving the Trinity. Granville Sharp was an English philanthropist, who began to study the grammar of the New Testament in order to demonstrate that his Trinitarian beliefs were correct and that Christ was God. From his study of the New Testament, he declared that when the Greek word *kai* (usually translated "and") joins two nouns of the same case, and the first noun has the definite article and the second does not, the two nouns refer to the same subject. This is the principle behind the "rule," but there are a large number of exceptions to it that must be noted.

There are problems with the Granville Sharp "Rule." First, it is impossible to prove that it was a rule of grammar at the time of the apostle Paul. Nigel Turner, a Trinitarian, writes,

Unfortunately, at this period of Greek we cannot be sure that such a rule is really decisive. **Sometimes the definite article is not repeated even when there is a clear separation in idea.**²⁹

Buzzard writes about Titus 2:13, also supposedly an example of the Granville Sharp rule:

A wide range of grammarians and Biblical scholars have recognized that the absence of the definite article before "our Savior Jesus Christ" is quite inadequate to establish the Trinitarian claim that Jesus is here called 'the great God' " (p. 130).

The point is, that when Scripture refers to "our Great God and Savior, Jesus Christ," it can refer to two separate beings—1) the Great God and 2) the Savior, Jesus Christ. Andrews Norton wrote a clear evaluation of the Granville Sharp Rule as it applies to the Trinity in *Statement of Reasons for Not Believing the Doctrines of Trinitarians*. [For the

²⁹ Moulton-Howard-Turner, *Grammar*, Vol. 3, p. 181. Emphasis ours.

ease of the reader, we have taken the liberty to translate into English some of the Greek words he uses.] Norton writes:

The argument for the deity of Christ founded upon the omission of the Greek article was received and brought into notice in the last century by Granville Sharp, Esq. He applied it to eight texts, which will be hereafter mentioned. The last words of Ephesians 5:5 may afford an example of the construction on which the argument is founded: “in the Kingdom of Christ and God.” From the article being inserted before “Christ” and omitted before “God,” Mr. Sharp infers that both names relate to the same person, and renders, “in the kingdom of Christ our God.” The proper translation I suppose to be that of the Common Version [the *King James*], “in the kingdom of Christ and of God,” or, “in the kingdom of the Messiah and of God.”

The argument of Sharp is defended by Bishop Middleton in his *Doctrine of the Greek Article*. By attending to the rule laid down by him, with its limitations and exceptions, we shall be able to judge of its applicability to the passages in question. His rule is this:

When two or more attributives, joined by a copulative or copulatives, are assumed of [relate to] the same person or thing, before the first attributive the article is inserted, before the remaining ones it is omitted” (pp. 79 and 80).

By attributives, he understands adjectives, participles and nouns, which are significant of character, relation, and dignity.

The limitations and exceptions to the rule stated by him are as follows:

I. There is no similar rule respecting “names of substances *considered as substances*.” Thus, we may say “the stone and gold,” without repeating the article before “gold,” though we speak of two different substances. The reason of this limitation of the rule is stated to be that “distinct real essences cannot be conceived to belong to the same thing;” or, in other words, that the same thing cannot be supposed to be two different substances.

In this case, then, it appears that the article is not repeated, *because its repetition is not necessary to prevent ambiguity*. This is the true principle which accounts for all the limitations and exceptions to the rule that are stated by Bishop Middleton and others. It is mentioned thus early, that the principle may be kept in mind; and its truth may be remarked in the other cases of limitation or of exception to be quoted.

II. No similar rule applies to proper names. “The reason,” says Middleton, “is evident at once; for it is impossible that *John* and

Thomas, the names of two distinct persons, should be predicated of an individual” (p. 68).

This remark is not to the purpose [*i.e.*, “is not correct”], for the same individual may have two names. The true reason for this limitation is, that proper names, when those of the same individual, are not connected by a copulative or copulatives, and therefore that, when they are thus connected, no ambiguity arises from the omission of the article.

III. “Nouns,” says Middleton, “which are the names of abstract ideas, are also excluded; for, as Locke has well observed, ‘Every distinct abstract idea is a distinct essence, and the names which stand for such distinct ideas are the names of things essentially different’” (*ibid.*).

It would therefore, he reasons, be contradictory to suppose that any quality were at once *apeira* [without experience] and *apaideusia* [without instruction, stupid, rude]. But the names of abstract ideas are used to denote personal qualities, and the same personal qualities, as they are viewed under different aspects, may be denoted by different names. The reason assigned by Middleton is therefore without force. The true reason for the limitation is that *usually* no ambiguity arises from the omission of the article before words of the class mentioned.

IV. The rule, it is further conceded, is not of universal application as it respects *plurals*; for, says Middleton, “Though *one* individual may act, and frequently does act, in several capacities, it is not likely that a *multitude* of individuals should all of them act in the *same* several capacities: and, by the *extreme improbability* that they should be represented as so acting, we may be forbidden to understand that second plural attributive of the persons designed in the article prefixed to the first, however the usage in the singular might seem to countenance the construction” (p. 90).

V. Lastly, “we find,” he says, “in very many instances, not only in the plural, but even in the singular number, that where attributives are in their nature *absolutely incompatible*, *i.e.*, where the application of the rule would involve a contradiction in terms, there the first attributive only has the article, *the perspicuity of the passage not requiring the rule to be accurately observed*” (p. 92).

It appears by comparing the rule with its exceptions and limitations that it in fact amounts to nothing more than this: that when substantives, adjectives, or particles are connected together by a copulative or copulative, if the first have the article, it is to be *omitted* before those which follow, when they relate to the same person or thing; and it is to be *inserted*, when they relate to different persons or things, EXCEPT when this fact is sufficiently determined by some other circumstance. The same rule exists respecting the use of the definite article in English.

The principle of exception just stated is evidently that which runs through all the limitations and exceptions that Middleton has laid down and exemplified, and is in itself perfectly reasonable. When, from any other circumstance, it may be clearly understood that different persons or things are spoken of, then the insertion of omissions of the article is a matter of indifference.

But if this be true, no argument for the deity of Christ can be drawn from the texts adduced. With regard to this doctrine, the main question is whether it were taught by Christ and his Apostles, and received by their immediate disciples. Antitrinitarians maintain that it was not; and consequently maintain that no thought of it was ever entertained by the Apostles and first believers. But if this supposition be correct, the insertion of the article in these texts was wholly unnecessary. No ambiguity could result from its omission. The imagination had not entered the minds of men that God and Christ were the same person. The Apostles in writing, and their converts in reading, the passages in question could have no more conception of one person only being understood, in consequence of the omission of the article, than of supposing but one substance to be meant by the terms “the stone and gold,” on account of the omission of the article before “gold.” These texts, therefore, cannot be brought to disprove the Antitrinitarian supposition, because this supposition must be proved false before these texts can be taken from the exception and brought under the operation of the rule. The truth of the supposition accounts for the omission of the article.³⁰

Norton makes some great points and shows the irrelevance of the Granville Sharp Rule in “proving” the Trinity. Because no ambiguity between Christ and God would arise in the minds of the readers due to the omission of the article, it can be omitted without a problem. Likewise, there was no need for a second article in Matthew 21:12 in the phrase, “all the [ones] selling and buying,” or in Ephesians 2:20 in the phrase, “the apostles and prophets,” because no one would ever think that “sold” and “bought” meant the same thing, or that “apostles” and “prophets” were somehow the same office. This same is true all over the Bible. There is no need for a second article if no confusion would arise without it. The “rule” therefore begs the question. It can be made to apply only if it can be shown that an ambiguity would have arisen in the minds of the first century readers between Christ and God. Because the whole of Scripture clearly shows the difference between Christ and God, and that difference would have been in the minds of the believers, the Granville Sharp “Rule” is not a valid reason to make Christ God.

2. Ephesians 5:5 mentions the kingdom of Christ and of God. There is a time coming in the future when the earth as we know it now, with all its wickedness, disease and death, will be destroyed and it will be made into a place of justice, peace and happiness. Christ taught about this future earth when he said, “The meek will inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:5). The future Kingdom that will be set up on earth has many names in Scripture. It is called the “Kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 4:17, *etc.*) and the “Kingdom of God” (Mark. 1:15,

³⁰ Andrews Norton, *A Statement of Reasons for Not Believing the Doctrines of Trinitarians* (American Unitarian Association, Boston, 10th ed., 1877), pp. 199-202.

etc.). In what is known as “the Lord’s Prayer,” Jesus called it “your [*i.e.*, the Father’s] kingdom” (Matt. 6:10). Jesus again called it the Father’s kingdom in Matthew 13:43. As well as calling it his Father’s kingdom, Jesus called it his own kingdom in Luke 22:30, and it is called “the kingdom of His dear Son” in Col. 1:13 (*KJV*). The reason both God and Christ are named as having the kingdom is apparent. In the Millennial Kingdom, Christ will rule with God’s authority, and in the final kingdom there will be two rulers (Rev. 21:22—22:1). From the above evidence, it is quite fitting and proper to call the future kingdom “the kingdom of Christ and of God.” Since it is so well attested that the kingdom will be the kingdom of God, a phrase well known in Scripture, there is no reason to remove “God” from Eph. 5:5 by grammatical juggling (the Granville Sharp Rule would make the word “God” a double reference to Christ and remove the Father from the verse), and every reason to see that He should be in the verse along with Jesus Christ.

Buzzard, pp. 130 and 131

Norton, pp. 199-203

Philippians 2:6-8

(6) Who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,

(7) but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men.

(8) Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (*NASB*)

1. These verses in Philippians are very important to Trinitarian doctrine (although they have also caused division among Trinitarians) and they must be dealt with thoroughly. There are several arguments wrapped into these two verses, and we will deal with them point by point. First, many Trinitarians assert that the word “form,” which is the Greek word *morphe*, refers to Christ’s inner nature as God. This is so strongly asserted that in verse 6 the *NIV* has, “being in very nature God.” We do not believe that *morphe* refers to an “inner essential nature,” and we will give evidence that it refers to an outer form. Different lexicons have opposing viewpoints about the definition of *morphe*, to such a degree that we can think of no other word defined by the lexicons in such contradictory ways. We will give definitions from lexicons that take both positions, to show the differences between them.

Vine’s Lexicon has under “form”: “properly the nature or essence, not in the abstract, but as actually subsisting in the individual...it does not include in itself anything ‘accidental’ or separable, such as particular modes of manifestation.” Using lexicons like *Vine’s*, Trinitarians boldly make the case that the “nature” underlying Jesus’ human body was God. Trinitarian scholars like *Vine* contrast *morphe*, which they assert refers to an “inner, essential nature,” with *schema*, (in verse 8, and translated “appearance” above) which they assert refers to the outward appearance. We admit that there are many Trinitarian scholars who have written lexical entries or articles on the Greek word *morphe* and concluded that Christ must be God. A Trinitarian wanting to prove his point

can quote from a number of them. However, we assert that these definitions are biased and erroneous. In addition, we could not find any non-Trinitarian scholars who agreed with the conclusion of the Trinitarian scholars, while *many* Trinitarian sources agree that *morphe* refers to the outward appearance and not an inner nature.

A study of other lexicons (many of them Trinitarian) gives a totally different picture than does *Vine's Lexicon*. In Bullinger's *Critical Lexicon*, *morphe* is given a one-word definition, "form." The scholarly lexicon by Walter Bauer, translated and revised by Arndt and Gingrich, has under *morphe*, "form, outward appearance, shape." The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, edited by Gerhard Kittel, has "form, external appearance." Kittel also notes that *morphe* and *schema* are often interchangeable. Robert Thayer, in his well-respected lexicon, has under *morphe*, "the form by which a person or thing strikes the vision; the external appearance." Thayer says that the Greeks said that children reflect the appearance (*morphe*) of their parents, something easily noticed in every culture. Thayer also notes that some scholars try to make *morphe* refer to that which is intrinsic and essential, in contrast to that which is outward and accidental, but says, "the distinction is rejected by many."

The above evidence shows that scholars disagree about the use of the word *morphe* in Philippians. When scholars disagree, and especially when it is believed that the reason for the disagreement is due to bias over a doctrinal issue, it is absolutely essential to do as much original research as possible. The real definition of *morphe* should become apparent as we check the sources available at the time of the New Testament. After all, the word was a common one in the Greek world. We assert that a study of the actual evidence clearly reveals that *morphe* does not refer to Christ's inner essential being, but rather to an outward appearance.

From secular writings we learn that the Greeks used *morphe* to describe when the gods changed their appearance. Kittel points out that in pagan mythology, the gods change their forms (*morphe*), and especially notes Aphrodite, Demeter and Dionysus as three who did. This is clearly a change of appearance, not nature. Josephus, a contemporary of the Apostles, used *morphe* to describe the shape of statues (*Bauer's Lexicon*).

Other uses of *morphe* in the Bible support the position that *morphe* refers to outward appearance. The Gospel of Mark has a short reference to the well-known story in Luke 24:13-33 about Jesus appearing to the two men on the road to Emmaus. Mark tells us that Jesus appeared "in a different form (*morphe*)" to these two men so that they did not recognize him (16:12). This is very clear. Jesus did not have a different "essential nature" when he appeared to the two disciples. He simply had a different outward appearance.

More evidence for the word *morphe* referring to the outward appearance can be gleaned from the *Septuagint*, a Greek translation of the Old Testament from about 250 BC. It was written because of the large number of Greek-speaking Jews in Israel and the surrounding countries (a result of Alexander the Great's conquest of Egypt in 332 BC and his gaining control over the territory of Israel). By around 250 BC, so many Jews spoke Greek that a

Greek translation of the Old Testament was made, which today is called the *Septuagint*. The *Septuagint* greatly influenced the Jews during the New Testament times. Some of the quotations from the Old Testament that appear in the New Testament are actually from the *Septuagint*, not the Hebrew text. Furthermore, there were many Greek-speaking Jews in the first-century Church. In fact, the first recorded congregational conflict occurred when Hebrew-speaking Jews showed prejudice against the Greek-speaking Jews (Acts 6:1).

The Jews translating the *Septuagint* used *morphe* several times, and it always referred to the outward appearance. Job says, “A spirit glided past my face, and the hair on my body stood on end. It stopped, but I could not tell what it was. A form (*morphe*) stood before my eyes, and I heard a hushed voice (Job 4:15 and 16). There is no question here that *morphe* refers to the outward appearance. Isaiah has the word *morphe* in reference to man-made idols: “The carpenter measures with a line and makes an outline with a marker; he roughs it out with chisels and marks it with compasses. He shapes it in the form (*morphe*) of man, of man in all his glory, that it may dwell in a shrine” (Isa. 44:13). It would be absurd to assert that *morphe* referred to “the essential nature” in this verse, as if a wooden carving could have the “essential nature” of man. The verse is clear: the idol has the “outward appearance” of a man. According to Daniel 3:19, after Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to bow down to Nebuchadnezzar’s image, he became enraged and “the form (*morphe*) of his countenance” changed. The *NASB* says, “his facial expression” changed. Nothing in his nature changed, but the people watching could see that his outward appearance changed.

For still more documentation that the Jews used *morphe* to refer to the outward appearance, we turn to what is known as the “*Apocrypha*,” books written between the time of Malachi and Matthew. “*Apocrypha*” literally means “obscure” or “hidden away,” and these books are rightly not accepted by most Protestants as being part of the true canon, but are accepted by Roman Catholics and printed in Catholic Bibles. Our interest in them is due to the fact that they were written near the time of the writing of the New Testament, were known to the Jews at that time and contain the word *morphe*. In the *Apocrypha*, *morphe* is used in the same way that the *Septuagint* translators use it, *i.e.*, as outward appearance. For example, in “The Wisdom of Solomon” is the following: “Their enemies heard their voices, but did not see their forms” (18:1). A study of *morphe* in the *Apocrypha* will show that it always referred to the outer form.

There is still more evidence. *Morphe* is the root word of some other New Testament words and is also used in compound words. These add further support to the idea that *morphe* refers to an appearance or outward manifestation. The Bible speaks of evil men who have a “form” (*morphosis*) of godliness (2 Tim. 3:5). Their inner nature was evil, but they had an outward appearance of being godly. On the Mount of Transfiguration, Christ was “transformed” (*metamorphoomai*) before the apostles (Matt. 17:2; Mark 9:2). They did not see Christ get a new nature, rather they saw his outward form profoundly change. Similarly, we Christians are to be “transformed” (*metamorphoomai*) by renewing our minds to Scripture. We do not get a new nature as we renew our minds, because we are already “partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4), but there will be a change in us

that we, and others, can tangibly experience. Christians who transform from carnal Christians, with all the visible activities of the flesh that lifestyle entails, to being Christ-like Christians, change in such a way that other people can “see” the difference. 2 Corinthians 3:18 says the same thing when it says that Christians will be “changed” (*metamorphoomai*) into the image of Christ. That we will be changed into an “image” shows us that the change is something visible on the outside.

We would like to make one more point before we draw a conclusion about “*morphe*.” If the point of the verse is to say that Jesus is God, then why not just say it? Of course *God* has the “essential nature” of God, so why would anyone make *that* point? This verse does not say, “Jesus, being God,” but rather, “being in the form of God.” Paul is reminding the Philippians that Jesus represented the Father in every possible way.

So what can we conclude about *morphe*? The Philippian church consisted of Jews and converted Greeks. From the *Septuagint* and their other writings, the Jews were familiar with *morphe* referring to the outward appearance, including the form of men and idols. To the Greeks, it also referred to the outward appearance, including the changing outward appearance of their gods and the form of statues. The only other New Testament use of *morphe* outside Philippians is in Mark, and there it refers to the outward appearance. Also, the words related to *morphe* clearly refer to an outward manifestation or appearance. We assert the actual evidence is clear: the word *morphe* refers to an outward appearance or manifestation. Jesus Christ was in the outward appearance of God, so much that so he said, “He who has seen me has seen the Father.” Christ always did the Father’s will, and perfectly represented his Father in every way.

Schema, as Kittel points out, can be synonymous with *morphe*, but it has more of an emphasis on outward trappings rather than outward appearance, and often points to that which is more transitory in nature, like the clothing we wear or an appearance we have for just a short time. As human beings, we always have the outward form (*morphe*) of human beings. Yet there is a sense in which our *schema*, our appearance, is always changing. We start as babies, and grow and develop, then we mature and age. This is so much the case that a person’s outward appearance is one of the most common topics of conversation between people when they meet.

Like the rest of us, Christ was fully human and had the outward form (*morphe*), of a human. However, because he always did the Father’s will and demonstrated godly behavior and obedience, he therefore had the outward “appearance” (*morphe*) of God also. Also, like the rest of us, his appearance (*schema*) regularly changed. Thus, in Philippians, 2:8 *schema* can be synonymous with *morphe*, or it can place an emphasis on the fact that the appearance Christ had as a human being was transitory in nature. The wording of Philippians 2:6-8 does not present us with a God-man, with whom none of us can identify. Rather, it presents us with a man just like we are, who grew and aged, yet who was so focused on God in every thought and deed that he perfectly represented the Father.

2. After saying that Christ was in the form of God, Philippians 2:6 goes on to say that Christ “did not consider equality with God something to be grasped” (*NIV*). This phrase is a powerful argument *against* the Trinity. If Jesus were God, then it would make no sense at all to say that he did not “grasp” at equality with God because no one grasps at equality with himself. It only makes sense to compliment someone for not seeking equality when he is not equal. Some Trinitarians say, “Well, he was not grasping for equality with the Father.” That is not what the verse says. It says Christ did not grasp at equality with *God*, which makes the verse nonsense if he were God.

3. The opening of verse 7 contains a phrase that has caused serious division among Trinitarians. It says, “But made himself of no reputation” (*KJV*), “but made himself nothing” (*NIV*), “but emptied himself” (*NASB, RSV, NRSV, New American Bible*). The Greek word that is in question is *kenos*, which literally means, “to empty.” For more than a thousand years, from the church councils in the fourth century until the nineteenth century, the orthodox position of the Church was that Christ was fully God and fully man at the same time in one body. This doctrine is known as the “dual nature of Christ,” and has to be supported with non-biblical words like *communicatio idiomatum*, literally, “the communication of the idiom.” This refers to the way that the “God” nature of Christ is united to the “man” nature of Christ in such a way that the actions and conditions of the man can be God and the actions and conditions of God can be man. Dr. Justo Gonzalez, an authority on the history of the Christian Church, notes, “The divine and human natures exist in a single being, although how that can be is the greatest mystery of the faith.”³¹ Biblical truth is not an “incomprehensible mystery.” In fact, God longs for us to know Him and His truth (see the notes on Luke 1:35).

The doctrine of the dual nature of Christ has been the standard explanation for the miracles of Christ, such as multiplying food, knowing the thoughts of others, raising the dead, *etc.* This explanation is maintained in spite of the fact that the prophets in the Old Testament were also able to do these things. The doctrine of Christ’s dual nature has caused a serious problem that is stated well by John Wren-Lewis:

Certainly up to the Second World War, the commonest vision of Jesus was not as a man *at all*. He was a God in human form, full of supernatural knowledge and miraculous power, very much like the Olympian gods were supposed to be when they visited the earth in disguise.”³²

Our experience in speaking to Christians all over the world confirms what Wren-Lewis stated: the average Christian does not feel that Christ “was made like his brothers in every way” (Heb. 2:17), but instead feels that Christ was able to do what he did because he was fundamentally different. We believe that the teaching of the dual nature is non-biblical and robs power from people who might otherwise seek to *think* and *act* like Christ. This artificially separates people from the Lord Jesus.

³¹ Justo Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought* (Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1992), pp. 222 and 223.

³² John A. T. Robinson, *Honest to God* (Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1963), p. 66.

In Germany in the mid-1800's, a Lutheran theologian named Gottfried Thomasius began what has now developed into "Kenotic Theology." This thinking arose out of some very real concerns that some Trinitarians had about dual nature theology. First, dual nature theology did not allow Christ's full humanity to be expressed. Second, it seemed to turn Christ into an aberration: very God and very man at the same time. Third, "if Jesus were both omniscient God and limited man, then he had two centers, and thus was fundamentally not one of us". Kenotic Theology (which has since splintered into a number of variants) provided a "solution" to these problems. Since Philippians 2:7 says Christ "emptied himself," what he must have "emptied" was his God-nature, *i.e.*, sometime before his incarnation, Christ agreed to "self-limitation" and came down to earth as a man only.

Trinitarian theologians have vehemently disagreed among themselves about Kenotic Theology, and some orthodox theologians have even called its adherents "heretics." The central criticisms of Kenotic Theology are: First, being only a little more than a hundred years old, it is simply not the historic position of the Church. Second, orthodox theologians say that it is not biblical, and that Philippians 2:7 does not mean what kenotic theologians say it means. And third, Kenotic Theology forces God to change—God becomes a man—which causes two problems for orthodox Trinitarians: God cannot change, and God is not a man.

We agree with the Kenotic theologians who say that dual nature theology does not allow Christ's humanity to be expressed, and that it creates a "being" who is really an aberration and "fundamentally not one of us."³³ However, we also agree with the orthodox Trinitarians who take the biblical stance that God is not a man, and that God cannot change. We assert that it is Trinitarian doctrine that has caused these problems, and that there simply is *no solution* to them as long as one holds a Trinitarian position. We assert that the real solution is to realize that there is only one True God, the Father, and that Jesus Christ is the "man accredited by God" who has now been made "both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:22 and 36). Then Christ is fully man and is "one of us," and God is God and has never changed or been a man.

4. While Trinitarians have argued among themselves about the meaning of Philippians 2:6-8, an unfortunate thing has occurred—the loss of the actual meaning of the verse. The verse is not speaking either of Christ's giving up his "Godhood" at his incarnation or of his God-nature being willing to "hide" so that his man-nature can show itself clearly. Rather, it is saying something else. Scripture says Christ was the "image of God" (2 Cor. 4:4), and Jesus himself testified that if one had seen him, he had seen the Father. Saying that Christ was in the "form" (outward appearance) of God is simply stating that truth in another way. Unlike Adam, who grasped at being like God (Gen. 3:5), Christ, the Last Adam, "emptied himself" of all his reputation and the things due him as the true child of the King. He lived in the same fashion as other men. He humbled himself to the Word and will of God. He lived by "It is written" and the commands of his Father. He did not "toot his own horn," but instead called himself "the son of man," which, in the Aramaic

³³ Walter Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Baker Books, Grand Rapids, 1984), pp. 600 and 601.

language he spoke, meant “a man.” He trusted God and became obedient, even to a horrible and shameful death on a cross.

The Philippian Church was doing well and was supportive of Paul, but they had problems as well. There was “selfish ambition” (1:15; 2:3) and “vain conceit” (2:3), arguing and lack of consideration for others (2:4 and 14) and a need for humility, purity and blamelessness (2:3 and 15). So, Paul wrote an exhortation to the believers that, “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus” (2:5). He then went on to show how Christ did not grasp at equality with God, but was completely humble, and as a result God “highly exalted him.” The example of Jesus Christ is a powerful one. We do not need to make sure people notice us or know who we are. We should simply serve in obedience and humility, assured that God will one day reward us for our deeds.

Buzzard, pp. 48-50

Dana, Letter #2, pp. 16 and 17

Farley, pp. 76-78

New American Bible, footnote on Philippians 2:7.

Norton, pp. 191-193

Racovian Catechism, pp. 119-121

Snedeker, pp. 443-446

Colossians 1:15-20

(15) He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

(16) For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.

(17) He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

(18) And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

(19) For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him,

(20) and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the Cross. (*NIV*)

1. As with all good biblical exegesis, it is important to note the context of the verses and why they would be written and placed where they are. Reading the Book of Colossians reveals that the Colossian Church had lost its focus on Christ. Some of the believers at Colosse had, in practice, forsaken their connection with the Head, Jesus Christ, and some were even being led to worship angels (2:18 and 19). The situation in Colosse called for a strong reminder of Christ’s headship over his Church, and the epistle to the Colossians provided just that.

2. These verses cannot be affirming the Trinity because they open with Christ being “the image [*eikon*] of the invisible God.” If Christ were “God,” then the verse would simply say so, rather than that he was the “image” of God. The Father is plainly called “God” in dozens of places, and this would have been a good place to say that Jesus was God. Instead, we are told that Christ is the *image* of God. If one thing is the “image” of

another thing, then the “image” and the “original” are not the same thing. The Father *is* God, and that is why there is no verse that calls the Father the image of God. Calling Jesus the image of God squares beautifully with his statement that, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9 and 10).

There are Trinitarian theologians who assert that the word *eikon* (from which we get the English word “icon,” meaning “image,” or “representation”) means “manifestation” here in Colossians, and that Christ is the manifestation of God. We believe that conclusion is unwarranted. The word *eikon* occurs **23** times in the New Testament, and it is clearly used as “image” in the common sense of the word. It is used of the image of Caesar on a coin, of idols that are manmade images of gods, of Old Testament things that were only an image of the reality we have today and of the “image” of the beast that occurs in Revelation. 2 Corinthians 3:18 says that Christians are changed into the “image” of the Lord as we reflect his glory. All these verses use “image” in the common sense of the word, *i.e.*, a representation separate from the original. 1 Corinthians 11:7 says, “A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the *image* and glory of God.” Just as Christ is called the image of God, so men are called the image of God. We are not as exact an image as Christ is because we are marred by sin, but nevertheless the Bible does call us the “image” of God. Thus, the wording about being the image of God is the same for us as it is for Christ. We maintain that the words in the Word must be read and understood in their common or ordinary meaning unless good reason can be given to alter that meaning. In this case, the common meaning of “image” is “likeness” or “resemblance,” and it is used that way every time in the New Testament. Surely if the word “image” took on a new meaning for those times it referred to Christ, the Bible would let us know that. Since it does not, we assert that the use of “image” is the same whether it refers to an image on a coin, an image of a god, or for both Christ and Christians as the image of God.

3. God delegated to Christ His authority to create. Ephesians 2:15 refers to Christ creating “one new man” (his Church) out of Jew and Gentile. In pouring out the gift of holy spirit to each believer (Acts 2:33 and 38), the Lord Jesus has created something new in each of them, that is, the “new man,” their new nature (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15; Eph. 4:24).

4. The Church of the Body of Christ was a brand new entity, created by Christ out of Jew and Gentile. He had to also create the structure and positions that would allow it to function, both in the spiritual world (positions for the angels that would minister to the Church—see Rev. 1:1, “his angel”) and in the physical world (positions and ministries here on earth—see Rom. 12:4-8; Eph. 4:7-11). The Bible describes these physical and spiritual realities by the phrase, “things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible” (1:16).

5. Many people think that because Colossians 1:16 says, “For by him all things were created” that Christ must be God, but the entire verse must be read carefully with an understanding of the usage of words and figures of speech. The study of legitimate figures of speech is an involved one, and the best work we know of was done in 1898 by

E. W. Bullinger. It is titled *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* and is readily available, having been reprinted many times.

First, the student of the Bible (indeed, of language and life) must be aware that when the word “all” (or “every” or “everything”) is used, it is often used in a limited sense. People use it this way in normal speech in countries and languages all over the world. I (John S.) had an experience of this just the other day. It was late at night and I wanted a cookie before bed. When I told my wife that I wanted a cookie, she said, “The kids ate all the cookies.” Now of course our kids did not eat all the cookies in the world. The implied context was the cookies *in the house*, and our kids had eaten all of them. This is a good example of “all” being used in a limited sense, and the Bible uses it that way too.

For example, when Absalom was holding a council against his father, David, 2 Samuel 17:14 says that “all the men of Israel” agreed on advice. “All” the men of Israel were not there, but the verse means “all” who were there. Another example is Jeremiah 26:8, which says that “all the people” seized Jeremiah to put him to death, but the context makes it very clear that “all the people” were not even present, and people who came to the scene later wanted to release Jeremiah. 1 John 2:20 (*KJV*) says of Christians, “ye know all things.” Surely there is no Christian who actually believes that he knows everything. The phrase is using a limited sense of “all,” which is determined by the context.

The point is that whenever one reads the word “all,” a determination must be made as to whether it is being used in the wide sense of “all in the universe,” or in the narrow sense of “all in a certain context.” We believe the narrow sense is called for in Colossians 1:16, and we give more evidence for that in point 6 below (For more on the limited sense of “all,” see the note on John 2:24).

6. An important figure of speech in Colossians 1:16 is called “encircling.” Bullinger notes that the Greeks called this figure of speech *epanadiplosis*, while the Romans labeled it *inclusio* (p. 245), and he gives several pages of examples from the Bible to document the figure. He writes: “When this figure is used, it marks what is said as being completed in one complete circle...giving completeness of the statement that is made.” With that in mind, note that the phrase “all things were created” occurs at the beginning and end of the verse, encircling the list of created things: “For by him **all things were created**: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; **all things were created** by him and for him.” The things that are “created” are not rocks, trees, birds and animals, because those things were created by God. These things, “thrones, powers, rulers and authorities,” are the powers and positions that were needed by Christ to run his Church, and were created by him for that purpose. The figure of speech known as “encircling” helps us to identify the proper context of “all things”—that it is the narrower sense of the word “all,” and refers to the things needed to administer the Church.

7. The phrase in verse 17 that “he is before all things” has been used to try to prove that Jesus existed before everything else. However, the word “before” (here *pro*) can refer to

time, place or position (*i.e.*, superiority). This leads us to conclude that the whole point of the section is to show that Christ is “before,” *i.e.*, “superior to” all things, just as the verse says. If someone were to insist that time is involved, we would point out that in the very next verse Christ is the “firstborn” from the dead, and thus “before” his Church in time as well as in position.

Buzzard, pp. 51 and 52
Dana, Letter #25, pp. 221-227
Racovian Catechism, pp. 91-94
Snedeker, pp. 446-450

Colossians 2:2

My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ. (*NIV*)

1. This verse, although not usually considered a Trinitarian verse, is occasionally used to show that the mystery of God is Christ (*i.e.*, that Christ is both God and Man, and thus a “mystery”). The verse was a subject of hot debate early in the Christian era, and there is ample evidence from the Greek manuscripts that scribes changed the text to fit their theology. Bruce Metzger writes, “The close of Colossians 2:2 presents what is, at first, a bewildering variety of readings; the manuscripts present fifteen different conclusions of the phrase.”³⁴ In almost all 15 of them, the possibility that Christ could be God is eliminated. The *KJV* represents a good example: “That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.”
2. There is now a wide concurrence of belief among scholars that the original Greek text read “*tou musteriou tou theou Christou*,” but the exact translation of that phrase is debated. It can be translated the way the *NIV* is: “...the mystery of God, namely, Christ.” However, it can just as easily be translated “the mystery of the Christ of God.” We believe the latter is the most probable translation for reasons that will be given in points 3 and 4 below.
3. It is difficult to make “Christ” into a “mystery” in the biblical sense of the word. In Greek, the word “*musterion*” does not mean “mystery” in the sense of something that cannot be understood or comprehended by the mind of man. It just means a “secret,” something that was hidden but is then made known. This point cannot be overemphasized for the correct interpretation of the verse. *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* under “mystery,” has this to say about *musterion*: “...not the mysterious, but that which...is made known in a manner and at a time appointed by God.” This is actually very clear in Colossians 1:26 and 27, which speak of the “mystery” that has now been “made known” to the believers.

³⁴ Bruce Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament* (Oxford University Press, N.Y., 1992), p. 236.

Thus, a biblical “mystery” can be understood, in contrast to the Trinitarian “mystery,” which is beyond comprehension. A quick study of the other uses of “*mysterion*” in the Bible will show that once a “secret” is revealed, it can be understood. But the “Trinity” and the “two natures” cannot be understood at all. Trinitarian theology speaks of the “mystery” of Christ in the sense that his incarnation and dual nature are impossible for us to understand. The Greek text, however, is implying no such thing. 1 Timothy 3:16 does refer to the “secret of godliness,” and this text is plainly discernible. Even today, although the Word openly proclaims personal godliness through the Savior, Jesus Christ, this fact remains a secret to the world and, unfortunately, even to some Churchgoers.

4. The difficulty in translating the verse, “the secret of God, namely Christ,” can be plainly seen. Although some of what Christ accomplished for us can be called a secret, and some of the things he went through were certainly hidden from the Jews, the Man Jesus Christ is the great subject of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. We believe that it is much more accurate to translate Colossians 2:2 as, “the secret of the Christ of God.” We believe this because there is a “secret” in the New Testament that is clearly set forth in the Church Epistles. The word “*mysterion*,” *i.e.*, “secret,” is used to refer to the “administration of the God’s grace” in which we are living now. Ephesians 3:2 and 3 reads, “Surely you have heard about the administration of God’s grace that was given to me for you, that is, the secret [*mysterion*] made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly.” Thus, when Colossians refers to “the secret of the Christ of God,” it is referring to the Grace Administration, which was a secret hidden before the foundation of the world, but revealed to Christians today (see Eph. 3:2-9; Col. 1:27 and Gal. 1:11 and 12, and keep in mind that the word translated in many versions as “mystery” should be “secret”).

5. Trinitarians are very open about the fact that the doctrine of the Trinity is a “mystery” that is beyond human comprehension. But with the correct biblical definition of “mystery” as “secret,” *i.e.*, “something that anyone can understand once it has been revealed or unveiled,” one can ask, “Where does the idea that the Trinity is mysterious and beyond comprehension come from?” That concept is found nowhere in Scripture. There is not a single verse from Genesis to Revelation that a Trinitarian can produce to show that one God exists in three persons and that this is a mystery beyond human comprehension. Yet they continue to say things like, “You can’t understand it because it is a mystery.” We maintain that the reason the Trinity is a “mystery beyond comprehension” is that it is an invention of man and not actually in the Bible at all.

Dana, pp. 167 and 168

Farley, pp. 12-18

Norton, p. 476

Colossians 2:9

For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form. (*NIV*)

1. The word “Deity” or “Godhead” is a translation of the Greek word *theotes*. In *A Greek English Lexicon*, by Liddell and Scott, the classic lexicon of the ancient Greek language,

it is translated as “divinity, divine nature.” In making their case, Liddell and Scott cite Greek authors Plutarch and Lucian, and also reference Heliodorus and Oribasius using the phrase *dia theoteta* = “for religious reasons.” The Greek word occurs only once in the Bible, so to try to build a case for it meaning “God” or “Godhead” (which is an unclear term in itself) is very suspect indeed. Standard rules for interpreting Scripture would dictate that the way Paul used *theotes* in Colossians would be the same way the Colossians were used to hearing it in their culture. There is no reason to believe that Paul wrote to the Colossians expecting them to “redefine” the vocabulary they were using. Christ was filled with holy spirit “without measure,” and God gave him authority on earth to heal, cast out demons, forgive sins, *etc.* Thus, it makes perfect sense that Scripture would say that Christ had the fullness of the “divine nature” dwelling in him. In fact, the same thing is said about every Christian (2 Pet. 1:4).

2. The word “fullness” demonstrates that the verse is speaking of something that one could also have just a *part* of. It makes no sense to talk about the “fullness” of something that is indivisible. God is indivisible. We never read about “the fullness of God the Father” because, by definition, God is always full of His own nature. Therefore, the verse is not talking about Christ being God, but about God in some way providing Christ with “fullness.” What this verse is saying is made clear earlier in Colossians: “God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him” (Col. 1:19). That is true. John 3:34 adds clarification: “For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the spirit without limit.”

3. The fact that Christ has “all the fullness” of God does not make him God. Ephesians 3:19 says that Christians should be filled with “all the fullness of God,” and no one believes that would make each Christian God.

4. If Christ were God, it would make no sense to say that the fullness of God dwelt in him, because, being God, he would always have the fullness of God. The fact that Christ could have the fullness of God dwell in him actually shows that he was *not* God. 2 Peter 1:4 says that by way of God’s great and precious promises we “may participate in the divine nature.” Having a “divine nature” does not make us God, and it did not make Christ God. The note on 2 Peter 1:4 in the *NIV Study Bible* is almost correct when, referring to the divine nature, it states: “We are indwelt by God through His Holy Spirit” (we would say “holy spirit, referring to God’s gift). Likewise Christ, who was filled with holy spirit without limits, had the fullness of “Deity” dwelling in him.

5. The context is a key to the proper interpretation of the verse. The Colossians had lost their focus on Christ (see Col. 1:15-20 above). Colossians 2:8 shows that the people were in danger of turning to “hollow and deceptive philosophy” rather than being focused on Christ. What could philosophy and traditions offer that Christ could not? The next verse is a reminder that there is no better place to turn for answers and for truth than to Christ, in whom all the fullness of God dwells. There is nothing in the context here that would warrant believing that Paul is writing about the Trinity. He is simply saying that if you want to find God, look to Christ. Christ himself had said he was “the Way” and “the Truth,” and that “no man comes to the Father except through me.”

Dana, Letter #23, pp. 137 and 138
Racovian Catechism, pp. 142-144
Snedeker, p. 450

2 Thessalonians 1:12

We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. (*NIV*)

1. Some Trinitarians try to force this verse to “prove” the Trinity by what is known as the Granville Sharp Rule of Greek grammar. We have shown that this is not a valid proof of the Trinity (see Ephesians 5:5, “The Granville Sharp Rule”).

2. It is easily established in Scripture that both God and Jesus Christ give grace. The phrase “the grace of God” is well attested to, and there are plenty of verses in the Old and New Testament that reveal the grace of God. That Jesus Christ also gives grace is obvious in scriptures such as 2 Corinthians 8:9; Galatians 1:6; 6:18; Ephesians 4:7; Philippians 4:23, *etc.* Also, it is well known from the salutations at the beginning of the Epistles that both God and Jesus Christ send their grace and peace to Christians. One example will do, although many could be given: “To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 1:7). Since it is so plain in the Bible that both God and Christ give us grace, there is no reason to try to make the two of them into one, and thus remove the Father from the verse.

1 Timothy 3:16

Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory. (*NIV*)

1. Although the above verse in the *NIV* does not support the Trinity, there are some Greek manuscripts that read, “God appeared in the flesh.” This reading of some Greek manuscripts has passed into some English versions, and the *King James Version* is one of them. Trinitarian scholars admit, however, that these Greek texts were altered by scribes in favor of the Trinitarian position. The reading of the earliest and best manuscripts is not “God” but rather “he who.” Almost all the modern versions have the verse as “the mystery of godliness is great, **which** was manifest in the flesh,” or some close equivalent.

2. In regard to the above verse, Bruce Metzger writes:

[“He who”] is supported by the earliest and best uncials...no uncial (in the first hand) earlier than the eighth or ninth century supports *theos*; all ancient versions presuppose *hos* or *ho* [“he who” or “he”]; and no patristic writer prior to the last third of the fourth century testifies to the reading *theos*. The reading *theos* arose either (a) accidentally, or (b) deliberately, either to supply a substantive for the following six verbs [the six verbs that follow in the verse], or, with less

probability, to provide greater dogmatic precision [*i.e.*, to produce a verse that more clearly supports the Trinitarian position].”³⁵

3. When properly translated, 1 Timothy 3:16 actually argues against the Trinity. “By common confession great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Beheld by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory” (*NASB*). This section of Scripture beautifully portrays an overview of Christ’s life and accomplishments. It all fits with what we know of *the man*, Jesus Christ. If Jesus were God, this section of Scripture would have been the perfect place to say so. We should expect to see some phrases like, “God incarnate,” “God and Man united,” “very God and very man,” *etc.* But nothing like that occurs. Instead, the section testifies to what non-Trinitarians believe—that Christ was a man, begotten by the Father, and that he was taken up into glory.

Buzzard, pp. 144 and 152

Dana, p. 137

Farley, pp. 69 and 70

Morgridge, pp. 82 and 115

Snedeker, p. 451

1 Timothy 5:21

I charge you, in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, to keep these instructions without partiality, and to do nothing out of favoritism. (*NIV*)

1. Some Trinitarians try to force this verse to “prove” the Trinity by what is known as the Granville Sharp Rule of Greek grammar. We have shown that this is not a valid proof of the Trinity (see Ephesians 5:5, “The Granville Sharp Rule”).

2. It is important to read the Bible thoroughly to find keys that help with the interpretation of a verse in question. In this case, we find that it was common in the biblical culture to charge someone “in the sight of God” (see note # 2 on 2 Timothy 4:1). Given that fact, and given that Paul definitely charges Timothy by both God and Jesus Christ in 1 Timothy 6:13, there is no reason to remove God from this verse by making the word “God” a second reference to Jesus Christ.

3. This verse has an element that is very hard to explain if the Trinity is true, and makes perfect sense if it is not. Paul charges Timothy by God, by Christ and by “the elect angels.” This fits beautifully with what we teach; *i.e.*, that there is the one God, and there is the man Jesus who has been made “Lord and Christ,” but there is no “person” called “the Holy Spirit.” If there were a Trinity composed of three co-equal, co-eternal “persons,” why would Paul charge Timothy by the “elect angels” and leave the “Holy Spirit” out of the picture?

³⁵ Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (United Bible Society, New York, 1975), p. 641.

1 Timothy 6:14-16

(14) To keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,

(15) which God will bring about in his own time—God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords,

(16) who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen. (*NIV*)

1. It is stated by Trinitarians that since God is called “King of kings and Lord of lords,” as is Christ, that Christ must be God. However, simply because the same title is used for two individuals does not mean that they are actually somehow one being. Before any conclusion is drawn about the title, we should search all of Scripture to see if we can determine how the title is used. A thorough search reveals that the phrase “king of kings” simply means “the best king.” In Ezra 7:12, Artaxerxes is called “the king of kings” because he was the most powerful king at the time. Consider also Ezekiel 26:7: “For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: ‘From the north I am going to bring against Tyre Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, king of kings, with horses and chariots, with horsemen and a great army.’ ” God again calls Nebuchadnezzar “king of kings” in Daniel 2:37. Nebuchadnezzar was the most powerful king of his day, and the Bible calls him “king of kings.” Thus, Scripture shows us that having the title “king of kings” does not make a person God. In the Bible, other powerful kings had that title, and no one denies that Jesus Christ is a powerful king and thus is also worthy of it.

2. In the Semitic languages, the genitive case was often used to express the fact that something was the “best.” Thus, “the best king” was designated as “the king of kings,” *etc.* When Daniel revealed King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, Nebuchadnezzar called Daniel’s God a “God of gods,” and that was long before Nebuchadnezzar realized much about the true God. He was simply stating that since Daniel’s God could interpret dreams so well, he was “the best god.” When Noah spoke of the future of Canaan, he foretold that Canaan would be “a servant of servants” (Gen. 9:25 - *KJV*). We use the same terminology in our English vernacular to express the greatness of something: “The sale of sales” is the biggest sale, and “the deal of deals” is the best deal.

3. When properly interpreted, 1 Timothy 6:14-16 is a strong refutation of the Trinity. Unfortunately, the Greek text has been translated with two different slants. A few versions, including the *KJV*, make the verse read such that Christ shows the Father to the world: “He [Jesus Christ] shall show who is the blessed and only Potentate [*i.e.*, God].” The vast majority of the versions and most of the commentators, however, state that the verse reads differently. They testify that the verse can be very naturally translated to read that God will bring about the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. And this is exactly the testimony of the rest of Scripture—there will come a day when God will send Jesus back to earth (Acts 3:20). The *NASB* does a good job of translating the Greek text and staying faithful to the meaning: “...until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which He will bring about at the proper time—He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords; who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable

light; whom no man has seen or can see. To Him *be* honor and eternal dominion! Amen.”

The *NIV* carries the same meaning but, by substituting “God” for “He,” makes the verse a little easier for the reader: “...until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which God will bring about in his own time—God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen.”

In both these versions, the ending eulogy refers to God. God alone is the one who is immortal and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. Those words cannot be made to refer to Christ, who, although he occasionally takes on some of the titles or attributes of God, cannot accurately be referred to as ever dwelling in unapproachable light or as one whom no man can see.

The reason these verses so strongly testify against the Trinity is now clear. There are clearly *two beings* involved—“God” and Christ. And of the two, “God” is the “blessed and only ruler,” and He will bring about Christ’s return. If Christ were God, or an equal part of a “Triune” God, these verses would not differentiate between “God” and Christ by calling “God” the “only ruler.”

4. Jesus Christ has been given “all authority” by God. Jesus Christ is the Head of the Body of Christ, the one who will raise and judge the dead, and be the ruler of the next ages. He is called “King of kings and Lord of lords,” and as God’s vice-regent he is indeed that, but notice should be taken of the fact that Christ is never given the title, “God of gods.” That title is reserved for God alone, especially since Christ is not above God. Even after his resurrection and in his glorified body, he still called God, “my God” (John 20:17).

Buzzard, p. 48.

Dana, pp. 15 and 212.

Snedeker, pp. 383 and 452

2 Timothy 4:1

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge. (*NIV*)

1. Some Trinitarians try to force this verse to “prove” the Trinity by what is known as the Granville Sharp Rule of Greek grammar. We have shown that this is not a valid proof of the Trinity (see Ephesians 5:5, “The Granville Sharp Rule”).

2. There is no logical reason for this verse to have a double reference to Christ by making the word “God” refer to Jesus Christ, thus removing “God” (normally understood to be the Father) from the verse entirely. A study of Scripture reveals that charging someone by God was common in biblical times. For example, the High Priest charged Jesus “before God” to say whether or not he was the Christ (Matt. 26:63), and other examples

could be cited. In another place, Paul charged Timothy by both God and Christ: “In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you to keep this command without spot or blame” (1 Tim. 6:13 and 14).

A study of the books of Timothy will show that Paul charges Timothy three times. The other two times he mentions both Christ and God in his charge (1Tim. 5:21; 6:13). Because it was a custom to charge people before God, and because Paul charges Timothy by both God and Christ in the other places, it is unreasonable for Trinitarians to assert that the word “God” is referring to Christ, and therefore leave God out of the verse altogether. It is much more reasonable to believe that Paul is consistent throughout Timothy and that he does indeed charge Timothy by both God and Jesus Christ, the Dynamic Duo.

Titus 2:13

While we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. (*NIV*)

1. Scholars debate the exact translation of this verse, and the two sides of that debate are seen in the various translations. Some scholars believe that “glory” is used in an adjectival sense, and that the verse should be translated as above in the *NIV*. Versions that follow suit are the *KJV* and the *Amplified Version*. Many other versions, such as the *Revised Version*, *American Standard Version*, *NAS*, *Moffatt*, *RSV*, *NRSV*, *Douay*, *New American Bible*, *NEB*, *etc.*, translate the verse very differently. The *NASB* is a typical example. It reads, “...looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.” The difference between the translations is immediately apparent. In the *NIV*, *etc.*, we await the “glorious appearing” of God, while in the *NAS* and other versions we await the “appearing of the glory” of God our Savior (this is a use of “Savior” where the word is applied in the context to God, not Christ. See the note on Luke 1:47), *i.e.*, we are looking for the “glory” of God, which is stated clearly as being “Jesus Christ.” Of course, the glory will come at the appearing, but Scripture says clearly that both the glory of the Son and the glory of the Father will appear (Luke 9:26). God’s Word also teaches that when Christ comes, he will come with his Father’s glory: “For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory” (Matt. 16:27). Keeping in mind that what is revealed in other places in the Bible about a certain event often clarifies what is being portrayed in any given verse, it becomes apparent from other scriptures referring to Christ’s coming that the Bible is not trying to portray God and Christ as one God. In this case, the glory of God that we are waiting for is Jesus Christ.

2. It has been stated that the grammar of Titus 2:13 forces the interpretation that Jesus is God because of the Granville Sharp Rule of grammar. That is not the case, however. The Granville Sharp rule has been successfully challenged, and an extensive critique of it occurs in this appendix in the notes on Ephesians 5:5. The point is that when Scripture refers to “our Great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,” it can mean two beings—both the “Great God,” and the “Savior,” Jesus Christ. The highly regarded Trinitarian Henry

Alford gives a number of reasons as to why the grammar of the Greek does not force the interpretation of the passage to make Christ God.³⁶

3. The context of the verse helps us to understand its meaning. The verse is talking about saying “no” to ungodliness while we wait for the appearing of Jesus Christ, who is the glory of God. Its purpose is not to expound the doctrine of the Trinity in any way, nor is there any reason to assume that Paul would be making a Trinitarian reference here. It makes perfect sense for Scripture to call Christ “the glory of God” and for the Bible to exhort us to say “no” to ungodliness in light of the coming of the Lord, which will be quickly followed by the Judgment (Matt. 25:31-33; Luke 21:36).

Buzzard, p. 129

Norton, pp. 199-203,305 and 306

Snedeker, pp. 452-457

Hebrews 1:2

But in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. (*NIV*)

1. The Greek word translated “universe” (or “world” in many translations) is the plural of the Greek word *aion*, and actually means “ages.” There are other Greek words that mean “world,” such as *kosmos* and *oikoumene*, and when the Devil tempted Jesus by showing him all the kingdoms of the “world,” these words are used. This verse is referring to the “ages,” not the “world.” *Vine’s Lexicon* has, “an age, a period of time, marked in the N.T. usage by spiritual or moral characteristics, is sometimes translated ‘world;’ the *R.V.* margin always has ‘age.’” *Bullinger’s Critical Lexicon* has:

“*Aion* [age], from *ao*, *aemi*, to blow, to breathe. *Aion* denoted originally the life which hastes away in the breathing of our breath, life *as transitory*; then the course of life, time of life, life in its temporal form. Then, the space of a human life, an age, or generation *in respect of duration*. The time lived or to be lived by men, time as moving, historical time as well as eternity. *Aion* always includes a reference to the filling of time”³⁷

Since most translators are Trinitarian and think that Jesus was the one who made the original heavens and earth, they translate “ages” as “world” in this verse. But the actual word in the Greek text means “ages,” and it should be translated that way.

2. Trinitarians use the verse to try to prove that Jesus Christ created the world as we know it, but the context of the verse shows that this cannot be the correct interpretation. Verses 1 and 2 show that God spoke through Jesus “in these last days,” whereas He had spoken “in the past” in various ways. If indeed it were through Jesus that the physical world was

³⁶ *The Greek New Testament* (Chicago, Moody Press, 1968 edition, Vol. 3), pp. 419-421.

³⁷ E. W. Bullinger, *A Critical Lexicon and Concordance*, under “world.”

created, then one of the ways that God spoke in the past was through Jesus. But that would contradict the whole point of the verse, which is saying that God spoke in other ways in the past, but “in these last days” is speaking through the Son.

3. Since verses 1 and 2 say that it was “God” who spoke through prophets and through His Son, it is clear that God is the prime mover and thus different from the Son. These verses show that the Son is subordinate to God and, as a “mouthpiece” for God, is compared to the prophets.

4. The fact that God appointed the Son to be “heir” shows that God and the Son are not equal. For the Son to be the “heir” means that there was a time when he was not the owner. The Bible was written using common words that had common and accepted meanings in the language of the time. The doctrine of the Trinity forces these words to take on “mystical” meanings. Yet there is no evidence in Scripture that the writer changed the meaning of these common words. We assert that if the Bible is read using the common meanings of the words in the text, there is simply no way to arrive at the doctrine of the Trinity. The word “heir” is a common one and, because death and inheritance are a part of every culture, it occurs in every language. Any dictionary will show that an heir is one who inherits, succeeds or receives an estate, rank, title or office of another. By definition, you cannot be an heir if you are already the owner. No one in history ever wrote a will that said, “My heir and the inheritor of my estate is...ME!” If Christ is God, then he cannot be “heir.” The only way he can be an heir is by not being the owner.

That Christ is an “heir” is inconsistent with Trinitarian doctrine, which states that Christ is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father. If Christ were God, then he was part owner all along, and thus is not the “heir” at all. These verses teach that God is the original owner, and will give all things to His heir, Jesus Christ. It is obvious from the wording of these first two verses that the author of Hebrews does not consider Christ to be God.

5. The entire opening section of Hebrews, usually used to show that Christ is God, actually shows just the opposite. More proof of this is in verses 3 and 4. After Christ sat down at the right hand of God, “he became as much superior to the angels” as his name is superior to theirs. “God” has always been superior to the angels. If Christ only *became* superior after his resurrection, then he cannot be the eternal God. It is obvious from this section of Scripture that “the Man” Christ Jesus was given all authority and made Lord and Christ.

6. Since *aionas* means “ages” and not “world,” it is fair to ask in what sense God has made the ages through Jesus. First, it must be understood that the word “made” is extremely flexible. It is the Greek word *poieo*, which, both alone and in combination with other words, is translated more than 100 different ways in the *NIV*, and thus has a wide range of meaning. Some of the ways *poieo* is translated are: accomplish, acted, appointed, are, be, bear, began, been, bring, carry out, cause, committed, consider, do, earned, exercise, formed, gain, give, judge, kept, made, obey, performed, preparing, produce, provide, put into practice, reached, spend, stayed, treated, was, win, work,

wrote, and yielded. Although most people read *poieo* in Hebrews 1:2 as referring to the original creation, it does not have to mean that at all. The context dictates that the “ages” being referred to are the ages after Christ’s resurrection. In verse 2, Christ became heir after his resurrection. In verse 3, he then sat at God’s right hand after his resurrection. Verses 5 and 6 also refer to the resurrection. The context makes it clear that God was not speaking through His Son in the past, but that He has spoken “in these last days” through His Son, and “given form to” the ages through him (Note #1 on Hebrews 1:10 below provides more evidence for this.

Broughton and Southgate, pp. 286-298

Hyndman, pp. 123-127

Norton, pp. 194-196

Racovian Catechism, pp. 93 and 94

Snedeker, pp. 457-459

Hebrews 1:8

But about the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom. (*NIV*)

1. The English language makes a clear distinction between “God” and “god.” Thus, in English Bibles, the heavenly Father is called “God,” while lesser divinities, people with God’s authority on earth and important people such as kings, are also called “god” (2 Cor. 4:4; John 10:34 and 35; Acts 12:22). The Hebrew and Aramaic languages cannot make the distinction between “God” and “god.” Since Hebrew and Aramaic have only capital letters, every use is “GOD.” Furthermore, although the Greek language has both upper case and lower case letters as English does, the early Greek manuscripts did not blend them. It was the style of writing at the time of the New Testament to make manuscripts in all capital letters, so the Greek manuscripts were, like the Hebrew text, all upper case script. Scholars call these manuscripts “uncials,” and that style was popular until the early ninth century or so when a smaller script was developed for books.³⁸

Since all texts were in upper case script, if we translated Genesis 1:1 and 2 as it appeared in the Hebrew manuscripts, it would read:

IN THE BEGINNING GOD CREATED THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH
NOW THE EARTH WAS FORMLESS AND EMPTY DARKNESS WAS
OVER THE SURFACE OF THE DEEP AND THE SPIRIT OF GOD WAS
HOVERING OVER THE WATERS.

Actually, Bible students should be aware that in both the early Hebrew and Greek manuscripts there were no spaces between the words, no punctuation marks, no chapters and no verses. The original texts of both the Old and New Testament were capital letters all run together, and it looked like this:

³⁸ Bruce Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament, Its Transmission, Corruption and Restoration* (Oxford University Press, NY, 1992), pp. 8-10.

INTHEBEGINNINGGODCREATEDTHEHEAVENSANDTHEEARTHNOWT
HEEARTHWASFORMLESSANDEMPTYDARKNESSWASOVERTHESURF
ACEOFTHEDEEPANDTHESPIRITOFGODWASHOVERINGOVERTHEWAT
ERS

Of course, the entire Bible was hand-printed exactly the same way, with every letter in upper case and no spaces between any words. As you can imagine, that made reading very difficult, and so it was common to read aloud, even when reading to yourself, to make it easier. That is why Philip the Evangelist could hear the Ethiopian eunuch reading the scroll of Isaiah (Acts 8:30). Such a text was hard to read and practically impossible to teach from. Imagine not being able to say, “Turn to Chapter 5, verse 15.” Therefore, divisions in the text began to appear quite early. However, because scribes lived far apart and hand-copied manuscripts, the divisions in the various manuscripts were not uniform. The first standardized divisions between verses came into being around 900 AD., and the modern chapter divisions were made in the 1200s.

It should now be very clear that there was just no way to distinguish between “God” and “god” in the early texts, and so it must always be determined from the context whether or not the word “GOD” is referring to the Father or to some lesser being. Although it was usual that the presence of the definite article in the Greek text alerted the reader that the “GOD” being referred to was the Father, this was not always the case (see the note on John 10:33). For example, in 2 Corinthians 4:4, the word “*theos*” has the definite article, but the verse is referring to the Devil. Context is always the final judge of whether *theos* should be translated “God” or “god.”

2. The Semitic languages, and both the Latin and Greek spoken by the early Christians, used the word “God” with a broader meaning than we do today. “God” was a descriptive title applied to a range of authorities, including great people, rulers and people acting with God’s authority. In John 10:33, when the Jews challenged Jesus and said he was claiming to be “a god” (mistranslated in most versions as “God”; see our note on that verse), he answered them by asking them if they had read in the Old Testament that people to whom the Word of God came were called “GODS” (and we use all caps here because the earliest texts did. It is hard to escape the modern notion that “God” refers to the True God and “gods” referred to lesser deities).

Any study of the words for “God” in both Hebrew and Greek will show that they were applied to *people* as well as to God. This is strange to English-speaking people because we use “God” in reference only to the true God, but both Hebrew and Greek used “God” of God, great men, other gods, angels and divine beings. It is the context that determines whether “God” or a great person is being referred to. This is actually a cause of occasional disagreement between translators, and they sometimes argue about whether “GOD” refers to God, the Father, or to a powerful person or representative of God. One example of this occurs in Exodus 21:6, which instructs a master whose servant wishes to serve him for life to bring the servant “to *Elohim*.” The *KJV*, the *NIV* and many others believe that the owner of the servant is supposed to bring the servant before the local

authorities, and so they translate *Elohim* as “judges” (see also Ex. 22:8 and 9 for more examples). Other translators felt that the master was required to bring the servant to God, so they translated *Elohim* as “God.” (e.g., *NRSV*) Thus, the verse will read, “God” or “judges,” depending on the translation.

Hebrews 1:8 is like other verses in that just because the word “*theos*” (“GOD”) is used does not mean that it refers to the Father. It could easily be referring to “god” in the biblical sense that great men are called “god.” The *Septuagint* uses the word *theos* for God, but also for men in places like Psalm 82 where men represent God. The context must be the determining factor in deciding what “GOD” refers to. In this case, in Hebrews that we are studying, the context is clear. Throughout the entire context from Hebrews 1:1, Christ is seen to be lesser than God the Father. Therefore, the use of “*theos*” here should be translated “god.”

3. The context must determine whether Christ is being referred to as the Supreme Being or just a man with great authority, so it must be read carefully. In this case, however, one need not read far to find that Christ, called “God,” himself has a “God.” The very next verse, Hebrews 1:9, says, “therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions.” Thus, Christ cannot be the supreme God, because the supreme God does not have a God. Furthermore, Christ’s God “set” him above others and “anointed” him. This makes it abundantly clear that the use of *theos* here in Hebrews is not referring to Christ being the supreme God, but rather a man with great authority under another God. Andrews Norton writes:

Here the context proves that the word “God” does not denote the Supreme Being, but is used in an inferior sense. This is admitted by some of the most respectable Trinitarian critics. Thus, the Rev. Dr. Mayer remarks: “Here the Son is addressed by the title *God*: but the context shows that it is an official title which designates him as a king: he has a kingdom, a throne and a scepter; and in verse 9 he is compared with other kings, who are called his fellows; but God can have no fellows. As the Son, therefore, he is classed with the kings of the earth, and his superiority over them consists in this, that he is anointed with the oil of gladness above them; inasmuch as their thrones are temporary, but his shall be everlasting.”³⁹

4. The verse is a quotation from Psalm 45:6,7. The Jews read this verse for centuries and, knowing the flexibility of the word “God,” never concluded that the Messiah would somehow be part of a Triune God.

5. We must note that the verse in the Greek text can also be translated as, “Thy throne is God.” However, because the verse is a reference from the Old Testament, and because we believe that God, the Father, is calling His Christ a “god” (*i.e.*, one with divine authority), there is no need to translate the verse other than, “Thy throne, O god, is forever.”

³⁹ Andrews Norton, *Statement of Reasons*, p. 301.

Broughton and Southgate, pp. 196 and 197
Buzzard, pp. 35
Dana, pp. 205 and 206
Farley, pp. 71 and 72
Morgridge, pp. 110 and 111
Norton, pp. 301 and 302
Snedeker, pp. 459-463

Hebrews 1:10

In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. (*NIV*)

1. This verse is quoted from the Old Testament (Ps.102:25), where it applied to *Yahweh*, and the author of Hebrews is lifting it from the Psalms and applying it to Jesus Christ. The subject of the verse changes from *Yahweh* (Old Testament) to Jesus Christ (New Testament). It makes sense, therefore, that the action being attributed changes also. Many Old Testament verses testify that God created the original heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1, *etc.*) However, both the Old Testament and New Testament tell us that there will be a new heavens and earth after this one we are currently inhabiting. In fact, there will be two more. First, the heaven and earth of the Millennium, the 1000 years Christ rules the earth, which will perish (Isa. 65:17; Rev. 20:1-10), and then the heaven and earth of Revelation 21:1ff, which will exist forever. The context reveals clearly that Hebrews 1:10 is speaking of these *future* heavens and earth. If we simply continue to read in Hebrews, remembering that the original texts had no chapter breaks, Scripture tells us, “It is not to angels that He has subjected **the world to come, about which we are speaking**” (Heb. 2:5). This verse is very clear. The subject of this section of Scripture is not the current heavens and earth, but the future heavens and earth. The reader must remember that the word “beginning” does not have to apply to the absolute beginning of time, but rather the beginning of something the author is referring to (see the note on this on John 6:64). When this verse is referring to the work of the Father, as it is in the Old Testament, it refers to the beginning of the entire heavens and earth. When it is applied to the Son, it refers to the beginning of his work, not the beginning of all creation, as Hebrews 2:5 makes clear.

2. Although we ascribe to the explanation above, a number of theologians read this verse and see it as a reference to the Father, which is a distinct possibility. Verse 10 starts with the word “and” in the Greek text, so verse 9 and 10 are conjoined. Since verse 9 ends with, “Your God has set you [the Christ] above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy,” these theologians see the reference to “the Lord” in the beginning of verse 10 as a reference back to the God last mentioned, *i.e.*, the Father. Norton explains this point of view:

Now the God last mentioned was Christ’s God, who had anointed him; and the author [of the book of Hebrews], addressing himself to this God, breaks out into the celebration of his power, and especially his unchangeable duration; which he dwells upon in order to prove the stability of the Son’s kingdom...*i.e.*, thou [God]

who hast promised him such a throne, *art he who laid the foundation of the earth*. So it seems to be a declaration of God's immutability made here, to ascertain the durableness of Christ's kingdom, before mentioned; and the rather so, because this passage had been used originally for the same purpose in the 102nd Psalm, *viz.* [Author uses *KJV*] To infer thence this conclusion, "*The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed be established before Thee*. In like manner, it here proves the *Son's* throne should be established *forever and ever*, by the same argument, *viz.*, by God's immutability."⁴⁰

Theologians such as Norton say that as it is used in the Old Testament, the verse shows that the unchanging God can indeed fulfill His promises, and they see it used in exactly the same way in Hebrews: since God created the heavens and the earth, and since He will not pass away, He is fit to promise an everlasting kingdom to His Son.

Authors who believe that the verse refers to the Son:

Broughton and Southgate, pp. 289-295

Buzzard, pp. 161 and 162

Racovian Catechism, pp. 95-105

Authors who believe that the verse applies to the Father:

Hyndman, p. 137

Morgridge, p. 122

Norton, p. 214

Hebrews 2:16

For verily he took not on *him the nature of angels*; but he took on *him* the seed of Abraham. (*KJV*)

1. This verse is occasionally used to prove the Trinity, but if so, it is only because a mistranslation is not recognized. Any student of the Bible should know that the words in the *KJV* that are in italics were added by the translators. The translators wanted readers to know what was in the Greek text and what was not, so they kindly placed the words they added in italic script. This is much more honest than some versions that add all kinds of things without giving the reader a hint of it. Without the italics, the verse in English becomes somewhat of an enigma, because it is not clear how Christ did not "take on" angels, but did "take on" Abraham's seed. The solution is in the translation of the Greek text, and the modern versions (including the *New King James*) get the sense very nicely: "For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants" (*NIV*). "For surely it is not with angels that he is concerned, but with the descendants of Abraham" (*RSV*).

2. Correctly translated and read in its context, this verse beautifully portrays how the man, Jesus Christ, "helps" us. He was human like we are, a lamb from the flock, and without spot or blemish so he could accomplish God's purpose by being the perfect

⁴⁰ Norton, *Reasons*, pp. 214 and 215.

sacrifice and thus atone for our sins. This allows us to be totally free from fear of death because Christ showed us that death is not permanent for those who believe in him. God can and will raise us from the dead. And, because he was like us in every way, “he is able to help those who are tempted.” Because in the context, it so clearly states that Jesus was “like his brothers in every way” (v. 17), there can be no reference to the Trinity in this verse. If the Trinity is correct and Jesus had both an eternal nature and human nature, he is hardly like us “in every way.”

Hebrews 4:8

For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. *(NIV)*

As it is translated above, this verse does not support the Trinitarian position at all. In some versions, the name “Joshua” was mistranslated as “Jesus,” which makes it sound as if Jesus were in the Old Testament. The names “Jesus” and “Joshua” are the same in Hebrew and Greek, and the translators of the *KJV*, for example, confused the names. This is easily discernible by reading the context, and every modern version we are aware of, including the *New King James Version (NKJV)*, has the name “Joshua” in the verse, clearing up the misconception that somehow “Jesus” led the Israelites across the Jordan into Canaan (see the notes on Acts 7:45).

Hebrews 7:3

Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he [Melchizedek] remains a priest forever. *(NIV)*

1. There are some Trinitarians who teach that Melchizedek was actually Jesus Christ because this verse says he was without Father or mother, beginning or end of life, *etc.* This cannot be the case, and misses the point of this entire section of Scripture. Knowing the Old Testament, specifically the Law of Moses, and then knowing about the genealogy of Jesus, the Jews did not believe that Jesus could be a high priest. The Law of Moses demanded that priests be descendants of Aaron and of the tribe of Levi. Of course, Jesus Christ came from the tribe of *Judah*. This “problem” is actually clearly set forth in the book of Hebrews itself: “For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah, and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests” (vs. 14).

What is the solution to this problem? This section of Hebrews shows that if Melchizedek can be a priest recognized by the great patriarch Abraham, and he had no priestly genealogy, then Christ can be a priest when he has no priestly genealogy. The Jews were very aware of the “qualifications” for the priesthood, and if someone claimed to be a priest but could not produce the required genealogy, he was disqualified (see Ezra 2:62). Thus, when this verse says Melchizedek had no genealogy or beginning or end, the Jews understood perfectly that it meant he did not come from a line of priests. They never thought, nor would they believe, that he had no father or mother or birth or death. They understood that if Melchizedek could be a priest to Abraham without being a descendant of Aaron, the first priest, then so could Jesus Christ.

2. Jesus Christ cannot be Melchizedek. Hebrews 7:3 says that Melchizedek was without Father or mother and without genealogy (*i.e.*, without one given in Scripture). However, Jesus did have a father, God, and a mother, Mary. He also had a genealogy, in fact, two—one in Matthew and one in Luke. Furthermore, this verse says that Melchizedek was “like the Son of God.” If he was “like” the Son, then he could not “be” the Son of God.

Buzzard, p. 35

Snedeker, p. 464

Hebrews 13:8

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. (*NIV*)

1. There is nothing in the context to warrant believing that this verse has anything to do with a “plurality of persons,” “one substance in the Godhead” or any other Trinitarian concept. The verses around verse 8 tell believers not to be fooled by strange new doctrines. The verse preceding it says to “remember” the leaders and “imitate” them. The verse just after it says, “Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings.” The context makes the intent of the verse obvious. Believers were being led astray by new teachings, and the author of Hebrews was reminding them that Jesus Christ does not change. The truth about him yesterday is the same now and will be the same in the future.

2. Although some people try to use this verse as if it said that Jesus Christ has existed from eternity past, the very wording shows that is not the case. A study of the word “yesterday” in Scripture shows that it refers to something that happened only a short time before. It stretches the grammar beyond acceptable limits to try to make this verse say that Christ has always existed.

3. It has been widely recognized by theologians of many backgrounds that this verse is referring to the fact that Christian truth does not change. Morgridge writes: “This passage refers not to the nature, but to the doctrine of Christ. With this exposition agree Adam and Samuel Clark, Calvin, Newcome, Whitby, Le Clerk, and the majority of expositors.”

Morgridge, p. 123

Norton, p. 269

1 Peter 1:11

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

The fact that this verse says the “spirit of Christ” was upon people in the Old Testament has caused people to believe that Christ himself was present in the Old Testament. But,

as we will see, such is not the case. In the first place, the phrase “spirit of Christ” never appears in the Old Testament. The “spirit of the Lord” or “the spirit of God” appears over and over, but never the “spirit of Christ.”

The spirit that God places upon people takes on different names as it refers to different functions. This can be abundantly proven. Nevertheless, the spirit is the same. God always gives His spirit, and then it is named as it functions. When it is associated with wisdom, it is called the “spirit of wisdom” (Ex. 28:3; Deut. 34:9; Eph. 1:17). When it is associated with grace, it is called the “spirit of grace” (Zech.12:10; Heb. 10:29). When it is related to glory, it is called the “spirit of glory” (1 Pet. 4:14). It is called the “spirit of adoption” when it is associated with our everlasting life (Rom. 8:15, which is translated as “spirit of sonship” in some versions). It is called “the spirit of truth” when it is associated with the truth we learn by revelation (John 14:17; 16:13). When it came with the same power as it brought to Elijah, it was called “the spirit of Elijah” (2 Kings 2:15). These are not different spirits. All the names refer to the one gift of holy spirit that God gives. Ephesians 4:4 states clearly that there is “one spirit,” and that spirit is God’s gift of holy spirit given to some people in the Old Testament and to all believers today.

When Peter mentions that “the spirit of Christ” was upon prophets as they “predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glory that would follow,” it is easy to see that the spirit is called the “spirit of Christ” because it is associated with Christ and foretold of Christ, not because Christ was actually alive during the Old Testament.

Racovian Catechism, pp. 146-148

2 Peter 1:1b

To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours: (*NIV*)

1. Some Trinitarians try to force this verse to “prove” the Trinity by what is known as the Granville Sharp Rule of Greek grammar. We have shown that this is not a valid proof of the Trinity (see Ephesians 5:5, “The Granville Sharp Rule”).

2. This verse is generally translated one of two ways: “Our God and Savior Jesus Christ” (*Revised Version, RSV, NIV*, etc.) and “God and our Savior Jesus Christ (*KJV*). Although it is possible that the word “God” (Greek = *theos*) is here being used in its lesser sense, *i.e.*, of a man with divine authority (see Hebrews 1:8 above), it is more likely that it is referring to the true God as distinct from Jesus Christ. This is certainly the way the context is leading, because the very next verse speaks of them separately.

Alford recognizes that two beings are referred to in the verse and writes, “Undoubtedly, as in Titus 2:13, in strict grammatical propriety, both “God” and “Savior” would be predicates of Jesus Christ. But here as there, considerations interpose, which seem to remove the strict grammatical rendering out of the range of probable meaning”⁴¹

⁴¹ Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament* (Moody Press, Chicago, Vol. 4), p. 390.

3. There is absolutely no reason to force this verse to make Jesus Christ into God. It is the opening verse of the epistle, and reading all of the epistles will show that it is customary in the New Testament to introduce both God and Christ at the opening of each one. Furthermore, it is through the righteousness of both God and Christ that we have received our precious faith. It was through God in that it was He who devised the plan of salvation and was righteous in His ways of making it available to us. It was through Christ in that by his righteous life he carried out the plan so that we can have what we now have. Both God and Christ had to be righteous in order for us to enjoy our current status in the faith, and we think the evidence is conclusive that they are both present in the verse.

Broughton and Southgate, p. 202
Buzzard, p. 129

1 John 2:22 (NIV)

Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist-- he denies the Father and the Son.

It is said in some Christian circles that: "If you do not believe that Jesus Christ is God, you are of the spirit of the antichrist." 1 John 2:22 has often been used to support this idea, but what does it *actually* say? Let us look at it in its context:

The context of the verse has to do with how there will be many antichrists that come as the Church Administration unfolds. Once the revelation contained in the Church Epistles was revealed, which it had been by the time 1 John was written, Satan began to assault people with all kinds of false doctrines. The "many antichrists" are people who promote such doctrines and practices that are *anti* (against)-Christ, that is, against the truth about who Jesus really is and what he did on our behalf. Verse 19 goes on to say that, "they went out from us, but they did not really belong to us." This is referring to those who pretended to be a part of the family of God, yet were really working on behalf of the enemy and against Christ. In the same vein, 2 John 7 makes that clear:

2 John 7 (NIV)

Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.

So how do we know *who* is "antichrist" and *who* is for Christ and God?

1 John 2:22 says that anyone who denies that Jesus is the *Christ* (Messiah) is a liar, that is, the words he speaks go against the truth of God's Word. "Messiah" comes from the Hebrew word *mashiach*, which means "anointed." "Christ" comes from the Greek word *christos*, which also means "anointed." Thus, linguistically, Messiah = Christ = the anointed one.

Given that words have definitive meanings, especially as God uses them in His Word, this makes it clear that someone had to anoint him, and of course, that was God, His Father, as per the following verse:

Acts 10:38 (NIV)

how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

God anointed Jesus, and thus Jesus is truly, “the Christ (anointed one) of God.”

Genesis 3:15 is the very first reference to the Messiah, the Redeemer of mankind, and it sets forth the truth that the Messiah would be a human being, a man born of a woman. All other Messianic prophecies follow suit: the Messiah would be a man, albeit the only begotten Son of God.

The key to salvation is to believe that Jesus Christ is the Savior (the Messiah), who died for our sins and is now the exalted Lord. The following verses are most pertinent:

Acts 2:32-36 (NIV)

(32) God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact.

(33) Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.

(34) For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, "The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand

(35) until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."

(36) "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

In conclusion, although some people assert that: “If you do not believe that Jesus Christ is God, you are of the spirit of the antichrist,” there is not Scriptural evidence to support that belief. An antichrist believes that Jesus is not the Christ, or does not acknowledge that Christ has come in the flesh. However, many people believe Jesus is the Christ and that he came in the flesh without also believing he is God. Furthermore, there is no Scripture that says that if you believe Jesus is not God you are an antichrist.

Can a person also be a Christian and a member of the family of God without believing that Jesus is God? The answer is yes, he or she most certainly can. Romans 10:9, which gives simple instructions on salvation, says nothing about believing that Jesus is God. The true question is, “who is Jesus Christ?” We assert that he is a man (1 Tim. 2:5), our Savior, our Redeemer, our Mediator, our Lord, our constant Companion, our Best Friend, our Big Brother, the Light of our lives, our Peace, our Joy, the Son of God and our Mentor in the art of faith.

Biblically speaking, you are saved if you do what Romans 10:9 says.

Romans 10:9 (NIV)

That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

1 John 3:16

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers (*NIV*).

There is no Trinitarian inference in the above verse or in 1 John 3:16 as it is translated in most versions. However, the *King James Version* reads as if "God" laid His life down for us. It reads: "Hereby perceive we the love *of God*, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren." The problem is caused by mistranslation. However, the informed reader will see the solution, even in the *KJV* text itself. In the *KJV*, words in italics were added by the translators. In this case, the translators added "of God," and thus caused the difficulty.

1 John 4:1-3 (NIV)

- (1) Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.
- (2) This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God,
- (3) but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

Many Christians use the above verses in an attempt to prove that one must believe that Jesus is God in order to be saved. We assert that this is not at all what the verses are saying. To understand them, it is most important that we read what is written, and not add our interpolation to the text. Then, to really understand why they were written the way they are, we must understand the cultural context in which they were written, as well as the overall context of 1 John itself.

Verse 2 says that "every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God." Why the emphasis on Jesus Christ having "come in the flesh"?

One of the false belief systems rivaling Christianity at the time 1 John was written was Gnosticism. The Gnostics believed that all matter is evil, and therefore they taught that Jesus Christ was not actually a human being of flesh and blood, but rather some kind of phantom or spirit being. Thus the Gnostics did not believe Jesus had come "in" the flesh.

By saying that Jesus had come "in" the flesh, the Bible is saying that Jesus was a flesh and blood human being. To not believe that Jesus was a human being is to be of the antichrist. In light of that, the assertion of some Christians that anyone who teaches that Jesus is not God is not saved and is of the antichrist is questionable indeed. Biblical Unitarians (such as those of us at Spirit & Truth Fellowship International) believe that Jesus is the Son of God, a man, and that he definitely came in the flesh.

Verse 2 is not saying that Jesus is God incarnate or God in human flesh. Rather, it is saying that those who acknowledge that Jesus Christ was born, grew up, carried out his ministry, and was a real human being, have the spirit of God within them. He came in the flesh indeed, just like every other flesh-and-blood human being.

The remainder of Chapter 4 contains the same fabulous truth found in the world's most famous verse, John 3:16:

1 John 4:9-15 (NIV)

(9) This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.

(10) This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

(11) Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

(12) No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

(13) We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.

(14) And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.

(15) If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God.

A careful reading of verse 15 shows that it is not about whether or not Jesus is God, but about acknowledging him as the *Son* of God. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the *Son* of God, God dwells in him.

Chapter 5 begins by affirming this same truth:

1 John 5:1 (NIV)

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the *Christ* is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well.

Let us read carefully as we closely examine the following verses:

1 John 5:5-8 (NIV)

(5) Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the *Son of God*.

(6) This is the one who came by water and blood [meaning that he was born]—Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood.

(7) And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.

(8) For there are three that testify: the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.

Verse 5 says that Jesus is the Son of God. Verse 6 says that he was born of a woman like every other human being since Adam and Eve (“by water and blood”). Then he received

the spirit of God upon him. If you are familiar with the KJV, you know that there is a discrepancy between it and the NIV in verses 7 and 8. See the discrepancy of 1 John 5:7-8.

So the point is that Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, was a true human being, a spotless lamb from out of the flock, and any teaching that claims he is anything other than fully human is against Christ, that is, against the truth of who he is.

1 John 5:7 and 8

For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one (*KJV*).

1. Some English versions have a shorter rendition of 1 John 5:7 and 8 than the *KJV* quoted above. The *King James Version* has words that support the Trinity that most modern versions do not have. How can this be? The reason that there are different translations of this verse is that some Greek texts contain an addition that was not original, and that addition was placed into some English versions, such as the *KJV* (the words added to some Greek texts are underlined in the quotation above). The note in the *NIV Study Bible*, which is well known for its ardent belief in the Trinity, says, “The addition is not found in any Greek manuscript or NT translation prior to the 16th century.”

Most modern versions are translated from Greek texts without the addition. We will quote the *NIV*: “For there are three that testify: the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.” We agree with the textual scholars and conclude from the evidence of the Greek texts that the statement that the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit are “one” was added to the Word of God by men, and thus has no weight of truth.

There are many Trinitarian scholars who freely admit that the Greek text from which the *KJV* is translated was adjusted in this verse to support the Trinity. The Greek scholar A. T. Robertson, author of the unparalleled work, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in Light of Historical Research*, and the multi-volumed *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, writes:

At this point [1 John 5:7] the Latin Vulgate gives the words in the Textus Receptus, found in no Greek MS. save two late cursives (162 in the Vatican Library of the fifteenth century, [No.] 34 of the sixteenth century in Trinity College, Dublin). Jerome did not have it. Erasmus did not have it in his first edition, but rashly offered to insert it if a single Greek MS. had it, and 34 was produced with the insertion, as if made to order. Some Latin scribe caught up Cyprian’s exegesis and wrote it on the margin of his text, and so it got into the Vulgate and finally into the Textus Receptus by the stupidity of Erasmus.”⁴²

⁴² A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Baker Books, Grand Rapids, 1933, reprinted 1960, Vol. 6), pp. 240 and 241).

Robertson shows how this addition entered the text. It was a marginal note. Since all texts were hand-copied, when a scribe, copying a text, accidentally left a word or sentence out of his copy, he would place it in the margin in hopes that the next scribe would copy it back into the text. Unfortunately, scribes occasionally did not make the distinction between what a previous scribe had left out of the last copy and wrote in the margin, and marginal notes that another scribe had written in the margin to help him understand the text. Therefore, some marginal notes got copied into the text as Scripture. Usually these additions are easy to spot because the “new” text will differ from all the other texts. However, there are times when people adore their theology more than the God-breathed original, and they fight for the man-made addition as if it were the original words of God. This has been the case with 1 John 5:7 and 8, and we applaud the honesty of the translators of modern versions who have left it out of their translations.

The famous textual scholar, F. F. Bruce, does not even mention the addition in his commentary on 1 John (*The Epistles of John*). *The International Critical Commentary* does not mention it either. The conservative commentator R. C. H. Lenski, in his 12 volume commentary on the New Testament, only mentions that it is proper to leave the addition out. He writes: “The *R. V.* [*Revised Version*] is right in not even noting in the margin the interpolation found in the *A. V.* [*KJV*].” Henry Alford, author of the *The Greek Testament*, a Greek New Testament with extensive critical notes and commentary, writes:

...OMITTED BY ALL GREEK MANUSCRIPTS previous to the beginning of the 16th century;

ALL the GREEK FATHERS (even when producing texts in support of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity: as *e.g.*, by [abbreviated names of Church “fathers”] Clem Iren Hipp Dion Ath Did Bas Naz Nys Ephih Caes Chr Procl Andr Damasc (EC Thl Euthym));

ALL THE ANCIENT VERSIONS (including the Vulgate (as it came from Jerome, see below) and (though interpolated in the modern editions, the Syriac;

AND MANY LATIN FATHERS (*viz.* Novat Hil Lucif Ambr Faustin Leo Jer Aug Hesych Bede) [Emphasis his].⁴³

2. With the spurious addition gone, it is clear that there is no reference to the Trinity in 1 John 5:7 and 8. The context is speaking of believing that Jesus is the Son of God (v. 5 and 10). There are three that testify that Jesus is the Son of God: the spirit that Jesus received at his baptism, the water of his baptism and the blood that he shed.

Scripture says, “We accept man’s testimony, but God’s testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God which He has given about his Son” (v. 9). This verse is so true!

⁴³ Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament*, (Moody Press, Chicago, 1968, Vol. 4), p. 503.

How often people accept man's testimony and believe what men say, but do not believe what God says. We need to accept the testimony of God that He has given about His Son, and agree with the testimony of the spirit, the water and the blood, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Farley, pp. 28-33

Morgridge, pp. 70-87

Sir Isaac Newton, "*An Historical Account of Two Notable Corruptions of Scripture*," reprinted in 1841 (John Green, 121 Newgate Street, London), pp. 1-58.

Norton, pp. 185 and 186

Racovian Catechism, pp. 39-42

Snedeker, pp. 118-120

1 John 5:20

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

1. Many Trinitarians claim that the final sentence in the verse, "This is the true God," refers to Jesus Christ, since the closest noun to "This" is "Jesus Christ." However, since God and Jesus are both referred to in the first sentence of the verse, the final sentence can refer to either one of them. The word "this," which begins the last sentence, is *houtos*, and a study of it will show that the context, not the closest noun or pronoun, must determine to whom "this" is referring. The Bible provides examples of this, and a good one is in Acts 7:18 and 19 (*KJV*): "Till another king arose, which knew not Joseph. The same (*houtos*) dealt subtilly with our kindred..., and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live." It is clear from this example that "the same" (*houtos*) cannot refer to Joseph, even though Joseph is the closest noun. It refers to the other king earlier in the verse, even though that evil king is not the closest noun.

If it were true that pronouns always referred to the closest noun, serious theological problems would result. An example is Acts 4:10 and 11: "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, *even* by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This [*houtos*] is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner" (*KJV*). If "This" in the last sentence refers to the closest noun or pronoun, then the man who was healed is actually the stone rejected by the builders that has become the head of the corner, *i.e.*, the Christ. Of course, that is not true.

An even more troublesome example for those not recognizing that the context, not noun and pronoun placement, is the most vital key in determining proper meaning, is 2 John 1:7: "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist" (*KJV*). The structure of this verse

closely parallels the structure of the verse we are studying. If one insists that the final phrase of 1 John 5:20 refers to Jesus because he is the closest associated noun, then that same person is going to be forced by his own logic to insist that Jesus Christ is a deceiver and an antichrist, which of course is absurd. Thus we conclude that, although the last phrase of 1 John 5:20 may refer to Jesus Christ, it can just as easily refer to God, who appears in the phrase “Son of *God*” and, via the possessive pronoun “his,” in the phrase “*his* Son Jesus.” To which of the two it refers must be determined from studying the words in the verse and the remoter context.

2. Once it is clear that the last sentence in the verse can refer to *either* Jesus or God, it must be determined which of the two it is describing. The context and remoter context will determine to whom the phrase “true God” applies. The result of that examination is that the phrase “true God” is used four times in the Bible beside here: 2 Chronicles 15:3; Jeremiah 10:10; John 17:3 and 1 Thessalonians 1:9. In all four of these places, the “true God” refers to the Father and not the Son. Especially relevant is John 17:3, which is Jesus’ prayer to God. In that prayer, Jesus calls God “the only true God.” These examples are made more powerful by the consideration that 1 John is a late epistle, and thus the readers of the Bible were already used to God being called the “true God.” Add to that the fact that John is the writer of both the Gospel of John and the Epistles of John, and he would be likely to use the phrase the same way. Thus, there is every reason to believe that the “true God” of 1 John 5:20 is the heavenly Father, and there is no precedent for believing that it refers to the Son.

3. From studying the immediate context, we learn that this very verse mentions “him that is true” two times, and both times it refers to the Father. Since the verse twice refers to the Father as “the one who is true,” that is a strong argument that “the true God” in the last part of the verse is the same being.

4. Not all Trinitarians believe that the last sentence in the verse refers to the Son. A study of commentators on the verse will show that a considerable number of Trinitarian scholars say that this phrase refers to the Father. Norton and Farley each give a list of such scholars. In his commentary on 1 John, Lenski writes that although the official explanation of the Church is to make the sentence refer to the Son:

This exegesis of the church is now called a mistake by a number of commentators who believe in the full deity of Jesus as it is revealed in Scripture but feel convinced that this *houtos* clause speaks of the Father and not of His Son.”⁴⁴

Buzzard, pp. 137 and 138

Farley, pp. 72-75

Norton, pp. 196-199

Racovian Catechism, pp. 78-89

Snedeker, pp. 466-468

⁴⁴ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of I and II Epistles of Peter, the Three Epistles of John, and the Epistle of Jude* (Augsburg Pub. House, Minneapolis, MN, 1966), p. 543.

Jude 4

For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord (*NIV*).

1. As it is written above and in most other versions, the doctrine of the Trinity is not stated or implied in this verse in any way.
2. However, there are a few texts that add the phrase “the only Lord God” in close proximity to “Jesus Christ,” and this has caused some Trinitarians to force this verse into a proof of the Trinity by using the grammar and the Granville Sharp Rule. This falls short on two counts. First, the Granville Sharp Rule cannot be shown to “prove” the Trinity (see the extensive note on Eph. 5:5). Second, modern textual research has shown that the word “God” in the phrase “the only Lord God” was not in the original text, but was added as the centuries progressed. Textual critics and translators recognize that fact and thus modern translations read in ways similar to the *NASB* (“our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ”).

Revelation 1:8

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.” (*NIV*)

1. These words apply to God, not to Christ. The one, “who is, and who was and who is to come” is clearly identified from the context. Revelation 1:4 and 5 reads: “Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, AND from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.” The separation between “the one who was, is and is to come” and Christ can be clearly seen. The one “who is, and who was and who is to come” is God.
2. This verse is made slightly more ambiguous in the *KJV* because the word “God” is left out of the Greek text from which the *KJV* was translated. Nevertheless, modern textual research shows conclusively that it should be included, and modern versions do include the word “God.”
3. Because of the phrase, “the Alpha and the Omega,” many feel this verse refers to Christ. However, a study of the occurrences of the phrase indicates that the title “Alpha and Omega” applies to both God and Christ. Scholars are not completely sure what the phrase “the Alpha and the Omega” means. It cannot be strictly literal, because neither God nor Christ is a Greek letter. Lenski concludes, “It is fruitless to search Jewish and pagan literature for the source of something that resembles this name Alpha and Omega. Nowhere is a person, to say nothing of a divine Person, called ‘Alpha and Omega,’ or in Hebrew, ‘Aleph and Tau.’”⁴⁵

⁴⁵ R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John’s Revelation* (Augsburg Pub. House, Minneapolis, MN 1963), p. 51.

Although there is no evidence from the historical sources that anyone is named “the Alpha and Omega,” Bullinger says that the phrase “is a Hebraism, in common use among the ancient Jewish Commentators to designate the whole of anything from the beginning to the end; e.g., ‘Adam transgressed the whole law from Aleph to Tau’ (Jalk. Reub., fol. 17.4)”⁴⁶ The best scholarly minds have concluded that the phrase has something to do with starting and finishing something, or the entirety of something. Norton writes that these words, “denote the certain accomplishment of his purposes; that what he has begun he will carry on to its consummation” (pp. 479 and 480).

Since both God and Jesus Christ are “the Alpha and the Omega” in their own respective ways, there is good reason to believe that the title can apply to both of them, and no good reason why that makes the two into “one God.” The titles “Lord” (see Rom. 10:9 above), “Savior” (see Luke 1:47 above) and “king of kings (see 1 Tim. 6:14-16 above) apply to both God and Christ, as well as to other men. As with “Lord,” “Savior” and “King of kings,” this title fits them both. God is truly the beginning and the end of all things, while Christ is the beginning and the end because he is the firstborn from the dead, the Author and Finisher of faith, the Man by whom God will judge the world, and the creator of the new ages to come (see Heb. 1:10 above).

Hyndman, pp. 93-95
Norton, pp. 479 and 480
Snedeker, pp. 385-389

Revelation 1:11

Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea. (*NIV*)

Some texts in the Western tradition add the words, “I am the Alpha and Omega” to this verse, but textual scholars agree that the phrase is an addition to the text, and thus versions like the *NIV*, *NASB*, etc., do not have the addition (See the notes on Rev. 1:8).

Revelation 1:13-15

(13) And in the middle of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across his breast with a golden girdle.

(14) And His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and his eyes were like a flame of fire;

(15) and His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been caused to glow in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of many waters. (*NASB*)

1. Many theologians have noticed the similarities between this description of Christ in Revelation, and the description of the “ancient of Days” (i.e., God) in Daniel 7:9 and Ezekiel 43:2. Thus, based on the similarities between the two descriptions, these verses

⁴⁶ E. W. Bullinger, *Commentary on Revelation* (Kregel Pub., Grand Rapids, MI, 1984), pp. 147 and 148.

are used to support the Trinity. One of the reasons that more Trinitarians do not advance these verses in Revelation as a “proof” of the Trinity is that most Christians are unprepared to really understand the argument. That God appeared in the form of a human being is very new information for most people, and quite a few are unwilling to accept it. Nevertheless, the Trinitarian argument goes like this: God appeared in the Old Testament with a certain physical description. Christ has much the same description; therefore Christ must be God.

Most Christians have not been shown from Scripture that God appeared in a form resembling a person. They have always heard that “no one has seen God at any time” and that God is invisible. A thorough explanation of God’s appearing in the form of a man is given in the notes on Genesis 18:1 and 2 above.

2. When God became visible to Daniel, He had hair “white like wool” (7:9), and from Ezekiel we learn that His voice “was like the sound of many waters” (43:2). This description is the same for Jesus Christ in Revelation 1:13-15, and thus the two are compared. Although we realize that these descriptions are similar, we would note that many things that are similar are not identical. Police are very aware of this. If you went to the police with the description of a man and said, “He has white hair and a deep voice,” that would be helpful, but more would be needed to establish identity, since that description can fit more than one person.

To see if Christ is the same as, or identical with, God, we must study the records, and indeed, the entire scope of Scripture. Daniel, Chapter 7 is about the succession of empires through time. By the time we get to verse 9, Daniel described a vision he had of something that is still future to us. He described God preparing for the Judgment. Daniel also foresaw Jesus Christ taking the kingdom from his God, the Ancient of Days.

Daniel 7:13 and 14 (NASB)

(13) I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven one like a **son of man** was coming, and he came up to the **Ancient of Days** and was presented before him.

(14) And to him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and men of every language might serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and his kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.”

It is clear from Revelation 1:13-15 that both Christ and God are present, although only God is described. In the Book of Revelation, God and Christ are both present. Chapter 4 and the opening of Chapter 5 describe God on a throne with a scroll in His right hand. Then Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, “came and he took it out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne” [i.e., God] (5:7). Again, there are clearly two present: God and Christ. Nothing in the context indicates in any way that these two are somehow “one.” There is no reason to assume that. Two is two. Furthermore, why is it so amazing that the risen Christ has an appearance similar to the one that God chooses to take on when He appears to us? Since God can take on any form He wants, why would He not take on

a form that he knew would be similar to His Son? This similarity does not prove identity in any way, but it does show the functional equality of Jesus Christ and God.

Revelation 1:17

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: “Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last.” (*NIV*)

1. The phrase, “the First and the Last,” is a title that is used five times in the Bible, twice in Isaiah of God (44:6; 48:12) and three times in Revelation of the Son (1:17; 2:8; 22:13). Trinitarians sometimes make the assumption that since the same title applies to both the Father and the Son, they must both be God. However, there is no biblical justification on which to base that assumption. When the whole of Scripture is studied, one sees that the same titles are used for God, Christ and men. Examples include “Lord” (see Rom. 10:9 above) and “Savior” (see Luke 1:47 above) and “King of kings” (see 1 Tim. 6:14-16 above). If other titles apply to God, Christ and men without making all of them into “one God,” then there is no reason to assume that this particular title would mean they were one God unless Scripture specifically told us so, which it does not.

2. In the Old Testament, God truly was “the First and the Last.” The meaning of the title is not specifically given, but the key to its meaning is given in Isaiah 41:4, in which God says He has called forth the generations of men, and was with the first of them and is with the last of them.

Isaiah 41:4

“Who has done this and carried it through, **calling forth the generations** from the beginning? I, the LORD—with the first of them and with the last—I am he.” Thus, the Bible connects the phrase “the First and the Last” with calling forth the generations.

While God was the one who called forth the generations in the Old Testament, He has now conferred that authority on His Son. Thus, it is easy to see why the Lord Jesus is called “the First and the Last” in the book of Revelation. It will be Jesus Christ who will call forth the generations of people from the grave to enter in to everlasting life. God gave Jesus authority to raise the dead (John 5:25-27). His voice will raise all dead Christians (1 Thess. 4:16 and 17), and he will change our bodies into new glorious bodies (Phil. 3:20 and 21). However, even when Jesus said he had the authority to raise the dead, he never claimed he had that authority inherently because he was God. He always said that his Father had *given* authority to him. While teaching about his authority, Jesus Christ was very clear about who was the ultimate authority: “The Son can do nothing by himself...the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son...For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in himself. And He has given him authority to judge” (John 5:19,22,26 and 27). If Jesus had the authority to raise the dead because he was in some way God, he never said so. He said he had his authority because his Father gave it to him. With the authority to raise the generations

came the title associated with the existence of the generations, and thus after his resurrection Jesus Christ is called “the First and the Last.”

Morgridge, p. 122

Racovian Catechism, pp. 157-163

Snedeker, p. 469

Revelation 3:14

To the angel of the church in Laodicea, write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s creation. (*NIV*)

1. As it is translated above, there is no Trinitarian inference in the verse. It agrees perfectly with what we know from the whole of Scripture: that God has made Jesus both Lord and Christ.

2. In the *KJV*, the word “ruler” (Greek = *arche*) is translated “beginning.” The word *arche* can mean “beginning,” “first” or “ruler.” When most people read the *KJV*, they say that Jesus Christ is the “beginning” of God’s original creation, and this has caused some people to say that the verse is Trinitarian, because Jesus would thus have been before everything else. If that interpretation is correct, then this verse would be a strong argument against the Trinity because then Christ would be a created being. “Arianism” is the doctrine that Christ was the first of all of God’s created things and that God then created everything else through Christ, and the way the *KJV* translates the verse can be understood as Arian.

3. It is possible (and some scholars do handle the verse this way) to understand the word “beginning” as applying to the beginning of the new ages that Christ will establish. If that were so, the verse would be similar to Hebrews 1:10 (see above). Christ, being the “firstborn from the dead,” would be the beginning of God’s new creation. Although it is certainly possible from a textual standpoint to handle the verse that way, the context of the verse is Christ ruling over his people. He is reproving and disciplining them (v. 19) and granting places beside him with the Father (v. 21). Thus, the translation of *arche* as “ruler” is a good translation and best fits the context. No one can argue with the fact that Christ is the ruler over all of God’s creation.

Broughton and Southgate, pp. 286-293

Snedeker, p. 470

Revelation 21:6

It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. (*NIV*)

1. For commentary on the phrase “Alpha and Omega,” see Revelation 1:8.

2. The exact meaning of the phrase “the Beginning and the End” is not given. Scholars give differing explanations of the phrase, but the meaning must be closely associated with the concepts of “Alpha and Omega” and “First and Last” because these titles are associated together (see Rev. 22:13). We have seen from the study of the title “Alpha and Omega” that it refers to the start and finish of something, and we have seen from the title “First and Last” (Rev. 1:17) that Christ will raise up the generations of people unto everlasting life. It is clear why Christ would be called the “Beginning and the End” in association with these concepts. He is the firstborn from the dead, and he will be the one to call the last people out of their graves, he is both the Author and Finisher of faith, he is the Man by whom God will judge the world and he is the one who will then create and bring to completion the next ages (see the notes on Heb. 1:10). There is no compelling reason to assume Jesus is God simply because of the title, “the Beginning and the End.”

Rachovian Catechism, pp. 161-163

Revelation 22:13

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.
(*NIV*)

For commentary on the phrase “Alpha and Omega,” see the notes on Revelation 1:8; on “the First and Last,” see the notes on Revelation 1:17; on “the Beginning and the End,” see the notes on Revelation 21:6.

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